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JOURNAL OF THE UNION FACULTY FORUM

2023 - 2024

# JOURNAL OF THE UNION FACULTY FORUM

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# LETTER FROM THE FACULTY FORUM PRESIDENT

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Faculty Forum exists to foster communication. Meetings of the Faculty Forum organization serve to gather the recommendations and concerns of the faculty, and then the leaders of Forum communicate these to the President and Provost of the University. The *Journal of the Union Faculty Forum (JUFF)* provides a venue for scholarly and creative communication from Union faculty to their colleagues within the University and beyond. Scholarly and creative communication addresses some of the tensions inherent in the academic life. As professors, we spend much of our time seeking to transmit knowledge, skills, and practices to our students.

Scholarly writing provides a needed opportunity to distill our learning (and wisdom) into a stronger form more suited to our colleagues. Reading scholarly works reminds us of what it is like to learn and thus helps us sympathize more effectively with our students. Creative writing and artwork are activities that push us beyond the analysis, critique, and reflection that comprise much of academic life, encouraging a journey from theory into practice. Reading new creative works and viewing new artwork remind us of what it is like to experience art afresh without a pre-existing interpretation, and thus aid us in recalling our own time as students.

Reading and viewing works for the first time also has the potential to inspire new art and writing. I hope that you will enjoy this new volume of the *JUFF* and that it will nudge at least a few to create new works, perhaps for future submission to the *JUFF*. The communication that Faculty Forum fosters would not be possible without the consistent work of many of my colleagues. Thank you to Brian Glas for serving as Forum president last year and setting the trajectory for this year's efforts. Thank you to Georg Pingen (Vice President) and Janna Chance (Secretary) for their faithful work with me in meetings with the University administration. Finally, thank you to Chris Bailey (*JUFF* Editor-in-Chief) for many years of excellent editing, and thank you to the editorial board, designers, artists, and authors who ultimately make the *JUFF* possible.

Geoffrey M. Poore  
Faculty Forum President, 2023–2024



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## WORD FROM THE EDITORS

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We, the student editors of the *Journal of the Union Faculty Forum*, are pleased to present to you the 43<sup>rd</sup> volume. These pages feature works by some of Union University's accomplished professors in a wide range of disciplines, from music and journalism to math, pharmacy, and more. It has been an honor to serve these gifted authors. We hope that you find these articles informative, challenging, and encouraging.

Soli Deo Gloria.

As Editor-in-Chief, I am thrilled to present to the faculty the latest volume of the *JUFF*. Truly, the credit belongs to an impressive team that worked so diligently to bring you this year's issue. Both faculty and students collaborated on the publication from start to finish. My Professional Editing, Proofreading, and Publishing class had the privilege of collaborating with Professor Angela Lee's Typography class on this journal. Together, we are proud to present this quality publication that is both aesthetically pleasing and rich in content. Further, a special thank you goes to the faculty members who contributed to this issue.

Chris Bailey  
Professor of English

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## General Submission Guidelines

A new volume of the *Journal of the Union Faculty Forum* is published during each fall semester. The editors invite submissions of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, artwork, and scholarly articles in various academic disciplines. Submissions should be in a MS Word format with a 12-point font. Acceptance is determined by the quality of the work. We are now accepting submissions for the Fall 2024 issue. Please email submissions to [cbailey@uu.edu](mailto:cbailey@uu.edu).

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# ENGAGING METHODS TO TEACH EMPATHY:

## A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY TO TRANSFORMATION

**Tammy Patton**

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### **Introduction**

Higher education identified two critical needs in our society: addressing the social and health needs of an aging society and meeting the shortage of helping professionals due to retiring Baby Boomers (Newman et al., 2005). A critical shortage in the global health workforce will arise if healthcare professionals are not effectively educated to care for people (United Nations, 2013). In social work and other helping professions, empathy is a skill needed to work effectively with people (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Gerdes et al., 2013; Rogers, 1975). Educational theory and research on empathy enable the researcher to effectively and adequately train Millennials and Gen Z to meet needs in the mental and healthcare workforce as empathic caregivers.<sup>1</sup>

### **Data and Methods**

#### *Problem Statement*

The problem statement for this study was: Social work in higher education can draw from research on the social cognitive neuroscience of empathy (including transformational frameworks for teaching empathy) and current technological advances to understand how empathy can best be taught to and processed in Millennials and Gen Z, then measured using the valid and reliable empathic scales. Effective empathic training and research are needed to increase the workforce of prepared social workers and

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<sup>1</sup> The original version of this article includes a literature review.

transform students to support the aging population and address the current mental health needs in society.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

The population sample consisted of traditional undergraduate students at Union University ages 18-23 enrolled in the Spring 2019 class of Social and Economic Justice along with those enrolled in Introductions to Social Work and Psychology classes. The freshman and sophomore classes consisted of 52 students. The student composition was 65% female students and 35% male students in the sample population. The ethnicity was 70% White, 20% African American, and 10% Hispanic/Latino. Convenience sampling was used due to the small population of social work and other majors and the availability to this researcher in a small Christian higher education institution.

Two validated indexes that measure empathy are the Empathy Assessment Index (EAI) and the Interpersonal and Social Empathy Index (ISEI). The EAI was developed in 2010 (Lietz, Gerdes, Sun, & Geiger, 2011) and measures five areas related to empathy: Affective response, self-other awareness, emotion regulation, perspective taking, and empathic attitudes. The ISEI is an instrument that measures interpersonal and social empathy (Segal et al., 2013). Social empathy is understanding experiences of groups of people as opposed to interpersonal empathy, which is understanding feelings of an individual. Developing contextual understandings lends to awareness of “systemic barriers” (Segal et al., 2013). Awareness of systemic or institutional discrimination (macro perspective-taking) helps social workers process what life might be like for members of other groups.

The groups were homogenous relative to age. As empathy tends to increase with age, the sample population scored similarly on EAI and ISEI, as all the sample participants represented young adults (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2015), as questions related to the empathy level in

Millennials and Gen Z, a mix of ages was not required for the focus groups. The mix of gender was higher relative to the number of women, who may be better able to understand emotions (2015). The variation in scores and answers may have been due to the small sample of men represented. Socioeconomic status as well as family backgrounds could have affected the dynamics of the group members' interaction per Stewart and Shamdasani (2015); however, the varied dialogue added better understanding of poverty between classes and cultures.

Permission was granted by authors of EAI and ISEI to use their indexes. This design study used the latest version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data from the indexes. One-group Repeated Measures ANOVAs were computed to determine whether the interventions led to a significant change in empathy at three different intervals. The dependent variables were the EAI and ISEI scores, and the independent variable was the empathy program teaching intervention. Two-group Repeated Measures ANOVAs were also computed to determine whether interventions led to a significant change when compared to a control group on average. The dependent variables were the EAI and ISEI scores, and the independent variable was the empathy teaching intervention.

This mixed-methods research design measured the development of empathy as affected by a serious social game Spent (also known as an online simulation) in conjunction with a constructivist teaching framework, critical reflection, and education on poverty and empathy in the classroom. Convenience sampling at Union University provided the students needed for the study,  $n = 41$ . The EAI and ISEI indexes that were utilized pre and post game and instruction were by Segal et al. (2012). Using the tools twice helped to measure if the serious game and teaching framework, along with education on empathy and poverty, were effective at empathy development. The tools were additionally used in a third measure after four weeks of journaling about empathic personal experiences. The EAI consisted of 22 questions that the respondents answered

on a 6-point Likert scale. Participants put their personally assigned code on the indexes for matching purposes. The ISEI consisted of 15 questions that respondents answered on a 6-point Likert scale. Qualitative questions were used in the focus groups at the end of the teaching interventions to discern if education on empathy and poverty aided in understanding empathy and developing empathy for people in poverty after playing the game *Spent*. These open-ended focus questions in small groups provided insight to this researcher of the overall effectiveness of the experience or intervention aimed at empathy development in the classroom for people living in poverty. Students also answered open-ended questions on individual handouts relative to the overall empathic experience and education. The students then journaled about empathic experiences for four weeks following the experiences in the classroom and after the serious game. The same post tests were given to the students in the classroom after journaling for four weeks to measure the impact of reflection at further increasing empathic levels (third measurement).

#### *Quantitative Analysis*

Before analysis of the gathered data was prepared, the data was checked for missing scores. The data was then analyzed using the statistical software SPSS. Repeated Measures ANOVAs were run on the indexes for quantitative analysis of the EAI and ISEI. The intervention groups were combined for a total of 41 students, and Repeated Measures ANOVAs run. Then, a comparable sample was randomly selected from the intervention groups of ( $n = 14$ ) to compare with the control group ( $N = 11$ ). Two-group Repeated Measures ANOVAs were run on SPSS to determine statistical significance in comparison to the control group.

#### *Qualitative Analysis*

Qualitative data from the group interviews were transcribed and open-ended questions were coded and analyzed based on the model of social empathy by Segal (2011) which consisted of the components of interpersonal empathy (the empathic process of affective response, cognitive empathy, self-other awareness,

emotion regulation), contextual understanding, and social responsibility. Using content analysis, each qualitative document was analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of interpersonal and social empathy using the insights from the participants. An additional four weeks of journal comments were categorized for themes, using content analysis, related to the interpersonal empathic process. In the journal descriptions of interpersonal empathy, students did follow affective recognition, mental processing, and emotion regulation in real-life situations.

## **Results**

### *Research hypothesis 1*

Repeated Measures ANOVAs were performed to determine if there was a significant increase in empathy, using the empathy program teaching intervention as measured by the EAI pre and second tests on a combined group of 41 students. A measurement using the EAI was conducted a third time (post) to see if four weeks of self-awareness of empathic circumstances further affected empathy score on EAI.

Results from EAI indicated that all components of empathy increased with the teaching intervention and Spent, except for emotion regulation. Empathy did not develop further with the journaling, except in perspective taking (PT). Areas that developed initially with the teaching intervention were affective response, affective mentalizing, self-other awareness, and perspective taking but not emotion regulation significantly from the pre to the second measure. The area that showed additional development from journaling on the post or third measure was perspective taking. No areas declined. PT grew further on the EAI with journaling because the students were allowed an opportunity to reason about their internal feelings in addition to others' affective and cognitive states. A study by Bockler, Herrmann, Trautwein, Holmes, and Singer (2017) supported the idea that better self-reflection can lead to greater awareness of another's perspective. Also, awareness of personal inner states from affective to cognitive may help students identify mental states of others (Bockler et al., 2017). Journaling



allowed students to process their inner feelings and thoughts in addition to cognitively processing the emotions of individuals who were hurting. In other words, affective and cognitive states worked together so students could take the perspectives of others, which is why PT further developed after journaling.

The teaching interventions positively affected all parts of empathy except emotion regulation (ER). ER takes time to learn, as seen by experienced social workers' recognition of emotional regulation and boundaries as issues working in the field, hence the high burnout rate. Findings from Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley, and Segal (2015) suggest that empathy may reduce burnout and should be a part of the social work curriculum as emotion regulation is part of the empathic process. Initially, the EAI confirmed that the teaching intervention significantly increased interpersonal empathy; however, ER needs to be targeted in future teaching interventions. Journaling increased PT significantly beyond the initial teaching intervention.

In comparison to the control, no empathic components resulted in significant results when comparing averages. The reason empathic components may not have grown significantly in comparison may have been due to the retest effect or because students may have initially overestimated their understanding of empathy. Additionally, students may have talked with others in the control group which could have skewed empathy results when compared. Going deeper into the study of empathy may have increased their awareness of the complexity of empathy and recognizing emotions, so they did not score themselves as high on the second and third tests. Thus, students may have initially overestimated their ability to recognize affect and differentiate from others. Relative to ER, as stated previously, it takes time to develop as part of emotional intelligence.

**Summary: Statistical significance found on all components of empathy using the EAI index except emotion regulation (ER) from pre to second measure:**

**Affective response:**

Level 1  $p = .006$   $M = 2.09$   $SD = .74$

Level 2  $M = 2.34$   $SD = .69$

**Affective mentalizing:**

Level 1  $p = .002$   $M = 1.85$   $SD = .69$

Level 2  $M = 2.24$   $SD = .66$

**Self-other awareness:**

Level 1  $p = .014$   $M = 1.80$   $SD = .64$

Level 2  $M = 2.15$   $SD = .73$

**Perspective-taking:**

Level 1  $p = .000$   $M = 1.83$   $SD = .63$

Level 2  $M = 2.15$   $SD = .73$

**Emotion regulation:**

Level 1  $p = .256$   $M = 1.93$   $SD = .71$

Level 2  $M = 2.05$   $SD = .71$

Failed to reject null on emotion regulation from level 1 to 2.

**Statistical significance on post-test after journaling from second measure on EAI:**

**Affective response:**  $p = .498$   $M = 2.42$   $SD = .67$  (did not decline)

**Affective mentalizing:**  $p = .096$   $M = 2.37$   $SD = .62$  (did not decline)

**Self-other awareness:**  $p = .570$   $M = 2.20$   $SD = .60$  (did not decline)

**Perspective-taking:**  $p = .033$   $M = 2.32$   $SD = .69$

(increased from  $M = 2.15$ )

**Emotion regulation:**  $p = .135$   $M = 2.19$   $SD = .56$  (did not decline)

Failed to reject the null on all components from level 2 to 3 except for perspective-taking.

*Research hypothesis 2*

Repeated Measures ANOVAs were run to determine if interpersonal empathy and social empathy increased after a teaching framework was introduced and debriefed using the ISEI. Pre and post tests were utilized with ISEI. Students also self-monitored for four weeks after the second measurement to see if self-awareness of empathic circumstances affected ISEI score from journaling. A third measure was conducted using the ISEI.

