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The Eternal Horizon:

The Role of Faith in Every Act of Learning

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THE ETERNAL HORIZON: THE ROLE OF FAITH IN EVERY ACT OF LEARNING

In this essay I make the rather audacious claim that most discussions on the relationship between faith and reason are wrong-headed. No sooner is a discussion proposed, than proponents and critics alike become enmeshed in a tussle over the question of the rational legitimacy of faith. Consequently, faith is lost to sight and the discussion focuses on the status of various kinds of reason, where faith is inevitably the least credible form of assent, as evidence in a set of claims such as the following: "I know that Yeltsin is the President of Russia." "I believe he is doing a good job." "I have faith that he will yet succeed in his reforms." Faith, in contrast to logic or science, is an expression of trust or confidence that lacks proof or factual evidence. At best, faith is a kind of country cousin of serious intellectual activity. But certainly this is not what believers mean by faith.

In my essay I seek to show that faith is an essential structure of human nature and only secondarily a category of knowing. In essence, faith is a fundamental orientation of human beings toward ultimate meaning and value in life. Like hope and love, faith is a recognizable receptivity in human beings to the eternal horizon of our every endeavor--be it history, philosophy, science, art, religion, or whatever. Faith, on this understanding, is not at all indifferent to truth; albeit, it is never a discrete discipline of learning, nor necessarily a belief that such-and-such is so.[1] Rather, faith arises in an immediate, pre-cognitive apprehension of our world, which I contend grounds all of our acts of knowing. By way of analogy, one might say that faith is related to learning, as the immediacy of seeing is to critical reflection. Faith, like seeing, calls forth reflection; but what one reflects upon is never all that is seen. It is this dynamics of seeing, attending to, and envisioning new possibilities not yet seen that seemingly underlies the dynamics of all human enterprises and comes closest to expressing the mystery that I understand as faith.

The pedagogical consequences of this thesis are profound: Faith, as evidenced in wonder, courage, hope, determination, reverence, and so on is both the beginning and the end of knowledge. It is the fundamental orientation of human beings toward the ultimate

conditions of our existence. We know and worship because our very beings are restlessly drawn to a Mystery that is beyond all knowing. I end my paper on a practical note of explaining how the School of Theology at Walla Walla College is revising its curriculum in response to these observations.

I

The desire of believers to articulate a rational defense of their faith is understandable. Not only are believers called upon to give a witness to their faith, but the voices of the "cultural elite" in most Western countries are so silent, or aligned against any form of confessional faith, that the believer, particularly the young student, might easily surmise that religious belief is intellectually if not morally bankrupt. Identifiable religious voices are located among the television evangelists and politicians, two groups of people consistently identified as some of the least respected people in public life.

Still, not withstanding the pressures to defend the epistemological validity of faith vis a vis reason, I contend that such exercises bear little fruit, and worse still, distort what faith itself is. In the first place, what is portrayed in these discussions is not a portraiture of faith, or even a disagreement over faith and reason, but rather a disagreement over what is reasonable.[2] The believer usually establishes some argument to demonstrate that her belief in God or a particular creed or doctrine is sound, which in turn is summarily rejected by the unbeliever and a goodly number of believers as unpersuasive.

We as human beings are incapable of ever offering a coercive proof or argument for God's existence or any claim made about God. At best we offer evidences that bear witness to our belief. We can demonstrate this result from the following sentences:

1. I trust the ladder will hold you.
2. I trust that he will give you a good deal on your car.
3. I believe in tooth fairies.
4. I believe that frugel is nugel.
5. I believe that the Koran is the true revelation of Allah.
6. I trust him like a thief.
7. I believe that God is a loving father.

Clearly, the noetic value of these sentences varies radically from sentence to sentence, although each is constructed in a similar form. In the first two sentences, trust is appropriate, only where the object of trust is indeed trust worthy. One should never trust a ladder that has repeatedly given one nasty spills, any more than one should trust a used car salesman with a record of cheating the public. Yet in the eyes of the skeptic, the believer appears to act as just such a fool when she continues to express trust in God, even when her prayers to God are terribly disappointed, as in the loss of a child. Consistently, believers assume a level of dissonance in their religious beliefs that they would never permit in their relationship to ladders, used car salesmen, or even their husband or wife.

