Fall 2003
Augsburg College

Til & Keep

a journal on vocation

Till & Keep

a journal on vocation

Till & Keep is a journal published by Exploring Our Gifts at Augsburg College, a program for the theological exploration of vocation funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. It is made by and for members of Augsburg and the greater academic community who are interested in exploring vocation and the interplay between faith and learning. For more information on the journal and other programs sponsored by Exploring Our Gifts, contact the co-editor, Juliana Sedgley, at <sedgley@augsburg.edu>.

Table of Contents

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."
–Genesis 2:15 (NRSV)

The name of the journal, *Till and Keep*, echoes God's purpose in placing humanity in the garden of Eden. It reflects a central theme of vocation—the call to service in God's world.

Mark Tranvik, co-editor
Juliana Sedgley, co-editor
Lynn Mena, production editor
Sammy Gross '03, graphic design and artwork

Vocation at Augsburg College

by Mark D. Tranvik

We cannot live our lives constantly looking back, listening back, lest we be turned to pillars of longing and regret, but to live without listening at all is to live deaf to the fullness of the music.
Frederick Buechner[1]

Not long ago while walking out of the Christensen Center I heard the ringing of the carillon bells announcing the beginning of chapel. I passed a student who was complaining loudly about the "noise." "Bells, bells, bells," he cried. "They ring but nobody knows what they mean. Why do they have to ring those damn bells?" The bells were playing a tune and ironically it was Martin Luther's great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." I resisted the temptation to answer his question but it did occur to me that this college would not even exist were it not for the efforts of the sixteenth century German reformer.

Perhaps this anecdote can serve as a useful introduction to the idea of vocation. Like all places of higher learning, Augsburg is the scene of a tremendous amount of bustle and activity. A danger is that all this work can take place without any connection to a transcendent meaning or purpose. Analogous to the story related above, there is a considerable amount of institutional "noise" but no one is able to discern a tune. The concept of vocation provides Augsburg with an opportunity to reconnect with its roots and make sense of why it does what it does. The prime assertion of this essay is that behind all the teaching, learning, mentoring and studying is the meaningful melody of vocation.

I will proceed by first locating vocation within Augsburg's tradition as a college of the Christian church. Building on that foundation, I will then discuss the various dimensions of vocation in the life of the college.

Vocation and the Scriptures

It is by speaking and hearing that the interaction of the creator and creation take place…God creates by speaking. Creation is to listen and answer.
Walter Brueggemann [2]

The word vocation is derived from the Latin *vocatio* for calling. Jews and Christians have long recognized that a central characteristic of God in the Bible is that of one who speaks or calls. For example, the opening chapter of Genesis reveals a God who creates by speaking. There are 14 references to God speaking or calling in the first 29 verses. Furthermore, Genesis 1 suggests that when God speaks the effect is powerful and transformative. After all, it is possible to talk and have nothing happen. This is not the case with God's speech. At the beginning of each day of creation stands the phrase "And God said…" which is followed by yet more details being added to earth's majestic landscape. God's crowning achievement is the creation of humanity (Genesis 1:26) which, like rest of the world, is a result of divine speech and is made in God's very image.[3]

[1] Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992) 4.
[2] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982) 18.
[3] Ibid., 1-39. Brueggemann organizes his entire commentary on Genesis around the theme of God's call.

The completion of creation does not result in divine silence. It is the conviction of the Scriptures that the God who speaks continues to be active in the world. Genesis also tells us that God calls the nation of Israel into existence and assigns her the task of being his witness in the world. Moreover, it is important to notice that God's call to Israel is not abstract or general; it is individuals who hear God's voice and respond in various ways. It might be instructive to cite several examples.

The call of Abraham is immediate and direct. God says, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make of you a great nation and bless you." And the text simply reports that Abraham "went as the Lord had told him" (Genesis 12:1-4). But other calls tend to be more complicated.

Moses is called dramatically by God through a burning bush. Upon hearing the identity of the voice, Moses hides his face, fearing the presence of the Holy One of Israel. However, following this initial encounter the relationship between God and Moses becomes much more mundane and conflicted. God commissions Moses to deliver his people out of the hands of the Pharaoh. But Moses exhibits great reluctance to answer the call. He raises five separate objections to the task God has presented him. Finally God becomes exasperated with Moses's excuses and the reluctant leader of Israel is forced to yield to the divine will.[4]

The prophet Jonah illustrates yet another way of responding to God's call. When he is told by God to go to Nineveh and speak a word of judgment, Jonah flees in the opposite direction. When God foils his travel plans (and the prophet becomes well acquainted with a large fish), Jonah ends up acquiescing to God's command and preaches to the wicked city of Nineveh. To his total surprise, his preaching is effective. Nineveh repents and avoids divine retribution. Interestingly, Jonah is completely undone by this turn of events and becomes angry at God for showing mercy and forbearance.

Two examples from the New Testament are also instructive for reflecting on the call of God. Mary is greatly troubled and afraid when she hears the greeting of the angel Gabriel. After learning that she is to be the mother of Jesus, her next reaction is to question the possibility of such a birth, given her virginity. Only after repeated assurances from the angelic messenger does she submit to the divine plan. The call of Jesus' disciples echoes the divine power displayed in the speech of creation. When Jesus sees Simon and Andrew casting nets into the sea, he summons them to follow. The reader is given no hint of hesitation; the fishermen hear the voice of Jesus and they immediately follow. A similar pattern of call and immediate response is repeated with the disciples James and John. These narratives impress upon the reader the irresistible force of Jesus' words and the way his speech results in a decisive break with the past. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer notes of this text: "This encounter (with the disciples) is a testimony to the absolute, direct, and unaccountable authority of Jesus. There is no need of any preliminaries, and no other consequence but obedience to the call."[5]

These biblical reflections on the call are but a small sampling of the available material. Much more could be said about the centrality of vocation within the authoritative texts of the Judeo-Christian tradition. But based on the material provided we might draw the following conclusions about the shape and content of vocation in the Bible.

[4] See Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991) 51-82.

[5] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillian, 1959) 57.

The God of the Bible is one who speaks. Fundamental to the character of God is speaking. The Scriptures witness again and again to a God who makes himself known through speech. This has significant consequences for the way a reader approaches the Bible. Instead of assuming a role of mastery over the text where the primary goal is to probe and discover what a particular passage means, the student of the Bible informed by a sense of vocation begins with an attitude of expectant listening. God's voice can be muted by a critical sensibility that is precoccupied with the cultural background or linguistic features of a text. A sense of vocation or calling can only be nurtured if one is first attentive to the divine voice that speaks through the words of the Bible.

God's speech is powerful. As we have seen, Genesis 1 presents a God who speaks with powerful effect. These are not empty words to fill time while waiting for some meaningful activity to take place. The words themselves are the activity. They create and transform reality. As many have pointed out, the language of the Bible is not only informative or descriptive. In many cases it is also "performative." In other words, the speech of Scripture has the power to effect change in the most profound way (Isaiah 55:10-11). Thus one who listens for the voice of God in Scripture must be prepared for the power of the words addressed to him or her. In the realm of vocation, one enters a world that upends traditional ways of seeing reality and reorganizes priorities. Vocation has little in common with the typical human pursuits of comfort, security and stability.

God's call can be resisted. While several of the biblical figures addressed by God appear to respond to the call with unquestioning obedience, some of the examples noted above indicate a less than enthusiastic reaction to the divine summons. Moses is perhaps the most famous example of reluctance in vocation. Before eventually trying God's patience he invokes numerous excuses to avoid the assignment given to him. Jonah tries to ignore the call altogether before he discovers the futility of fleeing from the God of all creation. These examples are instructive. While the Bible accentuates the power of God's speech it is not the case that humans are simply automatons without wills of their own. Thus evidence of resistance to a calling should not be a cause for undue alarm. The Bible provides numerous cases of people whom God used in spite of their reluctance to answer the call.

God's call can be ambiguous. Mary's fear upon hearing the words of the angel Gabriel can serve as a lens for those to whom a sense of calling is uncertain or tenuous. There is plenty of room in the concept of vocation for hesitation, questioning, and puzzlement. Even those who take up a stance of "expectant listening" find themselves in significant periods of divine silence. Or they may feel there are too many voices in their lives and thus find it difficult to sort out what constitutes a genuine call. To be avoided, however, is the modern tendency to wallow in ambiguity. While acknowledging the difficulty of discernment, the concept of vocation insists that God has spoken and continues to speak. Our hardness of hearing should not yield to a belief that God has stopped speaking.

God's call comes in the context of community. While the call comes to individuals in the Bible, it is never received in isolation. Vocation is always connected with a mission for the larger community. Moses is summoned by God so that he might lead the people of Israel out of bondage. Mary is called so that she might bear the one who fulfills God's promises to Israel and the world. The disciples are called so that they might constitute the beginnings of a new community charged with telling the world of a new way that God has acted in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Underscored here is the dramatic difference between vocation and some modern strains of individualism. In vocation, the individual never stands alone. Rather, the one called is continually acting in the world and responding to the claims of God and the larger community.

God's call is gracious. This needs to be the last word in our summary comments

about vocation in the Scriptures. Those in the realm of vocation often find themselves in bewildering circumstances. God tells Abraham: "Leave *your* country and *your* kindred and *your* father's house (emphasis mine)..." (Genesis 12:1). Embracing the call can mean a heart-rending suffering where the familiar gives way to loneliness and alienation. Therefore it is crucial to remind ourselves that the God who calls us is also a God who fundamentally favors us. The promises of Scripture point to a God who not only calls us but a God who keeps and preserves us. For the Christian faith this is highlighted most dramatically in the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Here we have a model of one who takes all human opposition to God upon himself and is thereby driven to death. In a remarkable reversal, however, death does not have the final word. At the heart of the Christian confession is the belief that God has raised Jesus from the dead and thus vindicated his mission. Upon hearing the gracious voice of Christ in vocation, Christians are empowered to move beyond themselves and live lives of service and love.

Vocation and the Lutheran Reformation

There was a time when the Christian church considered all secular things to be unclean and profane, not by reason of human sin, but of themselves…An unavoidable consequence of (this) view of the church and the world was that the laity constantly had to be in doubt whether their status was compatible with Christianity. They lacked the quiet trust that God was pleased with their faithfulness in their earthly calling.
Georg Sverdrup[6]

Augsburg is a college of the Christian church with deep roots in the Lutheran tradition. Accordingly, its understanding of vocation is shaped decisively by the theological revolution wrought by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, springing fifteen hundred years forward from the Bible to the Reformation creates the impression that the intervening years afford few insights into what it means to be called and have a calling. Such a view is misleading and glosses over the early church and the church of the middle ages. However, given the telescoped nature of our study we must move to the era that has had the most direct and lasting influence on our thinking about vocation.

Luther's theology of vocation must be located in the peculiar cultural context of the sixteenth century western church. At this time there were essentially two classes of Christians—those who supposedly committed themselves to a "holy" life such as the monk, nun or priest and the vast majority of people who continued to live in the "world" and experience its temptations. The former had vocations or "callings." It was believed they performed a higher duty or service and thus were able to gain merit for themselves and those left behind in the world. The latter, such as the midwife, farmer or blacksmith, served humanity by sustaining earthly life with their labors but possessed occupations which lacked the inherent sanctity of the clerical or monastic realm.[7]

A theological foundation based on merit made it possible to construct this two-tiered view of the world. The schemes of salvation in the late middle ages varied but all insisted that humans must do something to make themselves right with God. Note that this did not mean that good works alone were sufficient. Grace was also underlined as necessary and important. But the idea was to combine grace and human effort in order to be saved.

[6] Georg Sverdrup, *The Heritage of Faith*, tr. Melvin A. Helland (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969) 92.
[7] There is a nice summary of this situation in Lee Hardy's *The Fabric of This World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 22-26. Hardy's book is a thoughtful analysis of our culture's understanding of work.

