

FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENTS



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MESSIAH COLLEGE

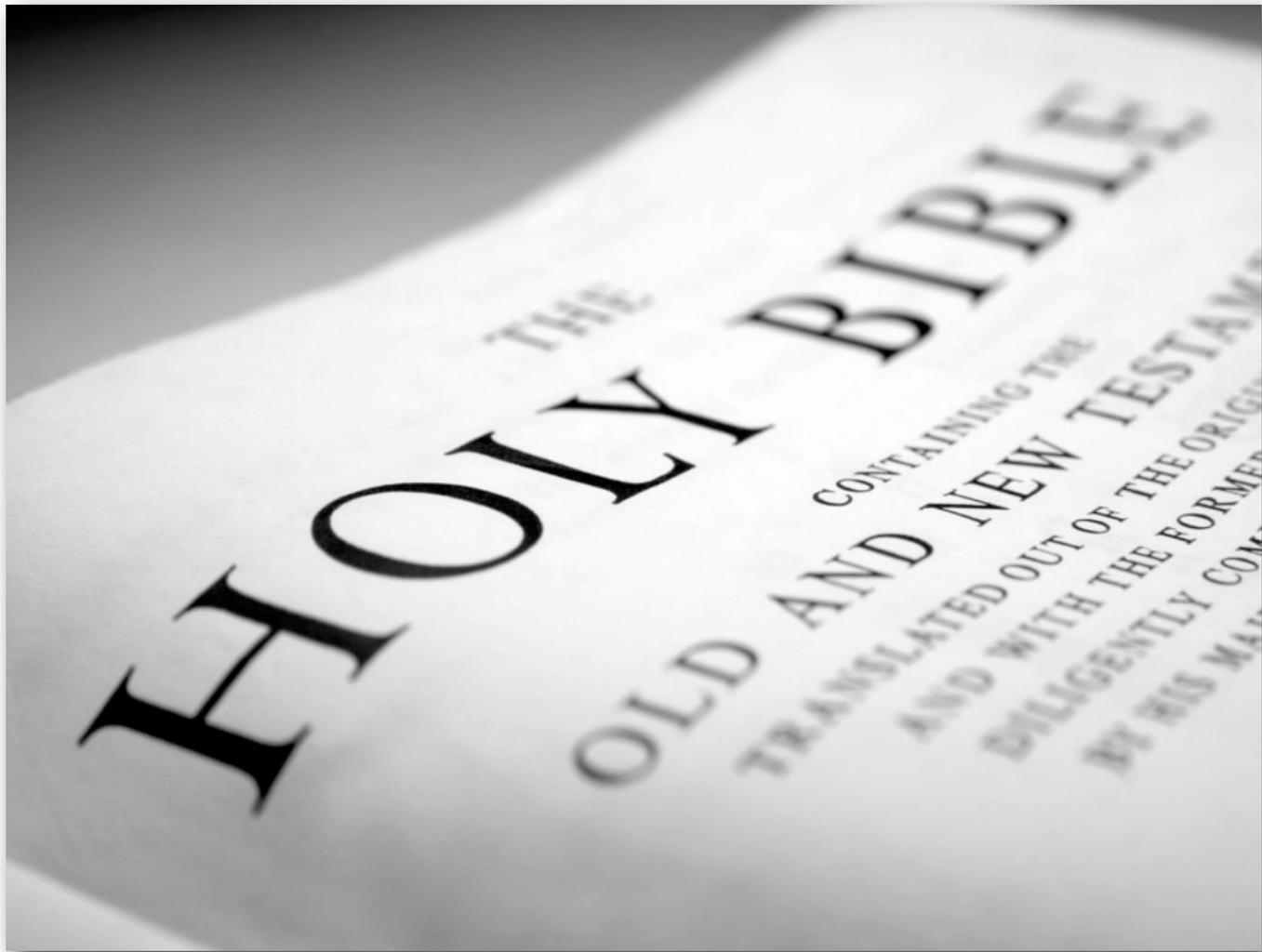
SCHOOL OF THE HUMANITIES

PREFACE

From the Dean:

The School of the Humanities at Messiah College is characterized by a rich diversity of Christian faiths seeking together to understand human beings and their acts in the world. Drawn from many different traditions, all of our faculty affirm the Apostles Creed and are dedicated to furthering the work of Jesus Christ in the world, especially as it is expressed in the educational mission and foundational documents of Messiah College. Our College's emphasis on community means that, while we come from different traditions and have many different points of view on matters of faith, we are committed to listening to one another, learning from one another, and living together in a spirit of love and common purpose. Students who choose to study in one of the majors found in our School will benefit not only from differences they experience that will enlarge and deepen their understanding of the faith, but they will also benefit from knowing that their voices are welcomed at our common table, and that their own journeys with God can enrich and support others as we walk together. What follows in this manuscript is a collection of short essays in which faculty and departments reflect on their intellectual interests and areas of study as a part of their spiritual journey.

--Peter Kerry Powers, Dean of the School of the Humanities



1

DEPARTMENT OF
BIBLICAL & RELIGIOUS
STUDIES

DEPARTMENTAL FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENT

A Messiah College education is a faith-filled education. The department of Biblical and Religious Studies embraces the calling to educate our students toward maturity in Christian faith by encouraging careful thinking about our faith and practice and the role of religion in the world. Our faculty are deeply committed Christians who hold faith and scholarship not in tension, but in a mutually enriching relationship. Our scholarship is thus seasoned by our faith, just as our faith is deepened by our scholarship. We foster spiritual and theological reflection that enables our students to develop and deepen Christian commitment, interpret matters of faith intelligently, and minister to others with wisdom and compassion.

BRIAN SMITH

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

I began to find my “calling” just after I graduated from college. I had known for a couple of years that I wanted to be in some kind of full-time ministry, but working in a church helped me realize that I was naturally inclined to teach and that the Old Testament was my favorite area of study.

During seminary I immersed myself in learning the biblical languages and exploring the riches of biblical interpretation. Exegesis and hermeneutics thrilled me, but I found myself a bit stymied by the deep divide between “conservative” and “liberal” scholarship. I knew that belief in God and the “Word of God” was foundational to my faith, but I had a hard time squaring some of what I was learning in biblical interpretation and criticism with the faith of my father and mother (and even some of my seminary professors).

The best thing that ever happened to my educational life was going to Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion for my Ph.D. There I learned from and alongside Reformed Jews. My professors presented the difficult questions of higher critical scholarship in a way that invited struggle. My professors understood the tension I experienced between faith and scholarship, and several shared openly their own, similar stories. I found myself in a community of scholar-learners who believed that the difficulties of a scholarly faith were an opportunity to find and worship God, as the Rabbis had done for centuries. Most importantly, these teachers modeled for me (and for my Christian and Jewish classmates) a kind of faithful criticism. I have come to understand that faithful criticism as two-fold: an unflinching scholarship seasoned and motivated by faith in God and God’s revelation; a vibrant faith deepened and strengthened by fully examining God, humanity, the Bible, and the world.

