



Social Justice and Human Rights Conference: Q&A with Tom Reynolds

TOM REYNOLDS IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AT EMMANUEL COLLEGE OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO AND A MEMBER OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR THE CONFERENCE



inside:

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Daryl: *The conference is described as “interdisciplinary, interreligious and cross-sectoral.” What is the benefit of that as opposed to a more narrowly focused conference?*

Tom: The benefit of an interdisciplinary and interfaith environment is it allows multiple perspectives to be put on the table and addressed, and this lends itself to a richer conversation. Often the danger of conferences like this is to overly specify the issues and overly specialize in ways that restrict the conversation and the implications of what’s been discussed.

In this conference, you get practitioners and academics, people on the ground and in school environments, and you bring them together and see neither can actually do without the other. Practice without a theoretical framework that informs it is aimless, directionless and can go awry in so many ways; but so can theory, without rootedness in practice, become empty. Putting these conversations in motion among not only practitioners and theoreticians, but among different perspectives – like faith traditions – produces a conversation that is very rich, and one that hopefully will nourish conversations among the participants in the conference, those who registered and also far beyond it. The hope is the conference isn’t a once-and-for-all thing, but will galvanize further conversations, which can make a social impact.

The interfaith component,

(continued on page 2)

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especially when you talk about questions of justice, opens up a range of issues. Just what does justice mean in a Canadian society that both Muslims and Christians share, as well as Jews and Hindus – an environment that is shared and yet at the same time seeks to honour the distinctness of its different constituencies? Questions of accommodation, questions of group rights versus individual rights – all these come out in the interfaith dimension, so I am excited about the prospect of the conversation being energized by the diversity at play.

It is the temptation of academics to talk only to other academics, and here at this conference we have deliberately tried to avoid succumbing to that temptation, or avoid falling into the sin of academics talking to academics. A conference on social justice that doesn't involve practitioners wouldn't be living up to its intention to display the transformative aspect of academics.

I have to wonder if a conference like this doesn't run the risk of not being able to keep up with events on the ground by being so broad itself. We see things in the news daily, the Occupy movement, itself with a very broad range of issues, the Arab Spring, and other things, that seem to be far removed from the kinds of things that we're used to.

A conference like this is responsive to situations like the Arab Spring and



events is whether or not the conference provides impetus to policy changes and addressing rights in particular ways, because, like you say, the conversation can be so broad that it loses its kind of power to impact things on the ground. That's a danger of academics – its perspective can be too broad, too theoretical and not specifically address contexts where the issues are being played out.

Movements like the Arab Spring and Occupy, or even just the Occupy Toronto issue, create real possibilities for transforming public discourse in a way that has an effect on how law is made, and on how human rights are parsed, discussed and considered at the public level. In fact, the Occupy movements force civil society to

rethink itself in important ways, and you see that happening in academic places like the University of Toronto, where questions are being asked

anew about economic disparities and about change.

In my own field of theology there have been too few books written on economics, and in the past few years many theologians are trying to address that, precisely because of contemporary economic currents. And I know there's a book coming

out that deals with the Occupy movements and theology. In a certain way, a conference like this can be responsive to all this and can offer a kind of reflective framework for thinking about and doing social justice. I believe academics is transformative, and it's the conversations we have that set in motion a performance, and that themselves enact ways of being together, not just as head games, but as shaping visions that have impact and mobilize social change.

Something that's been on my mind lately, again with reference to events on the ground on a global scale, is that within public discourse, and sometimes even more so within academia, any language of a religious nature seems to be unwelcome or in need of being made secular. It just seems unwise to exclude any voices at this time.

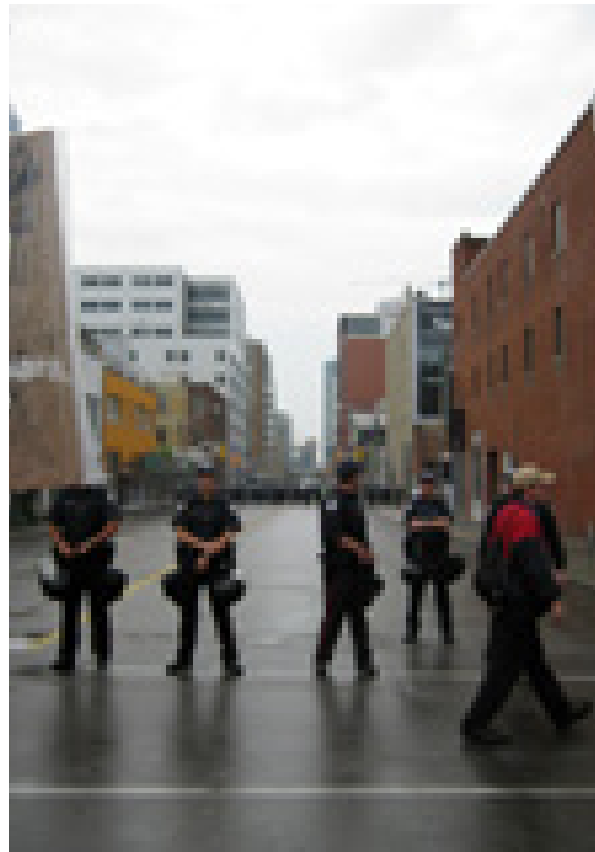
Take Jürgen Habermas, for example, who in his work initially asked for religious language to be translated into terms that could be parsed in secular terms. Now he has changed his view, and recently he permits faith discourse in public space much more. In fact, while I'm not a political philosopher, my own work is trying to imagine what a public space would look like that is pluralistic, not in a secular way of imposing neutrality, demanding all constituencies to translate their own particularity into voices digestible