Illustrative of late medieval theology is the teaching of the fourteenth century British thinker, William of Ockham. Ockham is of special interest to students of the Reformation because the young Luther was schooled by devotees of Ockham's theology. In essence, Ockham taught that a proper relationship with God began with a good effort on the part of humanity. He said that one must "do what is in one" (*facere quod in se est*) in order to qualify for supernatural grace. Once grace enters your life your character is "transformed" and then you do good works which lead to your justification before God. Ockham's theology formed the intellectual underpinning for a significant portion of late medieval church practice (though it was not the only option). It was assumed that "good works" were a *sine qua non* for salvation.[8]

As Luther steeped himself in the world of the Bible during his time in the monastery he became convinced that this way of conceiving one's relationship to God was false. Relying heavily on Paul, he began to believe that one is justified not by works but by faith alone. Ockham's paradigm and all others that left room for human works or efforts inevitably jeopardized the certainty of salvation. How does one know when one has done enough? Can one ever be sure that one's works have been sufficient to merit the grace necessary for justification?

Luther found great comfort in the God revealed on the cross of Jesus Christ. This was a God who entered deeply into the human condition, even to the point of becoming "sin" (II Corinthians 5:21) and knowing the desolation and darkness of death, so that men and women might be liberated to serve their neighbors and care for creation. For Luther, the God revealed on the cross freed humanity from its anxious quest for meaning, hope and salvation. Now the basis for that relationship was faith, understood primarily as trust. Even faith itself was understood as a gift, bestowed upon a doubting and despairing humanity through God's gracious word and sacraments.

It is a serious misunderstanding of Luther to think that his views on grace and faith were simply abstract matters of theology with little relevance for earthly life. Luther's rediscovery of a gracious God was not merely an intellectual exercise. Its reverberations would be felt in the homes, villages and town squares across Europe. It is Luther's conviction that if we are saved by grace through faith and not works, then earthly life is experienced in an entirely different way. It is no longer the place where we attempt to placate a demanding God. Or, in a more modern idiom, the world is no longer the realm where we find our core identity in what we do or achieve. Moreover, mindful of the interpretation of the late medieval church, "vocations" are no longer limited to a special class of Christians who by the supposed holiness of their lives have placed themselves closer to their Creator. Instead, all Christians are called by God and empowered by his undeserved love to serve their neighbors. It needs to be emphasized: all Christians have callings or vocations.[9]

[8] A good overview of Ockham's position and the other late medieval options can be found in Steven Ozment's *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550. An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval andReformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) 231-44.

[9] Luther's comments on I Corinthians 7:20 ("Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called") are instructive: "How is it possible that you are not called? You have always been in some state or station; you have always been a husband or wife, boy or girl, or servant. Picture before you the humblest estate. Are you a husband, and you think you have not enough to do in that sphere to govern your wife, children, domestics and property so that all may be obedient to God and you do no one any harm? Yea, if you had five heads and ten hands, even then you would be too weak for your task, so that you would never dare to think of making a pilgrimage or doing any kind of saintly work." *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. John Lenker, 10 vols. (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1905) 10:242. For an article on Luther's theology of vocation see Marc Kolden, "Luther on Vocation," *Word and World* , 3, 4 (Fall, 1983) 382-393. The best book on the topic is still Gustaf Wingren's *Luther on Vocation*, tr. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957). The Swedish original was published in 1942.

As we did with the Bible, it might be useful at this point to note some implications of Luther's teaching. This should not be construed as an attempt to use extra-biblical sources to justify an understanding of vocation that is absent from Scripture. Rather, this should be seen as an effort to use the tradition to further illuminate the biblical worldview. The conclusions reached below are consistent with the view of God, humanity and the world that is presented in the Bible. Here is a partial list of insights that might be gleaned from Luther's theology.[10]

Vocation includes the whole life of a person and is not simply his or her occupation. Because of the biblically-grounded conviction that God operates in every sphere of life (and not just in church or at work), Christians understand the divine summons to encompass every area of life (whether one is an employee, student, neighbor, parent, friend, etc.). Vocation involves all of life's relationships.

The purpose of vocation is to live for the sake of others—for their spiritual, physical, moral and cultural well-being. God upholds his creation and keeps order in human society by means of vocation. The focus belongs on the neighbor and the needs of the world. Luther once noted that God doesn't want a cobbler who puts crosses on shoes. Rather, he wants a cobbler who makes good, reliable footwear.

All true vocations rank the same with God. As already noted, there are no "higher" or "lower" callings. In the human realm distinctions will be made and the value of work measured by human scales. But in God's eyes the manager and the maid are both needed to keep human society functioning at an optimal level.

Vocation cannot be boiled down to ethics. This is a gross misuse of Luther's insights. Crucial to preserving a healthy understanding of vocation is the knowledge that one's identity and future are in the hands of a God who is trustworthy. If this essential link with the divine is obscured or ignored, then there results the overwhelming temptation to be defined by one's calling in life. Soon the self is no longer looking beyond its boundaries for ways to be of service but is instead trying to secure its own identity by its activity in the world.

Vocation properly locates the role of reason in the Christian faith. Certain truths of the Christian faith move beyond the rational and logical. They have a "theo-logic" that is peculiar to the tradition. An example of such a truth would be the conviction that God experienced death on the cross. This runs counter to the conventional idea that God is eternal and therefore outside the boundaries of death. Consequently, reason has definite limits when it comes to thinking about the Christian faith and probing the mysteries of the divine. However, this is not to say that Christians are irrational. Reason plays a key role in the exploration and explication of Christian claims. But it must not be allowed to undermine or blur revealed truths. However, in earthly callings the power of reason is not circumscribed. Reason is a great gift to be put in service to the neighbor and the wider cultural world.[11]

Vocation distinguishes but does not separate the roles of faith and politics in public life. Luther's teaching on vocation (the complicated legacy of his two kingdoms doctrine hovers over this discussion) makes clear that faith cannot be quiet in matters political. The political sphere is simply another arena where the neighbor is served. But the Lutheran tradition on vocation suggests there is no specific Christian agenda for the world. It walks a fine line that advocates a passionate engagement in political activity while avoiding the zealotry often linked with positions that claim God for a particular position or point of view.

[10] Compare the following with the list in Donald R. Heiges' *The Christian's Calling* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958) 48-60.

[11] It is difficult in this space to do justice to the tension between faith and reason in theology. One of the best books on this topic is Brian Gerrish's *Grace and Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

The Vocation of Augsburg College

It is clear that, according to the Christian view, secular vocations are of God's order and will, and that our exercise of them is pleasing to God if they are carried out in faith.
Georg Sverdrup[12]

Now, as president of Augsburg, I am pursuing the application of vocation in our curriculum and culture in ways that reflect my personal and increasingly fulfilled search for my own calling…We have intentionally introduced the concept of vocation into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, and are encouraging all of our employees to consider their work and career prospects in light of vocation.
William Frame[13]

It should be evident by this point that Augsburg stands within a long and deep tradition of reflection on vocation. It will surprise no one that the heirs to the Lutheran reformers who were fundamental in the founding and shaping of Augsburg were also profoundly influenced by biblical and Reformation views on vocation. Figures like Georg Sverdrup and Bernhard Christensen intuitively saw their work in the world through the lens of vocation.[14] Though there are plenty of hints in their writings to substantiate this claim, work still needs to be done to recover the insights and wisdom that animated the college during crucial years of its history.[15] Thus this essay is but an adumbration of Augsburg's rich heritage. But perhaps enough background has been provided in order to sketch a picture of what an institution might look like with vocation at its center.

By stressing the centrality of vocation at Augsburg, we are doing nothing less than proposing an alternative paradigm for how the college carries out its mission. This point needs to be stressed because vocation is often interpreted as something like a spice that might be added to the stew. It adds some flavor but it does not fundamentally alter the meal. However, what is being suggested in this paper is that vocation becomes the underlying purpose of the entire college and thus informs our enterprise at every level.

Most institutions of higher learning work within what might be termed as a "professional" framework. This way of thinking tends to be one-dimensional with an emphasis on rational and logical analysis. A decision about a particular career will be weighed on a cost-benefit scale. For example, those contemplating a future as a physician will weigh the costs of a demanding preparatory program, long hours, and job stress against the benefits of social approval, rewarding work, and high pay. The problem with this way of thinking is that the world and the future are limited to the horizon of the self. The needs and wants of the self are the significant determinants for a particular field of work or study. A college is then deemed successful to the extent it helps students progress on paths that are largely self-chosen or that are applauded by the surrounding culture.[16]

[12] Sverdrup, *Heritage*, 94.
[13] William V. Frame, "A President Looks Back 500 Years and Finds His Calling," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (September 6, 2002) B11-B12.
[14] Sverdrup was Augsburg's second president and served from 1876-1907. Christensen was president from 1938-1962.
[15] See Sverdrup, *Heritage*, and Carl H. Chrislock, *From Fjord to Freeway* (Minneapolis: Augsburg College, 1969).
[16] James VanOosting, "Vocation Education," *America*, 187, 1 (July 1-8, 2002) 8-11. VanOosting outlines the contrast between a "professional" and "vocational" approach.

A vocation-centered college invites its students to contemplate their futures in a different way. It might be useful to think of this as moving from a one-dimensional space centered in the self to a three-dimensional world in which the realms of self, community and God overlap. Let us explore each of these dimensions in turn, mindful of the dialectic that exists between them.

A college enlivened by vocation commences with the understanding that the students on its campus are not the products of a random and indifferent universe. Because it operates with a conviction that God is alive and continually at work in his creation, it views the students in its midst as having "souls," which is an old-fashioned way of saying they are made in the image of their creator. At the most fundamental level, this entails a deep level of respect for every member of the Augsburg community. But it goes beyond that. The belief that God stands behind every individual means they are endowed by their creator with gifts. One of the primary tasks of the college community is to help learners sort out the nature of those gifts. Some students, listening solely to the voices of family and friends, have never given this subject serious consideration. They assume their gifts are consonant with what they have been told they are. Others, having listened to cultural voices urging material achievement, assume that college isn't about self-reflection or consideration of gifts but only the means to obtain skills to make the most money possible. But when Augsburg accepts a "soul" into its midst it makes a commitment to stretch and challenge the student to think about their life in terms of gifts and service.

It also suggests a high level of concern for the student that moves beyond the collecting of tuition, assignment of dorm rooms, and awarding of diplomas. The cultivation of a sense of vocation requires a deep and, at times, exhausting commitment from the Augsburg community. This should not be mistaken for soft-minded paternalism. In fact, a college centered in vocation will regularly see the need to challenge students to rethink how they see themselves and their roles in the world. Vocational reflection is not sentimental. It recognizes the harm done when an object of God's creation is given ultimate value and it will be bold when speaking of the culture's numerous idols (money, nation, drugs etc.). Students, like the rest of us, succumb to these temptations. A school grounded in vocation will provide guidance and structure so that students are not left on their own to sort out these vital issues. There may not be uniformity in the community about how one ought to conduct one's life. But the vitality of the discussion will give evidence that this is a college which believes every person bears the mark of her creator. The overall goal is to equip all students with a deep and abiding sense of their value before God and their wider responsibility to the community.

Further, a college grounded in vocation will highlight the important role of the community in the discernment of a calling. Again, it will resist cultural tendencies which view the wants and needs of the individual as primary. Instead of focusing on questions like 'What do I want to do with my life?' and 'Where can I make the most money?' there is a shift to a sense of accountability to the wider world. Within a vocation paradigm, the questions are more likely to be 'What are the needs of my community and world?' and 'How do my gifts fit in with these needs?' Implicit in this shift of focus is a college that makes available to its learners a diverse campus which exposes students to different cultures, races and ideas. As a college in the heart of the city, Augsburg's commitment to vocation also means that learners will be engaged with the wonderful variety of neighborhoods and ethnic groups in the urban area as well as the problems of poverty, crime and injustice that often imperil it. The school's proximity to the business community and public sector also afford numerous opportunities for the shaping and discernment of a call. In summary, a sense of vocation calls us away from the isolation of the self and sets us in a much wider arena. As a result, callings have the possibility of being shaped by a multiplicity of voices.