So I am called to teach, and that finds its fullest fulfillment when I model a faithful criticism for my students. I celebrate the opportunity to do that here at Messiah College, alongside colleagues and students who are committed to doing the same.

JOHN YEATTS

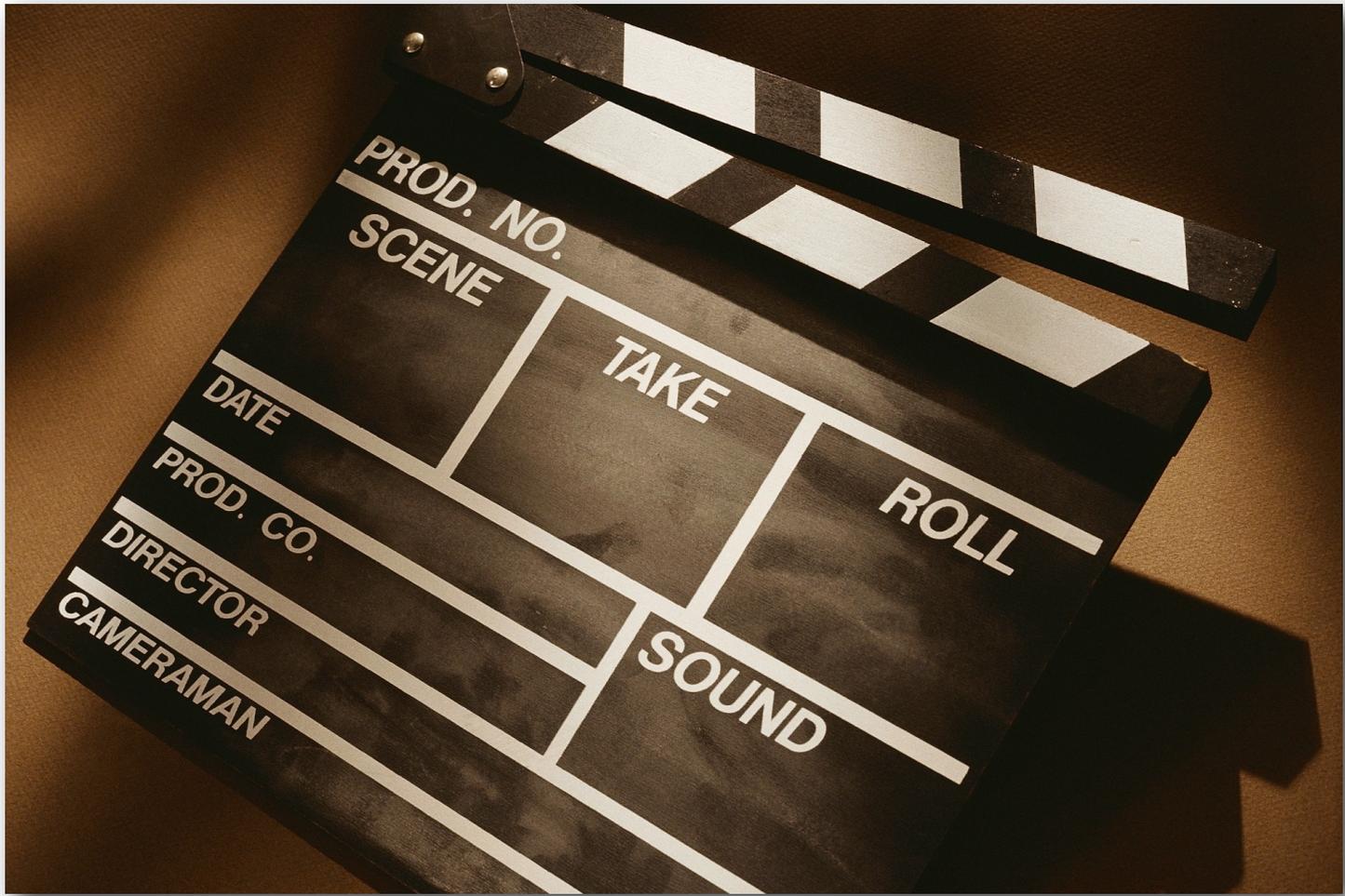
PROFESSOR OF RELIGION

I have been on the faculty of Messiah College for thirty years. I am an Anabaptist by heritage and belief. Yet, I prefer to be in an institution where diverse Christian beliefs are present. I learn from my fundamentalist, liturgical, mystical, reformed, and catholic colleagues. I love being at Messiah.

My vocation is to be a teacher. My master's degree focused on biblical studies and my doctorate on comprehension and recall of the English Bible. Therefore the focus of my teaching and research has always been on helping students to understand the Bible. I want them to learn to read the Bible both academically and devotionally. I even try to bring those two approaches together in the academic classroom.

I am a husband, father of two, and grandfather of five. I met my wife at Messiah and both my children met their spouses at Messiah. We are a Messiah College family. I am blessed by what the college meant to my children, and my focus is on providing the same nurture for my students that my children received.

With my daughter and her family, we attend Harrisburg Brethren in Christ, a multi-ethnic church in the city.



2

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

DEPARTMENTAL FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENT

At Messiah College, we believe that all people are created in God's image, and are to be valued as beings who reflect the image of their Creator. In the Department of Communication, we design our courses to teach students how to effectively use the gift of communication-- verbal and nonverbal, mediated and face-to-face, interpersonal and public--to deepen and extend their relationships with others.

We challenge our students to reflect the love of Christ through communication which respects, values, empowers, and shows consideration for others. By developing skills in communicating with graciousness and hospitality as well as maintaining integrity, openness, and directness, students learn to relate to others in God-honoring ways.

Courses in relational, interpersonal conflict, intercultural, small group, and mediated communication develop communication skills in a variety of contexts. Communication Theory provides a foundation in the field's scholarship while engaging students in applying that research to their everyday lives. Specific applications of these communication skills through public relations, film studies and digital media, broadcasting or internship courses further prepare students in our department for particular careers. Throughout all of their coursework, our students endeavor to find links between their faith and everything they study. But this process isn't just "tacked on" to learning theories, giving speeches, shooting documentaries, or writing copy for websites and Facebook pages. Rather, professors intentionally develop lessons and activities that weave faith and Christian perspectives throughout their courses. We work hard to help students approach studies in communication as an integral part of living out their faith rather than making separations between the two. And for all of our students, a senior seminar capstone course challenges them "go deep," reflecting back on their studies and making further connections between their faith, their major, and their personal lives as they prepare for graduation.