Affective response (AR) did not show significant growth on the ISEI. Again, new insight into the difficulty of understanding emotions in the study may have given participants insight into the complexity of empathy, just like with the EAI. Affective Mentalizing (AM) developed with the teaching interventions and journaling on the EAI but only on journaling for AM with the ISEI. This may have been an effect of retesting or using more than one test. One student stated the two tests were very similar. Cognitive empathy or AM did not increase after the teaching interventions, but it did with the journaling. This increase may have occurred as students were allowed to reason more in the journaling process. Self-other awareness (SOA) did grow with the teaching intervention and the game and with the journaling in contrast to the EAI.

Journaling allowed the opportunity to cognitively reason (self-reflect) more deeply in order to take the perspective of another and differentiate between feelings; however, the score was not as significant when compared to the control. Macro perspective-taking (Macro PT) did develop after the teaching intervention, but not further with the journaling. Macro PT may have initially grown, but in comparison, the growth was not significant, as it could have been impacted due to retesting or students may have initially scored themselves higher until they understood the complexity of empathy.

The most significant growth occurred in AM relative to interpersonal empathy on the ISEI. Again, journaling allowed students to process their inner feelings and thoughts in addition to viewing and seeking to understand the emotions of individuals who were hurting related to cognitive empathy. Gerdes et al. (2013) described empathy as an internal cognitive process supported by a comprehensive teaching strategy. Clark (2000) stated that focusing on elements of empathy can be a limitation for social empathy, as privilege needs to be acknowledged by participants relative to growing in self-awareness of biases. Discussion of privilege and bias were not included in the comprehensive teaching strategy but should be included in future plans.

When compared to the control, no empathic components showed significant development in the average. While there was significance between pre and post tests on AM and SOA overall on the ISEI, when groups were compared on the average, there was not significance.

**Summary: Statistical significance was not found on affective response or affective mentalizing, but was found on self-other awareness and macro perspective-taking from pre to second measure:**

**\*Affective response:**

Level 1  $p = .327$   $M = 2.32$   $SD = .65$

Level 2  $M = 2.39$   $SD = .74$

**\*Affective mentalizing:**

Level 1  $p = .090$   $M = 2.05$   $SD = .71$

Level 2  $M = 2.22$   $SD = .61$

**Self-other awareness:**

Level 1  $p = .003$   $M = 1.63$   $SD = .62$

Level 2  $M = 1.95$   $SD = .67$

**Macro PT:**

Level 1  $p = .044$   $M = 2.56$   $SD = .59$

Level 2  $M = 2.76$   $SD = .54$

\*Possible retest effect with second test. Failed to reject the null on affective response and affective mentalizing.

**Summary: Statistical significance from second measure to post:**

**Affective response:**  $p = .253$   $M = 2.49$   $SD = .67$   
(increased from  $M = 2.39$ )

**Affective mentalizing:**  $p = .011$   $M = 2.46$   $SD = .67$   
(increased from  $M = 2.22$ )

**Self-other awareness:**  $p = .006$   $M = 2.22$   $SD = .69$   
(increased from  $M = 1.95$ )

**Macro PT:**  $p = .486$   $M = 2.80$   $SD = .46$   
(increased from  $M = 2.76$ )

Failed to reject the null on affective response and macro PT from second measurement to post test. Accepted the alternative hypothesis on affective mentalizing and self-other awareness. The empathy program teaching intervention does impact empathy development as measured by the ISEI post tests for affective mentalizing and self-other awareness with journaling.

### *Research hypothesis 3*

Qualitative measures in the form of recorded group interviews, open-ended questions, and journaling were utilized and analyzed using content analysis to determine the effectiveness of using the serious game Spent, education on poverty, constructivist frameworks, and the latest neuroscience on empathy as preparation for understanding, experiencing, and processing empathy.

Eighty-four percent of the students stated that the teaching intervention and game were effective at developing empathy for people living in poverty. Of the sixteen percent of students who did not, one was already from a background of poverty, two wanted more concrete examples in teaching using role play, and one stated that he or she was not very empathic to begin with. The journaling did allow for the opportunity to practice perspective-taking and cognitive empathy (through reflecting on past experiences) which were indicated in their entries.

Using the model of social empathy by Segal (2011), content analysis provided insight into the development of empathy for people in poverty from qualitative data. The model of social empathy consisted of the three components: interpersonal empathy as a foundation (consisting of the empathic process of affective response, cognitive empathy, self-other awareness, which includes emotion regulation); this leads to the second component of contextual understanding of systemic barriers which allows for macro perspective-taking. When all components are present, they lead to the third component of a feeling of social responsibility according to the framework (Segal, 2011). The themes that emerged from the recorded focus group interviews were interpersonal and social empathy, as the perspective-taking led the participants to

understand that self-care and balance were sacrificed for survival as a result of ineffective systems. The lack of self-care and balance perpetuated the stressful lifestyle for people in generational poverty, according to students.

Student descriptions in the recorded group interviews, after playing the game *Spent*, were primarily positive related to empathic development. Students recognized affect, cognitively understood the emotions, and stated they could take the perspectives of parents and children indicating interpersonal empathy (also confirmed in quantitative analysis from growth in perspective-taking and affective mentalizing on the EAI and ISEI indexes, respectively). Rather than blaming individuals for poverty, many students reported the pressure of the systems and the difficulty with balance in life as the causes of stress and maintenance of poverty. Clark (2000) reported that for social empathy to develop, individuals need to understand different frames of reference (i.e., context and perspectives) and lived experiences in social locations. The teaching intervention did provide the context of lives in poverty by utilizing a PBS video and the game. Critically analyzing the experiences allowed the students to gain deeper insight. Interpersonal empathy and contextual understanding leading to macro perspective-taking were results indicated from content analysis.

The written open-ended questions by participants resulted in themes of interpersonal empathy related to perspective-taking and emotion regulation, as well as the motivation to act as a result of the teaching interventions connected to social responsibility. Carl Rogers (1975), in his seminal research, confirmed that people must sense first (e.g., affective response), then move to the discovery of meaning (by affective mentalizing and self-other awareness) to attain the viewpoint of another (perspective taking), and then move onto insight for the hurting individual which could lead to action. Students analyzed the reasons for poverty and were able to discern the viewpoints of parents and children then expressed a desire for social responsibility related to changed views and a commitment to helping people in poverty.

The EAI did confirm qualitative analysis since the areas that developed with the teaching interventions were affective response, affective mentalizing, self-other awareness, and perspective taking. In comparison to the control, no components were significant relative to interpersonal empathy on the EAI. The ISEI also confirmed this in comparison based on the average. As students did not score higher on the ISEI index related to macro or social empathy when compared with the control group, the results could be skewed as they may have reported their macro empathy as high initially on the index and rescoring it a second and third measure did not allow for the further growth to be indicated. Qualitative comments, though, did point to insights related to interpersonal empathy, macro perspective-taking, and social responsibility. All three components of the model of social empathy by Segal (2011) were evident in content analysis.

The open-ended questions were positive regarding empathic development. When asked if interventions increased empathy, 84% of students responded in the affirmative. The students also provided recommendations for future studies related to empathic development. Namely, they asked for more time with the breakouts after the game and for practicing scenarios. The open-ended questions asked students what caused poverty; students indicated insight, pointing to systems versus individual responsibility. These answers belied the quantitative results related to growth in macro empathy when compared to the control group. Qualitatively, the responses indicated insight into systemic inequalities and thus indicated growth in macro or social empathy. Further explanation to students of how to rank themselves on the index could have aided this study in quantitative results. The open-ended questions (as a result of teaching interventions and Spent) resulted in emergent themes of insight on perspectives of people in poverty (e.g., trapped, hard, anxiety, stress, and systemic racism), and the need for emotion regulation (empathy over sympathy, keep feelings separate). When perspective was attained, students reported motivation to help people in poverty: don't judge, be authentic, desire to help, be dedicated, increase awareness, don't stigmatize, and practice empathy with friends to improve on connections.

The journaling provided evidence of the interpersonal empathic process and allowed for students to reason cognitively in order to understand and take perspectives of individuals who were hurting. The journaling did not increase macro perspectives quantitatively, but it did increase individual perspective-taking from the EAI and affective mentalizing on the ISEI. Observation of the outcome provided verification of the full interpersonal empathic process being followed or not, which was an emergent theme and insight to the researcher. Students followed the empathic process, and significant growth was noted both quantitatively and qualitatively in affective mentalizing and perspective-taking. Much of the journaling related to interpersonal empathy versus macro or social empathy, though. Quantitatively, lack of further growth in macro empathy was confirmed by qualitative analysis. The student descriptions in journaling were primarily interpersonal. The reflections in the journals did match the lecture on the empathic process, and some students reasoned the difference between empathy and sympathy (also indicative of the effectiveness of the teaching intervention). The journaling also provided an additional theme of recognizing when empathy is accurately employed by watching for the response of the recipient of empathy. Noting the response to empathy helped participants to employ different methods to connect using empathy. Lack of empathy, or ineffective methods were also noted from the journaling. Noting the outcome of empathy can be included as part of a full interpersonal empathic process, Brown (2006) concurs that the empathic response can be powerful for healing and resilience.

### **Discussion**

The teaching intervention and game Spent hold promise to be effective tools to teach interpersonal and social empathy, but further research is needed for generalizability. Observing outcomes needs to be explained as part of the full interpersonal empathic process. Understanding a person's response to an empathic effort can provide guidance as to whether the social worker or helping professional is on the right track relative to supporting or empowering someone. Additionally, teaching of emotion regulation



(such as mindfulness, meditation, or prayer) as part of the empathic process can help social workers or helping professionals learn to improve on self-care and prevent burn-out. Emotion regulation did not increase significantly in the present study, thus it should be an area studied further in the education fields of helping professionals for curriculum development. A comprehensive teaching strategy has the potential, then, to transform the learner into an empathic helping professional. A comprehensive teaching strategy is critical due to the complexity of empathy as a quality in therapeutic alliances and for well-being of the people social workers help.

### **Contributions**

This study contributes to the field of social work education and future helping fields, as it has the potential of providing an effective and comprehensive teaching strategy in this initial research. The strategy utilizes teaching of the empathic process, based on the recent research on the neurobiology of how empathy is processed, along with debriefings or dialogic educational practices and the novel simulation Spent. The simulation was proven to be an active and engaging method, which can be effective in the development of empathy in contrast to the study by Roussos and Davidio (2016), who stated, “our data do not support the prejudice-reducing claims put forth by the creators of SPENT. ... In our study, playing SPENT had no positive effect on attitudes toward the poor” (p. 10). Spent may be effective if utilized in conjunction with the comprehensive teaching strategy. As part of the teaching strategy, experiences need to be processed for meaning and insights to be gained relative to empathy for people living in poverty. Processing of experiences needs to be considered in research for future game makers and current serious games or simulations.

### **Limitations and Generalizability of the Findings**

Due to a small and homogenous convenient sample size ( $n = 52$ ), generalizability is not possible except to smaller, conservative universities. However, additional research with larger institutions could further validate the effectiveness of the teaching intervention along with the game Spent to develop empathy. Additionally,

diversity was not low related to ethnicity, race, and age. Research with diverse groups could add to this body of research. The sample consisted primarily of White (70% White, 20% African American, 10% Hispanic/Latino), female (65% female, 35% male) traditional undergraduate students at a Christian college due to convenience sampling based on availability to this researcher.

Time was additionally a factor, as empathy was taught in a 5-week timespan. A full semester using the comprehensive teaching strategy with Spent, along with journaling and adding the history of other at-risk groups (which has the potential to increase social empathy), could improve the results. This study did not validate that increasing interpersonal empathy leads to social empathy quantitatively on the indexes; however, the qualitative results indicated increased interpersonal empathy and macro perspective-taking related to social empathy.

Further educating participants on how to score themselves on the indexes could have helped participants on outcomes related to measuring growth. The indexes are self-reports, thus actual measurements of an increase in social actions could provide further quantitative proof of empathic development.

### **Concluding Statement**

Teaching empathy is difficult due to its complexity as a construct and its necessity as an attribute in the helping fields, but it should be an ongoing endeavor as part of the core curriculum in the social work program. The empathic process can be introduced to form a base; however, ongoing growth means practice both through novel simulations and real-life experiences, interpersonally and socially. Additionally, education of the need to observe a person's response as a recipient of empathy should be emphasized as part of the full empathic process. Experiences need to be debriefed and processed as well, as that is how meaning is attained using social constructivism and critical pedagogy in a comprehensive teaching strategy. Emotional regulation is difficult to teach, but it is another necessary component as burnout is high within many helping

professions. Constructively planning lessons on empathy (to include emotion regulation and monitoring responses to empathy, which can help with connection), practicing empathy (through role play, novel simulations, and real-life experiences), and critically processing these experiences have the potential to transform college students into competent helping professionals able to effectively address the mental health and aging needs in society.

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## TAMMY PATTON

**Associate Professor  
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Tammy Patton is an Associate Professor at Union University as well as a licensed therapist in the local area for children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). She has taught at Union University for 12 years in the School of Social Work. She also teaches yoga (since spring 2023) at Union. Prior to higher education, she was in medical social work for 20 years. Currently, Patton is also a volunteer Building Strong Brains Presenter through the Building Strong Brains Initiative with the state of Tennessee since 2017. She has authored the dissertation *Teaching Empathy Using Engaging Methods: A Journey to Transformation* (2019). Her most recent publication is *Instructors Resources for the Sixth Edition of Christianity and Social Work* (2020).

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# MATHEMATICS & FAITH: A PATH FOR INTEGRATION

**Matt D. Lunsford**

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As members of the Academy who are employed in Christian higher education, we have a peculiar requirement in our vocation. We are called to think Christianly about our work in general and about our discipline in particular. This path for integration of faith and discipline often can seem to be a one-way road where faculty only use the Bible or a prescribed canon taken from the Christian intellectual tradition (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Lewis, etc.) to understand their discipline but not the reverse. It is generally left to the faculty member to discover how to integrate this additional content within the context of the discipline. Here, I postulate the path to a robust form of integration is, in fact, a two-way street, in which Holy Scripture and the Christian intellectual tradition inform our view of the discipline and how we teach it, and our discipline illuminates our understanding of the Christian faith and our ability to communicate this faith effectively. The goal of this essay is to explore a path for integration of faith and the discipline of mathematics. To do so, I will begin by discussing three aspects of my discipline: *language*, *nature*, and *contribution*.