This can make life more complicated (as anyone knows who has listened to sophomore angst over a choice of majors) but a school that values vocation should expect ambiguity and struggle about the nature of one's gifts in light of the world's needs.[17]

The third part of the vocational triad is undoubtedly the most controversial: the role of God. As long as the discussion is left somewhat general and vocation is equated with a hazy form of "spirituality" no one seems to be offended. Religious differences can be safely glossed over and faith can be relegated to a private realm. A call becomes something heard solely within the confines of the self and the community becomes the realm to exercise the call. Talk of God in any concrete way makes things messy. This is the "safe" route that seems to be preferred by many in the Lutheran college community.[18]

However, a Christian understanding of vocation will resist this gutting of the tradition. At the same time it will avoid a sectarian mentality that attempts to baptize or "Christianize" all knowledge. It is suspicious of those who jettison the use of reason in favor of some "higher" form of knowing based on the Bible. It knows that a healthy sense of vocation on a college campus can only be cultivated when voices from the margin and outside the tradition are given a full and fair hearing.

So what is being advocated? It appears that institutions either err on the side of too little or too much of God. Can there be some sort of via media that culls the best from these opposing positions while discarding the worst?[19]

A school shaped by a biblical and Reformation understanding of vocation has to insist on a central role for God in life of that institution. Or, it might be more proper to say that it has to confess that God is active and alive in its midst, no matter what some may say. For a number of people this will not be difficult. Many faculty, staff and students are willing and eager to talk about God and have no hesitation about embracing a Christian concept of vocation.[20] Perhaps it might be wise if our institutions were more intentional about nurturing that faith.

For others, God has become problematic--or at least the versions of God that closely link him with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As colleges have moved away from traditional constituencies and attracted students and employees from outside the Christian tradition a well-documented process of secularization has occurred on the campuses of many church schools. Sometimes this manifests itself as outright antagonism to the faith and is accompanied by a tendency to caricature Christianity as anti-intellectual or "non-inclusive" in order to dilute or dismiss it. More often, those who stand outside the tradition are not hostile but in fact are often curious about the beliefs of Christians. They are willing to listen and learn about Christianity provided a "space" is created where mutual conversation can occur and they do not feel coerced or manipulated.

[17] The importance of cultivating a mentoring community is stressed in Sharon Daloz Parks' *Big Questions. Worthy Dreams* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2000) 127-205.

[18] For an incisive critique of "spirituality" shorn of the particulars of a faith tradition see Eugene H. Peterson, "Missing Ingredient. Why Spirituality Needs Jesus," *Christian Century* (March 22, 2003) 30-37.

[19] For how to think about this issue within a Lutheran context see Darrell Jodock, "The Third Path. Gustavus Adolphus College and the Lutheran Tradition," *The Gustavus Quarterly* (Summer, 2003) 12-23.

[20] We are wary of the notion that we are "introducing" or even "reintroducing" vocation to Augsburg. Many of Augsburg's employees and students have a strong sense of calling. The goal here is for Augsburg as an *institution* to be explicit about vocation's centrality.

It is typical for Christians in church college settings to lament the level of secularization and yearn for the good old days when a common creed could more or less be assumed. And we should not be indifferent to some of the trends and what has happened to the church connections of many schools.[21] However, the concept of vocation might even provide some room for gratitude about the present state of affairs, as audacious as that might seem. Let me explain.

The insertion of vocation into the center of campus life means we cannot be silent about God. Nor can God be compartmentalized within the religion department or campus ministry. God is at work in all sectors and levels of the school, undergirding and guiding the life of the college. Consequently, vocation will at least insist that what one believes matters. Students may reject the concept of vocation or they may voice doubts about the "God" component. But no one who matriculates at Augsburg should be allowed to be indifferent about God and a sense of calling. Or if they are indifferent, they must at least have the skills to justify that indifference in a coherent way.

In other words, vocation demands that talk about God becomes public at Augsburg. Teachers across disciplines should recognize opportunities to talk about their sense of calling. The venue may be a classroom setting or private conversation in an office. But vocation in all its dimensions should be part of the "teaching horizon" of all faculty and staff. Likewise, students at Augsburg should be expected to think critically about their vocation and the role of God in their lives. Recent curricular changes are encouraging on this front.[23] But it goes beyond changes mandated by faculty committees. It must become part of the ethos of the campus.

It might be asked: What about those who dissent? What of those who are outside the Christian tradition? Won't all this talk about vocation be offensive and disrespectful? Here is where a sense of gratitude for those who differ plays an important part. It can be argued that in order for vocation to occupy the role envisioned above it is necessary that it be challenged and critiqued from different angles. If the conversation about vocation is only among Christians it will quickly grow stale and self-righteous. Christians need outside voices to help them reflect upon their faith. Their beliefs *require* the skeptical question from one who has been alienated by Christianity. Faith *demands* discerning inquiry from those who come from different religious traditions. The concept of vocation being advocated here suggests that God has placed these "outsiders" in our midst to help us think about vocation. So instead of viewing outsiders as threats they ought to be seen as valuable partners that actually invigorate and enliven our understanding of our vocations.

Similarly, part of the task of those within the Christian tradition is to help those on the outside think about what vocation might mean for them. For example, a coherent case for vocation is possible on purely humanistic grounds. For some, a concept of God is fraught with too many difficulties. Nevertheless, a sense of calling from the community is

[21] James Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[22] This should not just be interpreted as a "personal" concern divorced from subject matter. As Robert Benne points out: "Students learn in Christian theology that they are created as the crown of God's purposeful creation, but learn in biology that they are accidental products of a blind evolutionary mechanism…We treat the mind, body and spirit separately, so that a cacophony of claims pulls our students in many different directions…We leave the task of integration to the student, a pretty fragile reed indeed for such a challenge." See Robert Benne, "Lutheran Quietism in Higher Education?" *The Cresset* (Trinity, 2003) 53.

[21] Augsburg recently adopted a curriculum that makes vocation central in two religion classes that all students are required to take at the beginning of college and also mandates significant vocational reflection in a senior seminar.

strongly felt and then is interpreted with a vocational framework. A Christian can surely be supportive of such an understanding because it represents a significant advance over a life centered on self and its needs and wants. However, a proponent of a humanistic understanding of vocation should not expect that Augsburg will simply leave the "God" question alone. He or she should understand that they will be respectfully questioned about their beliefs and that there is an obligation in turn to question the Christian viewpoint.

In order for this vigorous discussion on vocation to occur, two things will be crucial. The first is a cultivation of civility so that respectful conversation can occur. A campus with vocation animating its ethos ought to be such a place. As we have seen, the Scriptures underline that God's call is finally gracious. Two things are implied here. First, if God communicates primarily by speaking then the proper posture of the recipient of a call is listening. Second, since God's call is gracious this indicates that the object of the call is undeserving and therefore humble. This includes a recognition that one's own position is human and finite and possibly in need of correction. Seasoned by vocation's virtues of listening and humility, a campus conversation about God has the potential to bear much fruit rather than rancor and division.

Alongside civility it will be important that the campus develop a "critical mass" of adherents to a concept of vocation that involves the three dimensions of God, self, and community. If key members of the administration and a large majority of faculty fail to embrace this understanding of vocation, then the prospect of a civil conversation is doomed from the outset.[24] If the proponents of vocation on campus feel unsupported and in the minority they will unlikely have the energy and enthusiasm necessary to sustain an ethos. While the members of this "critical mass" must always be on guard against the hubris that has often been linked with religion, they must also be careful to encourage the college to hire a significant number of people that are at least sympathetic to the multi-dimensional idea of vocation being described here.

In summary, vocation at Augsburg involves entering a space anchored by God, self, and community. It is Augsburg's conviction that all three are necessary for a vigorous understanding of vocation that transforms lives and sparks courageous service in the world. Of course not all will agree. But it is the genius of vocation that it has the capability of embracing that disagreement without having it lead to division. It will respectfully listen to its critics and change when necessary. But it will also venture forth with assertions of its own and carefully question those with different points of view. All of this is done with confidence and humility. The former because it is convinced that it stands in a long line of those who have wrestled with God's call and the known the joy of grace. The latter because it recognizes that vocation is finally in the hands of God and that we must not confuse our efforts on earth with heaven's design.

[22] Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul. How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 179-206.

Our Presidential Calling: *Where is that Voice Coming From?*

Presentation to a concurrent session of the President's Institute Council of Independent Colleges
Naples, Florida • January 5, 2003

William V. Frame, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn.

The inquiry I have in mind for this session concerns a mystery that has puzzled me ever since I first noticed the peculiar character of the independent college presidency. This mystery became positively bedeviling six years ago, when I accepted employment as president of an independent college, after pledging two years earlier that I would never do such a foolish thing. Why did we—any of us—seek this particular work, and what fuels our perseverance in it?

I suspect this question remains unanswered for many of us. I have never yet met a president who was not, upon first meeting, surprised—even shocked—by the nature and demands of the work. No known experience prepares us for the job; it exploits our time, energy, and talent relentlessly, and most of us are left by our employers to construct the tools of our survival alone, sensing even less than do we our need of them.

These questions of motive, purpose, and sustainable passion in our own work attract little more systematic attention from presidents than from their employers. Both of us converse much more freely about the arts of leadership, governance, administration, even planning—about what we do rather than why we do (and keep on doing) it.

To confront this avoided question—and to consider another, namely, "What are the rewards of the independent college presidency to those that hold that office?"—I propose that we employ the terms and presumptions of Vocation—an idea that originated in one of the great traditions of independent higher education and at the dawn of modernity. Although its formative position in the

Reformation was eventually exchanged for a minor alliance with the manual arts (as in "vo ed"), Vocation is currently being re-charged with its original importance. This revitalization of Vocation has been supplied by its own progeny in the tradition of Lutheran higher education and, now, by the Lilly Foundation—and perhaps eventually by the Millennials who are said to be just "rising" into college; they seem to embrace relational sociality (a marker of Vocation) more warmly than any earlier generation in American history.

Vocation is a called life of service. It is different, therefore, from an employment defined in terms of: (1) function (butcher, baker, candlestick maker); (2) the blandishments of private advantage (status, compensation, perquisites), or (3) success measured in structural terms (rank, profession, celebrity). Vocation is comprised of three terms, each of which strikes the intellectual culture of the modern commercial republic as conceptually problematic as well as subtle. They are: (1) an Audible Literate Voice; (2) an Expectant Listener, and (3) Gratuitous Work (work, that is, which is primarily Given rather than Exchanged for compensation or for a need or want).

The third term—Gratuitous Work—suggests certain immediate advantages of using Vocation to describe the life of the college president; we frequently (but quietly) complain that CEOs in all other industries are better paid. But Vocational Work is Gratuitously rendered as service to others out of a profound gratitude—gratitude for the gift of an unwarranted Grace extended voluntarily by a complete and self-sufficient God. This ground in a human gratitude inspired by Grace seems to limit the availability of Vocation to the proclaiming believer; certainly it lay for generations unused by any but clerics.

But I think that the limited utility of

Vocation in our time is traceable to its classical character. It was borne of ancient civil ideas at the dawning of the modern moment—a moment that ultimately enthroned the "natural" or private individual in the place of the political community itself. Martin Luther intended Vocation, especially for the lay professions, to reconnect the individual with society through work. From this point of view, work was socializing, even civilizing, and it was to be offered as community service. And some such reconnection was needed just then to fill the void created by the withdrawal of the reformed Church from its interwoven relationship with the state.

Luther's idea of the Called Life of Service was to be practiced in a reformed and now civil society that he called the Kingdom on the Left. Vocation carried into this new Athens at least three critical axioms of his theology—translated from the Kingdom of the Word into the terms of civil society: (1) That we can do nothing of value by ourselves; (2) That our redemption by Grace does not erase the limitations of our humanity and so, in this world, even Christians remain in need of law and the thrall of reason (the latter of which educates us in, among other things, "the fine liberal arts" cultivated so admirably, for example, by Cicero and even Aristotle), and (3) that the service we give the world through work in gratitude for our redemption is *corrective* and is therefore offered in both love and hope for the world.

The promise of Vocation as a corrective connector was challenged from the beginning by the idea of natural right, which strained the relationship between citizen and society much more than did the concept of a Fallen World. The idea that the individual is shaped by certain natal forces that are prior to and beyond the salutary reach of civil society may leave us free, but it also leaves us alienated and individualized. And it places our work in the essentially private zone of our economic and psychological interests.