Students also interact with professors outside the classroom as another hallmark of our department. Whether pouring over study abroad options in an advising

meeting, discussing future career options or graduate school possibilities, or sharing personal stories and adventures over coffee in the Union, our students and professors develop lasting relationships that go way beyond academics. And the department offers plenty of applied opportunities where students can hone skills, glean from scholars and professionals' experiences, and serve others. From the Lambda Pi Eta national communication honor society, to the Messiah Filmmakers Society student organization, to the Pulse Media Hub, to the Public Relations Student Society of America Messiah College Chapter, our students find unique ways to engage with each other while extending their understanding of and practice in the field of communication.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

NANCE MCCOWN

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

As a teacher, scholar, and Christian, I find a very satisfying convergence, a coming together of my beliefs and values, in the field of public relations. Although there are those who would question the possibility of a Christian being involved in public relations – since some PR professionals choose to practice their craft with manipulation and lack of integrity – I believe that at its core, ethical, excellent public relations shares many foundations with my Christian faith.

The Bible speaks prolifically about communication and relationship-building—two behaviors critical to effective public relations. But rather than focus on the myriad individual principles found in Scripture, I will describe several over-arching truths that relate my faith, public relations, and my professional endeavors.

First, I believe that God’s truths are absolute and universal. I esteem God as Creator, and as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, from Whom all things come and by Whom all things are known. God has given me truths and absolutes by which to live, such as the Ten Commandments and Jesus’ admonishment to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Deuteronomy 6:5) and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:40). Second, I believe that all people have intrinsic worth. Since all men and women are created in God’s image, I am to value them as beings who reflect the One who gave them life. I also am to value them as God does, giving them the honor and glory due them. And, I recognize the value of and need for collaboration and community, because all of us are to work together as one body, each doing our part.

These two guiding principles for my life are also foundational to the way I view the field of public relations. At its best, public relations is practiced interactively and in dialogue, with organizations and their publics engaging in two-way communication where both parties value what each other has to say. The most effective public relations professionals advocate for their organizations while simultaneously making sure the voices of their many publics are heard, valued, and accommodated by

organizational decisions and actions. To me, these ideas demonstrate biblical principles of loving and valuing all people.

The last overarching truth that guides me has to do with pursuing excellence in my work. Scripture tells me that whatever I do, I am to do it as though I were working directly for God and for the purpose of glorifying God (Ephesians 6:7; I Corinthians 10:31-33). As a person created in God's image, valuing others, and working for God's glory, I must do everything I do—whether teaching students in a classroom, interacting with them in casual settings, serving my university through committee work, or researching organizations for scholarly projects—as though I were serving God, which, of course, is exactly what I believe I'm doing. So as I help students discover ways of communicating that value others, as I conduct research that explores ways to help public relations practitioners do their jobs with excellence and utmost integrity, as I meet with students to share in their journey of discovering God's plan for their lives, and as I meet with colleagues to ensure that my university's policies and procedures are working in ways that value employees and help them live out their faith through their teaching and scholarship, I find myself happily serving God in the midst of my calling.



3

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

DEPARTMENTAL FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENT

The English Department at Messiah College is committed to following Jesus, both literally and figuratively. For, when Jesus said “Take up your cross and follow me,” he gave us both a profound challenge and a powerful metaphor. Anyone familiar with the New Testament knows that Jesus transmitted many of his deepest truths through literary devices: the fiction of his parables and the poetry of his figurative language. Jesus tells us he is a door, a light, a shepherd, and a vine. He compares his followers to oxen under a yoke and to seed that must die. And he transmitted such a novel metaphor to a Pharisee well-versed in Scripture that the listener, Nicodemus, needed explanation: “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” (John 3:4).

English majors at Messiah are trained to ask questions like those of Nicodemus, seeking to understand the insights generated by literary language. At the same time, they are encouraged to follow the example of Jesus, developing their own stories and metaphors to communicate the sacred truths of existence. Taking seriously Christ’s call to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16), they study the serpentine language of acclaimed literary artists—Shakespeare, Milton, Eliot, Nabokov, Achebe, Woolf, DeLillo—to better assess the power of language throughout history to capture the exigencies of life, from encounters with transcendence to the depths of despair.

Furthermore, they are trained to understand how history affects the language employed by authors. When John the Baptist proclaims “Behold the lamb of God!” he developed a metaphor that had significant implications for a culture that sacrificed lambs in atonement for their sins. Similarly, when Shakespeare establishes that Hamlet went to college in Wittenberg, Germany, we are given insight to the character’s struggle to attain an authoritative source of truth: a struggle that parallels that generated when Martin Luther presented his 95 protests against the Roman Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Like good Bible scholars, then, English majors study the context that gives meaning to the signs presented in literary language.

Significantly, Jesus, the light of the world, is repeatedly called a “sign” in the Bible. The Greek word for sign, used by New Testament authors, is “semeion.” This word forms the root of an approach to literature called “semiotics”: the study of signs. By becoming astute readers of signs, both secular and biblical, Messiah English majors learn how to develop their own signs to effectively point the way to the light. Sometimes what they read is quite dark; but, as is well known, light shines all the brighter when lit in a dark place. A bushel is a dark place, of course, and when Christians speak only to other Christians they hide their lights under bushels: something Jesus, using another spectacular metaphor, instructed us not to do. At Messiah we ignite our students with the fire of both sacred and secular language, generated by influential writers of the English-speaking world, so that their lights can shine all the brighter in a dark and hurting world.

LARRY M. LAKE

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF WRITING

A vitally important goal of our work as writers teaching at a Christian college is to build an understanding of the Christian's commitment to the responsible use of the imagination and literary skills, through readings and class discussions and more personal conversations. One student says "This course has really reinforced my belief that Christians can write good literature. The imagination is a gift from God that He lets us use for His glory." And another student observed that "a Christian writer doesn't have to put the Word of God in each story, but writers (especially Christian ones) should remember their theme and what impact their story will have on an audience." Such ideas are frequently stressed by professors' showing and discussing their own work and describing the difficulties of working and writing faithfully.

Writing at Messiah College isn't a "sink-or-swim" proposition. We carefully guide students through useful exercises and try to equip them with tools that will help them grow as writers beyond the classroom and beyond the campus. We work to make students aware of their individual writing processes, patterns, strengths, and needs through peer evaluation, conferences with instructors, and maintenance of portfolios.