In defense of her belief, the believer may well suggest that God's ways are not our ways, or that God's ways are beyond knowing, but to make such a move is ultimately to subject faith, as Anthony Flew has noted, "to the death of a thousand qualifications;" for, the nonbeliever is likely to wonder at this point how belief in God differs at all from belief in tooth fairies, or even from such nonsense as belief that frugel is nugel.[3] Pushed in this way, the believer may wish to reverse herself and say that she does in fact know God loves her in spite of her loss, because the Bible tells her so.

Our skeptic, however, is likely to wonder how our believer knows that the Bible is in fact true. As David Hume wryly noted, every religion finds fault in the religious beliefs of every other faith, so that religion provides a universal condemnation of itself.[4] But the problem is even more difficult than one of resolving squabbles between religious proponents who don't get along or agree with each other. To know the truth of a statement, one must possess some sort of literal knowledge of its referent. So to know that a revelation from Allah is true, I require knowledge of Allah; to understand the irony of trusting someone like a thief, I must know that thieves are untrustworthy; likewise, to know that God is not literally a father, I must literally know that God has not sired children. Yet human beings never know God except as God is revealed, and no revelation is given that is not stated in human terms. The result is that our language about God is bound to our finite world. Not even our metaphorical and symbolic language transcends our finite world. Epistemology always arrives at this dead end when speaking about God.

Still, even if we allow that human beings are somehow capable of knowing God, an

even more perplexing problem confronts every rational defense of faith--namely, the inexplicable suffering and death of a child; for, in order to justify God, the suffering and death of the child must be justified as well. This was Dostoyevsky's great insight. The enormous problem of suffering and evil is not tallied in the death of the legions who have suffered and died. It is measure in the death of a single child who dies with the prayer "Dear Jesus save me!!!" still on her lips.[5] At this point, the believer appears pushed to either abandon his faith (for how can God be God and not ultimately and perfectly good, and how can a perfect and ultimate good exist where disease and the murderer torture and kill the child?), or in the name of faith itself, the believer must enter on behalf of victims a complaint against God. More often than not, in the DARK NIGHT OF FAITH, the believer is sustained by only the most radical of faiths--a faith that is not a "belief-that" or a "trust-in," but a "belief-in spite of," and even a "belief-against." For on the darkest nights, the only faith to which the believer can often cling is the doubt of his doubts.

Finally, in the traditional ways of defining faith as some sort of belief or trust, the possibility remains open that the person of faith may turnout to be a scoundrel. Yet if faith possesses any virtue, it is the power to inspire human beings to noble deeds, as evidence in the inexplicable prayers of Ruby Bridges, the six-year-old girl who braved a torrent of curses and screams as she passed through an angry white sea of protesters on her way to public school, with little clinical stress, because her mother told her, and she heard in church, that such people "need praying for." Robert Coles, the Harvard psychiatrist, is transfixed by Ruby Bridges, not because she proved the validity of faith, but because he can't shake the power of her life.

> The great paradox that Christ reminded us about is that sometimes those who are lonely and hurt and vulnerable--meek, to use the word--are touched by grace and show the most extraordinary kind of dignity, and in that sense, inherit not only the next world, but even at times moments of this one. We who have so much knowledge and money and power look on confused, trying to mobilize the intellect, to figure things out. It is not figurable, is it? These things are mysteries. As Flannery O' Connor said, "Mystery is a great embarrassment to the modern mind."[6]

It is this mystery that must become the subject of analysis in theological and philosophical discussions of faith.

6

II

If faith is shroud in mystery, mystery itself is not faith. Faith is far too active and demanding of answers to be satisfied with mystical retreat alone. In fact, looking at everyday expressions of faith, one might easily concluded that the life of faith is primarily a matter of engaging in such day to day activities as attending meetings, worshipping, planning, organizing, sacrificing, and the like. But obviously, if religious faith is directed only toward these things, the nasty suspicion arises and is reinforced that faith is not really about anything.[7] A flying saucer cult may, after all, exhibit most of the overt behaviors and actions as those located in organized religion, but that hardly proves that flying saucers actually exist.