But Vocation survived the victory of the natural right position, largely because that victory was never fully consolidated (for which we should thank the political history of the United Kingdom as well as such moderns as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and James Madison). It is now regaining its applicability to the broad world of the professions—especially among the generations who may practice as many as five different careers before retirement—and among those of us who are helping them prepare for this eventuality.

Let's see how the idea works for us as college presidents. Do we consider our work both Gratuitous and Civil? Do we, in other words, understand our labor to be public service in the highest classical sense—as a contribution to the polity? I think many of us do. Certainly, we should; the tax status of our institutions declares them a "public good," and we are expected more than any of our colleagues—or, it seems to me, than our counterparts in other industries—to labor for the institution per se. (Indeed, I am regularly told by my staff that a very large number of the meetings and events that destroy my privacy are not scheduled at the request of my employers or at their whim, but at my request! So it is, I'll wager, with you.)

Not all of us are moved to public service by gratitude for Grace, but much of what we do is, nevertheless, fundamentally voluntary. We do what we think has to be done—and that turns out to be much more than was asked of us or for which we are paid. Why? Because of a palpable sense of obligation—to the welfare of an institution that is both older and greater than we ourselves. Indeed, we are drawn by our positions to see our institutions as citizens. Thus, our work, to the degree it is volunteered in behalf of the college, is public service.

In what sense and by whom are we Called to this work? Instead of going immediately to the first term of Vocation—an Audible Literate Voice—let's try next the second (an Expectant Listener). In our world, hearing a Call to anything other than the preference of liberated and entitled self interest requires extraordinary

acuity. Even such acuity is likely to be deafened by the modern cacophony unless it is stubbornly expectant—as Christians are taught to be at Advent.

Are college presidents Expectant Listeners? Most of us emerged from the senior faculty ranks, and probably added a brush-stroke or two to the dark portrait painted of Administration by that constituency ever since it freed itself of institutional management obligations. To move, from such origins, to the very center of that darkness required a virtual career change—and that would have involved us in some pretty deep and extensive reflection. We might have been able then to hear a Call—although I suspect most of us worked out the transition in terms acceptable to (and, unfortunately, re-enforcing of) the "dark side" image; it was to escape from poverty, to replace a really deficient administration, or to "take a break" from the noble arts for a little try at the practical ones. Even if we jumped from a deanship to the presidency, the leap was high enough to require a preparation that might have entailed some careful reflection.

Indeed, colleges lack career paths for their presidents for the same reason that they lack job descriptions for them—because the academy (for most independents and all publics) harbors a deep ambivalence about leadership; it despises its need for it and craves it nonetheless. This ambivalence seems to me to be rooted in the rejection of the world that is characteristic of the contemporary liberal arts—or at least a rejection of the parts of it that are considered inhospitable to the intelligentsia (the rude and rustic, for example, and those who are preoccupied with the practical arts). This ambivalence is re-enforced by the academy's rudimentary structural bifurcation—a symptom that is often mistaken as cause of the ambivalence. In any event, our work occurs in institutions that lack the cohesive and hierarchical shape of almost all other institutions of the modern polity. Hence, our endeavors lack the legitimacy and, naturally, the authority that normally undergirds the work of our counterparts in both the corporate and the service-agency world.

This strikes me as a most powerful prod to Expectant Listening: No one can describe our work; it has no parallel in the institutional life of modern society; no training is available for it; there is no original agreement among interested constituencies concerning the measures or evaluation of a presidency. We are on our own! We are the authors of our own job descriptions. Indeed, we are the authors of our own work!

Hence, we have had reason to Listen Expectantly. But have we? And what did we hear? Again, without going to the Confessional, let's take a short cut: What has been our central work as presidents? Most of us, I think, started with the work of envisioning. That is the first necessary condition of our core task, which I would describe as "institutional clarification." We seek a distinctive identity for the institution which employs us—one which clarifies the value of the institution to the society on which it depends and which it serves; that clarifies the contribution which each of our colleagues might make to this identity; that clarifies for potential employees, students, and benefactors the service aims (the institutional self-definition) of the college. Oh yes, this work entails, at some level, close attention to administration and operations—but this huge task of execution is manageable only to the degree that we've established the institutional self-definition in the consciences of our colleagues.

What is the source of the clarifying vision? If the answer is "me" alone, no clarifying will take place—or very little and for a very short time. The answer most of us give is the college itself—its founding, the dispensation with which it currently lives, its circumstance, etc. For those of us who have parachuted in, the first task is to get the college to identify itself to us. Then, we must concatenate the contradictory answers we get into a rational and cohesive image.

While the confusion we encounter in envisioning gives us the opportunity to stamp the institution with a new and personal brand, few of us have sought to do so. Abraham Lincoln seems to have sensed, in the national circumstances of his time, an opportunity to do so—but he chose, as most of us have on our comparatively miniature stages, to re-sanctify the original founding of "the great experiment."

So, most of us are drawn—or, shall I say, "should be drawn?"—to the beginnings of our colleges for the principles and purposes with which to clarify its mission in our time. It seems to me that this turning is Vocational; it makes us stewards, and in almost every case, of a mission borne of the Christian Gospel. By going back there to start with, we are bearing that mission forward by adaptation into our own time—and thereby making both the mining and adaptation of the founding mission the core ingredient of our own self-written job description.

Are we Called to this work by a Voice other than our own? Well, we can at least say that we are guided by two things outside of ourselves—the founding and the modern challenge. What binds us to the task of bringing these together? It will sound tautological to answer: The task itself! But that answer should be taken seriously.

Although there is no training program available for the college presidency, and though no particular career path has been designated for it, most of us possess in considerable measure the one talent that is crucial in such a circumstance. I mean, of course, speech. We are all pretty verbal. We get better at it as we go along. Clarification and envisioning are rhetorical tasks, especially in institutions dedicated to the Muse. Those efforts engage us as presidents in the search for the "right words," and—willy-nilly—in a deepening yearning for contact with the Word.

To the degree that our rhetoric gives new voice to the founders of our institutions, we participate in the passion that commissioned them—as Lincoln did through Washington. It isn't our life that is speaking—I refer to Parker Palmer's recently-published discussion of Vocation—it is theirs, translated by us for present purposes. The Translating Voice is ours, and it is an Inner Voice. Listening to that Voice tunes us to the frequency of the Call issued by the Great Commission itself. When we have found words that set our institutions on fire for the realization of their specific destinies, we are under the jurisdiction of the Call, within audible reach of the Word.

An alternative answer is that we are Called to the work that makes the best use of our talents. To assess this proposal, let's understand our talents as our skills. It isn't enough, I think, to test one's obedience to a Calling by the amount of joy and satisfaction we find in executing it. Indeed, I think the most vocationally oriented of our colleagues have the least fun in the work. The reason for this is that Vocational work is in service to one's neighbor—not to the preferences of the neighbor but to his need. While Vocation calls us out into the world, it expects us to offer a corrective therapy to the neighbor, not a satisfying soporific. Frederick Buechner describes Vocation as the meeting point between our own deep joy and the world's deep need. "Deep Joy" should be understood, I'm sure, as a kind that "passes all understanding."

It is a kind of Joy that comes from the suffering that Vocation entails. Since we are given a vocation—according to the argument of this essay, by our very jobs—we are given an obligation, i.e., a burden. The Joy of Vocation is hidden in that burden; bearing it with the full employment of one's faculties, in the full conviction of the nobility and political importance of the task, grinding through the speeches, the confrontations, the negotiations—all this does not make life "fun." But it makes it fulfilling. It literally confirms that we are where we ought to be, doing what we are Called to do.

Ponderings

by Stacy Overby

Questions and quandaries
Spin through my head
Entry to exit
They never cease
Oddities and oxymorons
Surround you
Light and life
Exist within you
Death and darkness
Are dealt by your hand
Yin and Yang
So completely opposite
Delight and Deliverance
Available to all
Forgiveness and freedom
Only through you
Sin and sorrow
All we embrace
Wondering and wandering
Far from you

Stacy Overby is 2004 graduate of Augsburg College

Greek Orthodox and Economic Perspectives on the Environment

by Stella Koutroumanes Hofrenning, Ph.D.

Introduction

Religion and economics are two great agencies that shape society and influence human affairs.[1] However, theologians and economists are often unable to understand each other's discipline. Some commentators have suggested that there is a "wall of separation" between economics and religion.

> Bishops are not expert economists. Neither, in most cases, are economists…expert theologians. Unless we wish to build a "wall of separation" between economics and Christianity…somehow the expertise of numerous specialists and experts must be conjoined.[2]

It is a goal of this paper to help bridge the gap between economics and religion. I hope to accomplish this by analyzing the Greek (i.e. Eastern) Orthodox teachings on the environment from an economic perspective.

The Eastern Orthodox Church is the second largest Christian denomination, consisting of approximately 300 million members. The spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians is Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (a.k.a. Istanbul). Bartholomew's full title is Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch. Bartholomew is a leader in the environmental movement and is often referred to as the "Green Patriarch" because of his passion for the environment.

The Ecumenical Patriarch advocates restoring the proper relationship between humanity and the world. He goes so far as to claim it is humanity's "noble vocation" to participate in the created world and to transform the world.[3] This transformation can be done through the Eucharistic and ascetic ethos of the Orthodox tradition. The Orthodox Church also values the appropriate use of the sciences and the social sciences in order to understand environmental issues and the unintended consequences of humanity's choices.

Section I of the paper provides background information on the Orthodox Church. The ascetic and sacramental perspectives of the Orthodox Church are discussed in Section II. Section III discusses the Orthodox approach to economic questions of the environment and describes the Black Sea crisis and the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection. The conclusion is in section IV.

---

[1] British economist Alfred Marshall, one of the founders of neoclassical economics, described religion and economics as the two great forming agencies of the world in his book, *Principles of Economics* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1920), Library of Economics and Liberty, Book 1, Chapter 1, I.I.2, (4 October 2002). <http://www.econlib.org/library/Marshall/marP1.html>.

[2] T.R. Martin and G.R. Laczinak, "Why Bishops and CEOs do not Agree on Economics," *Forum for Social Economics* 19.2 (1989):73-88, cited in Patrick J. Welch and J.J. Mueller, "The Relationship of Religion to Economics," *Review of Social Economy*, 59.2, (June 2001):185.

[3] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Message of his Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the Day of Prayer For the Protection of the Natural Environment, September 1, 1994," (21 August 2002). <www.patriarchate.org/speeches/1994/Sept_1-Environmental_enc.html>.

I. Background on Orthodoxy

Western Christians often stereotype Orthodox Christianity as a relic of the past. However, according to Fr. Alexander Schmemann, an Orthodox theologian,

> The true Orthodox way of thought has always been historical, has always included the past, but has never been enslaved by it...[4]

The Orthodox Church celebrates its past but participates in the present.[5] This section of the paper provides a historical overview of the Orthodox Church. A series of events in the early Christian Church, or undivided Church, led to a gradual separation between Christian East and West, and this separation ultimately led to the Great Schism.[6] The year 1054 is the traditional date used to mark the schism. However, it was a complex chain of events—political, economic, cultural and theological—beginning in the 8th century that eventually led to this split. The final event of the split was the sack of Constantinople by western Crusaders in 1204.[7]

The two main factors that led to the split between the undivided church into the church of the West and East was first, the claim of primacy of the Bishop of Rome and second, the *filoque*, a clause added to the Nicene Creed.[8]

The Bishops of the undivided Church were (and are) equal to each other in the administration of the liturgical rites and teaching. However, they began to differ in rank according to the valuation of the places where their Sees were located. Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch were prominent cities or Metropolises. Bishops in major cities were called Metropolitans and the Bishop of Rome was given the honorary primacy only because Rome was then the political capital of the Empire. Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire east to Byzantium (renamed Constantinople in his honor). Later, the Bishops of capitals of all political provinces were called Archbishops.

By 451, the Bishops of the major cities of the Empire—Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem—were called Patriarchs.[11] Later in 587, the title of "Ecumenical" was bestowed upon the Patriarch of Constantinople.[12] Indeed his title is Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome

---

[4] See Aristeides Papadakis, "History of the Orthodox Church," in *A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church* (New York: Department of Communication Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, 1984), 17.