In teaching writing at Messiah College, we seek to increase students' writing fluency through numerous short assignments treated as drafts, not only as final products. A former student says "this course wasn't learning by listening; it was learning by doing." Another writes: "the interaction with other students was valuable, too: work-shopping was a different sort of 'editing' I had never worked with before. You'll never know how people react to your writing if you don't have people read your writing. Sure, you don't have to take all suggestions. But you should at least listen to all of them. It improves your writing immensely." Another student noticed great improvement: "Workshop sessions helped me become less fearful about sharing my fiction with others. I'm a self-conscious person, especially when it comes to things I create, such as writing. Forcing me to share my creations with others has made me bolder. This doesn't mean I've completely overcome that fear; I sure was nervous before each class in which my work was to be discussed. But the fear decreased with

each session.” Another saw the other writers as a resource: “I enjoyed having a critical group of thinkers always on hand to evaluate my work.”

Our teaching of writing at Messiah College always entails encouragement and compassion, two vital traits of a faithful Christian. One student writes "I was very afraid at the beginning of the course. I felt I was the least creative out of the whole bunch. But the professor was very encouraging, and made me feel very much at ease with my writing, and eventually proud of it. Because of this encouragement, I became a better writer." “Knowing that even established authors experience the throes of crummy rough drafts,” another student said, “makes it easier for me to accept criticism from others. I enjoyed the workshop sessions. They provided me with opportunities to hear how others react to my work. My classmates shared suggestions about how I could improve my stories. Not all the suggestions dealt with changing things. The class became good at compliments, too.”

In preparing students to engage the world beyond the Christian college classroom, we familiarize them with conventions of fiction writing and publishing through use of draft work-shopping, standard manuscript specifications, samples of editorial correspondence and manuscript submission procedures. We give them opportunities to enter writing contests, and encouragement to attend literary readings. One student says "We didn't just learn about writing and writers: we got to write and write.”



4

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

DEPARTMENTAL FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENT

When prospective students approach me with questions about the Christian distinctiveness of a Messiah College history education, I usually respond in this way:

First, I let them know that, at one level, a history course at Messiah is not unlike a history course at any other institution. We teach our students how to think like historians. We cover much of the same material that would be covered at a place like Penn State. In this regard we believe that our history department is not only one of the best Christian college history departments in the country, but we also think students get an equal or better history education here than they would get at Dickinson, Gettysburg, Lebanon Valley, etc...

While we believe that God is the author and sovereign Lord of history, we do not pretend to know the exact purpose of his plan as it played out in the past. One of our favorite Bible verses comes from 1 Cor. 13: 12: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” History is not a discipline about trying to understand God’s purpose or plan behind human events. (We leave that to the theologians). It is rather a discipline about understanding the way human beings, God’s highest order of creation, have acted through time.

Here are three ways we challenge our students to think “Christianly” about the study of the past.

First, we always start with the premise that all human beings are created in the image of God and thus have inherent worth. This premise shapes our decisions about the kinds of courses we offer and the historical actors we choose to focus upon in those classes. When we study the actions, behaviors, and institutions of humans we are studying God’s creation. This should lead us to worship. Of course we also believe that human beings, because of the fall (Genesis 3), are sinful. Human failure, war, violence, evil, etc... in the past should not surprise us.

Second, we try to bring an ethical dimension to our study of the past. While the historian's primary goal is to understand the past in all its fullness and complexity, we do believe that it is appropriate to critique the events of the past from the perspective of Christian faith. For example, a debate might ensue in a Messiah College history class about whether or not Abraham Lincoln and U.S. Grant's decision to commit tens of thousands of troops in a bloody Civil War of attrition for the purpose of "preserving the Union" is a policy decision that conforms to the moral teachings of the Christian faith.

Third, we believe that the study of history is a form of spiritual discipline. The act of striving to understand a past world that is different from the one in which we live can cure us of our narcissism. The study of the past forces us to see ourselves as part of something larger than ourselves. Any effort to understand the past on its own terms educates us (education in the Latin means literally "to lead outward") in the truest sense by leading us away from the present moment and toward the expansive nature of the human story as it has developed through time. History thus cultivates Christian virtues such as hospitality, humility, and self-sacrifice. We learn to respect the views of others before criticizing them. We learn to be "quick to listen" and "slow to speak." (James 1:19).

JOHN FEA

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

It is the remoteness of the past that turns off many school children to its study. What if the past does not seem relevant? What if it does not inspire? How does knowledge of the medieval feudal system enrich our lives? What if we came to the conclusion that much of the 18th-century world of the American founding fathers was different than our own? This might mean that we proceed with caution when trying to evaluate every contemporary issue we face in American life today with the question: "What would the founders do?"

Yet, I would argue that it is the very strangeness of the past that has the best potential to change our lives. An encounter with the past in all its fullness can cultivate virtue in our lives. It teaches us empathy, humility, selflessness, and hospitality. And I think everyone would agree that these are virtues that our society desperately needs. Students of the past learn to listen to voices that differ from our own, a skill that goes a long way toward ridding ourselves of the selfish quest to make the past serve our needs.

Theologian Charles Mathewes, in a brilliant book entitled *A Theology of Public Life*, argues that Christians today are afflicted by the sin of escapism -- the desire to flee from God and each other. God wants us to turn toward Him, but he also wants us to turn toward each other. In the process of loving our neighbor, Mathewes argues, we grow as Christians.

What if we viewed the study of the past as a form of loving our neighbor? Even if the neighbor we encounter is dead, we can still enter into a conversation with the sources or materials that he or she left behind. If we take seriously the idea that all human beings are created in God's image, then we should also take seriously the idea that those who lived before us were also created in God's image. The very act of studying humanity -- past or present -- can be what Mathewes calls "an exploration into God, a mode of inquiring God."

An encounter with the past thus becomes an act of spiritual devotion. This kind of encounter, as Mathewes writes, "provides more than enough opportunities for humility, penance, recognition of one's sin and the sins of others, and a deepening appreciation of the terrible awe-fulness of God's providential governing of the world." Doing history is not unlike the kind of disciplines we employ in our spiritual lives -- disciplines that take the focus off of us and put it on God and others.



5

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENTAL FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENT

Each academic area trains its scholars to think in a particular way or adopt a certain approach to interpreting information and viewing the world. How does this academic approach in the Department of Modern Languages intersect with our Christian faith? In a sense, Modern Language faculty really wears multiple hats. As we teach higher level language skills, we often delve into the diverse fields of history, culture, political science and literature. Because of this, many of the connections we see between faith and learning may hold true for those departments as well. The Department of Modern Languages fully supports the college's mission to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation. As students deepen their cultural knowledge and perfect their communication skills, they also develop a global perspective that honors the Christian values of peace, justice, reconciliation, hospitality, service, respect for others, and a desire to create a better world. Below we have outlined four specific ways in which language study connects faith and learning at Messiah College.