Tom Reynolds

“A conference like this can offer a reflective framework for thinking about and doing social justice”

the Occupy movement – or really Occupy movements, plural. The different contexts provide different ways of raising what's at stake. With police removing occupants from various places, arrests being made, there's much here to inform our conversations. An important way to know our conversations are being informed by



Photos: Deryl Kineman

by each other, which in fact do an injustice to the unique individualities of groups and different voices, but instead in a way that honours the differences as contributing to an ongoing and robust conversation that creates public space. I'm interested in finding a way for philosophical discourse and political discourse to be Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and in ways that affirm the dignity and identity of these different groups at the same time that it asks for certain kinds of negotiations so that we all might share space productively. How that happens is a matter of human rights and justice. Like the Canadian Charter for Human Rights and Freedoms, there needs to be a baseline set of practices that honour shared human dignity and rights. That idea might go against some faith traditions, for example those that practise polygamy, but there needs to be a complex set of negotiations and compromises along the lines of how we share space, and I don't think that has to mean groups are forced to translate themselves out of the faith language with which they identify.

For example, the dignity of the

human person is a concept used in secular contexts as well as Christian contexts – Catholic social teachings being one of them. The matter of dignity can be Christianly advocated without having to translate into discourse giving up the language of God, or giving up language of salvation. The notion of being “created in the image of God” is a resource for thinking about the integrity and dignity of the human person in a way that supports rights discourse. It also can be critical of rights discourse. For equality can be used to homogenize and render everybody the same in ways that reflect a dominant group's ideology over and against groups that are deemed subordinate. It's true that some of these ideas are quite complex and require detailed working out, but this doesn't mean that particular religious voices need to become themselves denied.

There's a great potential in Canadian society to be truly intercultural;

maybe not multicultural, because of the danger of cultural silos existing in separate spheres, but rather cultures involved in a rigorous, enriching, mutual conversation about what it means to share space together in our differences without letting the “together” become a force for some sort of universalized and homogenized Canadian identity. And that's the struggle. That's what reasonable accommodation in Quebec has wrestled with, and that's what was

“There needs to be a baseline set of practices that honour shared human dignity and rights”

at stake with the issue of Sharia Law in 2005, here in Ontario. Debates are going to occur, but Christian academic institutions, especially those like Emmanuel and ICS, can be at the forefront leading the discourse in terms of promoting an interfaith way of sharing space. At least that's my hope. That's why I'm here. ●

Protest Movements

WHETHER BY FOOT OR STAYING PUT, THE ARAB SPRING AND OCCUPY MOVEMENTS ARE GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS THAT SHOW A CONTINUED FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

As people around the world increasingly struggle to keep their families afloat, cities have become a fertile breeding ground for a diversity of grassroots

“The search for equality and justice will require sustained work over a long period”

movements. A global wave of response developed, frequently utilizing the forms of media and communication favoured by the young.

In 2011, the Middle East and North Africa witnessed two revolutions, one civil war, three civil uprisings, major protests in six countries, and significant protests in five more – and that does not include the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. We also saw large-scale protests and rioting in Europe: Spain and Greece and the U.K. And then,

of course, the Occupy Wall Street movement emerged in September, becoming an international phenomenon in 1000 cities within a month, with over 6000 cities Occupied at the start of 2012. Amid all the different movements one thing seems clear: none of it is over. As Egyptians gathered for the anniversary