[5] The Orthodox Church is active in the ecumenical movement. The Ecumenical Patriarch promotes dialogue with Ancient Oriental Churches, the Church of Rome, the Churches of the Anglican Communion, the Churches of the Lutheran World Federation, the Reformed Churches, as well as with the Judaism and Islam. See the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople website,<www.patriarch.org>, for additional information on the Ecumenical Patriarch's role in the world today.

[6] See Papadakis, p. 17. See also Rev. George Mastrantonis, "The Great Schism of the Ecumenical Church," (31 July 2002). Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website, <www.goarch.org>.

[7] Papadakis, p. 18.

[8] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (England: Penguin Books, 1993), 44.

[9] See Mastrantonis.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid. Also, the Patriarch of Alexandria is also called "Pope," a Greek word for father.

[12] Ibid.

and Ecumenical Patriarch. After the inroads of the Moslems (7th century), only two Patriarchs remained beyond Islamic control, Rome in the West and Constantinople in the East. However, the two Patriarchs (Rome and Constantinople) became more and more distant due to differences in language and culture.

The Bishop of Rome claimed that he has a primacy of jurisdiction over all Churches including the Patriarchs of the East. He claimed that they should be subject to him since "he is not only the Bishop of Rome and Patriarch of West but also the Vicar of Christ on Earth, the successor of St. Peter and Supreme Pontiff."[13] The Orthodox argues that all bishops (including the Bishop of Rome) are successors of the original apostles of the Pentecost. All bishops share in the apostolic succession; all have the same sacramental powers. Bishops act "collegially" and democratically; in other words, one bishop, one vote. The primacy assigned to Rome does not overthrow the essential equality of all bishops. The Pope is the first bishop in the Church but he is "the first among equals." The Orthodox views him, in a sense, as the chairman of a meeting, but not as the infallible monarch. In terms of church governance the Orthodox Church is similar to the Episcopal Church.

The second factor that led to the schism between the Eastern and Western Church was the insertion by the West into the Nicene Creed the Latin word, *filoque*. The term *filoque* means "and from the son."[14] Now the Creed for most Western Christians reads that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also the son as well. The original Creed did not contain this phrase; the original text states "the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, proceeds from the Father." Theologically the Latin phrase *filoque* implied that the Spirit now had two sources of procession, the Father and the Son, rather than one alone, the Father alone.[15] The balance between the three persons of the Holy Trinity was changed by the Roman Church.

Some claim that the Roman Catholics added the *filoque* to consolidate power. Since they claimed that the Pope of Rome was the only "vicar of Christ," the addition of the *filoque* ensured that the Pope also "controlled" the "Holy Spirit" in the sense that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also "of the son." The Orthodox, as a Church of Councils, rejects the notion that a change to the Creed can be made without the consent of all bishops.

The schism reached a climax in the 13th century with the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders. The Crusaders from the West forced the Greek patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem to abandon their sees and for sixty years imposed their harsh occupation on Constantinople. The Crusaders pillaged Constantinople's resources and caused its eventual downfall and conquest by the Ottoman Turks.[16]

As a result of the Ottoman conquest, the Orthodox Church was isolated from the West. The Eastern Church retreated into monastic and liturgical prayer.[17] This geographic and intellectual isolation helps explains Orthodoxy's silence during the Reformation. Nevertheless, relations between the Protestants and the Orthodox are longstanding, dating to the early days of the Reformation. A group of Hussites sought to enter into relations with the East.[18] Also, in the 16th century, there were at

---

[13] Ibid.

[14] See Papadakis, p. 20.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Pope John Paul II apologized for the Crusades in a May 2001 visit to Greece. See Alessandra Stanley, "In Athens, Pope Seeks to Mend an Ancient Rift," *New York Times*, 5 May 2001, Foreign Desk, p. 1.

[17] See Oliver Clement, *Conversations with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*, trans. Paul Meyendorff (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997),190.

[18] Ibid.

one time close ties between the Lutheran theologians of Tubingen and Augsburg and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.[19] Political problems and difficulties in finding a common language prevented dialogue from developing. One scholar even asserts, "It has often been said that if the schism between East and West had not taken place, then the upheaval of the 16th century would have been avoided."[20]

Although the beliefs of the Roman Church are close to the Orthodox Church, the Roman Church implemented a number of changes after the separation of the Western from the Eastern Church.[21] In addition, until Vatican II, Roman Catholicism imposed a uniform Latin liturgical language on all its converts, but the Eastern Church (like the Protestants) employed the vernacular language of the people (for example, Russian in Russia, Serbian in Serbia, Arabic in Arab countries). Orthodox Christianity insists on preaching the Gospel in the ordinary language of the people so it can be understood.

II. Ascetic and Sacramental Emphasis

The current spiritual leader of the world's 300 million Orthodox Christians, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, (His all Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch) says:

> ...Orthodox liturgy and life hold tangible answers to the ultimate questions concerning salvation from corruptibility and death. The Eucharist is at the very center of our worship. And our sin toward the world, or the spiritual root of all our pollution, lies in our refusal to view life and the world as a sacrament of thanksgiving, and as a gift of constant communion with God on a global scale.[22]

In order to understand this view of the world as a sacrament, the Ecumenical Patriarch advocates restoring the proper relationship between God and the world. This proper relationship and awareness of humanity's relationship to the world goes beyond just philosophical posturing and pretense but is "...a tangible experience of a mystical nature."[23]

---

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid. According to Martin Luther: "[The Greek Orthodox] believe as we do, baptize as we do, preach as we do, live as we do...I now say that on this point the Greeks...are not heretics and schismatics but the most Christian people and the best followers of the Gospel on earth." See Luther's Works: *Career of the Reformer: II*, vol. 32, eds. G. Forell and H. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 58-59. See also <http://www.stpaulsirvine.org/html/lutheran.htm>.

[21] Examples of the differences between Catholicism and Orthodoxy include the Western Church introducing the prohibition of the marriage of clergy and divorce, establishing the idea of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary as dogma and using unleavened bread instead of leavened bread, which was the tradition of the undivided Church.

[22] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Address of his all Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Environmental Symposium, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Santa Barbara, California, November 8, 1997," (21 August 2002). <www.goarch.org/patriarchate/us-visit/speeches/Address_at_Environmenta.htm>.

[23] Ibid.

The Ecumenical Patriarch believes that humanity's "noble vocation" is to respect and participate in God's created world and to transform the created world through its actions.[24] The Ecumenical Patriarch argues that respect for nature ultimately leads to a transformation of nature. This transformation of the world can be made through the Eucharistic and ascetic ethos of the Orthodox tradition and faith.

A. Eucharistic Ethos

The Eucharistic ethos of the Orthodox faith asks its believers to approach the world in a Eucharistic way.[25] From the Greek root of the word Eucharist comes the modern Greek "ευχαριστω," which means "thank you." In other words, use natural resources with thankfulness and act responsibly towards the environment. Also, the Eucharistic ethos defines the two elements of human beings, the spiritual and the material.[26] The spiritual element is the belief that human beings were created by God as spirits.[27] The material element is the belief that human bodies are created from nature, from the "dust of the earth."[28] Consequently, these two natures help humanity to recognize the interdependence between the environment and humanity. This interconnectedness between humanity and the environment lies at the core of the Orthodox liturgy.

The Ecumenical Patriarch describes a "cosmic liturgy" as a celebration of life by the universe or cosmos.[29] This celebration is related to the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is repeated in a sacramental way every Sunday in the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church. The phrase "Τα σα εκ των σων σοι προσφερομεν κατα παντα και δια παντα," translated as "We offer to You these gifts from Your own gifts in all and for all," is sung when the bread and wine, parts of the natural Creation, are offered to be mystically changed by the Holy Spirit into the Body and Blood of Christ.[30] The bread and wine of the Eucharist are gifts that remind us of our continual communion with God and the environment. The Ecumenical Patriarch states, "We share the world in joy as a living mystical communion with the Divine. Thus it is that we offer the fullness of creation at the Eucharist, and receive it back as a blessing, as the living presence of God."[31] In other words, the Eucharistic approach balances the spiritual and material world.

---

[24] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Message of his Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the Day of Prayer For the Protection of the Natural Environment, September 1, 1994," (21 August 2002). <www.patriarchate.org/speeches/1994/Sept_1-Environmental_enc.html>.

[25] See Clement, p. 105 for a discussion on transfiguring the world through a Eucharistic ethos.

[26] See Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "A Toast of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew During A Luncheon Given in His Honor by the Officers of Scenic Hudson Environmental Organizations," *Ecumenical Patriarchate News*, text no. 18, November 13, 2000, (21 August 2002). <www.goarch.org/patriarchate>. See also Clement, ch. 5.

[27] Genesis 1:26, as cited in Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "A Toast."

[28] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "A Toast."

[29] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Address…Environmental Symposium."

[30] *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1985), 22.

[31] Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Address…Environmental Symposium."

B. Ascetic Ethos

The ascetic ethos of the Orthodox tradition involves fasting and other spiritual works. The Ecumenical Patriarch says that humanity's responsibility toward the environment and toward others is to practice restraint, self-control or "encratia."

This "encratia" is not only required of monks but of all Orthodox Christians. Indeed, the Orthodox practice of fasting stands in stark contrast to the consumeristic imperative to "super size" every serving of food. However, the Patriarch is quick to point out that asceticism, even monastic, "…is not negation, but a reasonable and tempered utilization of the world." The ascetic ethos is one of balance, a balance between consumption and conservation. In other words, it is living within one's means.[32]

III. What does this mean for Economics?

The Orthodox Church does not side with any particular school of economic thought. It is critical of both the failed communist systems of Russia and Eastern Europe and the excesses of capitalism. Indeed the Orthodox Bishops of America, in a recent encyclical, said,

> … As bishops who have ties to many churches that suffered terribly under communism we believe that we have an understanding of that system that few other Americans share. The common belief that communism was predicated on atheistic materialism is true. However, we acknowledge that our capitalism system is no less predicated on purely materialist principles, which also do not engender faith in God. There is no place in the calculus of our economics to account for the intangibles of human existence. Reflect on how the simple accounting phrase "the bottom line" has shaped our whole culture. We use it to force the summarization of an analysis devoid of any externals or irrelevancies to the heart of the matter. This usually means the monetary outcome…[34]

The church has a prophetic role in any society. The church's role is not to sanction any economic system but to critique any human institution. The Orthodox Church does not choose sides or endorse any extremes but attempts to take a balanced approach to economics that emphasizes our role as caretakers for the next generation. Although critical of both extreme capitalism and communism, Orthodoxy values what science and economics bring to evaluation of social problems.

---

[32] "ενκρατια" or "encratia" is a Greek theological term for restraint. See Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Address…Environmental Symposium."

[33] Ibid.

[34] Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops (SCOBA) Millennium Encyclical, "A Pastoral Letter on the Occasion of the Third Christian Millennium," (13 February 2002). <www.oca.org/pages/orth_chri/orthodox-churches/scoba_sncyc.html>.

Orthodox theology tends to be more mystical and more otherworldly than the more rational theology of Western Christianity. Paradoxically, this mystical emphasis allows Orthodoxy to embrace more rational approaches to social problems.[35] Orthodoxy appreciates the pursuit of scientific knowledge.

For us Orthodox Christians, to speak of a relationship with creation is to speak of a relationship with God, who created this world out of love. We value the information that science can give us about the state of the earth, and especially what it reveals to us about the often unintended consequences of our actions and our way of life.[36]

Indeed Orthodoxy values what science and the social sciences, such as economics, have to say about the environment. The Ecumenical Patriarch says "morality and intelligence…goes together."[37] There is a need for scientific inquiry to better understand the world in which we live. The Orthodox tradition reinforces the pursuit of scientific knowledge as a legitimate part of theological reflection.[38]

This section will discuss the Orthodox approach to economic questions of the environment with special emphasis on the Eucharistic and ascetic ethos of the Orthodox tradition.