## **Three Aspects of Mathematics**

### *Language*

Creation is a gallery, full of intrinsic beauty. The feat of expressing this beauty with fidelity requires rigorously defined terminology. An inherent preciseness is required to ensure that we humans, as universally as possible, comprehend the terminology uniformly. Mathematics provides such a *language*. Defining terms with prudence is the starting point for conventional mathematics. Mathematical language is characterized by clarity, precision,

universality, and, whenever possible, simplicity. Not unlike an ordinary dictionary, which defines words using other words, the mathematical vocabulary, to avoid circular reasoning, must have terms which remain undefined. Obviously, these undefined terms should constitute as small a set of words as possible. For example, a mathematician studying geometry must define “right angle” before using that term in any formal way. Assuming the terms used here either have been defined previously or have been designated as undefined terms, a mathematician defines “right angle” as an angle formed by two lines intersecting to form equal adjacent angles. Continuing in this same manner, precise mathematical definitions of more challenging concepts such as symmetry, similarity, congruence, dimension, infinity, chance, paradox, contradiction, order, and chaos can be established. In many ways, the language of mathematics is ideal for describing creation’s beauty.

### *Nature*

The *nature* of mathematics is discovering mathematical truth. The mathematician follows a rigorous method for establishing mathematical truth: definition→axiom→conjecture→proof→theorem. As we have seen, definitions are essential to the language of mathematics. Axioms are statements that are assumed to be true without the requirement of a proof. For example, the statement “all right angles are equal” is considered an axiom of geometry by mathematicians. This claim seems self-evident from the aforementioned definition of right angle; therefore, no additional logical argument is required. Beyond a minimal set of mutually agreed upon axioms, any statement that is claimed to be true requires a mathematical proof. A mathematician often begins with a conjecture, that is, a statement that seems plausible considering the definitions, axioms, and theorems that already have been established. If an unerring logical argument can be presented (i.e., a mathematical proof), then the statement moves from the category of conjectures to the category of theorems. Typically, a proof requires not only deductive reasoning but also creativity and imagination. Mathematical truth produced in this manner exhibits permanence, in that, if we continue working within the same framework of

definitions and axioms, known as an axiomatic system, then the theorems proven will remain true. Conversely, if a statement is false in the axiomatic system, then it always will be false within that system.

An example of a timeless mathematical truth is the Pythagorean theorem, which states that a square constructed upon the hypotenuse (the longest side) of a right triangle (i.e., a triangle with a right angle) is equal in area to the sum of the areas of the squares constructed upon the two legs (the remaining sides) of the right triangle. It is believed that the Greek philosopher Pythagoras discovered this theorem around 400 B.C. If he or any of his followers gave a proof of this theorem, then that proof has been lost. Fortunately, an ingenious proof of this theorem appears in *Elements*, written by Euclid around 300 B.C. After constructing squares on each side of the right triangle, Euclid sections the square on the hypotenuse into two smaller rectangles. He then proves that the area of each rectangle corresponds exactly to the area of one of the squares constructed on the legs.

Two millennia later, the character Scarecrow in the classic movie *The Wizard of Oz*, upon receiving his diploma—which apparently signified the miraculous appearance of a missing brain—says these words: “The sum of the square roots of any two sides of an isosceles triangle is equal to the square root of the remaining side” [1]. By the way, an isosceles triangle is a triangle for which exactly two of its three sides have the same length. How is one to decide if this statement is true or false? The nature of mathematics dictates that one should be able to demonstrate either a proof of this statement, thus establishing it as mathematical truth, or provide a counterexample to this statement and assign it to the trash heap of falsehoods. In this case, a counterexample is readily produced. In fact, I challenge the reader to find even one isosceles triangle for which Scarecrow’s conjecture is true.

Unfortunately, mathematics has limits when it comes to establishing its own truth. Because of Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorems,



there exist well-formed mathematical statements within a given axiomatic system that lie outside the purview of a proof. Hence, the truth value of these mathematical statements is unknown. Mathematicians generally believe that these statements are rather complex and therefore are not a hindrance to the routine work of producing mathematical truth. However, if it makes sense to talk about absolute truth within a given axiomatic system, then mathematicians are aware that absolute truth within a given axiomatic system is not synonymous with mathematical truth since the latter can never encompass the former. That is, if we assume that mathematical statements are either true or false, then there exist true statements within the system that cannot be proved.

### *Contribution*

A remarkable *contribution* of mathematics to human society is its ability to impart understanding. How does mathematical truth discovered within an axiomatic system convey knowledge of the real world? One primary way involves the creation of mathematical models of reality. Working within well-formed models, mathematicians, engineers, scientists, financial analysts, and others can analyze and obtain truths about the real world and even predict what will happen in the future. Mathematics advances our understanding of the past, present, and future status of whatever the researcher attempts to model. Of course, these mathematical models are not exact.

The knowledge derived from mathematics has changed our everyday lives. We drive cars, ride in subways, fly in airplanes, use laptops and smartphones, receive urgent health care, yet somehow we remain unaware that the understanding mathematics brings is essential for all of these technologies. There is a recent joke of a person on social media lamenting that another day has passed without having to use the Pythagorean theorem. Actually, the Pythagorean theorem has been in continual use since its discovery. The theorem yields the mathematical formula for measuring distances in two and three dimensions. In current times, because the result is so fundamental, the actual statement of the theorem

is often hidden from view. For instance, our society is enamored with flat screens, and the instructions for the pixels in those flat screens are determined in part by their relative distance from an initial locus. In fact, any technique for lighting an image or scene that calculates illumination for each pixel, such as per-pixel lighting, necessarily utilizes the relative location of each pixel on the rendered image. So, whether one is watching digital TV, or playing a 3-D video game, or just tapping, swiping, or dragging on a smartphone, the Pythagorean theorem is there, working in the background, making this technology function.

### **A Path for Integration**

How can one integrate mathematics and the Christian faith? How does one think Christianly about mathematics? Is it possible that not only the skills acquired from studying mathematics (critical thinking, problem solving, struggling with a difficult problem, etc.) but also the content of mathematics is transferable to an integrated life? To address these questions, consider a passage of scripture from the New Testament. 1 Peter 3:15 commands, “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect” [2]. Serious consideration of this passage reveals that words (“to give an account”) and truth (“to make a defense”) and understanding (“for the hope that is in you”) are key components of a faithful life.

Communicating the richness of the Christian faith demands *language* sufficiently robust to articulate our thoughts fully. Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Pascal, and Lewis have used mathematical language to enlighten and clarify their thoughts. Similarly, we can use mathematical language to clarify, to construct analogies, and to make claims. One literary example is Edwin Abbott’s novella *Flatland* [3]. In this work, Abbott uses the subject matter of geometry and the concept of dimensionality to create an analogy for the gulf that exists between a lost unregenerate person and a spiritually regenerate one [4].

We are truth-seekers, and fortunately for us, we can draw upon the work of theologians over two millennia who have studied the scriptures to aid us in our defense of the faith. However, when doctrinal differences arise, as they certainly have in the past, how does one decide which path leads to the best orthodoxy? One potential tool in our arsenal is the model used by mathematicians for seeking mathematical truth. Like the *nature* of mathematics, the systematic theologian seeks to define terminology precisely (definitions), to state in advance all suppositions believed to be true without additional justification (axioms), and then proceeds to deduce doctrinal statements (theorems) from this structure. The 20th century British scholar C. S. Lewis exemplifies this approach in his apologetic work *Mere Christianity*. Applying this model, we have a valuable resource to enhance our defense of the faith.

Mathematics enhances our understanding of God’s creation and therefore has *contributed* greatly to the advancement of human civilization. As believers, we acknowledge the often-positive contributions of mathematics to human society, but we also realize that “the hope that is” [2] in each of us is not to be found in human knowledge or its applications. We place our hope neither in mathematics nor in the technologies it facilitates, for these will not provide the redemption for which the creation groans. Our hope is in “Christ as Lord” [2] and in Him alone. Though our hope is in Christ and not in mathematics, we remain grateful for the ways mathematics facilitates the purposes of Christ’s kingdom here on earth.

Thinking Christianly about the discipline of mathematics is a two-way road. The language of mathematics allows us to use an expanded vocabulary to communicate the beauty of creation as well as a deeper understanding of our faith. The nature of mathematics provides us with a coherent model for demonstrating truth through rational means. The contribution of mathematics to human understanding gives us new ways to appreciate the design of creation and to improve the physical condition of our human society. Mathematics, through both its content and the skills

its study produces, remains an integral part of a liberal arts education and facilitates a vibrant path for the integration of faith and discipline.

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## MATT D. LUNSFORD

### **University Professor of Mathematics**



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Matt D. Lunsford is a University Professor of Mathematics at Union University where he has been a faculty member since 1993. He holds a doctorate in mathematics from Tulane University. His current research interests include classical Galois theory and finite fields. He and his wife Deanna have three grown children: Cara (UU '16), Thomas (UU '19), and Emma; one son-in-law: Brennan Kolbe (UU '16); and one adorable granddaughter, Eana.

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## A VISUAL RESPONSE TO MARC CHAGALL'S *WHITE CRUCIFIXION*

**Christopher Nadaskay**

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Chagall's 1938 painting, *White Crucifixion*, which is currently part of the collection of The Art Institute of Chicago, has been the subject of a great deal of scholarly research and supposition. I recently found myself enamored of what I believe to be one of his most extraordinary works, and it is curiosity, not academic investigation, that has fueled my interest in the painting. As a painter, I was drawn to it for both its formal aspects and content.

I recently saw a Facebook post in which contemporary Japanese-American painter Makoto Fujimura was contemplating paintings by Agnes Martin at Pace Galleries in New York City.<sup>1</sup> In the post, he makes a statement about "contemplation," asking us to consider the notion that paintings can be beautiful in simplicity, demanding that the viewer examine them more closely and seek the truth found therein. It is not something that can happen in the space of a few moments—as in the fast-paced world of billboards—but requires a deeper searching, a contemplative act on the part of the viewer if he or she is to gain entrance into the meaning and fullness of beauty found in the work. I was challenged by his approach to viewing a painting in this manner.

As I considered the painting by Chagall, I was struck by the time and concentration required to interpret and fully realize his intentions for the work. As a believer in Christ, of course I found the image of my Savior emotionally stirring. Such an interpretation is quick and profound, yet to really understand the

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1 See: <https://www.pacegallery.com/artists/agnes-martin/>

work, it must be viewed more intentionally, contemplatively, and perhaps, prayerfully.

Chagall's later work is sometimes touted as too sweet, "too codified and inauthentic"<sup>2</sup> due to symbols that have been used for centuries. I feel this is a rather simplistic view brought on by the idea that every work of art must be "relevant" to the current generation. It is also a "knee jerk" method of interpreting his work, believing that initial impression/interpretation is all that there is to see. I feel relevance is not measured by time *period* but by timelessness itself. In that sense, Chagall's images are timeless and relevant to a much larger historical audience. They help us to see more fully what it means to be human.

In my opinion, Chagall seems to be trying to connect to the universally understood human condition of suffering for one's faith and/or ethnicity. The connections to his Jewish heritage and the Holocaust are obvious and there appears to me, as a painter seeking to connect in a more meaningful way with the image, a use of color and movement that speaks deeply to my personal aesthetic. I am particularly moved by his use of white in the crucifixion itself, which speaks to me of the purity of faith and personal sacrifice.

The painting, which depicts several references to the suffering of the Jews in Russia during the pogroms of the 1930's, also seems to make a comparison of their struggles with the crucifixion of Christ. This juxtaposition is interesting and brings to mind several possibilities that I find intriguing. It is rather large, coming in at 61" x 55"; it is meant, therefore, to be viewed both up close *and* at a distance. In order to fully grasp the compositional beauty of the painting, I believe that it must be viewed at a distance of 8–10 feet. While I cannot verify these thoughts through his writings and interviews, I believe Chagall was seeking to compose the space in a "wholeness"—a unity whereby the images presented are intended to be part of a whole, that we should view the painting as such—associating all of the images together with the juxtaposition of

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2 Gabriella Costa, Vasari Lecture, 2017.

meanings leading to higher, more profound thoughts and reactions. Thus, the distance at which we view the painting helps to facilitate meaning and intention.

It is a beautifully subtle painting, the color scheme suggesting ashes as well as the more obvious symbolic use of yellows, oranges, and reds. Chagall is a master of color symbolism, and it is spell-binding. For me, the investigative processes used in art history scholarship don't often include a deep understanding of the communicative aspects of brushwork, subtle tonal variations of color, or textural considerations, nor an emotive and direct investigation of the movements made by the artist's hand in making the painting. These are things that a painter is uniquely suited to contemplate.

The suffering of Christ for Chagall, and perhaps his people at that time and place, may have been a means for them to connect together all of the sufferings of the Jews, past, present, and perhaps, for a very uncertain future.

### A Visual Response



Inis vitae sed non amoris ("The end of life, but not of love."); 24" W x 30" H,  
Acrylic, Aluminized Reflective Data Coating, Ashes, Purified Water, and Tears on  
Canvas, 2022

Yiddish:

רעבאָ, נבעל וואָס רעד  
עביל וואָס טשיינ



As a part of my investigation of his work, I embarked on a visual exploration—a painting intended as a type of response—and have sought to treat the subject through the eyes of an artist and believer in Christ. While Chagall did not intend to use the crucifixion of Christ as a promotion of Christianity (and maybe not even the Jewish faith), he did, at least for me, make a direct connection with my own faith. While some may say that it is not logical to make an equitable comparison between the suffering of Christ and the suffering of Jews during the pogroms or the six million murdered in the Holocaust, I would defend my belief by saying that the sacrifice of Christ was for the suffering in sin of every living human.