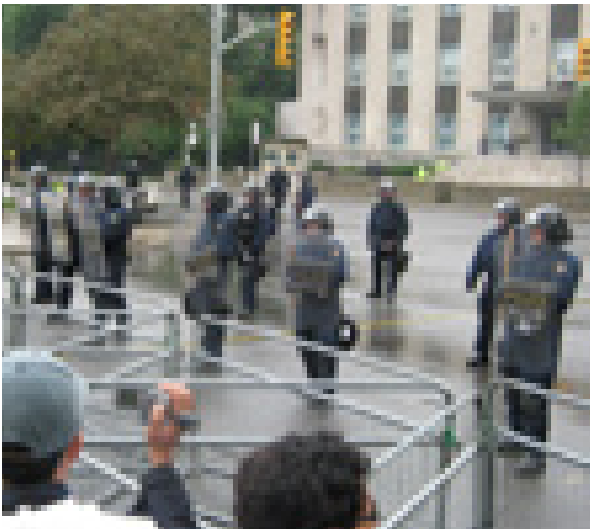
of Tahir Square, one message came through: the protest is ongoing. Tahir Square wasn't an event that happened in the past – it is a process that continues to this day. At the Occupy Toronto Activist Assembly in mid-January one could overhear, “We've reached day 100 of Occupy, meaning we're one percent done.” Are we looking at a 27-year revolution? Ask the *indignados* of Spain: “we are going slow because we are going far.”

Many people marching around

the world know there's no quick fix. Deregulated capitalism has eroded social freedoms and increased inequality over decades. Lobbyists have been persuading governments to change our legal systems globally to encourage deregulation and allow capital to increasingly influence politics. That is not work that can be undone on a whim. The search for equality and justice will require sustained work over a long period. Over the years the nature of protests has taken many different forms. In 2011 we saw some new tactics developing, as well as various adaptations of old themes. Looking forward, we see an array of questions on the horizon. When will the next round of protests emerge? Which tactics were effective and which protests achieved their goals? How can people work together more effectively? Are the protests in 2011 just the heralds of more widespread expressions of dissatisfaction? Where will the fights for social justice and the realization of human rights take us next? ●

After receiving his MA in Philosophy from ICS in 2007, Stuart Basden has spent his time working on organic farms in Europe, beautifying websites globally, researching current events and playing board games. He immigrated to Canada from the U.K. and now lives with his wife, dogs and cats in Toronto. He marched at Occupy Toronto several times, but has yet to spend the night.

Stuart Basden, below



#Protest Symbols



Symbols have always been important to protest movements. The peace symbol, which combines the semaphore letters 'N' and 'D' as shorthand for "nuclear disarmament," is one of the most recognizable symbols of our time. One of the most prolific symbols today is the hashtag, owing to its use on Twitter, a medium through which mass movements quickly communicate plans and form consensus about what matters – what is "trending," in the vernacular of the mostly younger population that employs Twitter and other social media. The picture illustrates the incorporation of several hashtag terms into a simple protest sign found in St. James Park at the Occupy Toronto camp.



This poster, credited with beginning the Occupy movement, features the Arturo Di Modica sculpture Charging Bull with a female dancer posing on its back in arabesque and what appears to be an angry mob following the pair. A caption above the dancer asks, "What is our one demand?" which could be taken to mean either that the demands are so numerous they can't be listed or there is only one demand and it should be obvious. The bull is a well-known symbol of market optimism, and indeed the Di Modica statue rests in public space near Wall Street in New York City. The dancer is evocative of the early Minoan bull leapers, both male and female, who would grasp the horns of a charging bull and use its own energy to help them somersault over and land behind it. Today the shadowy hacker group known as "Anonymous" is seen as using the attributes of 'the system' to assist the protest movement or, as with Wikileaks, facilitate resistance activities such as exposing secrets.

Well-Deserved Honours

WITH CONVOCAATION 2012 QUICKLY APPROACHING, ICS IS PRIVILEGED TO CONFER HONORARY DOCTORATES ON TWO PEOPLE WHO HAVE MADE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Fred Reinders is known for his work as an engineer and for his commitment to integrity, education, and giving back to the community. Born in the Netherlands, he immigrated to Canada in the 1950s, where in 1967 he founded two companies, Maple Engineering and Construction, and F.J. Reinders and Associates.

Reinders has modelled leadership as an important businessman in construction and engineering, and in his role as a strong voice in commu-

nity development. Though Reinders is now retired, Maple is still going strong, as Maple Reinders. The company has been involved in the construction of an airport and schools, and environmentally related municipal projects, such as composting, wastewater treatment and renewable energy sources. It was recently ranked among the top 50 employers for small- to medium-size businesses in Canada for its commitment to employees and the responsible manner in which it undertakes its projects. Reinders established this ethos of integrity and community involvement as he developed the company out of the basement of his home to where it is today, with one of his sons as the president. His leadership has truly been an example that others have been able to build on.

nizations and institutions, those of Christian higher learning in particular. He was a member of the ICS Board of Trustees in the 1980s and '90s, eventually serving as Chair; he was also Chair of the ICS Regeneration campaign. He has served on the King's University College Board and as Chair of the Board of Christian Studies International. For his expert leadership in these roles, to name but a few, and his deep commitment to Christian education, he is well deserving of this recognition.