A. ENVIRONMENT

The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople is often called the "Green Patriarch" because of his passion for the environment.[39] The Ecumenical Patriarch was awarded the prestigious Sophie Prize for Leadership on the Environment in 2002.[40] The Ecumenical Patriarch has organized and participated in many seminars,

---

[35] Vladimir Katasonov in "To Heal Reason: Science and Religion in Russian Culture" writes: "For the Orthodox Church, the relation of science and religion never displayed the same kind of antagonism often seen in the West. Traditionally, Orthodox theology, in general, depends less on science than do the Western denominations. It is, in a sense, more otherworldly; yet, paradoxically, this often allows it to be less hostile to developments in this world, including science. Today in the situation of the world [ecological] crisis…this heritage of the old wisdom is…very relevant." See Saint Luke the Evangelist Orthodox Church website, <http://www.russianorthodox.com/html/evangelist/2000/healreason.htm> (27 May 2003).

[36] See John Chryssavgis, "Healing the Black Sea: Religion, Science and the Environment," National Outlook Website, (26 August 2002). <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~wfnev/Sept99Chryssavgis.htm>.

[37] See Nicos Mouzelis, "Religion, Science and Environment: A Synthetic View," paper delivered at the Symposium II: Black Sea in Crisis, 28 September 1997. For text, see the following website, <http://www.patriarchate.org/visit/html/mouzelis.html>, (22 May 2003).

[38] For discussion on the need for scientific inquiry on questions of the environment, see Celia Deane-Drummond, "The Two Horizons: Introducing Environmental Themes Into Theological Education," (31 July 2002). <http://www.patriarchate.org/visit/html/94_41.html>.

[39] In Europe, the Patriarch is known as the "Green Patriarch" because has he taken the lead among all religious leaders in his concern for the environment. See the following articles: Gustav Niebuhr, "Patriarch's Visit Bolsters Orthodox Church," *New York Times*,19 October 1997; Robert Worth, "From the Green Patriarch, A Plea for Planet Earth," *New York Times*, 14 November 2000, sec. B-5; Gustav Niebuhr, "Orthodox Patriarch Reaches Out to U.S. and the World," *New York Times*, 25 October 1997, Religion Journal.

[40] The Sophie Prize is awarded annually to individuals or organizations that have initiated pioneering efforts on the environment and development. See Press Release: Sophie Prize 2002, <www.sophieprize.org>, (11 April 2002).

dialogues and ecological summits in Asia and Europe on the environment.[41] He and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, co-sponsor annual international Ecological Seminars at the historic Monastery of the Holy Trinity on the island of Halki in Istanbul.[42] In 1997, the Ecumenical Patriarch convened a trans-national conference on the Black Sea ecological crisis. In addition, the Ecumenical Patriarch has initiated projects worldwide addressing environmental degradation.[43]

Environmental problems are not new. What is new and different is the attention the Orthodox Church gives to these problems. For example, since 1989, every September 1, the beginning of the ecclesiastical calendar, has been designated as a day of prayer for the protection of the environment, throughout the Orthodox world. Traditionally on September 1 the Church prayed for humanity to be saved from natural disasters. Now on September 1 the Church also prays for the Earth to be saved from the abuses (pollution, war, exploitation, waste, secularism) caused by humanity against the environment.

Indeed, the Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarch for September 1, 2002, states,

> We pray to God to remove natural destructions, which we cannot avert by our own care and foresight, but at the same time, it is our bounding duty to engage in the labor of study and the expense of taking necessary measures for avoiding those disasters that are derived from bad human action.[45]

The Ecumenical Patriarch has said that his role as an environmental activist is a natural outcome of being a religious leader.

> Human beings and the environment compose a seamless garment of existence, a multicolored cloth, which we believe to be woven in its entirety by God…the connection between human beings and their natural surroundings, like that between the body and the spirit, is at the center of the Orthodox liturgy.[46]

In other words, there is a never-ending link between humanity and the created world. According to the Orthodox, the vocation of humanity is not to dominate the environment but to transform it. Not only do the Orthodox believe that the Earth is sacred, but any harm against the Earth is a sin. The Ecumenical Patriarch, in a speech in California, said:

> It follows that, to commit a crime against the natural world, is a sin. For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation … for humans to degrade the integrity of Earth bycausing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural

---

[43] See Oikonomou and Martin Palmer, "Introduction to Christian Environmental Initiatives," (August 21, 2002). <www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8051.asp>.

[44] See "Message on the Day of Prayer for Creation, September 1, 1989," Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website, (August 23, 2002). <www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8052.asp>.

[45] See Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Patriarchal Encyclical, for the Environment, September 1, 2002," (2 June 2003). <http://www.patriarchate.org/OFFICIAL_DOCUMENTS/756.htmlhm>.

[46] Robert Worth, "From the Green Patriarch, A Plea for Planet Earth," *New York Times*, 14 November 2000, sec. B-5.

forests, or destroying its wetlands…for humans to injure other humans with disease …for humans to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances…these are sins.[47]

The statement above by the Ecumenical Patriarch clearly focuses upon the actions of individuals. The next quote from the Ecumenical Patriarch in a speech given in New York describes the consequences of these individual actions on the environment. He said:

> According to Scripture, the wages of sin is death…At this point, this is confirmed from the everyday experience of the chain reactions of environmental destruction: changes in the climate, stripping the earth of its forests, torrential rainfalls, floods, mudslides; the consequence is death.[48]

The church is generally concerned about individual behavior and actions and believes that it is important for individuals to realize their own personal responsibility for their actions. However, the concept of sin for the Orthodox goes beyond pietistic notions of individual sin. Sin can also be communal sin. Polluting the water, the extinction of species, global warming, smog, and acid rain are examples of the sin between humanity and nature. The communal sin of humanity destroying the environment can stop. However, the Church realizes that solutions to environmental problems "…may go beyond [individual]…capabilities…[And] even go beyond the capabilities of individual states and require inter-state collaboration and even cooperation of the entirety of human community."[49] The Orthodox tradition emphasizes the interdependence and complex relationships between individuals and the environment.

The engagement of the Orthodox Church with environmental issues is a natural part of the Orthodox tradition and faith.[50] The Ecumenical Patriarch says, "Restraint frees us from selfish demands, so that we may offer what remains and place it at the disposal of others…This is the result of our freedom from avarice, which has its roots in the lack of faith and the making of a god out of matter, which we consider idolatry." An important aspect of the Church's tradition is the ascetic ethos. It is necessary to use self-control or encratia in a balanced manner to share and conserve resources on a global level.[52]

Some accuse the church of not acting upon its passion. However, the messages that the Orthodox Church offers are not irrelevant. It takes many members of society for example to pollute the air and water. Those same members working together as a community can also create a benefit to society.[53] The ascetic

---

[47] See Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Address…Environmental Symposium."
[48] Worth.
[49] See Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, "Encyclical…for September 1, 2002."
[50] The Russian sophiologist Sergeii Bulgakov summarizes the connection between the beauty of the created world and the Holy Trinity. See the website, Introduction to Sophiology, <http://www.home.zonnet.nl/chotki/introduction_to_sophiology.htm>, (22 May 2003).
[51] Worth.
[52] The Ecumenical Patriarch's message of *encratia* is interestingly on point with the liberal Protestant theologian Sally McFague. See her article, "New House Rules: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living," *Daedalus* 130.4 (October 2001): 125. <http://www.daedalus.amacad.org/issues/fall2001/mcfague.htm>.

and Eucharistic ethos of the Orthodox faith can increase individual awareness towards the world. In turn, this individual awareness can lead to a communal awareness of participating and living in the created world.

How can the Orthodox Church's concerns about the environment be made practical? In other words, how can individuals participate in protecting the environment? The Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection and the Black Sea crisis discussed below provide two practical examples of how the Eucharistic and ascetic ethos of the Orthodox Church leads to both local and global initiatives and recommendations.

1. Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection

An Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection held in Crete in 1991 discussed the Orthodox Church's position on the protection of the environment.[54] Asceticism offers practical examples of conservation to transform nature. Several projects and initiatives were described at the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection as examples for local Churches and individuals. Such examples include developing educational materials, organizing recycling programs, conserving energy within church buildings, and encouraging water conservation. In addition, each Church can re-examine its use of land and the investments it controls to ensure that they are used in a way that will not harm the environment. In addition to community activities, the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection discussed global initiatives.

A recommendation from this conference was to make a formal appeal to the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) calling for the use of taxes and subsidies to encourage or discourage the use of various resources.[55] Specifically, the appeal "...may require the removal of taxes on insulation and the removal of subsidies on the production and use of particularly environmentally damaging non-renewable sources of energy. It may also require the increase of taxes to restrict use of fuels in order to induce a more thoughtful use of such resources as coal and petrol."[56]

This recommendation for the use of regulations and tax incentives would appear at first glance to be interfering with the market. However, economic incentives and market based environmental policies can be used to protect the environment and stimulate economic development. An article by economist Robert N. Stavins, entitled "Clean Profits: Using Economic Incentives to Protect the Environment," discusses the use of economic incentives as a

---

[53] This link between the economy and the natural environment is studied in a new field of economics called "ecological economics." This field of economics argues that current generations cannot "use up" existing resources so that future generations will be affected by the scarcity of resources.

[54] See Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, "Conclusions of the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection, Crete, 1991," The Orthodox Churches and the Environment, website, (31 July 2002). <www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8060.asp>.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Robert N. Stavins, "Clean Profits: Using Economic Incentives to Protect the Environment," *Policy Review* 48 (1989).

different way of thinking about environmental problems.[57] Stavins states that a number of environmental laws and regulations have been enacted but the world continues to face environmental threats. The costs of meeting environmental standards and enforcing existing environmental policies have risen. Given budget deficits, environmental protection needs to become cost-effective not only to increase economic productivity but to increase environmental protection.

"The key to reducing inefficient natural resource use and environmental degradation is to ensure that consumers and producers face the true costs of their decisions—not just their direct costs, but the full social costs of their actions."[58]

In a market system, competition generates economic efficiency only when individuals know the true opportunity cost of their actions, or in other words, the true cost that one pays for a resource or a good. Private costs are those costs that are borne solely by the individual who incurs them. For example, when a business builds a new plant, it knows what the costs are—they are internal costs in the sense that the business must take account of them. However, when businesses or individuals pollute the air or water, they do not pay for the damage done to others and the environment, i.e., they do not bear the full social cost. By internalizing these costs, the decisions of individuals, businesses, and governments work effectively for the environment.

The removal of a subsidy from an environmentally damaging resource makes that resource reflect its true full and higher cost. This would lead to less demand of that resource and provide an incentive to search for alternative resources.

The recommendations of the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection in Crete are consistent with traditional economics. Economics defines a detrimental externality when an activity causes damages to others who are not directly involved in the activity and no compensation is provided to or paid by those who generate the externality. For example, air and water pollution are externalities. Signals in the economy have to be changed in order for decision makers to take account of all the costs of their actions and to correct for these externalities. A basic principle of economic theory states that as the price of a good or resource increases, less of that good or resource is demanded. Or, to use the words of the Church, the price increase would lead to "encratia" or restraint by individuals in consuming the particular good or resource and would also encourage conservation.

2. The Black Sea: The Tragedy of the Common Waters

The ecological crisis of the Black Sea is another example of nations not bearing the true and full social costs of their actions. The Orthodox Church takes a special interest in the Black Sea not only as an illustration of the challenges faced by other waters worldwide but also because of its religious significance as the possible place where Noah and his Ark survived the flood.[59] Additionally, the Black Sea is bordered by six historically Orthodox countries: Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Ukraine, and Georgia.

---

[58] Ibid, p. 59.

[59] Marise Simons, "Modern Creed for Ancient Church," *The New York Times*, 19 October 1997; Guy Gugliotta; "Black Sea Artifacts May be Evidence of Biblical Flood," *New York Times*, 13 September 2001, p. A1.

The problems of the Black Sea are similar to the problems discussed in the "Tragedy of the Commons."[60] William Forster Lloyd, a 19th century British mathematician, is famous for introducing the parable of the "Tragedy of the Commons." He observed that when common land is available to everyone, cattle-owners have an interest in increasing the size of their herds. But the size of the herds will be greater than the capacity of the land. The result is the common land is overgrazed. In other words, the tragedy of the commons is that collectively-owned resources lead to the overuse and eventual destruction of that resource. The cattle-owners acted as "free-riders," ignoring the interests of the group. In 1968, Garret Hardin applied this theory to population growth. Hardin wrote that overpopulation in society leads to excessive consumption of natural resources.[61] This consumption will put a strain on limited resources and will eventually lead to the resource's downfall. The concept of the commons is a useful model for understanding the problems faced by the Black Sea.