A large part of our time in the language classroom is spent role playing. At the lower levels students may pretend they are buying clothing in a store in France or ordering food in a restaurant in Chile. The use of our imaginations is required to transport ourselves to another culture and imagine that we are interacting with people there. In upper level courses we may explore how it feels to live under a dictatorship, or how it feels to learn in a different educational system. The time spent walking in someone else's shoes also prepares students to communicate with people very different from themselves in language, ethnicity, class, and beliefs. During travel abroad experiences, there is ample opportunity for students to interact with the other. The desire to understand and communicate with people very different from ourselves is valuable. We believe that it fosters the Christian values of compassion, empathy, hospitality, love and respect for others.

In our language classrooms we hold an ethical perspective as we wrestle with issues of injustice, discrimination or brokenness that often emerge as we study

history, literature or current events. These issues are present, for example, as we discuss the emergence of street gangs in El Salvador and the effects of gang violence on community life. Examining this issue leads to ethical questions about responsibility, forgiveness, and how to respond with love in a way that values all people. It provides a concrete example for thinking through God's call to reconciliation and responding to brokenness in the world.

As students study language, they begin to perceive themselves as world citizens. They realize that they are important players in a web of relationships, histories, cultures that extends far beyond themselves and their immediate surroundings. They learn about global problems whose roots and solutions stretch across national borders. It becomes clear that there is an urgent need for people who are globally informed, able to move in and out of various cultural settings, and able to communicate in several languages. Instead of focusing narrowly on their own needs and life goals, students are able to search for their roles in the world as God's servants.

One of Messiah College's goals is to challenge students to "see anew" or experience a kind of transformation as they learn. Much of language learning is based around seeing anew. As we learn a foreign language, we are acquiring new words to describe our experiences, exploring new cultural values, and learning new ways of understanding the world. Much of the joy and excitement of international travel experiences and cross cultural communication comes from this feeling of seeing anew. However, operating in a different culture also requires the sometimes difficult negotiation of a new identity. Our current beliefs and priorities may be challenged. The process of trying to make sense of the world from new perspectives often leads to meaningful reflection about who we are and who we want to be. As Christians, when we consider new values and new ways to live we can measure their worth against a consistent set of Christian values that root and direct our lives regardless of the culture we operate in.

KIM YUNEZ

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SPANISH

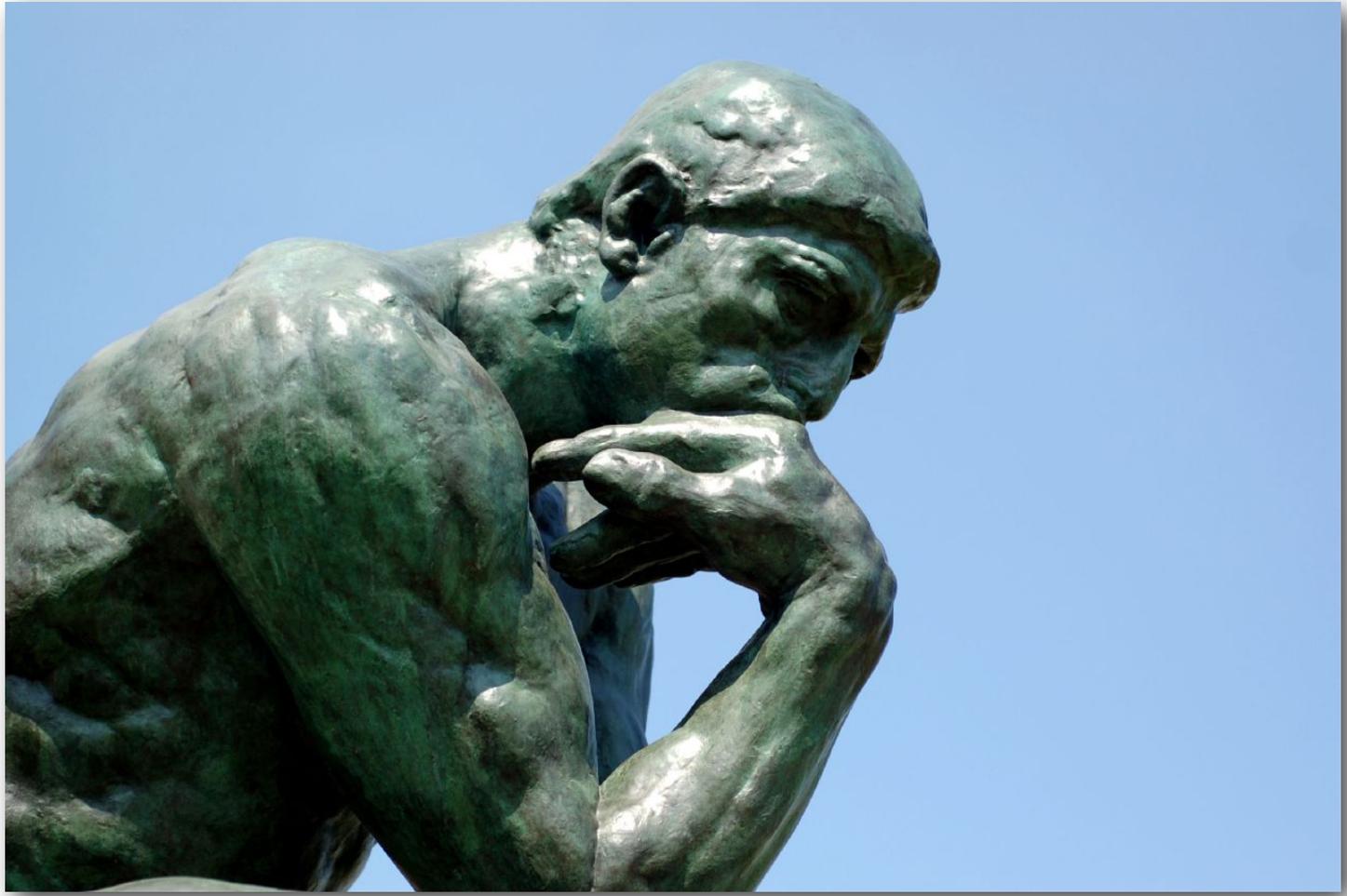
Each one of us comes out of a cultural heritage that profoundly affects the way that we make sense of things. I was born in an area of Pennsylvania (Lebanon Co.) which in the 1960s, was populated largely by the descendants of German speaking farmers. For the first years of my life, my mother, father and I lived in a little town named Lawn and the farmers, butchers and country store managers that attended our country church had last names like Huntzberger, Lehman, Zimmerman and Messerschmidt. The people of this town and others like it were known for their work ethic and when they promised to do something, it was as good as done.