The problem facing us, then, is that of showing how faith is not another mundane feature of the world, but that faith, indeed, grasps features that transcend the everyday world. I will seek to accomplish this task by arguing, after the fashion of Merleau-Ponty, that every mundane feature of the world presupposes an infinite horizon of meanings and values that come to view under the dynamics of seeing, attending, and re-visioning.[8]

FAITH AS SEEING

The identification of faith with seeing may well seem odd, since faith is usually identified as a belief that goes beyond sight. The point I wish to make is not that faith somehow sees its object, but that faith like seeing is an immediate, pre-conceptual apprehension of its referent. Merleau-Ponty's great discovery was that in the act of seeing, the thing being seen and the one seeing are immediately united, so that the person who is seeing never doubts that she is seeing, even though she may be terribly mistaken about the nature of what she is seeing. The pink elephants playing jump rope on the ceiling, on closer inspection (or in a moment of sobriety) may turn out to be reflections cast by the bed spread. What is never open to doubt is the fact of seeing itself.

Yet here a paradox emerges, for in seeing, we see everything, and therefore we see nothing. To see "something" we must isolate it from its foreground and background. But here our difficulties only multiply, for everything we isolate by sight is at one and the same

time the foreground and background of something else. I see the chair because it is different than the wall, and I see the wall because it is behind the chair, both of which are located inside a building that is isolated from a foreground and background of surrounding lawns and buildings, and the like, all of which, in turn, stand out from each other as well as every other thing. Quite clearly, then, all seeing, includes both particular and universal aspects. To see at all, is to isolate some object of perception from a foreground and background that extends infinitely from the thing being perceived.

This dialectic of immanence and transcendence in the act of seeing is the key that opens the possibility for a transcendent faith that is at the same time a finite knowledge. Close observation reveals that faith centers neither in mundane objects or propositions, nor in catatonic escape from the world. This is no accident. Faith resides in the transcendental aura of finite objects, be they glowing crystals, mantras of meditation, or the incarnation of God in Christ. This explains faith's tenacity in the face of seemingly impossible obstacles. The purview of faith is always greater than any of its discrete observations. Human beings always see and experience more than they are able to say. Believers construct doctrine and creeds because they are first orientated toward an ineffable mystery that is beyond words. Some discover this mystery in such inexplicable joys as the birth of a child or a brilliant sunset. Others find it the cognitive pursuit of questions that opens infinitely before the inquirer. For still others, it appears in the power to create new things and novel ideas. Certainly, many are awakened from their religious slumbers by the rites and preaching of the church. Amazingly, not a few first happen upon this mystery in the experience of their most tragic losses, when they are forced to confront their own absolute powerlessness. But in whatever situation faith arises, it does so as a perception of human being's orientation toward a horizon of meaning that resists reduction to any everyday feature of the world. Faith is satisfied with nothing less than the eternal.[9]

My claim to this point, then, is that the possibility of faith resides in the fact that human perception opens onto a horizon of meanings and values that recede infinitely from the thing being observed.[10] As Socrates long ago demonstrated, questions of "what" lead on to questions of "how" that entail questions of "why," so that to speak about a captain of a ship, for example, is to talk about certain duties, that suppose certain ways of acting, which

in turn presuppose certain responsibilities and purposes. But to speak of responsibilities and purposes is already to speak of values.

This movement of perception, I am claiming, underlies all human undertakings--even the sciences. Often science is portrayed as a utilitarian enterprise that is directed only toward answering empirical questions that, if not verifiable, are at least open to refutation. On this view, science is understood as being indifferent to questions of ethics and religion. Yet the very undertaking of science presupposes a moral undergirding of integrity, careful observations, and an open and free exchange of ideas. All of these are moral qualities that themselves can become the subject of observation.