To put it very simply, in this painting, I hoped to touch, through visual language and paint, these contemplative aspects of Chagall's work. I would like the viewer to respond to the work with questions that they themselves alone, must in seeking, answer. How does a pogrom come to exist in a culture and time period? Why, in both my work and Chagall's, does Christ appear to be so peaceful? How does my emotional response to these works differ and how is it shaped by my culture?

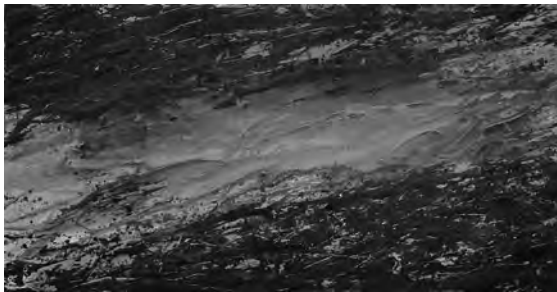
A description of the work follows: For me, ashes became a symbol of lives destroyed by hatred—of homes and personal belongings ruined. I was reminded of an artist's story about the visual response she made after the World Trade Center in New York City was destroyed by terrorists. Collecting ash from the destruction, she made of it ink for printmaking. The material significance of an expressive medium made from the ashes of human disaster struck a chord with me. So, I sought to symbolically represent the destruction of the pogroms by making my own ash, actually thinking about the abject hatred it took to destroy the homes and lives of thousands of people. Reflective data coating, another medium used in my painting, brings my own life into the visual narrative. The significance of digital data (gathered from numerous DVDs containing stored personal files) is a reminder that I, too, was a responsible party in the crucifixion of Christ.

The Jews were forced to abandon their homes and move to the “Pale of Settlement,” a region in western Russia reserved only for them and from which they could not leave—an apparent pre-cursor of the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. The words Program - Programming - Press - Propaganda - Pale - Proscription - Pogrom are repeated over and over in my painting, indicative of how we as humans so easily move toward and embrace hatred.

The color and paint application reflect blood, destruction, and chaos. God is a God of order, not chaos. Chaos in this work represents sin and evil. The simplicity, whiteness, subtle color, and purity of the Christ figure in my painting is in competition with the visually dominant words. I see this as a reminder of contemporary pogroms waged against Christians and ethnic groups around the world. In a way, Chagall hinted that such hatred will always be present toward Jews, various races, and, in my view, Christians as well.

The title was purposefully chosen to speak to the distance that an interpretation in Latin (a dead language) creates in the viewer. Chagall’s true intentions cannot be known due to the distance created by time and our cultural differences. We do know—whatever his reasons—that they were important to him. As part of the title, I have also attempted a translation into Yiddish, a language he would have known intimately.

Another painting completed as part of this ekphrastic response to Chagall follows. It is mixed media that utilizes aluminized reflective data coating, crushed glass, ashes, tears, and blood on canvas.



Title: *a'a*      Size: 72.5"x 36.25"

This second work titled *a’a* (pronounced ‘ah ah’) is a word that refers to sharp, rough lava.<sup>3</sup> In this context, I am using lava as a symbol for anger and hatred. My thoughts on this work again revolve around the issue of persecution, thinking of my own faith, in relation to the pogroms of Chagall’s time. It refers to Christians in 2022. According to Open Doors ministry, “5,898 Christians were killed last year for faith related reasons.”<sup>4</sup> Color choices are often used by artists to display certain emotional states, for instance, dark reds can cause the viewer to feel disturbed when viewing a work. Thus, the colors used are intended to convey a sense of my emotions as I consider such tragedy. There is, however, beauty to be found in this painting as well. Within the countries listed below, there are believers sacrificing their lives to see their fellow countrymen saved. There is, I believe, great beauty in that kind of love. This dichotomy was interesting to pursue in visual terms.

The following is a list of places in the world where believers in Christ have experienced a variety of forms of persecution:

Afghanistan	Algeria	Bangladesh	Bhutan
Brunei	Cameroon	Central African Republic	China
Colombia	Congo DR		Cuba
Egypt	Eritrea	Ethiopia	India
Indonesia	Iran	Iraq	Jordan
Kazakhstan	Kuwait	Laos	Libya
Malaysia	Mali	Mauritania	Mexico
Morocco	Mozambique	Myanmar	Nepal
Niger	Nigeria	North Korea	Oman
Pakistan	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Somalia
Sudan	Syria	Tajikistan	Tunisia
Turkey	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	Vietnam
Yemen			

3 Glosbe Dictionary, <https://glosbe.com/en/haw/a'a>), and to “burn, blaze” in the Hawaiian language (Hawaiian Electronic Library, <https://wehewehe.org/gsd12.85/cgi-bin/hdict?e=q-11000-00---off-0hdict--00-1----0-10-0---0---0direct-10-ED--4-textpukuieibert%2ctextmamaka----0-11--11-haw-Zz-1---Zz-1-home-a%27a--00-4-1-00-0-4----0-0-11-00-OutfZz-8-00&a=d&d=D6>).

4 See: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>

You will find the names of these countries in the painting. As in the previous painting, ashes are a symbol of the death and destruction wrought by those who would persecute people of faith. Crushed glass reminds me of the town of Smyrna that experienced great persecution in the early Christian era, as well as the broken, shattered, and crushed lives of martyrs today. The name Smyrna became synonymous with the word “crushed,” both due to the manner in which myrrh was processed there as well as the suffering that occurred there.<sup>5</sup>

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## CHRISTOPHER NADASKAY

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Christopher Nadaskay is an artist and University Professor of Art at Union where he has served for 30 years. He is a graduate of Southern Arkansas University and Texas A&M Commerce where he received his B.A. and M.F.A. in Painting/Studio. His mediums have included watercolor, oils, acrylics, and various sculpture mediums. Working in primarily in mixed-media painting and ceramics, he is interested in the relationship between technology, the human experience, and the created order. He has works in several collections, including the Tennessee State Museum.

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<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Revelation 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 69.

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# J. S. BACH'S VOCATION AS A LATTER-DAY LEVITE TEMPLE MUSICIAN

**Joshua Veltman**

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The music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) commands admiration and respect from all quarters, from concert halls around the world to the halls of academe, from musical novices to connoisseurs, and from classical stars to icons of jazz and rock. Bach's deep and enduring devotion to his Lutheran faith, while a source of embarrassment for some or indifference for others,<sup>1</sup> is nevertheless a defining feature of the composer's legacy and a source of great encouragement and inspiration for like-minded believers. Bach served all his life as a leader of music in the employment of various churches and aristocratic patrons, so it would not be without justification to look to him as a paragon of the pursuit of music as a vocation, that is, as one's calling in life as a Christian.

Apart from Bach's exemplary life and music, did he ever make explicit his own views on how a life in music could serve as a faithful witness to God's glory and goodness? The prime candidate for a statement of this nature, one that seems to express Bach's sense of vocation, was made in his request for dismissal from his job as organist at the Church of St. Blasius in Mühlhausen. This was Bach's second professional position and one he had held for a little less than a year. The document, dated June 25, 1708, was occasioned by the 23-year-old Bach receiving a call to serve as court organist for the Duke of Weimar. He wrote:

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1 See Calvin R. Stapert, *My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of J. S. Bach* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 5, and Calvin R. Stapert, *J. S. Bach* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009), 8.

. . . I should always have liked to work toward the goal, namely, a well-regulated church music, to the Glory of God . . . yet it has not been possible to accomplish this without hindrance, and there are, at present, hardly any signs that in the future a change may take place . . . Now, God has brought it to pass that an unexpected change should offer itself to me, in which I see the possibility of a more adequate living and the achievement of my goal of a well-regulated church music without further vexation, since I have received the gracious admission of His Serene Highness of Saxe-Weimar into his Court Capelle and Chamber Music.<sup>2</sup>

The original German word translated as “goal” here is *Endzweck*. It carries the connotation of ultimate aim or purpose,<sup>3</sup> and is thus compatible with the notion of vocation or life’s calling. Bach’s self-identified vocation, then, was to establish a “well-regulated church music to the Glory of God.”

At first glance, the matter of Bach’s own conception of his vocation would appear to be settled by this statement. Difficulties arise, however, when one attempts to pinpoint exactly what he meant by “well-regulated church music” and to assess the extent to which he actually achieved that goal. Central to these questions are the natures of the “hindrances” and “vexations” encountered by Bach in Mühlhausen that caused him to request dismissal from his post after only eleven months. Bach’s many biographers and scholarly commentators over the years have opined on these issues, but a clear and uncontested interpretation has not emerged. The various interpretations, to a greater or lesser degree, leave certain questions

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2 Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, eds., *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, rev. and enl. Christoph Wolff (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 57.

3 *Endzweck* is often rendered as “ultimate goal” or “ultimate aim” in other translations of this letter.

unresolved. Each attempt opens up a helpful but ultimately incomplete viewpoint onto how Bach thought about his vocation. The whole scene comes sharply into view, however, when observed through the lens of Bach's sense of calling as an inheritor of the legacy of the Levite temple musicians of the Old Testament.

The idea that Bach identified and resonated with the Levite temple musicians is derived from a few main lines of evidence. In a scene from his masterly and beautiful documentary on the life of Bach, Sir John Eliot Gardiner says:

I have in my hand what was probably the most precious book of Bach's childhood, certainly the one that he used every single day of his life until he left Eisenach. It's the *Eisenachischen Gesangbuch*, the song book, used in church and used in school, and it has wonderful copper engravings which show David and Solomon in the Temple, surrounded by their temple musicians. And the connections that Bach must have made in his mind between his family, the most famous musicians in the area, with the long dynastic lineage going all the way back to Solomon . . .<sup>4</sup>

The young Johann Sebastian envisioned here by Gardiner had come from a long line of musicians. Members of the Bach clan were so prevalent in musical occupations of one sort or another throughout the Thuringian region of Germany that the name "Bach" had become all but synonymous with "musician." Just as the Levites among the Twelve Tribes of Israel were responsible, by the Lord's command, for all priestly functions relating to the Tabernacle and then the Temple, including musical worship, so too the Bachs carried on their divinely appointed, hereditary profession of church musician. Or so the thought went in the young Sebastian Bach's mind, according to Gardiner. Perhaps it is a stretch to imagine that a schoolboy would have articulated such a close analogy between the

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<sup>4</sup> John Eliot Gardiner, *Bach: A Passionate Life*, prod. and dir. Cesca Eaton and David Jeffcock (BBC, 2014), DVD. <https://youtu.be/3ZVn9NZqyxs>, 10:41.

Levites and the Bachs in his mind, but it seems plausible that at least the seed of the idea was planted by repeated viewings of the engraving in the *Eisenachischen Gesangbuch*.<sup>5</sup>

Decades later, that seed sprouted and bore fruit when a fifty-year-old J. S. Bach, by then installed in his final and longest-lasting position as Cantor of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, drew up a family tree, which he entitled “Origin of the Musical Bach Family.”<sup>6</sup> This was not an ordinary family tree but a *musical* family tree; Bach included only those ancestors who had been professional musicians and left the rest out. Furthermore, all the figures were men; this patrilineal focus was in keeping with the social norms of the time, but it also echoed an ancient Israelite society in which husbands were the public-facing members of the household. That Bach chose his fiftieth year to draw up a musical family tree, and to assemble a collection of his ancestors’ compositions at the same time, carries special significance, according to Mary Dalton Greer:

His heightened interest in preserving his family’s history in 1735 may have been prompted, at least in part, by the injunction in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus to hallow one’s fiftieth year as a jubilee year and to return to one’s family and property. Bach may have carried out this command figuratively by preparing the family tree and genealogy and by compiling the Old Bach Archive.<sup>7</sup>

Greer convincingly supports this claim by pointing to evidence for Bach’s careful reading of and obedience to the Scriptures, as well as to his affinity for Levite temple musicians like Asaph and his descendants.

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5 The engraving in question is reproduced in John Eliot Gardiner, *Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), plate 1.

6 “*Ursprung der musicalisch-Bachischen Familie*” is the original German title. For a picture of the tree, see Stapert, *J. S. Bach*, 14-15.

7 Mary Dalton Greer, “From the House of Aaron to the House of Johann Sebastian: Old Testament Roots for the Bach Family Tree,” in *About Bach*, 15-32, Gregory G. Butler, George B. Stauffer, and Mary Dalton Greer, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 15-16.



Such evidence comes in the form of the numerous highlights, corrections, and marginal comments made by Bach in his copy of the so-called Calov Bible, which thankfully has survived to the present day.<sup>8</sup> He must have taken a keen interest in I Chronicles 23-25, which details how an elderly King David, after having passed the throne to his son Solomon, organized the members of the tribe of Levi for service in the soon-to-be-built temple. Some of the Levites were assigned to the task of providing music for worship:

David and the officers of the army also set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, who were to prophesy accompanied by lyres, harps, and cymbals . . . They numbered 288 together with their relatives who were all trained and skillful in music for the Lord. (I Chronicles 25:1a, 7, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*)

In this passage, Bach underlined the proper names as well as the names of the instruments, then added in the margin that “[t]his chapter is the true foundation of all God-pleasing church music.”<sup>9</sup> Significantly for Bach, musical worship in the temple was to be provided by both singers and instrumentalists, all of whom were “trained and skillful.” Furthermore, these prescriptions were no mere human invention. In another note in the margin next to I Chronicles 28:21, Bach wrote: “Splendid proof that, besides other arrangements of the service of worship, music too was instituted by the Spirit of God through David.”<sup>10</sup> These various lines of evidence build up a picture of a man who, taking his cue from the Levite temple musicians that he read about in the Bible, felt a calling to develop a divinely-ordained worship music that was amply provisioned and skillfully performed.