When my family moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania, my world expanded. I still had German neighbors, some who even spoke German, but when I started kindergarten, I would meet kids from many different backgrounds. It would be years before I would learn the word multiculturalism, but it was in Ritter Elementary School in Allentown where I learned that I loved meeting people who were different than me.

Since my Dad was a minister, we moved from town to town as I was growing up. For two years we lived in what is known as the "coal regions" of Pennsylvania. In Frackville, the kids I went to school with had surnames like Naspinski and Bloschichak. Later, when I was fifteen years old and my family lived in Lancaster County, my church denomination sponsored a mission's trip to Mexico and I was one of the first ones to sign up. That summer in Mexico would have a profound impact on my life because it was my first real immersion experience into a culture where a language other than English was spoken. I experienced what it was like to be the person who could hardly follow the conversation around me and who definitely did not understand the jokes! Instead of withdrawing into the comfort zone of my English speaking companions, I found that I was energized by venturing out and engaging in limited conversations with the Mexicans who were collaborating with us. Moving between cultures made me feel alive, and when I returned to Pennsylvania, I was like a plant in need of water. I couldn't learn Spanish fast enough because progress seemed too slow in my high school classes.

These cross cultural experiences led to study abroad as an undergraduate and later to graduate level study. As I explored the varied landscapes of the Spanish speaking world, I was aware that the new modes of thought I encountered along the way were entering into a sort of ongoing dialogue with the discourse of my upbringing. It was apparent to me that I was becoming equally conversant in the discourses of more than one cultural tradition and it was a little like occupying the "in between space" of a Venn diagram. Borders between cultures melted away and I found myself in a very "happening place."

In John 18:36, Jesus told Pilate that he was indeed a king saying, "My kingdom is not of this world...But my kingdom is from another place." As human beings, we long for something greater than ourselves and it is astonishing to me that all that we have learned about the kingdom of heaven has reached our ears through the languages of earth. As Christians, we live our lives in the shared space between the Kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven. We are able to do this only because God's immense love reaches into this finite world.



6

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENTAL FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENT

All members of the department are committed to helping students develop a strong and engaged Christian faith; indeed, each of us felt that this is what God wanted us to do with our lives. We believe that since worldviews rest on fundamental presuppositions, the ability to uncover and critically engage these presuppositions is an essential skill Christians must have to fruitfully engage the marketplace of ideas. This is one of the key skills that philosophy teaches, and is now more essential than ever before. The internet has made the arguments and views of the critics of Christianity, along with those of other world religions, a few clicks away; it is like having the bookstores of atheists, skeptics, and advocates of other religions right next door. Thus, we are convinced that the best training we can provide for our students is to teach them how critically and fairly to evaluate these alternative ideas that they are likely to encounter, while coming to understand the considerable intellectual strengths of Christianity.

Even though much of the academy is hostile to Christian thought, there has been a great revival of Christianity in philosophy as a result of applying the rigorous standards of philosophical enquiry (which you will learn in our classes) to issues of faith. This is unknown to most people, who still have a view of philosophy as being hostile to Christian belief. A 1987 Christianity Today article took note of this revival, pointing out that the Society of Christian Philosophers, with over eight hundred members, was "the largest special interest group within the American Philosophical Association." The revival of Christianity within philosophy has increased since 1987, with leading atheist philosopher Quentin Smith recently lamenting that, today one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists, with most being orthodox Christians . . . God is not "dead" in academia; he returned to life in the 1960's and is now alive and well in his last academic stronghold, philosophy departments.

Given the tremendous philosophical resources currently available for understanding and defending the Christian faith, we believe that no serious Christian who wants to engage today's world can afford to neglect philosophy.

ROBIN COLLINS

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

I became a Christian shortly before going to college at Washington State University. Partly because I was not raised in a Christian home, I had many intellectual questions about the Christian faith. These were partly stirred by my best friend from high school attempting to dissuade me from any faith. In college, I majored in mathematics and physics (completing two degrees in this subject), eventually picking up a third major in philosophy – which I completed on a scholarship in my fifth year. I went into philosophy because I thought it would give me the tools to help sort through my faith, which it did.

Before going into philosophy, I went to graduate school in theoretical physics for two years at the University of Texas at Austin (1984-1986). During that time, I felt a strong and persistent sense of calling to study philosophy, something that has stayed with me over the years. Because of this, I wrote the newly formed Society of Christian Philosophers concerning whether there were any Christian philosophers at universities on the West Coast. When I eventually received a reply, it was on a letterhead with the imprint “Alvin Plantinga, President, Society of Christian Philosophers, University of Notre Dame.” After a little research, I knew that I wanted to study under Plantinga, who was not only a devout Christian but one of the leading philosophers in the world. I thus went from there to the University of Notre Dame, which was (and still is) both a leading graduate school in philosophy and one that has many Christians on its faculty. The training in philosophy I received at that time further strengthened my faith. I also learned that there was a revival of Christian thought taking place in philosophy departments throughout the country, something that has continued since I graduated. As a leading atheist philosopher, Quentin Smith, has noted, “God is not ‘dead’ in academia; he returned to life in the 1960’s and is now alive and well in his last academic stronghold, philosophy departments.”(Quentin Smith, “The Metaphysics of Naturalism,” *Philo*, Vo. 4, N. 2, 2001, pp. 196-97)

Since being here at Messiah College, I have particularly pursued questions on the intersection of science and religion, receiving three major external grants for work in the area. The area that I have become most well-known for is the argument for divine

creation from the so-called fine-tuning of the universe – that is, the fact that the basic structure of the universe is set just right for life. I am now completing two books on the subject, one concentrating on the physics and cosmology and one concentrating on the philosophical and theological issues involved. In the future, I hope to publish a popular book on the subject.

This work has greatly strengthened my faith, especially since the spring of 2010. I not only discovered many cases of how the universe is fine-tuned for life, but also that it is fine-tuned so that we could have technology and can do science. Concerning the latter, if certain aspects of the fundamental physical structure of the universe were slightly different, humans could have existed, but they would have had no means of developing scientific technology; they would have been forever stuck in the Stone Age. For me, this provides compelling evidence for divine providence in the basic structure of the world for both our existence and our science and technology; this means at the most basic level, our science and technology points to the providence of God. My research in this area has also given me a strong sense of how miraculous the structure of the universe and the world around us really is; everyday truly does seem like a miracle to me.