In 1997, the Ecumenical Patriarch organized a symposium, "Religion, Science, and the Environment: The Black Sea in Crisis."[62] The Black Sea is located in the heart of Eastern Europe, and several European rivers bring water to the sea such as the Danube. Over the past few decades agricultural and industrial waste from Soviet economies has destroyed the natural ecosystem of the Black Sea. Industrialization, excessive use of chemicals, and agricultural waste has led to the pollution of many rivers leading to the sea. This has led to increasing economic disparities among the region's inhabitants.

The Ecumenical Patriarch's symposium addressed ways to restore the environmental balance to the Black Sea and to raise the environmental consciousness of people around the Black Sea. One recommendation from the symposium is to organize local initiatives by each national Orthodox Church or diocese bordering the Black Sea to preserve the environment.[63]

The problems of the Black Sea lend themselves to economic analysis. The Black Sea is common property, property owned by everyone and therefore by no one. When no one owns a particular resource, no one has any incentive to conserve that resource. The pollution problems of the Black Sea occurred in part because of poorly defined private property rights. Somehow the gap between private costs and true social costs will have to make up for the fact that property rights are not well-defined or assigned. Taxation, regulation and subsidization are examples of ways to fill that gap between private and social costs.

The Ecumenical Patriarch's symposium supports the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan, which brings together the nations surrounding the Black Sea in an effort to define solutions to the problems of the region.[64] The Plan requires commitment from all countries to implement laws and regulations so as to ensure that full social costs are internalized.

---

[60] Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-48.
[601] Ibid.
[602] See the speech given by Metropolitan John of Pergamon, September 28, 1997, at the Black Sea Symposium, Ecumenical Patriarch website, <www.patriarchate.org/visit/html/pergamon.html>, (26 August 2002).
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

The Orthodox Church views the problems of the Black Sea in classical economic terms. Protecting common resources such as the Black Sea is a challenge requiring global solutions and cooperation and a change of attitude or "μετανοια" by individuals.[65]

IV. Conclusion

Orthodoxy has been typecast as a relic of the past. However, the Ecumenical Patriarch shows that Orthodoxy's concern for the environment is much more than a museum showpiece. Indeed, the Patriarch's view that humanity's "noble vocation" is to participate in the created world is more relevant now than ever given current environmental problems.

Orthodoxy values the insights of science and the social sciences in the quest for solutions to today's environmental problems. The Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection and the Symposium on the Black Sea Crisis are two examples in which economics and religion (in particular, Orthodoxy) can find agreement in providing practical recommendations to address environmental problems.

Although economists and theologians often talk past each other, hopefully this paper will facilitate a dialogue between religious and economic perspectives on the environment.

Stella Hofrenning is assistant professor of economics at Augsburg College. *A prior version of this paper was presented at the Lilly Fellows Program Second National Research Conference, Christianity and Economics: Integrating Faith and Learning in Economic Scholarship, Baylor University, November 7, 2002.*

---

[65] The Orthodox Church teaches the necessity of "μετανοια" or "metanoia," a change in perspective or repentance in order to live simply and be closer to God.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baumol, William J. and Alan S. Blinder. *Microeconomics: Principles and Policy*. Ninth edition. Thompson Press, 2003.

Chrysostom, Saint John. *On Wealth and Poverty*. Translated by Catharine P. Roth. New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999.

Chryssavgis, John. "Healing the Black Sea: Religion, Science and the Environment." *National Outlook: Christian Perspectives on Contemporary Issues*, <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~wfnev/Sept99Chryssavgis.htm> (August 26, 2002).

Clement, Olivier. *Conversations with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*. Trans. Paul Meyendorff. New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

Colander, David C. *Microeconomics*. Fourth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993.

Deane-Drummond, Celia. "The Two Horizons: Introducing Environmental Themes into Theological Education." <http://www.patriarchate.org/visit/html/94_41.html> (31 July 2002).

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1985.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. "Address of his all Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Environmental Symposium, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Santa Barbara, California, November 8, 1997." <http://www.goarch.org/patriarchate/us-visit/speeches/Address_at_Environmenta.htm> (20 August 2002).

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. "A Toast of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew During A Luncheon Given in His Honor by the Officers of Scenic Hudson Environmental Organizations." *Ecumenical Patriarchate News*. Text no. 18, 13 November 2000. <http://www.goarch.org/patriarchate> (21 August 2002).

Fields-Olewiler, Barry. *Environmental Economics*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Garrett, Hardin. "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): 1243-48.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. "Conclusions of the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection, Crete, 1991." <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8060.asp> (31 July 2002).

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. "Encyclical of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for September 1, 2002." *Orthodox World News*. <http://www.goarch.com> (30 August 2002).

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. "Message on the Day of Prayer for Creation, September 1, 1989." <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8052.asp> (23 August 2002).

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. "The Orthodox Churches and the Environment." <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8060.asp> (31 July 2002).

Gugliotta, Guy. "Black Sea Artifacts May be Evidence of Biblical Flood." *New York Times*, (13 September 2000).

Litsas, Fotios K., editor. *A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church*. New York: Department of Communications Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, 1984.

Marshall, Alfred. *Principles of Economics*. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1920. <http://www.econlib.org/library/Marshall/marP1.html> (4 October 2002).

Mastrantonis, Rev. George. “The Great Schism of the Ecumenical Church.” <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article7108.asp> (31 July 2002).

Meyendorff, John and Robert Tobias, eds. *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992.

Niebuhr, Gustav. “Patriarch’s Visit Bolsters Orthodox Church.” *New York Times* (19 October 1997).

Niebuhr, Gustav. “Religion Journal; Orthodox Patriarch Reaches Out to U.S. and the World.” *New York Times* (25 October 1997).

Okun, Arthur M. *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Trade-off*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1975.

Oikonomou, Dimitri Dr. “Orthodox Church Environmental Activities and Initiatives.” <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8053.asp> (22 August 2002).

The New Oxford Annotated Bible. New York: Oxford Press, 1973.

Palmer, Martin. “Introduction to Christian Environmental Initiatives.” <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8051.asp> (21 August 2002).

Papadakis, Aristeides. “History of the Orthodox Church.” In *A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church*. New York: Department of Communications Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, 1984.

Samuelson, Paul and William Nordhaus. *Economics*. Twelfth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985.

Serbian Orthodox Church. “History of the Orthodox Church.” <http://www.decani.yunet.com/history1.html> (31 July 31 2002).

Simons, Marise. “Modern Creed for Ancient Church.” *New York Times* (19 October 1997).

Sophie Foundation. “Sophie Prize 2002.” News, Press Release, Sophie Foundation website. <http://www.sophieprize.org> (11 April 2002).

Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. “A Pastoral Letter on the Occasion of the Third Christian Millennium.” <http://www.oca.org/pages/orth_chri/orthodox-churches/scoba_sncyc.html> (13 February 2002).

Stanley, Alessandra. “In Athens, Pope Seeks to Mend an Ancient Rift.” *New York Times* (5 May 2001).

Stavins, Robert N. “Clean Profits: Using Economic Incentives to Protect the Environment.” *Policy Review* 48 (Spring 1989).

Theokritoff, Dr. Elizabeth, “Thine of Thine Own: Orthodoxy and Ecology.” <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8022.asp> (20 August 2002).

Ware, Bishop Kallistos. *The Orthodox Way*. New York: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995.

Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church*. England: Penguin Books, 1993.

Welch, Patrick J. and J.J. Mueller. “The Relationships of Religion to Economics.” *Review of Social Economy* 59.2 (June 2001).

Worth, Robert. “From the Green Patriarch, A Plea for Planet Earth.” *New York Times* (14 November 2000).

Dialogue Around the Well

by Bruce Reichenbach

We can learn a great deal from interfaith dialogue. In its poignant moments we discover stories from our own and other traditions that not only help us to understand our commonalities and differences, but also teach us how to live in peace. We dwell in harmony with people of other cultures, traditions, and faiths not in spite of our differences but because of them. Through interfaith dialogue we discover the hurt that people of our faith have brought to others and they to us. We are called to mutual accountability for actions and teachings of hate committed and disseminated by our theological and political leaders and by the religious laity. By creating empathy we reach out in mutual forgiveness and in covenant to mend the wrongs. Dialogue can occur in formal settings that intentionally assemble participants, but it arises most poignantly and effectively in settings of hospitality, where we entertain strangers, making them feel comfortable and important on our own turf, or we on theirs.

This said, interfaith dialogue raises a troubling question for those who both take their own faith seriously and at the same time intentionally and openly engage others. How, it may be asked, should we approach people from other faiths while simultaneously affirming the centrality and universality of our own faith? For guidance Christians might turn to Jesus' encounter with a person not only from another faith, but who was even in her own culture a third class citizen. The story occurs in John 4. Instead of traveling around Samaria, as was the Jewish custom, Jesus and his disciples travel through Samaria to Galilee. Jesus sends his disciples on ahead to get food, while he rests by Jacob's well. Before long a Samaritan woman comes to draw water during the heat of the day, and upon Jesus' request for a drink an interfaith dialogue ensues between a Jew and a Samaritan, a man and a woman, a rabbi and many-times married woman living with another man.

What is striking from the outset is that, contrary to custom, Jesus does not avoid the woman. To the astonishment of all he dialogues with her. The woman puzzles: how can you a Jew associate with me? Jesus' disciples query how a man can associate alone with a woman, while the townspeople ponder how a respectable person can associate with a woman of such ill repute in her community. Yet Jesus engages in no demeaning, no name-calling, no accusations, no dehumanizing. One quickly senses—and indeed, the text indicates that the woman too sensed—that Jesus speaks out of genuine concern for her. Love, not hatred, is his motive. *Dialogue*, we may conclude, *involves mutual understanding that grows out of respect for and listening to the other*. We do not disassociate with those who differ from us, but seek out such association. Out of our common humanity we dialogue, genuinely accepting the other as a person sincerely holding his or her beliefs.

Which brings us to a second point in this story: While respecting the woman and wishing to dialogue with her, Jesus does not abandon his beliefs either about Judaism or about his own identity. He does not begin by

denying that he and she really differ in perspective. He does not disavow but affirms his own Jewishness. “You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.” He does not deny but affirms his own identity, that he is the messiah. “I who speak to you am he.” He affirms not only that he is what the Samaritans expected—a teacher—but that he is the giver of salvation, of eternal life. He affirms that the gift of God is found in him: “Everyone who drinks this well water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst again.” In effect, Jesus begins the dialogue by maintaining that the claims about him are true.

Respectful dialogue grows out of the belief that one’s own beliefs are true. To participate in dialogue I do not have to abandon my beliefs. Were I to discard my beliefs, were I to think them untrue, I would have nothing to assert in my discourse with the other, and a dialogue with nothing to assert would be empty—of content, of understanding, and probably of significance. To enter into dialogue with another affirming that what I believe is false would be rather silly.

If I dialogue from a position of truth-affirmation, it follows that in a respectful dialogue I will acknowledge that those with whom I dialogue also will think that their beliefs are true. For if it is legitimate for me to dialogue while affirming my beliefs, it is likewise legitimate, if not necessary, for the others to believe and affirm that their beliefs are true. Otherwise, they would have nothing for me to understand, and vice versa. From the outset I want to understand what the others believe. *Respectful dialogue thus grows out of mutual respect for our differences.*

But—and here is the key—it does not follow in true dialogue that *I* must think that *their* beliefs are true. I only need affirm that *they* think that *their* beliefs are true. And similarly, they will think that I hold my beliefs as true, though they may not agree with those beliefs. In effect, in dialogue to create understanding we both affirm that the other thinks their beliefs are true but are under no obligation to assent to them ourselves. Here is the paradox often missed: understanding grows out of significant disagreement, not a reductionism where each gives up his or her unique beliefs and only holds what beliefs the participants have in common. The popular view that dialogue is impossible unless we first agree is quite mistaken.