Any attempt to cut off the eternal horizon from our perceptions results, I believe, in a loss not only of the religious dimension of life, but it cuts off every mundane inquiry from the horizon of meaning that gives it meaning. Without a recognition of the infinite reach of our questions our mundane actives become arbitrary and capricious for they lack a point of reference that might stabilize them. It is this openness of human being to the infinite, then, that makes possible human appreciation of value and meaning, and it is, I believe, the ontological possibility of faith.

FAITH AS ATTENTION

Secondly, faith requires attention. As our everyday experience illustrates, when our attention lags, our vision blurs. Attention is the act of keeping something in focus. When we focus our attention on something, be it a physical object or an idea, the indefinite horizon of our vision becomes focused and fixed, if only momentarily, into a concrete perception. The indefinite white object before us on closer inspection turns out not to be a ghost as we feared but a sheet fluttering in the breeze; or on another ocassion, the wonderful line of poetry we created in our thoughts turns out on reflection not to be so wonderful after all. Attention is the imaginative act whereby we isolate and thereby creatively restructure our world into ever more perceptive units of meaning and value.[11]

As William James noted, to attend to some object is to "hold it fast before the mind."[12] When our attention is not focused we say it "wanders." More precisely we might say that our attention oscillates as certain parts of our vision stand out more sharply at one

moment, only to move out of focus into the foreground or background of our perception in the next, as some new thing occupies the center of our attention. To attend is to establish a certain perspective on things. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that acts of cognition are often described in terms of metaphors that stop processes such as: "grasping an idea," "holding an idea fast," "determining the basis of an idea," "following and idea to its conclusion," "grounding an idea," "establishing the foundation of an idea," and so on. In the act of attention we single out certain features of our world as the object of our focus, while we suspend our observations of other features.

Attention, then, is central to our knowing anything. Without it our world would be little more than a ever moving, blooming, buzzing nonsense. By the act of attending we give importance to things. In fact, one might say that the various activities of human beings, from everyday sorts of things such as deciding what to eat for breakfast, to extremely complex sorts of things, such as creating and producing a movie or performing a brain surgery, all represent acts of lending importance to certain things while sublimating the importance of other things. To become proficient in any human undertaking is to become skillful in knowing how to attend in certain ways. Thus, if a person is ever to learn how to draw, she must forsake her preconceived notions of eyes and nose and attend to shapes of light and shadow before her. Similarly in the sciences, one must often put away one's common sense views of the world and attend to the world under the purview of very specialized tools and rigorous methods of observation if one is to enjoy the success of discovery. Likewise, in the religious life, the task of the ordinary believer, and the theologian alike, is one of attending to certain realities that come into view. Attention is the wonderful, imaginative act of eerily consolidating one's sensations and intuitions into a momentary perception.

The important question that must be asked, therefore, is what are the realities to which faith attends? Every occupation of human beings is defined by certain categories--parenting by such things as responsibility, care, and attention; science by things such as mass, length, weight, and time; drawing by shadow, perspective, texture, pattern, and design; Music by sound, rhythm, pitch, and meter; poetry by sound, rhyme, meter, and alliteration; and so on. In the act of attention we focus the world by means of symbols, categories, and

determinative acts. This is unavoidable if we are to know at all. Yet this fact poses a problem for determining the occupation of faith. If faith is a fundamental openness of human beings to the infinite horizon of all human undertakings, then it would seem that faith could never come into focus, and therefore could never be an object of attention.

At the very least, our discussion to this stage suggests that the occupation of faith is not a discrete undertaking such as reading the Bible, getting along with people, or administering the church--however important these things may be. By identifying faith with any discrete human undertaking, be it a belief, a practice, or a methodological framework, faith is subjected to the ambiguities and vicissitudes that are endemic to all human processes, so that to change a word in a creed, the order of the liturgy, or the structure of the organization is to cause a crisis of faith. On this reading, faith is no longer the substance that sustains our fragile undertakings, but it is one of the factors that destablizes our world, for then faith is set in conflict against itself--as is only far too evident in the religious divisions of our world.