Finally, over the years I have also come to appreciate how God works in circuitous ways. As one example, when I first started studying philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, I had wondered why I spent so many years studying physics and working in physics labs. Since that time, however, my background in physics has become my greatest asset. Because God often works in this way, the providence of God in our lives will not always be obvious, but often can only be seen hindsight. For students, this implies that unless one feels a specific calling to pursue a certain career, one should use college to develop one's gifts to the fullest, while being open to how exactly God might use those gifts in the future. As the book of James tells us, do not say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town, stay there a year, conduct business, and make money" since "you do not know what tomorrow will bring" (James 4:13-14). Rather, say "If the Lord wants us to, we will live - and do this or that." I thus encourage my students to be like the faithful servant in the Parable of the Talents and to invest in the development to their reasoning capacities through their study of philosophy, but at the same time to recognize their need for God's guidance and providence.

DAVID SCHENK

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Be sure there is something inside you which, unless it is altered, will put it out of God's power to prevent your being eternally miserable. While that something remains there can be no Heaven for you, just as there can be no sweet smells for a man with a cold in the nose, and no music for a man who is deaf.

—C. S. Lewis, 'The Trouble with "X" ...'

I do not call this a "testimony." I prefer simply to call it an explanation. It is an explanation of why today I am convinced of what previously seemed breathtakingly silly. It is an explanation of why I believe that the God revealed in the Bible exists and that the man called Jesus of Nazareth was and is His divine Son, sent to us that we might have hope in an otherwise hopeless predicament.

I have neither "great and terrible sins" to confess, nor dramatic transformations to report. In their stead I could confess a host of small sins conspiring to make me the small man that I am and report a change of conscience whereby gradually their grip on my life has abated. The autobiographical details are not important, but perhaps a general sketch of how this became possible will be useful.

From earliest youth I was convinced that atheism is true and throughout my adult life I remained so convinced right up until December of 1998. My convictions were neither naïve nor dismissible as "rebellion." Indeed, twelve years of training in philosophy at the undergraduate and graduate levels kept me pretty well informed about the issues in this debate. I was rationally convinced that God does not exist, and I was convinced not by a stubborn temperament but by some of the best evidence to be had. All the same, Reason is a funny creature; though it is trustworthy, you can trust it only with as much as you give it.

As an instructor in the Philosophy Department at the University of Iowa, I often used to teach Introduction to Philosophy to a comfortably small class of thirty or thirty-five students. Within the course I included a seven-week study of philosophy of religion, focusing on various arguments for and against the existence of God. At the conclusion of the fall semester of 1998 my research for revising the syllabus led me to

C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* and *Mere Christianity*, both of which enchanted me. It was during my study of those two books that a very old and familiar gut-level suspicion, a subtle kind of perceptual inkling, took hold of me once more. The sensation itself, while hard to describe, is one that I think many people have—it is the feeling that there is something strange about the world; the vague sense that something profoundly different sits underneath all the ordinary stuff and bustle of our ordinary lives. Instead of ignoring that suspicion and returning to my work or my sandwich, I chose to examine it, holding it up before the light of Reason and studying it as a very peculiar sort of hypothesis. I want to emphasize this: had I chosen my sandwich instead, the entire affair would have ended right there and I would have continued my ordinary life with my ordinary selfish indifference. That single moment was crucial. If I had dismissed my suspicion as a mere suspicion about which nothing further needed to be said, I would be an atheist today. I did not and I am not. As a consequence, over the next two weeks I was subjected to a series of direct, powerful, and deeply structured religious experiences.

These were not feelings because I simply had no emotions while they were happening. Neither were they thoughts; I was not contemplating any propositions. What I encountered over those weeks (and still encounter at times today) presented itself as the thing that underlies all other things, except it did not present itself as a thing, strictly speaking. It presented itself as the answer to a question that I never asked, as the final explanation of things that always sat out just beyond the edges of my awareness and titillated my intellect, thereby enlivening each day with a kind of living poetry. More importantly, it presented itself as a Mind. Don't ask me how, but I realized that as I was observing it, "it" was observing me. While I sat there holding my sandwich and contemplating the earth that sat underneath the wet street, I was being contemplated by a Mind that sits underneath absolutely everything. In those first few weeks of my conversion I would wake up each morning with His presence right there in front of me, and that was pretty much the way I would go to sleep at night, too. Quite simply, I bumped into God.

Even so, I faced an enormous spiritual and intellectual hurdle—the divinity of Jesus. This is not a view to which mentally healthy people come easily, and in my own case there was no discrete moment of full repentance in which I entrusted myself to the Christ Jesus. Oh, I prayed the prayer and made a perfectly sincere request all right, but at that early stage I comprehended neither what I was doing nor the extent to which I needed His help. Much less was I convinced that Jesus of Nazareth truly

was and is the Son of God. All of that came only after the foundations and implications of this outrageous proposition gradually became clear.

From the account I just gave I would like to extract two essential points. First, I want to discuss the extraordinary difficulty people have in giving peculiar hypotheses their due. Second, I want to examine what might underlie this difficulty.

At bottom, human nature is less impressive than it is fashionable to pretend. This is true of us in our ordinary reasoning as much as it is in our moral behavior, and in both cases several consequences of our shortcomings are easily ignored. One common failing is the temperamental inability to take seriously a hypothesis that just seems too absurd to be serious. For example, if we insist upon dismissing certain suspicions or inklings as mere suspicions or as wish fulfillments, then we do not find an answer to the essential question; we succeed only in avoiding it. In general, when one is unwilling to entertain a wild hypothesis as a genuine possibility, one swiftly closes oneself off to the evidence by which it might be confirmed. But why should this general failing afflict us? Why is each of us subject to it regardless of intellectual training and imagination? I believe the answer is that ultimately our difficulty is not an intellectual one.

Now, I don't call this a spiritual difficulty if only because too often that word is used without the speaker properly knowing what is meant by it. Instead, I call it a predicament of our character, a flaw inscribed within the most basic elements of human nature. We can call it vanity, we can call it pride, or we can call it a "healthy self-image," but our desire to be nobler and more important than the facts permit typically leads our actions, with our rational faculties trailing behind and trying to clean up the mess, as it were. Consequently, we are inclined to favor those things that flatter us over those that do not. Is it any wonder, then, that theism and Christianity get a cold reception? Inter alia, theism tells us that we are not our own creatures, that our personal conduct in our lives is not up to us, and that all independence is illusory. Christianity gives an account wherein each human being is small, stupid, and corrupt and wherein each of us thereby brings about his or her own condemnation. Furthermore, against this our gritted teeth and strong language are useless; our only hope is a form of outside help that no human effort can produce.