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8 The remarkable story of the provenance of Bach’s Calov Bible is recounted in Robin A. Leaver, *J. S. Bach and Scripture: Glosses from the Calov Bible Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 16-21.

9 Leaver, *J. S. Bach and Scripture*, 93.

10 Leaver, *J. S. Bach and Scripture*, 95.

This faith-inspired calling of Bach's carries strong explanatory power for the various data of his life and career. In witness to the faith that Bach brought to bear upon his musical activities, he often wrote "JJ" or "Jesu, juva" (Jesus, help) at the top of the score when embarking upon a new composition, and, upon its completion, he often wrote "SDG" or "Soli Deo Gloria" ("To God alone be the glory") at the bottom. The latter was, of course, one of the Five Solas of the Reformation. A related testament to the role of faith in his music, or, more properly, the role of music in his faith, comes from an unlikely source: a little manual on figured bass playing that he put together for some students in Leipzig. Here he said that "just as with all music, so also the purpose and ultimate cause of the figured bass should be nothing other than the honor of God and the recreation of the soul; where this is not observed, it's not proper music, but a devilish clatter and droning."<sup>11</sup> For Bach, music is worthless if it is not done for the glory of God. The wording of the statement is reminiscent of Bach's Mühlhausen letter, where he wrote that his ultimate goal was not just a well-regulated church music, but a well-regulated church music *to the glory of God*. With so much focus on the meaning of "well-regulated church music" in the literature, it is easy to forget the rest of the sentence.

A common interpretation among Bach scholars is that Bach finally achieved his "ultimate goal" when he composed the multiple annual cycles of church cantatas in his first years as Cantor of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig.<sup>12</sup> This cantata-focused view makes the mistake of seeing Bach from the modern-day vantage point of Bach primarily as a composer. But Bach the temple musician saw his role as participating in the worship of God in His sanctuary. Bach was an

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11 Quoted in Christhard Mahrenholz, "Johann Sebastian Bach und der Gottesdienst seiner Zeit," in *Musicologica et Liturgica: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Karl Ferdinand Müller (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1960), 211. Translated by the author.

12 See, for example, C. H. Bitter, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, vol. 1, second revised and enlarged edition (Berlin: Wilhelm Baensch, 1881), 91-92, Alfred Dürr, *Studien über die frühen Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs*, improved and expanded edition (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1977), 223, and Ulrich Siegele, "Bachs Endzweck einer regulierten und Entwurf einer wohlbestallten Kirchenmusik," in *Festschrift Georg von Dadelsen zum 60. Geburtstag*, 313-51, Thomas Kohlhase and Volker Scherliess, eds. (Stuttgart: Hänssler-Verlag, 1978), 314.

all-around musician who composed, performed, conducted, taught, and organized—whatever was necessary to elevate church music for the glory of God. Composing was just one part of his overall activity, done in support of his calling. The cantatas were composed *in service* to this end, but they were not the end in themselves. A problem remains, however: what explains Bach’s preoccupation not just with cantatas but with complete annual cycles of cantatas? Does a project of that scope not suggest something like a life’s goal? Not necessarily. The explanation lies with a feature of Bach’s personality that Stapert has called his “*summa* mentality,” which entails an orientation toward “summing up and being encyclopedic.”<sup>13</sup> The pioneering biographer C. H. Bitter also noticed Bach’s desire for “systematic order and completeness” early on.<sup>14</sup> Stapert further explains that *summa* also connotes “bringing . . . some area of knowledge . . . to its highest development,” and proceeds to show how many of the collections Bach is famous for, such as the Brandenburg Concertos, The Well-Tempered Clavier, the Goldberg Variations, and many others, are manifestations of his *summa* mentality.<sup>15</sup> In a similar way, Bach created cantata cycles that were comprehensive in their annual scope, but he also took cantata composition to new heights of excellence. In the Leipzig cantatas, Bach synthesized the best of the old and new, blending *stile antico* with *stile moderno* elements, traditional choral writing with fashionable opera-like solo numbers, and simple Lutheran chorale tunes with complex counterpoint.<sup>16</sup> Martin Geck suggests that Bach’s *summa* mentality extended beyond individual genres to music itself:

When Bach spoke of an ultimate goal . . . he wished systematically to conquer the realm of music in its various provinces . . . The course of Bach’s life and work aimed at the ultimate goal of exploring and mastering the orbit of music in all directions—

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13 Stapert, *My Only Comfort*, 45.

14 Bitter, 91.

15 Stapert, *My Only Comfort*, 45-46.

16 Mahrenholz, 216.

preserving what was there and discovering what was new.<sup>17</sup>

There is truth in what Geck says about Bach's systematic approach to elevating music as a whole, but he is mistaken in conflating Bach's *Endzweck* with this all-of-music *summation*. He makes the same error noted above of focusing primarily on Bach the composer instead of Bach the church musician.

Bach's meticulous attention to the liturgy, particularly in his cantatas from the Weimar and Leipzig eras, lends further credence to the temple-musician view of his vocation. Christhard Mahrenholz observes that, during Bach's time some 200 years beyond the start of the Reformation, the traditional Lutheran liturgy was already somewhat moribund: "the traditional service . . . was retained simply because it was there . . . and there was little inclination to defend it."<sup>18</sup> Bach's cantatas cut against that trend, however. The Lutheran lectionary prescribed particular readings from the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles for any given Sunday. Cantatas were typically performed directly after the Gospel reading of the day. It would have been easy to program some generic and pleasant "special music" to follow the reading. That's far from what Bach did, of course. Sometimes in collaboration with others, he chose scriptural and poetic texts that had direct topical connections to the Gospel lesson. According to Stapert, the cantatas "functioned something like musical sermons."<sup>19</sup> Bach's skill as a composer allowed him to express the affect and meaning of the texts through musical rhetoric and clever symbolism. In this way he provided a kind of wordless commentary on the Gospel reading. He was probably better qualified than most to provide this sort of commentary. The contents of his personal book collection show that he was widely read in theology.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, he had been able to pass the required oral exam in theology before assuming his post as

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17 Martin Geck, "The Ultimate Goal of Bach's Art," trans. Alfred Mann, *Bach* 35, no. 1 (2004): 30, 40.

18 Mahrenholz, 205. Translated by the author.

19 Stapert, *My Only Comfort*, 20.

20 Stapert, *My Only Comfort*, 9.

Cantor at the St. Thomas School and Church in Leipzig.<sup>21</sup> Bach was a preacher in his own right, and his medium was music.

As a musical preacher, Bach was clearly committed to producing liturgically integrated cantatas. “Bach opposes the view of church music as a decorative accessory to the service; as every Sunday has its hymn, its reading, its sermon, so also it has its church music as an organic part of the liturgical event.”<sup>22</sup> Mahrenholz actually identifies liturgical integration as the meaning of “well-regulated” and “well-structured church music” in the Mühlhausen letter, and he elevates that to the “ultimate purpose” of Bach’s life.<sup>23</sup> One can easily imagine a latter-day Levite-like Bach looking back at the temple worship in Jerusalem and contemplating how the various Psalms might have functioned within a liturgical cycle based on clues given in certain Psalm headings, and how he wanted to do something similar in his own context. However, it seems unlikely that composing liturgically-conformant cantatas constituted the whole of his life’s calling in his mind. Mahrenholz adds an important element to the understanding of Bach’s practice, but in doing so, he does not manage to escape the shortcomings of the cantata-focused view discussed above.

The temple-music theory helps explain another element of Bach’s practice, namely his persistence in prescribing concerted music for church, even in the face of frequent difficulties in obtaining sufficient numbers of adequately skilled instrumentalists. Simply put, concerted music entailed the relatively new practice of including independent parts for orchestral instruments along with parts for voices in a composition. It might have been tempting to take the path of least resistance and just give up on the church orchestra, but instead he took to heart the model of worship attested to in I Chronicles 25, which specifically references particular instrument types: lyres (*kinnor* in Hebrew), harps (*nevel*), and cymbals (*tzeltzalim*). The exact instruments mentioned in the Bible

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21 Stapert, *J. S. Bach*, 99.

22 Mahrenholz, 215.

23 Mahrenholz, 206.

were no longer extant in Bach's time, of course, but it was not a great leap over to the general principle that proper worship of the Lord includes instruments. Bach was not opposed to purely vocal music in worship per se—he wrote some himself—but he evidently considered it an error to cultivate it exclusively, to the neglect of orchestral instruments. As noted above, Bach underlined the names of the instruments in his Bible and made the comment that this chapter was the true foundation of all God-pleasing church music. In other words, church music would not be fully God-pleasing if it did not include instruments, at least some of the time. Bach's reading of Chronicles may have been further reinforced by his memory of the engraving in the *Eisenachischen Gesangbuch* that depicted the king kneeling humbly in prayer before the burning altar with a nearby crowd of Levite musicians playing various horns, trumpets, pipes, and percussion instruments. The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that concerted church music, that is, the composition and performance of vocal-orchestral church pieces, while not Bach's calling as such, was clearly an indispensable part of it.

Bach longed for an ample supply of professional musicians, both singers and instrumentalists, who enjoyed well-paid, full-time positions. In I Chronicles 25:7, he read that King David assigned 288 of the Levites to the task of supplying music for the temple worship, and that they were “all trained and skillful in music for the Lord”—a deep pool of talent to draw from, indeed! Apart from the musicians, the rest of the Levites helped with sacrifices, general caretaking, gate security, scribal duties, teaching, and judging. In ancient Israel, the other tribes (all those not descended from Levi) had a responsibility to support the Levites so that the latter could be free to pursue their work and develop the needed expertise without worrying about providing for the necessities of life. This support came in the form of tithes (giving a tenth of their farm produce and other goods to the Levites) and special first-fruits offerings, a portion of which also went to the Levites. Everything in the temple was geared toward praising God in an elevated and abundant

manner. It was costly to the Israelites to support worship in this way; it was a divine excess, a true sacrifice of praise.

Bach understood that this system of temple worship was the will of the Lord; he wrote in his Bible that among “the arrangements of the service of worship, music too was instituted by the Spirit of God through David.”<sup>24</sup> By obvious analogy, the worship of the Lord in Christian churches during Bach’s own time ought to be similarly well-appointed. It was the duty of the clergy and parishioners to devote significant resources to the musical apparatus in a church. Bach felt that his music program was entitled to solid support from the town and the church, and he became vexed and irritated when they skimmed on that support month after month, year after year. In a famous missive to the Leipzig town council entitled “Short But Most Necessary Proposal for a Well-Appointed Church Music, with Certain Modest Reflections on the Decline of the Same,” Bach wrote that “when a musician has to worry about his bread, he cannot think of improving, much less distinguishing himself.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, the level of performance—and thus the worship of the Lord itself—will suffer if the musicians are forced to cobble together multiple sources of income just to make ends meet. For Bach, then, a necessary ingredient for carrying out his calling as a leader of church music was access to a cadre of skilled, professional musicians with a reliable means of support who could focus their time and energy on making the best music possible in service to the Lord. If Bach envisioned his vocation as carrying out musical worship in all its facets in a latter-day Temple, i.e., his own church, then his cantatas were composed in support of that vision, alongside all his other activities of performing, rehearsing, arranging, organizing, teaching, organ inspection, and so on. For Bach, composing was a means to an end but not an end in itself.

Bach’s outlook on financial support for church music sheds light on a trait of his that is often misunderstood, namely his apparent

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24 Leaver, J. S. *Bach and Scripture*, 91.

25 Herbert Kupferberg, *Basically Bach: A 300th Birthday Celebration* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 4.

preoccupation with salary. Personal financial considerations are a frequent theme in his correspondence. In a section of the Mühlhausen resignation letter not quoted previously here, Bach wrote that “modest as is my way of life, with the payment of house-rent and other indispensable articles of consumption, I can with difficulty live,” and that in Weimar, “I foresee the attainment of a more sufficient subsistence.”<sup>26</sup> He also mentioned that he paid out of his own pocket for exemplars of fine church music he had collected. In light of Bach’s attitude toward proper provisioning of church music, a subtext can be discerned: if they had wanted to keep him around, they should have paid him better and perhaps even given him an allotment for buying scores. Bach struck a similarly money-conscious tone in a Leipzig-era letter to his friend George Erdmann:

(1) I find that the post is by no means so lucrative as it was described to me; (2) I have failed to obtain many of the fees pertaining to the office; (3) the place is very expensive . . . In Thuringia I could get along better on 400 thaler than here with twice that many, because of the excessively high cost of living.<sup>27</sup>

One cannot rule out the possibility that Bach’s financial complaints included some component of pure self-interest, which would be very human and understandable. An unsympathetic reader might find his frequent wranglings over money to be petty and unenlightened. However, Bach took umbrage on behalf of his profession at least as much as on his own behalf. It was the municipal authorities in both Mühlhausen and Leipzig who held the purse strings for his position and related expenses, and in Bach’s mind, they were duty-bound by the very word of God to provide generously for music in the churches—as in the Jerusalem temple, so in the Mühlhausen and Leipzig churches. After all, Bach *himself* was one of those temple musicians who needed to be supported

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26 Quoted in Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*, trans. Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller Maitland, Vol. 1 (London: Novello, 1899), 374.

27 David and Mendel, 152.



properly so that he could cease worrying about his daily bread and devote his attention to the worship of God.

According to what Bach highlighted in his Calov Bible, annoyance at the town councils for failing in this part of their duty was right and proper and not something to be ashamed of. He made several marks to emphasize a portion of Luther's commentary on Matthew 5:25–26. Luther wrote that:

. . . anger is sometimes necessary and proper. But be sure that you use it correctly. You are commanded not to get angry, not on your own behalf, but on behalf of your office and of God; you must not confuse the two, your person and your office. As far as your person is concerned, you must not get angry with anyone regardless of the injury he may have done to you. But where your office requires it, there you must get angry, even though no injury has been done to you personally.<sup>28</sup>

Luther made the critical distinction between affront to one's person and affront to one's office, which Bach duly noted. Since Bach's office entailed service as organist or cantor with responsibility for worship music glorifying God, it was within bounds to express displeasure to the town councils for receiving poor treatment from them, but only insofar as the poor treatment hindered him from carrying out the duties of his office.