In contrast, I argue that the occupation of faith, rather than being directed toward discrete beliefs, practices, or methodologies, entails an all-encompassing posture toward all beliefs, activities, and methodologies. In the first place, faith, as an act of attention, entails a critical posture toward the world. Faith is radically, iconoclastic. It resists identification with every mundane thing, be it a figure carved in stone, a creed written on parchment, or the methodologies of science. In biblical terms, faith is the antonym of idolatry. This suggests that faith is not opposed to critical methodologies per se. It is opposed, only, to treating any finite thing--be it a belief, ritual, method of knowing, strategy of organization, or even something comprehensive and demanding of loyalty such as a nation, a denominational commitment, or even one's family--as something of ultimate value. As Jesus reminded his would-be-disciples, one must forsake everything, even father, mother, and children to become his follower.[13]

Secondly, while faith arises in the orientation of human beings to the infinite, faith itself is inevitably mediated through the particularity of history. On the one hand, faith refuses allegiance to any finite thing; yet, on the other, faith is conceived and transmitted through the particularity of certain stories, beliefs, and rituals. This ambiguity is inherent

in the attention of faith. While faith recognizes it dependence upon the conveyance of certain vehicles such as physical artifacts, texts, rituals, and institutions, it refuses to identify any such vehicle with the true object of its attention, which remains forever beyond name.

Thirdly, faith, as is the case of all acts of attention, seeks stability and consistency. The fact that faith gives rise to institutions and systems of thought is no accident. Without some sort of stability, faith would degenerate, as we have seen, into chance and caprice. Given, however, that human beings are finite, and therefore incapable of ever holding in attention the whole horizon of faith, the stability of faith is located in an intersecting field of many perceptions. This is why faith is properly the occupation of a whole community and not the task of a single person. A proper perspective is maintained not by a state of homogeny, which is inevitably a condition of stasis, but in the cross-referencing field of vision that emerges as the shared boundaries of a common act of attending.[14]

Finally, faith, as a matter of attention, is never indifferent to the truth of its claims--as if believers are concerned only to have faith, regardless of the referent of their faith. This why the tasks of faith transcend the private domain of religious clerics or scholars. Faith, as an attending to the world and its boundless horizon, requires not only a body of believers, but all available methods and procedures to carry on the task of mapping the contours of its vision. Consequently, faith is not jeopardized by legitimate strategies of questioning and research that are aimed at knowing the truth. It demands only that the world not be limited to the purview of discrete disciplines at particular times. Faith, collapses, and becomes indistinguishable from the secular enterprise, not when it avails itself of critical methodologies, but when it loses sight of the eternal horizon that grounds it.

FAITH AS RE-VISIONING

The implications of these ideas for constructing an educational curriculum beg pursuing, but first we must speak of a third movement in the dynamics of faith--namely, that of re-visioning. Seeing is never simply a matter of bringing pre-existing data into a focused observation of things-in-themselves, but a bringing about of a new articulation of them as figures.[15] We distinguish a third moment of faith in the fact that all of our figures break down in time, so that every act of seeing requires re-seeing. Ironically, while seeing requires

attention to keep in focus what it sees, attention itself obscures seeing by so narrowing the scope of its focus that it loses sight of the background that allowed it to see in the first place. Critical methodologies of observation, in the rigor of their observations, inevitable undermine their own observations by focusing on ever narrower bits of information, so that science, for example, in its focus on the data at hand, becomes blind to the ethical requirements supporting it.

This is why seeing always requires seeing anew. Faith as a seeing that remains conscious of the infinite horizon of its observations, must therefore, entail a continuing process of re-visionment, or in biblical language, re-conversion. In the words of M. J. Ferreira, "Faith is the surrender of an old vision in the activity of seeing a new way in which things can be together."[16] The ever popular 3-D poster provides a helpful illustration of the shift of vision that takes place in re-visioning. Initially we can see only the surface of the poster with its repeating design--only the surface is 'real' to us, even though we can be told of and admit the possibility of another option. Then, at some point, after concentrated attention or perhaps after coaching or guidance, another alternative, the 3-D image, comes into focus for us.