Well, the American ego balks at the suggestion of an absolute authority with which we cannot argue, and the idea of being too weak to accomplish what is needed

just sets our teeth on edge. We do not reject the Christian hypothesis because it is odd. We reject it because it offends us, because it is injurious to our personal pride. But that pride is a lie and the picture of ourselves that it holds up to us is an infantile delusion. That is our curse and from it our individual and collective cleverness cannot ever help us to escape. Even so, there is hope. If just for one moment a man honestly repudiates his pride, then he will begin to see himself for what he truly is and all starry-eyed evasion and back-patting will be impotent. Furthermore, he will become aware of a higher form of life for which he is created and from which he is fallen. Regarding this form of life, Christianity alone makes an almost inexplicable promise [John 5:24, Romans 3:21-24]. To this day I do not fathom it, but the promise is there: any person who entrusts the redemption of his or her life to the Christ Jesus will be redeemed.



7

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS & INTERNATIOANL RELATIONS

DEPARTMENTAL FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENT

Politics studies the way in which people make collective decisions affecting life under government, choices about those goods, services and relationships that individuals cannot readily attain on their own (e.g., say public highways, police departments, and freedom of worship). From a Christian perspective, politics is part of God's provision for Creation, a means of reconciling self-interest and sociability, innate dispositions, so that a rich, peaceable, and just social order can be achieved.

In the Christian view, truth is unified under the Creator from whom it proceeds. Yet as St. Paul reminds us, even faithful Christians see through the glass darkly. It is this limited vision, a function of human mortality and fallibility, which requires open academic inquiry. At Messiah, the Politics and International Relations curriculum is marked by a diversity of emphases, approaches, and perspectives because we are convinced that is the best way to consider a truth only imperfectly revealed. We know there can be good faith disagreements among faculty and students who are equally devout. So, instead of trying to communicate a set list of ideas, facts and beliefs, faculty strive to make an education in politics an open conversation, one in which students can refine independent powers of insight, argument, and good judgment.

Doubtless our faith commitments will find their way into the classroom. When it comes to education, who we are influences what we will do and how we will do it. Yet the common denominator among Christian educators in Messiah's Department of Politics and International Relations will be found less in the content of lecture notes than in aspirations to Christian virtue. Ideally we seek to foster collegial relationships on the basis of honesty and trust, exhibit patience and understanding for individuals with alternative points of view, evince compassion for the needs of others, display disciplined work habits, are tenacious in the search for wisdom, place ourselves in the service of our students. In short, we aspire to be scholars of character. From a prospective student's perspective, one could hardly wish for a more congenial atmosphere in which to pursue academic excellence.

PAUL REGO

DEPARTMENT CHAIR

I whole-heartedly embrace the Catholic tendency to stress similarity over difference, meaning that I do not accept the incompatibility of the spiritual and the secular, religion and science, or revelation and reason. Instead, I prefer what Thomas Rausch and Terrence Tilley refer to as the “both/and” formula in reconciling these supposed differences. If, for example, God is the source of both revelation and reason, then both are equally valid ways of understanding of God and God’s creation.

This confidence in the compatibility of reason and revelation was shared by many of America’s founding fathers. I make this point, because the political science of those founding fathers is central to my teaching and research interests: American political thought; the presidency; and constitutional law. The original framers of the American republic were, in fact, this country’s first political scientists. Certainly, they regarded themselves as such. As John G. West explains, they were familiar with the world’s long history of religious conflict and spent a lot of time and intellectual energy trying to demonstrate that the teachings of reason and the teachings of revelation often agreed on moral matters. Even Thomas Jefferson, who discounted biblical revelation, was interested in and sympathetic to Jesus’ social teachings.

But it was not just the original founding fathers who appealed to both reason and revelation in many of their political writings. The men who guided the nation through the Civil War and Reconstruction deftly blended Christian theological beliefs with core American values that are rooted in the Enlightenment. In so doing, they were able to persuade a reluctant country to end slavery and move closer to the realization of America’s most cherished ideals.

The reformers of the Civil War and Reconstruction Eras demonstrated that they could meet people on their own terms, while simultaneously attempting to expand the orientation of those people; and that is what real leadership entails. In an increasingly diverse country, in which many consider themselves to be spiritual but not necessarily Christian, Christians cannot effect change without appealing to a number of people who do not share the exact same worldview. For Christians, this does not and should

not mean setting aside their most cherished beliefs, but it should involve taking the best that Christianity has to offer and blending it with different but complementary values that have shaped the nation as well. In short, politically aware and active Christians can use the “both/and” framework to bring more reconciliation to our world.

ROBIN LAUERMAN

PROFESSOR OF POLITICS, ASSISTANT DEAN OF GENERAL
EDUCATION & COMMON LEARNING

Approaching politics as Christian scholar provides a critical framework from which to evaluate the political world - the means and ends of government - by encouraging the challenge of one's own intellectual foundations through the examination of others. As a Lutheran, I see that disciplinary study itself provides a means to serve God, to mediate between the spiritual and earthly worlds as one seeks to understand the political world and apply this knowledge for the betterment of humankind. Faith can inform and encourage better scholarship and application to real world political dilemmas through an encompassing sense of vocation as well as the recognition of human finitude allowing Christian political scholars to engage the earthly kingdom. Christian scholars may take the lead in modeling the engagement of values while maintaining intellectual rigor and integrity. Given my passion for empowerment (individuals as citizens as well as leaders), faith plays a critical role in enlightening the perspective of who we are called to be and how God plans for us to work in this world. Knowledge of political and historical contexts provides a means for people to effect change to repair the condition of God's creation marred by the Fall.

Part of what has drawn me to academic life is not only the content of political science, that is, a desire to understand further about the political realm, but also the way in which we as academics must make connections across sometimes seemingly diverse arenas. These connections are of course built through dialogue between academics within, and often without, the discipline. This connectedness, a shared hospitality, is vital to a fruitful examination of the subject matter in any discipline. Christians are called to service in a vast array of professions in response to God's grace and as a means to mediate between the two kingdoms. One of my primary areas of expertise, public opinion, bridges a number of disciplines, including psychology and sociology. Understanding our own beliefs as well as the pulse of the public requires that we understand their mental and social context.

Reading and reflecting on the significance of Christian scholarship and my faith tradition in particular has provided new insights and opportunities for my research and teaching. While some of this process has been helpful in providing understanding

of new material, it has, as much if not more, enlightened the ways that my faith had unknowingly shaped my education and scholarship prior to my formal inquiries. The Lutheran tradition provides for me a sense of purpose in my work, but also recognition of the humility I must hold in the knowledge that I acquire. As academics examine pressing political problems, we can only study one segment of a problem at a time. If we are encouraged to question the effectiveness of policies and government structures, even those which we might otherwise support, we may not, as supporters of the status quo fear, demolish them, but we may reform them. To do so, political scientists must share in conversation across sub-fields and faith traditions, and be willing to question the foundations of our own knowledge.

FAITH & LEARNING STATEMENTS

MESSIAH COLLEGE SCHOOL OF THE HUMANITIES

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