The concept of vocation has been treated thus far as synonymous with professional occupation. But Bach was a theologically astute follower of Luther and therefore would have had a wider conception of vocation. Bach's familiarity with the theology of Luther is evident from his engagement with the aforementioned Calov Bible, which contains extensive commentary by Luther in addition to the biblical text. Furthermore, Bach's personal book collection consisted entirely of theological volumes, and it contained more works by Luther than any other author, including a complete edition

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28 Leaver, *J. S. Bach and Scripture*, 121–22.

of Luther's works. In Robin Leaver's words, "Bach made a point of studying carefully the fundamental doctrines of his faith and did so by reading the writings of the reformer, Martin Luther."<sup>29</sup> To round out the picture of Bach's vocation, it will be fruitful to situate Bach's professional occupation as just one component, albeit a major one, of his wider vocation as a Christian man.

Reformation thought includes the distinctive notion of the unity between the so-called sacred and secular realms. A failure to appreciate this point leads to the commonly encountered idea that Bach's years at the Calvinist court of Cöthen, where he wrote virtually no church music, were an unfortunate sidetrack from his true calling. They were years spent wandering in the wilderness before reaching the promised land of Leipzig. And yet, Bach reported that he would have been happy to remain in service there. He adorned his secular scores with *JJ* (*Jesu, juva*) and *SDG* (*Soli Deo Gloria*) just as surely as his sacred ones. There was no separation between sacred and secular for Bach.<sup>30</sup> Or, to state it differently, there was no such thing as secular music for Bach because all of life was sacred. Every sphere of activity from the most mundane to the most heavenly was dedicated equally to the glory of God.

Bach's concept of vocation, adopted from Luther, was big enough to encompass music that was not related to the church; in fact, it was big enough to encompass things that were not even music. In Luther's thought, according to Mark Kolden, vocation "refers not only to one's occupation but to all one's relationships, situations, contexts, and involvements (including, of course, one's occupation, if one is employed)."<sup>31</sup> God providentially places each person in a variety of spheres of influence, and it is the Christian's calling to work for God's kingdom in each one of them. For Luther, marriage and family life were vocations of great significance for the believer:

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29 Robin A. Leaver, "Bach and Luther," *Bach* 9, no. 3 (1978): 29.

30 Mahrenholz, 218.

31 Mark Kolden, "Luther on Vocation," *Word & World* 3, no. 4 (1983): 386.

You have always been in some state or station; you have always been a husband or wife, or boy or girl, or servant. Picture before you the humblest estate. Are you a husband, and you think you have not enough to do in that sphere to govern your wife, children, domestics, and property so that all may be obedient to God and you do no one any harm? Yea, if you had five heads and ten hands, even then you would be too weak for your task, so that you would never dare to think of making a pilgrimage or doing any kind of saintly work.<sup>32</sup>

Luther delighted in serving as husband to Katharina von Bora and as loving father to their children. Bach, too, reportedly enjoyed a “blissful” marriage to Maria Barbara, and then, after she passed away, to his second wife Anna Magdalena. All told, he fathered 20 children, though sadly, only 10 of them survived into adulthood. He trained them in music and several became accomplished musicians and composers. In spite of conflicts at work, he was able to maintain a home that was “a happy, hospitable place.”<sup>33</sup> He spoke with fondness and pride about Anna Magdalena’s singing and his little ones’ first forays in music-making. With so many at home depending on him, one can forgive Bach’s frequent references to income. Just as he was justified in advocating for proper support of his church music vocation, he was justified in pursuing a salary that adequately supported his vocations as husband and father.

It seems almost miraculous that Bach maintained as blessed a home life as he did, for he was also no stranger to loss and grief. Both his parents died within a year of each other, leaving him an orphan at the tender age of 10. Half of his own children died in infancy or at a young age. One son was developmentally disabled and another went off the rails in young adulthood and succumbed to an illness at the age of 24. Regarding the latter, Bach wrote: “Since no admonition or even any loving care and assistance will suffice any more, I must

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32 Quoted in Kolden, 386.

33 Stapert, 146-47.

bear my cross in patience and leave my unruly son to God's Mercy alone, doubting not that He will hear my sorrowful pleading."<sup>34</sup>

The theme of bearing one's cross found a significant place in Bach's work. He devised an ingenious way to represent the cross musically with the motif seen in Figure 1.

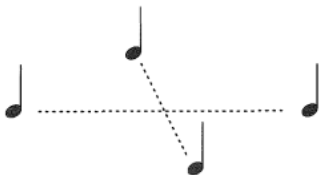


Figure 1: The *Kreuz* or “cross” motif. Source: Stapert, *My Only Comfort*, 17.

It consists of four notes and, in its evocative chromatic form, features narrow stepwise motion around a central axis. The second note rises a half step above the first, then the third notes dips to a half step *below* the first. Finally, the fourth note returns to the same pitch as the first note (variations on this basic plan do occur). If lines are drawn connecting the first and fourth notes and the second and third notes, the resulting figure looks like a cross viewed from an oblique angle. Bach put this motif to use in an aria from his *St. Matthew Passion*, “Gerne will ich mich bequemen” (Gladly will I myself submit). The action has arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, and the singer represents the universal believer reflecting on the scene. The text of the first section runs as follows:

*Gerne will ich mich bequemen,*  
Gladly will I submit myself,

*Kreuz und Becher anzunehmen,*  
to take up cross and cup,

*Trink ich doch dem Heiland nach.*  
I drink just as my Savior did.

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34 Quoted in Stapert, *J. S. Bach*, 148.

Bach deploys the cross motif (with the third note repeated to make a five-note sequence) to set the words “Kreuz und Becher,” as seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Cross motif from “Gerne will ich mich bequemen”, No. 23 in Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, measures 41-42.

Bach concludes the section with a violin obbligato phrase whose beginning sounds like just another repetition of the cross motif (see Figure 3). However, the motif has been transposed to a new pitch level.



Figure 3: Cross motif as it appears in measures 65-66.

The transposition seems insignificant at first, but upon closer inspection it becomes evident that Bach has done it in order to spell his own name backwards with these notes. Spelling his name with notes is something Bach did from time to time in his music. In the German pitch nomenclature, B-flat is just called ‘B’, and B-natural is called ‘H’. Therefore Bach’s name can be musically “spelled” with the sequence B-flat – A – C – B-natural (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: German pitch nomenclature and the musical spelling of Bach's name.

It just so happens that the same sequence in reverse makes a passable cross motif. In effect, Bach is superimposing his own name on the cross. He is saying that he, too, will gladly submit to carrying the cross for the sake of his Savior Jesus. This is what Christians are called to do. As Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24, *New International Version*). It defies human reason to bear a burden gladly, but that is simply a part of the Christian calling. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, one can rejoice even in adversity.

Without this fully-orbed concept of vocation, one's view of Bach's life might take on a more tragic aspect than is warranted. Ulrich Siegele strangely concludes that Bach more or less failed in his life's work because he never actually secured the group of full-time, professional musicians he wanted.<sup>35</sup> But not all of Bach's vocational eggs were in that one basket, and ultimately he had a different rubric for success. He did not measure success according to his own humanly-defined outcomes, but according to whether he persevered in serving the Lord faithfully in whatever roles were allotted to him.

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<sup>35</sup> Siegele, 351.

Outcomes are measured differently in the divine economy, where “for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, *English Standard Version*). Bach would have been shocked to learn that the family name he was proud of—his little troop of latter-day Levites in Thuringia—had become a household name on the lips of millions within the span of a couple centuries. More significantly, he would have been overjoyed to hear that his music would be responsible for the coming to faith in Christ of tens of thousands of believers across the world.<sup>36</sup> But these are things one cannot know in advance; instead, one must simply trust in God’s sovereignty and goodness even in the face of setbacks and suffering. Bach understood well that in this fallen world, everyone has a cross to bear. Hindrances and vexations and heartbreaks will never vanish from this life in which the ancient Foe doth seek to work us woe. And yet, a mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing.

*Editor’s Note: This is an excerpt from a longer work.*

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36 Uwe Siemon-Netto, “Bach in Japan,” *Christian History & Biography* 95 (2007): 42.

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## JOSHUA VELTMAN

### **Professor of Music**



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Joshua Veltman serves as Professor of Music History and Literature at Union University. He earned a B.A. in music history at Calvin College and an M.A. and Ph.D. in musicology at Ohio State University. His primary professional calling is to love the Lord through loving music well and to lead students in doing the same. Toward that end, he applies a diverse toolkit from the fields of history, theory, theology, psychology, computer programming, and media technology. Dr. Veltman has written and presented on a variety of topics including Renaissance music, Navajo music, music and fractals, theological aesthetics, and popular music.

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## LETTERS TO SARAH: THRIVING IN CHRONIC ILLNESS

**Beth Madison**

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Dear Reader,

This writer didn't set out to be a chronic illness patient. Yet God had other plans. This book didn't start out to be a book.<sup>1</sup> Yet God had other plans.

Here's the story behind the book: When one of my dearest friend's daughters developed chronic illnesses, my friend asked me to mentor her daughter in how to live well with these illnesses. Because of distance and other factors, I couldn't mentor in the usual ways of meeting in person or virtually or even by phone. With that in mind, I decided to start writing letters to my friend's daughter, Sarah. I could write the letters as I had time, energy, and ideas. Sarah could read them as she was able and more than once if wanted. Plus, she had actual papers to hold in her hand as tangible reminders of our Good God's love (and my love) for her as sent from me in words on a page.

So, I started writing the letters, one at a time.

Yet after letter two or three, I realized that more people might be encouraged by these letters. So, I asked Sarah's permission to share some of the letters on my blog.<sup>2</sup> She graciously agreed and away we went! And then one thing led to another, until here we are with this book.

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<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Sarah: Thriving in Chronic Illness*, forthcoming 2024, Northeastern Baptist Press.

<sup>2</sup> [soulscientistblog.com](http://soulscientistblog.com)

Having said all that, Sarah and I surely hope that you are heartened from the Scripture contained in these letters. She and I are learning together that our God is good and what He does is good, even if it might not seem good at the time or in the way we'd expected (see Psalm 119:68a).

Lessons like these aren't easy but are essential in equipping us to receive and give more and more of His amazing love (see 1 John 3:1). Since our Good God is ever faithful and always loving, we can trust Him for joy's strength, no matter where our stories might take us, including the path of chronic illness. We are never alone on our paths; we are never without hope in our suffering. Sarah and I are praying for you.

## Letter # 1

*...because the struggle for us is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evilness in the heavenly-places. (Disciples' New Literal Translation, Eph. 6:12)*

Dear Sarah,

Yup, I agree, that is an odd choice of a verse with which to start a letter. But, I think, it's an especially appropriate one for those of us yearning to thrive while living with chronic illness. This verse provides a different approach to our days (and nights) and people in them, be they ones we consider good (or not).

Far too often, we can get consumed with diagnoses, symptoms, treatments, and everything our body is screaming at us to fix, i.e. *blood and flesh*. And when we do, we lose sight of what's really important—eternal purpose and everlasting plans. This is God's perspective: *The Lord isn't slow to do what he promised, as some people think. Rather, he is patient for your sake. He doesn't want to destroy anyone but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to him and change the way they think and act (GOD'S WORD Translation, 2 Pet. 3:9).*

That *blood and flesh* isn't what we are fighting; it's the *darkness* that beckons us to descend into believing the lies that this hard life of *blood and flesh* is our eternity and joy is forever forsaken.

And even if we recognize those lies, we must fight to keep our lives from embracing them as reality. We must fight such choices as: googling every new (or old) symptom for another answer; only talking and thinking about diagnoses and disappointments; downplaying a good day (or moment) while dreading the next not-good one; choosing what we want instead of what will help someone else; and making a host of other seemingly unimportant choices that add up to shaping a life for thriving (or not). These are easy ways to live *blood and flesh* today; these are not the choices that will push back *darkness* for thriving today or tomorrow.

Our lives are not our own. Our lives are not confined to these bodies. Our lives are not constrained by what we feel.

Our God has our bodies and our souls held forever in His hands and in His plan.

Our God has purpose far beyond what we can know or imagine.

Our God has made us for Him.

And in the making of us for Him, He has crafted our limitations in lavish love and our challenges in order that Christ's compassion may be made known to the nations. He wants to use our suffering as He did Christ's—to beckon one and all to come to Him for salvation. We cannot waste our time languishing in what has been lost. We must revel in what remains—the opportunity to join Christ in suffering so that we might learn *trusting obedience* (*The Message* Heb. 5:8). And if we learn that *trusting obedience*, then thriving is the natural outcome, no matter what the struggle with *blood and flesh* looks like in our lives.

Because the reality for our lives is what David said best in Psalm 16:6: *Your boundary lines mark out pleasant places for me. Indeed, my inheritance is something beautiful* (*Names of God Bible*). Our

inheritance in Christ is indeed *beautiful*; our lives have been laid out as *pleasant places* when we see them as gifts for His glory and the good of His people. Pleasant places are a gift but require work to maintain as pleasant places, just like any garden or farm. Our Good God gifts *pleasant places* to us and graces us with the assignment of caring for them as stewards, not owners. More to come on that idea in future letters from this old soil scientist, so stay tuned, dearest Sarah.