> At the critical moment of transition there is no set of equally real alternatives which we recognize from among which to choose--the moment of transition is rather the point at which what has been an abstract possibility (one we have been assured is there) suddenly comes into focus for us, the point at which it is so real that it seems to be the only way to see it (though, of course, we can try to revive the early picture by an effort of re-focusing).[17]

It is this phenomenon of being able to see on multiple levels that underlies the possibility of scientific research, artistic invention, and religious faith: for, how can one know where to look if one does not know what one is looking for, and if one does know where to look, how is it a discovery? And how can one create something new if one has not first seen it, but if it is seen, how can it be new? And how can one have faith in what one does not know, but how can what we know be an object of faith? These are the paradoxes that are resolved by the mystery of imaginative re-visionment. For faith, in the final analysis, is not a matter of seeing before leaping, or of leaping before one sees. It is rather, as Ferriera points out, that the "new seeing is the leap."[18] Or with Merleau-Ponty we might say that

perception anticipates what it will see. On this understanding, faith is inevitably a spiral, that moves from the immediacy of seeing, through a process of criticism, to a new horizon of seeing.

III

The implications of this paper for integrating faith and learning in the class room are many, but I will limit my discussion to just three. In the first place, if a general principle of pedagogy emerges from this paper, it is that education is never completed with conveying information alone. Data and facts are the momentary collapse of an indeterminate horizon into the particularity of a concrete perception. But as such they presuppose the imaginative acts of seeing, isolating, comparing, weighing, and re-evaluating that go into any act of human perception. As a result students must be taught how to see. They must be provide opportunities in which their powers of imagination, wonder, and awe are evoked. In the words of Wintley A Phipps, the goal of education must be nothing less than to inspire in our students "the audacity to dream about what God dreams about."[19] To aim at any lesser goal is to set the standard to low.

Secondly, this essay suggests that since faith is not a discrete discipline of study or practice, faith is not necessarily incorporated into the curriculum simply by the addition of more religious topics or discussions into the schedule. Faith is a posture that underlies all human undertakings. It is not another subject matter to be added to the curriculum. No such thing as Christian math, or Christian English, or Christian Biology exists. Rather, teachers mentor faith when they call attention to the infinite horizon that is the background of their particular area of study. While prayers and discussions of religious topics contribute to the atmosphere where faith flourishes, the goal of integrating faith into the curriculum is not one of turning all classes into Bible doctrines classes. Such goals stand in the way not only of developing the skills students need to survive in our complex world, but they obscure the infinite horizon of faith itself. The goal of every teacher should be to show out the discipline they teach evokes wonder, awe, and mystery at its edges. Thus while the goal of integrating faith and learning is shared by all, the strategies for integrating faith will vary

from discipline to discipline.

Finally, to understand faith as an openness of human beings to an infinite horizon of meaning and value suggests that we must actively assist students in the integration of their learning into a cohesive vision. We cannot assume that the student will see the relationships that exist within a particular discipline--let alone between disciplines. A smorgasbord offering of classes may provide a rich variety of educational experiences for a student, but the very variety can harm the educational health of a student and an institution. Without a comprehensive vision of the goals of education, students are incapable of making enlightened choices. As a result, many student leave the formal education process with a great deal of confusion regarding how the many parts of their education fit together.

In the space that is left I will try and show how the School of Theology at Walla Walla College has attempt to restructure its curriculum in light of these conclusions.

Unfortunately, even a theological education can be so directed toward helping the student develop necessary skills of interpretation, care giving, and administration, that the true referent of faith is loss to sight. After several years of asking our graduating seniors to evaluate our program we came to the unhappy realization that we were not doing a good job of integrating faith and learning, although students gave our school high marks in promoting academic and professional excellence. Graduating seniors repeated time and again stories of coming to Walla Walla College fresh from a personal experience with God that they wanted to deepen and learn how to share with others. Yet their first two years of study were dominated by courses in Greek and exegesis. As a result their original goals of wanting to experience and share a deeper understanding of faith was obscured.