It is sometimes suggested that Christians, to engage in respectful interfaith dialogue, should make significant concessions. They should abandon their belief that Jesus was more than a prophet, that he was the Son of God come to save the world. They should hold in abeyance their belief in the universal significance of Christ for salvation and instead adopt a parochial Jesus who has relevance only to other Christians. Jesus’ wondrous water is only for a few who thirst. But no, in talking with the Samaritan woman Jesus did not deny his belief in the superiority of Judaism or that he had the water of life not to be found elsewhere. Indeed, this assertion to the woman was what captured her interest. Similarly, to engage in interfaith dialogue I need not abandon my faith and its uniqueness; I need not deny its truth; I need not reduce my beliefs to what the participants in the dialogue have in common. What we learn from Jesus’ dialogue with the Samaritan woman is that *sincere, respectful dialogue begins with the*

recognition of differences, not with the requirement that we abandon our different beliefs. Understanding begins with affirmations of both commonality and difference.

The third point we derive from the story is that *respectful interfaith dialogue can be carried out in the context of persuasion*. It is appropriate to speak with the intent that the other change their view and come to agree with me, and vice versa. In his dialogue Jesus not only respects the woman and affirms his beliefs, but he also asks the woman to believe what he believes, that he is the messiah. He respects her for who she is, notes the differences between Jews and Samaritans, and then attempts to persuade her to the truth of what he says.

Christians are often told in interfaith dialogue that they should not be out to convert or persuade other people in the dialogue to their views. This, on its very face, is puzzling, for the very persons who tell Christians they should not attempt to persuade others are at the same time trying to persuade Christians to their very position. We are told (persuasively, I may add) that we can bear witness to our faith, but if we are to be respectful we should not attempt to persuade people of other faiths to that truth. In dialogue others attempt to persuade us that we should not attempt to persuade others about the deity of Christ or the universal efficaciousness of his death and resurrection. At the same time interfaith documents call Christians to be persuaded that peace comes through submission to the will of Allah and that the Jews have a legitimate claim on Palestine as the promised land. Thus the paradox: other persons can legitimately persuade us to their positions, but not vice versa.

The very paradox makes clear that respectful dialogue need not preclude persuasion. It is not that we assert our beliefs in a persuasive way that may foil respect, but how we assert them in treating our partner in dialogue. When we dialogue, we are to be reminded that we engage in persuasive speech in an atmosphere of respect. Discourse should not demean or show hatred, manipulate or coerce.

Interfaith dialogue is like gathering around the well at Sychar. When we gather around the well, formally or informally, with people holding other positions or of other faiths, we should dialogue out of *respect* for each other; after all, we are all made in God's image. At the same time, we should *dialogue without having to abandon our beliefs*, beliefs that we take to be true and yet about which we *humbly admit* we may be mistaken. We, as they, must have something to assert. And we dialogue not only to understand each other, but also *to persuade* about the truths we hold. Not all dialogues will emulate the results Jesus had with the woman: "Come," she told her neighbors excitedly, "see a man who told me everything I ever did." "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him originally because of the woman's testimony," and later because they "heard for themselves that he really was the Savior of the world." We dialogue to learn, understand, and share, and in that learning, understanding, and sharing introduce others to the Person who tells them that he is the water of life, so that those who drink the water he gives them will never thirst again.

Bruce Reichenbach is professor of philosophy at Augsburg College.

GOD'S *Extraordinary* CALL IN ORDINARY LIFE

by Kay Hanenburg Madson

I came to Augsburg in the fall of 1958 when the campus was considerably different. The women's dorms were Gerda Mortensen Hall and Sivertsen Hall, attached to one another, and located directly across from Fairview-Riverside Hospital. Most of the men lived in Memorial Hall, which also housed the cafeteria on ground level. A number of early 20th-century houses occupied *this* block and a temporary gym sat where Melby Hall sits today.

I knew no one on campus, very little about Augsburg, and even less about sociology (soon to be my major). Four years later, I left Augsburg with a degree in sociology, a goal of graduate school and college teaching, lifelong friends, a stronger faith, and a fiancé. You can see why Augsburg is a special place for me.

What I found at Augsburg were faculty, staff, and students called to responsible service to others. Ordinary individuals, called to extraordinary service. They were dedicated, talented people, but something *else* was present. Something that affected me and changed my life in significant ways.

Robert Benne, in his book *Ordinary Saints*, identifies that something else as "the grace of God in Christ. That liberating grace … [that] gives Christian identity and morality their uniqueness … transform[ing] moral responsibility and development into Christian calling" (p.99). Benne says, "The call of God and the calling of the Christian are not meant only for priests and pastors, exemplaries and heroes. Every ordinary Christian has been sought out by God's Word. Likewise, every Christian is called to responsible service in the world. We do not have to look far for the locations of our service to one another. Those locations are very close-at-hand. They are also very ordinary—family, work, state, and church" (p.67).

One of the people who exhibited that responsible service in God's world, and served as a mediating influence for me, was Dr. Joel Torstenson. Joel *was* the Sociology Department for many of us in the late 1950s and early 60s. As a sociologist, of course he introduced me to the classic sociological theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. But Joel went beyond that for those of us fortunate enough to be his students; he lived and modeled his concern for and responsibility to the social world. Whether analyzing labor movements, promoting affordable housing options, developing urban and international study programs, or teaching and advising, Joel—and many others at Augsburg—exemplified what I soon came to think of as the Augsburg spirit. In some ways, it's the

spirit of any caring community, Christian or non-Christian. But, most importantly, Joel embodied the notion of *Spirit* as Benne defines it: the necessary and vital aspect of the Christian community and the Christian's call, where individuals understand that each place of responsibility provides an opportunity to live out the presence of God in that setting. Benne believes that the Spirit of God comes to us through those who (through faith) understand a deeper level of meaning in God's world. They use their vocations, their personal lives, their public lives as vehicles of God's care for the world.

Joel Torstenson is such a person. A model of the serious academic but also a model of Christian intentionality. From him, I gained a desire not only to understand the impact of social forces on human behavior, but also to ask how I could make the world a better place, as I vote, as a consumer, as a neighbor, as I embrace the diversity of my community…

Joel's encouragement and influence led me to graduate school to receive a master's degree in sociology at the University of Minnesota. After several years of teaching there and at Augsburg, and a number of years of parenting three children, I returned to a Ph.D. program in sociology. Meanwhile, I accepted a sociology position at Concordia in St. Paul, where I am in my 21st year.

Along the way—from Augsburg to graduate school to college teaching—I believe that Joel and others were given God's mediating grace in Christ to be mediating influences for me. Benne describes it as God's Spirit working in them, "to nurture responses of faith, love, and hope" (p. 99), through which they then reached out to others.

Why these particular responses—faith, love, hope?

a. *Faith* allows us to perceive the presence of God in the ordinary and brings a deeper meaning to our everyday lives…students, colleagues, friends, and family are not just those who happen to fill statuses in relation to our own, but gifts of God we are to respect and cherish (p. 101).

b. *Love*—Christian love—brings a special moral summons to our responsibilities. The world understands love, but it's love based on mutual respect and trust; a fair exchange kind of love! God calls us to move beyond this love to a love *not* based on mutuality. We are called to love even the unlovable—we are called to love all—just as God in Christ loves us (pp. 109, 110).

c. *Hope*, Benne argues, is the third means through which God's Spirit transforms our lives. "Hope enables us to continue to act with vigor in spite of continued sin, ambiguity of motive and effect, obscurity and uncertainty about the movement of history," (p. 124)—as the world is experiencing today.

God's call has been evident in my own vocational life.

1. Just as others nurtured me, I have tried to nurture my students—encouraging them toward their undergraduate degrees, employment, and graduate programs, but also toward service to their communities and global society;

2. God's call has challenged me to help students experience and interpret *global society* by leading student groups to India where we've set up semester internships studying social issues such as domestic abuse. Also, in January of 2001 and again this January, I led groups of students to Thailand to study the immigration experience of Hmong families (from Laos to Thailand to the United States) and help students connect with family members they hadn't seen since early childhood. In northern Thailand, we stayed among hill tribe villages, sleeping on floors, sharing meals, and experiencing the warm hospitality of the Hmong families.

3. Finally, through the mediating influence of two special people at Concordia, President Robert Holst and former Executive Vice President Dr. Loma Meyer, I served for eight years as Executive Vice President, working closely with and learning from a President who is a model of servant leadership.

Robert Benne writes that, "Faith, love and hope are consequences of the grace of God in Jesus Christ" (p. 124). Our ordinary places of responsibility become extraordinary opportunities for service when God's " ... Spirit working in us opens us to faith in that grace and the Spirit working through us brings forth the fruit of that faith" (ibid.). May it always be so for each of you. AMEN

Kay Hanenburg Madson, a 1962 graduate of Augsburg College, is professor of sociology at Concordia University in St. Paul. She delivered this text in an Augsburg chapel service on February 19, 2003

A Review of The Sacred Journey

by Juliana Sedgley

Frederick Buechner. *The Sacred Journey*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1982.

In his introduction to *The Sacred Journey*, Frederick Buechner explains why he has chosen to begin to write his memoirs. "What I propose to do now," he says, "is to try listening to my life as a whole, or at least the key moments of the first half of my life thus far, for whatever of meaning, of holiness, of God, there may be in it to hear" (6). It is Buechner's thesis, the ideal around which he fashions his memoirs, that God speaks to us "at moments of even the most humdrum of our days" (2). And, indeed, Buechner has the distinctive ability to imbue his life story with a sense of awe.

Buechner works through his memories chronologically, although not altogether linearly, from his early childhood to the moment in his young manhood when he determined to go to seminary. Although the book is slim, Buechner examines his life in great depth, choosing to describe moments of particular importance to his life's direction. He particularly focuses on the people who influenced his early thinking and helped to mold his philosophy and outlook on the world: his parents, his grandmothers, the girl he fell in love with in Bermuda. He handles all of them with great care and shows explicit appreciation for what they, knowingly or not, have done for him. Through his narrative, Buechner teaches us the value of the gifts that people give one another simply by living and remaining engaged in the world.

He speaks equally poignantly, however, of the pain that people can cause one another. Again and again, he recalls his father's suicide, which occurred when he was ten, and reflects on how it influenced his life. The constant retelling and refashioning of this early tragedy illustrates clearly his assertion that "people do not die; they continue to grow in our memories, and they influence how we live long after they have died" (22). His description of life breaking in half, dividing into a life of innocence on the one hand and a world of knowledge on the other, the moment he learned of his father's death is a clear expression of sudden loss, not only of a father or of childhood but also of that other person he could have been had his father chosen to live (39). Yet, even in describing this awful moment, Buechner offers his own sense of hope; for, he asserts, God was there, too (41).

Throughout his memoir, Buechner hints at the sense of vocation he gradually came to feel as the events of his life shaped him. As he reminisces on his experiences at Lawrenceville prep school, he tells of an English teacher, Mr. Martin, who gave him a grade of 100 percent on a character sketch and, "with that one preposterous grade," led him to a life of writing (74). At the same time, he describes friends who taught him that he did not have to live life alone, instructors who made him realize the things he did not want to do, and relatives who offered encouragement at just the right moments. And, he concludes, by the time that he graduated from Lawrenceville, he "found work to do." He writes, "If vocation is as much the work that chooses you as the work you choose, then I knew from that time on that my vocation was, for better or worse, to involve that searching for, and treasuring, and telling of secrets which is what the real business of words is all about" (75).

A few years later, after publishing his first novel just out of college, he found another, different kind of calling: to go to seminary. Yet, Buechner is careful to relate, his two callings were never at odds with each other. Both of them, he is sure, were given to him by God and were there with him all along. For, he asserts, God speaks to us constantly in the small events of our lives and "a power from beyond time was working to achieve its own aim through my aimless life in time as it works through all the lives of all of us and all our times" (95).

Since the publication of *The Sacred Journey*, Buechner has written several other novels and memoirs, and it might very well have made more sense for me to choose one of them to review. Our culture, after all, values the young and the new, and even yesterday's news is old. Nonetheless, there are certain books that can speak with new words to each new generation. For everyone entering into adulthood, and for everyone just beginning to make sense of their childhood, *The Sacred Journey* is just such a book. It offers reassurance, hope and guidance without being polemical. And it reads like a poem.

Juliana Sedgley is the program assistant for Exploring Our Gifts at Augsburg College.

AUGSBURG
COLLEGE

Transforming Education

www.augsburg.edu