Praying for you with much love and understanding,

Your friend,

Beth

## Letter # 2

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. (English Standard Version, 1 Cor. 4:1-2)*

*But rather what we are setting forth is a wisdom of God once hidden [from the human understanding] and now revealed to us by God – [that wisdom] which God devised and decreed before the ages for our glorification [to life us into the glory of His presence]. (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, 1 Cor. 2:7)*

Dear Sarah,

I know you've got lots of nicknames, just like I do. Your nicknames fit you well in expressing your sweet and kind spirit! I think "Sunshine" is my favorite of your nicknames. Here in the long and dark of all of this, you haven't wavered from living your nicknames, which encourages me deeply and inspires me to keep striving to do the same with my life even now...

On that note, have you ever been called a steward? “Steward Sarah” sounds pretty good, doesn’t it?

As Christians, all of us are stewards—stewards of the created world around and in us, stewards of talents and time entrusted to us, stewards of friendships, finances, and families gifted to us. Stewards of the Word, wisdom, and witness graced upon us, stewards of conscience and conviction placed upon us. Stewards of righteousness and reputations imputed upon us, and stewards of the love for Christ and longing for heaven growing inside us. Yes, I agree—that is a lot! But hallelujah, we aren’t expected to do any of this in our own strength – our Good God gives what is needed, when it is needed (see Philippians 4:13).

As stewards, our job is to tend with deliberate care what God has put for us to watch over. To care for it as if it were ours, all the while knowing it isn’t. Therein lies both the beauty and the freedom of stewardship. As a steward, I have been given the gift of tending something precious to my Good God. The privilege, honor, and responsibility of caretaking is an opportunity for worship in the simple and selfless tasks that display His worth, not mine. That’s the beauty, while the freedom is that if I do what He asks me to in the tending, He is responsible for the outcome.

Yet, as Christians living with chronic illnesses, do you realize that we are also stewards of suffering? It’s not a job we applied for; it’s a job we were appointed to. And it’s a job through which we can bring glory to our Good God in our daily choosing of sacrifice and sanctification. Receiving the caretaking of this mystery of suffering opens us up for His good work in us through the long, dark suffering that (most likely) won’t end before we return to dust or go to heaven.

Others are watching us carefully to see how we tend the mystery of suffering in our lives. Our responses and reactions to all of this can be an unwrapping of God’s grace or our own selfishness. Grace is always the best choice; grace is usually not the easy choice. This holds true whether the grace is for us to receive in our

own mistakes or inabilities or is for us to release to others in their misunderstandings or inappropriate comments.

Even if you might not yet have encountered a deep need for such grace, I pray that you might be empowered to rely upon grace when such times come in your life. For such times are opportunities for either disappointment in others (and ourselves) or the display of distinctive grace that points to our Good God. He alone is King of and Provider in the wilderness of suffering. We are never alone; we are never in lack (see Psalm 23). And reliance on these truths will help us be good stewards of suffering, which is often considered as not-good. But our Good God can transform suffering, and us in here in the middle of it, into a place of thriving in His goodness in all ways. He always has plans for good for us, no matter how long or dark the days or nights (see Rom. 8:28).

As always, dear Sarah, I am praying for you—for light and hope and peace to reign in your life as you choose to trust our Good God for the strength, faith, and courage to steward well what is before you in life for today and the not-yet.

With much love,

Your friend,

Beth

### Letter # 3

*Blessed be the Lord, Who bears our burdens and carries us day by day, even the God Who is our salvation! Selah [pause, and calmly think of that]! (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, Psalm 68:19)*

*Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit [that stops bearing] He cuts away (trims off, takes away); and He cleanses and repeatedly prunes every branch that continues to bear fruit, to make it bear more and richer and more excellent fruit. (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, John 15:2)*

Dearest Sarah,

I've been watching you grow in courage and conviction. Thanks be to God for how He is tenderly leading you along and for how you're letting Him lead you in this way. Both the leading and the being led are very good things from our very Good God!

You're realizing that our Good God is indeed the One Who carries you and your burdens all at the same time. My favorite depiction of this idea is found in Deut. 33:12: *He said about Benjamin: The LORD's beloved rests securely on him. He shields him all day long, and he rests on his shoulders (Christian Standard Bible)*. Even though our names aren't Benjamin, we can rest securely on our Good God's shoulders *all day long*. He's big enough and strong enough to carry us and whatever burdens we have *day by day* and day after day. Long after our strength is gone, His never will be.

In case you didn't already know, a good shepherd will carry a hurt sheep on his shoulders until the sheep is healed. During that time, that sheep becomes beloved by the shepherd and the shepherd by the sheep from that close contact. So, if you think about it, as chronic illness patients, we are the hurt sheep being tenderly carried by our Good Shepherd. We have a special opportunity to hear His voice, feel His touch, and know His presence, like many never will. For there, between His shoulders, we can learn more and more of His love for us and how to love Him in return.

As much as we might want to try to pick up and carry our own burdens, we can't because He didn't design us for that purpose. Instead, He tenderly teaches us what is true. For He wants us to learn these truths:

He is the shepherd; we are the sheep.

He is the burden-carrier; we are the carried.

He is our shield; we are the sheltered.

And these truths don't change because He doesn't change.

But He wants us to change to be more like Jesus.



As we've talked here before, Jesus learned *trusting obedience* (*The Message*, Heb. 5:8). And we can too, if we embrace our assignments as sheep to be carried and sheltered. This is a school from which we never graduate. Or as my grandfather, who was a school principal, used to say, "you're never too old to learn something new." For if this "old dog" can't learn "new tricks" from my Good God, then I've grown into (or never grown out of) selfishness and pride.

Because if I've grown more into pride, then I'm stuck. And trust me, stuck is nowhere you want to go, much less to be! I may think I'm stuck between the rock of chronic illness and the hard place of its impact on my life. But really, I'm stuck neck-deep in stubbornness and ignorance thinking I can do this task, hour, or day by myself, when the reality is that I can't do anything by myself, for myself, or through myself. I know I've talked about that before, but I've never been the best student. I need reminding over and again of His strength being made known in my weakness (see 2 Cor. 12:9).

Our Good God knows all of this (and so much more) and loves us still. He gives His love and Himself to us, every single day. And His love is so deep for us, He doesn't let us languish or linger long in pride. But He reminds us that His pruning of our lives is for growth for His glory and the good of His people. He wants *the more and the more excellent fruit* for our lives. And I want the same for my life, and I think you do too...that which is beyond my own making, thinking, and imagining. That which only my Good God can do in and for me as He carries me *day by day on His shoulders* where I am *securely held*.

As ever, I think of and pray for you so often during the day and night. May our Good God keep giving you evidence of Him holding you fast against disease and doubt as you trust Him while resting on Him as our Good Shepherd and King forever.

Much love from your friend,

Beth

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BETH MADISON

**Associate Professor  
of Biology**



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Beth Madison teaches science courses in the School of Adult and Professional Studies and the College of Arts and Sciences. Her focus is on integrating environmental science with faith in the classroom, laboratory, and writing. Currently, she's working on a book and video project on finding hope in long-term suffering. Her third book, *Well-Grounded: Cultivating Intimacy with God*, on finding beauty in nature and growing closer to God through the spiritual disciplines, will be released December 2023. Her first two books, *Good Ground, Volumes 1 and 2* are now available for purchase at Amazon and other online book distributors. Her blog, [soulscientistblog.com](http://soulscientistblog.com), features excerpts from these books along with topics she finds interesting in science and faith.

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## ALL MY FRIENDS' DADS ARE DYING: ON GRIEF, CHRIST, AND TRYING TO BE A GOOD MAN

**Ted Kluck**

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They all had awesome mid-century names like Terry and Mike and Joe and Kenny. Terry let us borrow his Lexus one night after we covered a fight card at The Orbit Room and the car wouldn't start. Mike took us to air shows when we were little. Kenny let us sit around in the garage and watch him wrench on whatever amazing new/old vehicle he was wrenching on. He also let us take all the tiny Chiclet boxes from the candy dish in his office. Joe was my favorite teacher of all time.

I'm 46 and as such all my friends' dads are in their 70s or 80s. Many of them are dying. These men all worked hard at mostly anonymous and unglamorous jobs. If they complained, I rarely heard it. They kept marriages together (no small thing) and raised good kids who are now raising their own good kids. Some of them knew the Lord and some of them I'm not sure.

None of these men had social media personas. Zero of them were "influencers." They had no online beefs with anyone, because they enjoyed working on cars or listening to records or hitting the heavy bag in their garage or whatever it is they did that is for sure better than the thing I'm doing. I don't recall any of them ever sitting around and bloviating about their "legacy" or even about "character," as is de rigueur in Christian Man circles and is in fact the only way to sell a book to a Christian Man.

Terry once let us ransack an office building he was closing because we were dumb young hipsters who were in search of old office

supplies—which supplies we liked because of their ironic value. Gosh we were insufferable (“look at this amazing briefcase!”), but Terry was really nice about it. One time Joe called my house on NFL Draft night, posing as an emissary of the Indianapolis Colts, and indicating that I had been drafted in the 12th round. He was funny like that. It was also his idea that I become a writer.

Mike appreciated the fact that I was a football player. And I appreciated that he appreciated it. He never said a whole lot, but this was cool.

Whenever I get these calls—whether I’m in the car, or in this morning’s case, in my “sitting and having coffee with my wife” chair which is adjacent to her identical chair—I involuntarily start crying and my wife knows exactly what the call was about.

Because of life and responsibility, my time with these men was confined to a season (called childhood). It wouldn’t be normal to hop on a BMX bike at 40 (with a Kent Tekulve baseball card taped into the spokes) and ride it across town to Kenny’s office. It wouldn’t have been especially normal for Mike to keep driving us to airshows when he was 70 and we were 40. But honestly, I don’t hate that idea. I think what I’m missing, in addition to these guys themselves, is the feeling of safety and love that they just sort of wordlessly delivered simply by being around. They taught us how to goof off and bust chops and work hard and be generous and stay married. But the best thing was that when they were around, they were responsible and we didn’t have to be. They made sure we had a car that worked, money for burgers, or a place to watch the Super Bowl. They didn’t judge us when we unsuccessfully tried to change our own oil, gave up, and went to Jiffy Lube. Now, of course, we’re doing the same things for our kids and their friends. And we’re (hopefully) doing it well because of Mike, Terry, Joe, and Kenny (and others like them).

Our bodies are starting to wear down, because that’s what happens in middle age. None of those aforementioned men were especially preoccupied with looking young or staying young.

Often, parenting stuff is complex and hard, but sometimes it isn't, and they all managed to do it well.

I'm encouraged because of them. And because of Christ, none of this is hopeless. Because of Christ I can be sad (and even at odds with death) but not devastated.

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## TED KLUCK

**Associate Professor of  
Communication Arts**



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Ted Kluck is the award-winning internationally published author of 30 books, and his journalism has appeared in *ESPN the Magazine*, *USA Today*, and many other outlets. He is screenwriter and co-producer on the upcoming feature film *Silverdome* and co-hosts The Happy Rant Podcast and The Kluck Podcast. Ted won back-to-back Christianity Today Book of the Year Awards in 2007 and 2008 and was a 2008 Michigan Notable Book Award winner for his football memoir, *Paper Tiger: One Athlete's Journey to the Underbelly of Pro Football*. He currently serves as an associate professor of journalism at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and coaches long snappers at Lane College. He and his wife Kristin have two children.

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## TEBOW, FIFTEEN YEARS LATER: ON NETFLIX'S "THE SWAMP KINGS," WORSHIP, AND IDOLATRY

**Ted Kluck**

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Thirteen years ago, I traveled to Mobile, Alabama, for the Senior Bowl, to meet Tim Tebow. I had covered the event before, and remembered it fondly as a football-only affair for players, coaches, scouts, and agents. The Tebow experience was something different entirely, inasmuch as the lobby of the Renaissance Mobile downtown was shoulder-to-shoulder with Tebow worshippers who shared in common sharpies, stuff to get signed, and a crazed look in their eyes. These worshippers (all in Tebow jerseys) included kids (normal), middle-aged men (less normal), old men (kinda weird), and women of all ages and backgrounds. "Wild" doesn't begin to describe it.

We now have fifteen years or so in the rearview mirror since Tebow descended from the heavens (or Jacksonville) upon Gainesville, Florida, and made college football kind of weird for a few years. And now we have a documentary about it on Netflix, called "The Swamp Kings," which chronicles the rise of Florida Football in ways that are mostly well-done and fascinating, and ways that portray Urban Meyer as miserable and borderline psychotic, Tebow as kind of ethereal/weird/bicep-centric (he's always seated next to a Bible), and the black guys as oddly interchangeable and, for lack of a better term, the same. Which was, troublingly, how college football was back then.

For a football-junkie like me, it's riveting. But for a now middle-aged Christian who enjoys thinking about sports and has always struggled to keep them in their proper place, it's more riveting.

When the Tebow experience started I was a young-adult, was raising toddlers, and by-and-large didn't care or have time to care about a muscled-up Super-Christian who was running people over and kneeling in end zones. If pressed (then) I would have said something like "I enjoy watching him play but am not crazy about the performative prayer stuff given that the Bible says, you know, not to perform your acts of righteousness before men in order to be seen by them...and all that."

Now, fifteen years later, Tebow exists as a sort of interesting cultural object who is emblematic of a certain time: the beginning of the Internet and the beginning of social media, which both hyper-charged football idolatry in ways that are captured very well in "The Swamp Kings." The stadium footage is especially riveting, in that it shows people in the throes of worship. Eyes closed. Swaying in unison. Shouting in unison. Cut to a locker-room scene with grown men screaming with a crazed look in their eyes that says, "I won't be able to live without winning this game...this game is my whole life." The whole thing is a compelling disordered mess.

In strange ways, Tebow himself has both "exceeded expectations" as a public figure, and also weirdly hasn't, in that the range of outcomes in 2010 could have included "President of the United States" or, for some people, "maybe the Messiah," and it wouldn't have really raised an eyebrow. To me, it's weird that Tebow isn't at least the muscled-up lead pastor of a 30,000-seat megachurch. This seemed like the most inevitable outcome of all.