Furthermore, while individual class syllabi and even course offerings provided a holistic view of the Christian life, the curriculum itself failed to provide an integrated, developmental approach to theological studies. The curriculum was organized along the taxonomic lines of biblical languages, Old and New Testament exegesis, church history, Bible doctrines, and finally practics. Unfortunately, by the time students entered their practics courses, they were often unable to see the relationship that existed between these courses and what they had studied in their biblical, historical, and theological courses.

We are now in the process of seeking to resolve these problems. First, we have completely restructured our curriculum from the ground up in an attempt to keep in focus contours and direction of the life of faith. Our curriculum is now structured so that students cannot miss the guiding role faith plays in their education. Instead of first focusing on the tools and skills students need as biblical exegetes, pastoral counselors, and church administrators, incoming students are introduced to the developmental stages of the life faith itself. Courses that cover specific topics or skills are integrated into the general framework of tracing the movement of faith.

In our new curriculum the progressive development of faith is now explicit. Our first year courses form a hub around which all of our courses circle. These courses are: **Roots of Faith** (which focuses on the origins of faith in the life of the church and the individual), **Sacred Texts of Faith** (which draws attention to the normative way faith is remembered and transmitted), **Faith Seeking Understanding** (where we look at the ways in which faith prompts an investigation of the clarity and veracity of its claims), and finally **Actions of Faith** (where the focus is not upon learning varying practical skills, but in helping the student understand how faith is in fact enacted within the church).

Now instead of seeing a theological education as a collection of marginally related disciplines, our curriculum is focused on aiding students understanding that the life of faith is a single sort of thing. This shift in perspective is particularly evident in our restructuring of our courses which are directly related to pastoral ministry. Now all of our courses are organized so as to trace the life of faith along its natural lines of matriculation. Again, this is evident from the titles of our courses alone. They move from aspects of **Personal Ministry**, to **Gender, Generation, and Race Ministries**, to **Congregational Ministries**, all of which come to fruition in **Public Ministry**.

Secondly, our new approach demands a far greater collaboration of teaching efforts than has existed in the past. We see that the goals and tasks of providing a theological education belong to the entire theological faculty. We can no longer afford to restrict our interest or our work to the domains of our own disciplines. Each of the disciplines must inform the work of the other disciplines. Practics, for example, is not a matter of teaching skills so that students can effectively apply what they have learned in their biblical studies.

Practics is a aspect of all that we do. As a result, we are initiating more team-courses, and where budgets prohibit such, we plan to exchange classes from time to time where warranted.

Finally, we are planing to make a concerted effort to widen the horizon of our classes beyond descriptive and analytical tasks. To facilitate this process we are incorporating into our classes opportunities for students to get in touch with the imaginative and integrative sides of their lives by means of stories, poetry, art, music, and discussion. In addition, we are adding to our curriculum a **Senior Seminar** in which students are required to develop a project with their major professors that will illustrate how they have integrated faith and learning throughout their course work in theology.

This revised curriculum will be taught for the first time next year, so most of the difficulties we will face in implementing this program still lie ahead. We anticipate difficulties will arise when we are faced with adding transfer students into our program, who started their course work under some other system. We are already experiencing the difficulties of speaking across the lines of our disciplines. Still, the goal of integrating faith and learning in the life of our students and the life of the church is so great, that we are willing to face whatever problems come our way.

In summary, the goal of this paper has been to shift the issue of faith and learning from the problem of legitimizing the rational integrity of faith in reference to subscribed standards of reason, to one of bringing to the fore of our attention the nature and interests of faith. We have therefore suspended judgment on the object of faith, or its truth or validity in the interest of bringing to mind the possibility and interests of faith itself. Simply stated, this paper claims that faith is, in itself, a critical approach to life that avails itself of all methods that offer the promise of uncovering truth. Faith, however, refuses to offer absolute allegiance to any claim. Faith is inherently suspicious of any undertaking that threatens to obscure the open horizon of life that invites every pursuit of truth and meaning in life.

The great need in the life of faith, on this reading, is not the establishment of more controls on thought or the construction of more apologies defending faith. Rather the great need in the community of faith is the establishment of more time and opportunity for inter-

disciplinary, inter-generational, inter-racial, and inter-faith sharing in the task of advancing the never ending task of mapping the horizons of faith. In this spirit and to these ends is this paper contributed.

Endnotes

1. For an excellent discussion of the distinction between faith and belief see, Louis Pojman, "Faith Without Belief," Faith and Philosophy 3 (April 1986) 157-176.

2. Alvin Plantinga frankly admits in his own very careful philosophical defense of the epistemological grounding of faith that such discussions of faith regard the status of belief claims. See his essay, "Reason and Belief in God," Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff eds. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 18.

3. Anthony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," The Existence of God, ed. John Hick (New York: Collier Books, 1964), 224-228.

4. See David Hume, "Against Miracles," An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1748).

5. See especially the chapter entitled "Rebellion," in The Brothers Karamazov, trans. Andrew R MacAndrew (New York: Bantam Books, 1970).

6. Robert Coles, "The Inexplicable Prayers of Ruby Bridges," Christianity Today, August 9, 1985: 17-20.

7. I gain this insight, as well as the general staging of my paper from the work of Edward Farley, whose dedication to uncovering the parameters of faith sets the standard for such work. See, Ecclesial Man: A Social Phenomenology of Faith and Reality (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

8. Merleau-Ponty did not identify his work as Christian, or suggest implications of his work for faith. In a discussion of his work on November 23, 1946, Merleau-Ponty appears to suggest that his philosophical constructions are opposed to Christian faith, but only to certain dogamtic understandings of Christian faith. "My viewpoint differs from the Christian viewpoint," Merleau-Ponty said, "to the extent that the Christian believes in another side of things where the 'renversement du pour au contre' takes place. In my view this 'reversal' takes place before our eyes. And perhaps some Christians would agree that the other side of things must already be visible in the environment in which we live. By advancing this thesis of the primacy of perception, I have less the feeling that I am proposing something completely new than the feeling of drawing out the conclusions of the work of my predecessors." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, ed. James M. Edie

(Northwestern University Press, 1964), 12. For a fuller understanding of Merleau-Ponty's work see, Phenomenology of Perception, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

9. The author of Ecclesiastes makes this point when he writes that God "has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (3:11)." This text might also be compared to Romans 12:3 where Paul says that a measure of faith has been given to all people. Every human being is made in the image of God and therefore shares something of the likeness of God. If this were not the case, then human beings would not be able to grasp the notion of God.

10. Paul notes the universal appreciation of moral values when he says that even the Gentiles who lack the law do by nature what the law requires (Rom. 2:11). The fact that even the Gentile can distinquish the eternal from the mundane is evident in Paul's charge that the Gentile so Knows God that the Gentile can be held accountible for identifying God with an idol (Rom. 1:21).

11. Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall in their book, The Quantum Society: Mind, Physics, and a New Social Vision, speak to this phenomena when they write: "When we think about it, many events in our everyday lives seem to be preceded by 'feelers' toward the future followed by eventual "collapse." At the borders of consciousness itself we experience a plethora of fuzzy "prethoughts' that collapse into clear, single ideas when we concentrate. In our imaginations we constantly throw out, and experience, a multiplicity of future scenarios before these collapse into one at a moment of choice." Danah Zohar & Ian Marshall, The Quantum Society: Mind, Physics, and a New Social Vision (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1994), 51.

12. William James, Principles of Psychology, Vol.II (Dover Publ., 1950, c. 1890). Quoted in M. J. Ferreira, "Seeing (Just) is Believing: Faith and Imagination," Faith and Philosophy 9 (April 1992): 155.

13. See for example Luke 14:26.

14. This point is amply supported by the Christian Scriptures. See, I Corn 3, 11, 12; Eph 1-3, I Peter 2.

15. Phenomenology of Perception, 30.

16. Ferreira, 162.

17. Ibid, 162.

18. Ibid, 164.

19. Wintley Phipps, "The Power of a Dream," Commencement Address at Walla Walla College, June 12, 1994.