Instead, if you go into any Michaels or Hobby Lobby on earth there is a one hundred percent chance of you finding a ghostwritten and moderately-inspirational Tebow book for sale somewhere near the mints and the gum. He appears from time to time on ESPN, saying moderately-insightful things about college football. He played moderately-well for a few years in the pros and did some underwear ads and then tried baseball and then tried football again. All of which to kind of say, "he was a guy in his twenties who wasn't the Messiah." This is fine.

The idolatry the doc portrays is gross and convicting. I've done my fair share of it as a player, a coach, and a fan. The Tebow stuff scans as kind of charming and quaint and a little sad on the level of "I wonder if they had it to do over again, his parents would have chosen all of this insanity for him?" They certainly fell face-first into it in real time and considered it a blessing to themselves and others. I'm not so sure.

The desire in the heart of man to identify someone to worship is strong. It always has been. It shows both that we were *made* to worship, and that *being* worshipped never works well for us, and never ends well.

As it turned out, Tebow worked really well as a football player. He made sense there. He—and Florida, and the SEC, and Urban Meyer, and winning—all work significantly less well as sources of hope, and objects of worship.



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# CONTEXTUALIZATION

**Bryan Dawson**

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Last week, my good friend Troy dropped by my house to lend me his copy of the First Nations Version (FNV)<sup>1</sup>, a recent translation of the New Testament. Following his suggestion, I turned to some familiar passages of scripture to begin familiarizing myself with the translation style. Before long I turned to the Christmas story beginning in Luke 2:1 and read the following: “When the time drew close for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child, the government of the People of Iron (Romans) ordered that the people be numbered and put on government rolls.” I stopped in my tracks, excited as my mind processed new understanding, giving deeper meaning to this passage.

Why? How is the phrase “the people be numbered and put on government rolls” so different than a translation that renders “all the world should be registered?” To describe the impact I felt, I should tell you a little more about my background.

My paternal grandfather was born in Tahlequah, Indian Territory, in 1898, as a Cherokee Nation citizen of mixed heritage. When the southeastern woodlands tribes were removed to present-day Oklahoma in what is now known as the Trail of Tears, each tribe received territory that was to be theirs “forever,” which in reality meant about 60 years, when, in turn, this land was desired for white settlement. In preparation for allotting some of the land to individual tribal members (110 acres each but in multiple non-contiguous widely dispersed pieces) so that the “excess” land could

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1 FNV bills itself as “a dynamic equivalence translation that captures the simplicity, clarity, and beauty of Native storytellers in English, while remaining faithful to the original language of the New Testament.” The phrase “First Nations” refers to the Indigenous people groups of the North American continent.

be claimed by settlers (160 contiguous acres each), the Dawes Commission was tasked with creating tribal rolls. My grandfather, his siblings, his father, and many other relatives were placed on the Cherokee roll and assigned a membership number. My father still has his father's original allotment certificates from 1904, detailing the locations of his parcels of land. Those lands were sold when my grandfather was still a minor, and he never again owned land, eventually becoming a sharecropper in the Texas panhandle. Meanwhile, my wife, who like me is a Cherokee Nation citizen, still has a first cousin living on their family's allotment land.

Back to the scripture. If you had asked me beforehand, I could have told you that the Romans occupied Israel and all or much of the Middle East, and that Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem to register. But when I read the phrase "the people be numbered and put on government rolls," my mind immediately saw the parallels to the time of allotment. Instead of viewing Mary and Joseph's situation merely as the inconvenience of a required trip that placed them in the precise location prophesied for the birth of the Messiah, I understood the trip more fully as part of the demands of an oppressive Roman regime, a regime that had conquered the land of the Jews and now required registration. It's not that I had learned a new fact; it's that I had gained empathetic understanding and that I had made a connection heretofore unnoticed. That's the power of contextualization at work.

As I write this four days after Troy lent me his copy, I have procured my own copy of the FNV and have greatly enjoyed reading from it. From a great many word choices, the familiar storytelling style, and the idioms and cultural references, I have made additional connections. Many passages seem fresh, and I am experiencing the joys of scripture anew. It's as if certain aspects of my being that had been closed off to a deeper relationship with Christ now have been set free to experience Jesus, Creator Sets Free.<sup>2</sup> This experience has made me feel like I finally understand contextualization!

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2 The explanation in the Glossary of Biblical Terms in the FNV is that Jesus, or

As evangelical Christians, we recognize the importance of the efforts of Tyndale, Wycliffe, Luther, and others to bring the scriptures to the masses by producing translations in the common languages of the people. This idea has expanded to producing more readable translations or paraphrases, to enhance understanding.

I remember as a teenager receiving a copy of *Good News for Modern Man*, a paperback with what looked like newsprint on the cover, and a copy of *The Living Bible* with the words “The Way” on the cover, pictures of smiling young people with 1970s hairstyles in the interior of the letters forming those words. I found them much easier to read than the King James; I read quite a bit of that *Living Bible*.

So why produce an “Indigenous translation?” Isn’t a translation in each Indigenous language enough?<sup>3</sup> I have a copy of the New Testament in the Cherokee language. But the problem is that I don’t know more than a few words and phrases of Cherokee; I can’t read or speak the language. That’s true of well over ninety percent of First Nations people. Consider the progression from scriptures held only in languages the priests have studied, to translations in the common languages of the people, to even more readable translations. Contextualization of the scriptures is the next logical step, at least for those not fully part of the dominant culture. Many non-Native readers encountering the FNV translation will see it as quirky, but for those with at least some Native American cultural background such as myself, it can be revitalizing—and for some, perhaps even the vehicle by which the seed of faith is watered until it germinates.

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Yeshua in Hebrew, comes from two words; the first is Yah, a shortened form of Yahweh, and the second from a word that means “to rescue, deliver, save, or simply set free” – Yah Sets Free.”

3 There were once over 250 languages spoken in North America. Many of these have disappeared or are endangered; a few years ago, I talked to a Chickasaw citizen who told me there remained only 20 fluent Chickasaw speakers at that time. Other Native languages are benefiting from revitalization efforts.

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BRYAN DAWSON**University Professor  
of Mathematics**

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Bryan Dawson first received his bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics from Pittsburg State University. He later received his doctorate in mathematics from the University of North Texas. Dawson joined Union's faculty in 1998, leaving a tenured position at a state university for the joys of teaching at a Christian college and working with wonderful colleagues. His desire of having his children attend a Christian college was fulfilled, with all three of his children graduating from Union. Dawson is the author of *Calculus Set Free*, published by Oxford University Press (OUP). The cover of the textbook includes his name in both English and Cherokee. An editor at OUP said that his was their first request for Native script.

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# THE PHARMACIST'S ROLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PATIENTS WITH MIGRAINE

**George DeMaagd**

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Migraine headache (MH) is a chronic neurological disorder that has major impacts on patients and families, resulting in significant disability. Migraine is the third most prevalent disease globally, affecting 14% of adults. It is three times more common in females, with 70% of patients having a family history. Migraine's common occurrence in young adults during their productive years impacts education, employment, relationships, parenting, and overall quality of life (QOL).<sup>1-2</sup> With the plethora of new migraine medications approved over the last six years, pharmacists have a major role in working alongside other health professionals in the care of patients with migraine.

The pathophysiology of migraine has evolved over the years and the most recent evidence focuses on activation of the trigeminovascular system (TGVS) located in peripheral and central components of the brain. This activation causes a release of neuropeptides (e.g., calcitonin gene-related peptide [CGRP]), neurotransmitters and other proinflammatory substances, resulting in vasodilation and neurogenic inflammation, which leads to the propagation of migraine pain and other symptoms.<sup>1-2</sup>

The clinical presentation of migraine involves various phases, including a premonitory phase, e.g., symptoms of fatigue and irritability prior to the head pain. Some patients also experience an aura, which occurs an hour or so prior to the headache and consists primarily of visual field disturbances. The migraine headache (HA)

itself presents with mild to severe, unilateral, throbbing, pulsating pain in the frontotemporal region. It varies in duration and may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound in addition to watery eyes and congestion. The phase after the migraine is called the postdrome and includes lethargy and fatigue and may last for a day or two after the attack.<sup>1-2</sup>

The management of migraine is challenging and requires practitioners and pharmacists alike to understand this chronic disease and the role of various pharmacotherapies. Involvement in disease state management, including migraine, can be an important component of community pharmacy practice. It can also be a challenge in this busy environment. Community pharmacists are often the first option for patients seeking advice regarding their migraines, thus a knowledge of the role of newer pharmacotherapies is essential. Patients presenting with headaches need to be referred to a physician when appropriate, especially if they present with certain red flags including the following: new onset headache in a middle-aged adult or pediatric patients, neurological symptoms, or what they describe as a first and worst headache.<sup>1-2</sup>

Pharmacists can utilize available and easy-to-use migraine screening tools to assist them in making patient care decisions such as the National Headache Foundation's headache tests.<sup>3</sup> Pharmacists can also assist with recommending appropriate use of over-the-counter (OTC) medications and educating patients about the risks of "Medication Overuse Headache" (MOH), associated with overuse of acute therapies, especially analgesics.<sup>1-2</sup>

Over the past six years, multiple new medications for the treatment of migraine have been approved by the FDA and have had a significant impact on controlling this chronic disease. The treatment of migraine involves both abortive (acute) and preventative interventions. Non-pharmacological interventions and therapies both for abortive and prevention include avoiding triggers as well as incorporating behavioral therapies and neuromodulation devices. Pharmacists can play a role by recommending all migraine patients keep a diary to track their headache triggers and patterns. The

current migraine abortive therapy guidelines recommend over-the-counter analgesics, such as Advil<sup>®</sup>, Naprosyn<sup>®</sup>, Excedrin<sup>®</sup> (limited use), and triptans (e.g., sumatriptan) as first-line options based on migraine severity. Opioids (e.g., hydrocodone) and barbiturate combinations (e.g., Fiorinal<sup>®</sup> and Fioricet<sup>®</sup>) should be avoided and have a limited role. Pharmacists should counsel all patients on the appropriate limits for using abortive therapies to avoid MOH. These limits include the use of combination analgesics and triptans less than or equal to 10 days per month and simple analgesics less than or equal to 15 days per month. In addition, pharmacists should work with providers in monitoring analgesic usage to avoid this overuse condition.<sup>1-2</sup>

In the last year, two new classes of medications have been approved for the abortive management of migraine, including the ditans and the gepants. The role of these agents in the abortive management of migraine is still evolving. Lasmiditan (Reyvow<sup>®</sup>), a ditan, was approved for the abortive therapy of migraine and differs from the triptans in being more receptor selective without vasoconstriction effects. This agent will likely be utilized in patients who have contraindications or have not responded to an adequate trial of the triptans. Important counseling points include no driving or operating machinery 8 hours after use, and no more than one dose in a 24-hour period. The gepants, which are antagonists of the calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) receptor, are the other new class of migraine abortives. They include two oral agents, ubrogepant (Ubrovelvy<sup>®</sup>) and rimegepant (Nurtec ODT<sup>®</sup>), and a recently approved nasal spray, zavegepant (Zavzpret<sup>®</sup>), all of which are approved for the abortive management of migraine. A key counseling and monitoring component with these agents is their extensive cytochrome P450 and other drug interactions. Pharmacists must be aware of these interactions when evaluating the use of these agents.<sup>4-8</sup>

Although beta-blockers (e.g., propranolol) and some antiseizure drugs (e.g., divalproex acid and topiramate) are still used as first-line options for the prevention of migraine in some patients, there are several newer preventive migraine therapies as well.

The anti-seizure drugs, divalproex acid and topiramate, should be avoided in women of childbearing age due to the significant risk of teratogenicity. From 2018–2020, four new preventative migraine monoclonal antibody therapies were approved: the CGRP receptor antagonist erenumab (Aimovig<sup>®</sup>), fremanezumab (Ajovy<sup>®</sup>), galcanezumab (Emgality<sup>®</sup>), and eptinezumab (Vyapti<sup>®</sup>), which bind to the CGRP ligand itself as antagonists. These agents are dosed monthly via subcutaneous injection (or quarterly in the case of fremanezumab), and eptinezumab is administered via IV infusion quarterly. In addition, one of the gepants described above in the abortive section, rimegepant (Nurtec ODT<sup>®</sup>), and a newer released oral gepant, atogepant (Qulipta<sup>®</sup>), are both approved for prevention of migraine as well. Although onabotulinumtoxinA (Botox) has been approved for migraine since 2010, it remains another more recent option in the prevention of migraine.<sup>4, 9-13</sup>

Pharmacists can have a major role in the care of migraine patients, especially since they are often at the front lines of care when patients experience headaches. Their involvement can include triaging specific patients before directing them to their providers and discussing the appropriate role of medications used for migraines. In addition, through medication counseling, they can discuss potential side effects, drug interactions, and proper administration. They can also monitor effectiveness and partner with patients and providers to assist in adjusting doses or eliminating other migraine therapies. Pharmacists can also assist patients and providers while working alongside third party payers to obtain insurance coverage for appropriate patients. Pharmacists' role in patient care continues to expand, and one area where a great opportunity exists is in the management of migraine patients.<sup>1-2</sup>



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## GEORGE DEMAAGD

### **Professor of Pharmacy**

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George DeMaagd received his Pharm.D. degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and completed a Pharmacy Practice Residency at St. Lawrence Hospital in Lansing, Michigan. He was board certified as a Pharmacotherapy Specialist in 1995. Prior to joining Union University, Dr. DeMaagd spent five years as an Assistant Director/Clinical Pharmacist at a community hospital in Michigan, where he was also a clinical instructor for the University of Michigan College of Pharmacy. His first full-time faculty position was with the Campbell University School of Pharmacy, where he developed geriatric clerkship practice sites in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He also spent ten years on faculty at Ferris State University and was promoted to professor rank in 2006. During this time, he had a clinical practice in geriatric assessment and memory disorders.