Balanganani Samson Makhado is the Africa Director for the Association of Christian Schools International, in which role he supports the work of tens of thousands of schools serving hundreds of thousands of students across the continent. He was raised in poverty in South Africa, where apartheid legislation was enacted the year after he was born. More damaging than going to school under a tree for the first five years, Makhado recalls, was the "educational bondage of Bantu educa-

tion." He nonetheless "managed to manoeuvre through," qualifying to teach in 1973 and serving in public schools at the primary and secondary levels and then as principal of Vele Secondary. A founder of Tshikevha Christian School, he became its principal in 1990.

Supported by an ICS scholarship, Makhado earned a Master of World-view Studies with a focus on Christian Education in 1994. He goes so far as to say, "I am what I am because of what ICS invested in me." Makhado's stewardship of that investment is the real story, though. As someone who has worked with him closely in recent years has said, "He is probably doing more at this time in Africa to spread the good news that Christ transforms all of life than anyone else I know and his message is being well received." And he has taken that message around the globe, sharing it at colleges and conferences at the same time as he shares the struggles and the joys of Christian schooling on his own continent, imploring others to "come over" and serve.

With a characteristically mischievous twinkle, Makhado last year shocked an international conference of Christian teachers with the revelation that he was raised to be a "witchdoctor." More significant for Makhado than his escape from educational bondage was his emergence into spiritual freedom in Christ. It was at that conference that an English colleague remarked how wonderful it was to hear someone speak in such non-dualist and anti-individualistic terms. ●

"I am what I am because of what ICS invested in me"

nity development. Though Reinders is now retired, Maple is still going strong, as Maple Reinders. The company has been involved in the construction of an airport and schools, and environmentally related municipal projects, such as composting, wastewater treatment and renewable energy sources. It was recently ranked among the top 50 employers for small- to medium-size businesses in Canada for its commitment to employees and the responsible manner in which it undertakes its projects. Reinders established this ethos of integrity and community involvement as he developed the company out of the basement of his home to where it is today, with one of his sons as the president. His leadership has truly been an example that others have been able to build on.

Reinders has been a generous supporter of many different orga-



Fred Reinders



Balanganani Samson Makhado

Student News

ICERS MOVING UP AND MOVING ON



Christopher Allers
mentor Ron Kuipers

In January, ICS doctoral candidate Chris Allers passed his Pre-Dissertation Area Examination, and is now officially ABD (all but dissertation). The committee included supervisor Ron Kuipers, internal examiners Jeff Dudiak of the King's University College (ICS adjunct) and Shannon Hoff, and external examiner John Caruana from Ryerson University. Chris has proposed an exciting dissertation project entitled "The Miracle of Forgiveness: Between and Beyond Condoning and Excusing," in which he will use the work of Hannah Arendt and other thinkers to examine the theme of forgiveness, including the special features that distinguish it from the actions of condoning and excusing.



Kevin Huinink
mentor Doug Blomberg

In November, Kevin Huinink successfully defended his MA thesis entitled "What Children Can Do: A Polycultural Garden Theory of Development for Education." Kevin has taught for many years at Woodland Christian High School, Breslau, Ont. He challenges psychological theories that impose limitations on what is developmentally appropriate for children to learn. Drawing critically on reformational philosophy, Kevin argues for an understanding of children as image-bearers who are constitutionally capable of functioning in all modes of experience from an early age. In dialogue with holistic educators, he defends an expansive view of children's potential that schools should seek to nurture.



Jeff Morrissey
mentor Shannon Hoff

In November, Jeff Morrissey successfully defended his MA thesis to a committee comprising supervisor Shannon Hoff, internal examiner Bob Sweetman and external examiner John Russon. The thesis, "Speaking Bodies: Communication and Freedom in Fichte and Merleau-Ponty," is a creative and insightful synthesis of these two thinkers. In it Jeff argues that freedom is a complex intersubjective, bodily, and linguistic phenomenon – that we develop as free beings capable of meaningful lives only on the basis of bodily and linguistic interaction with the world and with other people. Jeff is currently enrolled in a PhD program at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

An Event to Remember

GERALD VANDEZANDE (77) PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY IN HIS ARMCHAIR AT HOME IN SCARBOROUGH, ONT., EARLY ON THE MORNING OF SATURDAY, JULY 16, 2011. HE WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF CITIZENS FOR PUBLIC JUSTICE (CPJ) IN 1963, AND CONTINUED TO BE AN ACTIVE MEMBER AND SUPPORTER ALL THE DAYS OF HIS LIFE. GERALD WORKED AS CPJ'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UNTIL 1988 AND THEN NATIONAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR FOR A DECADE THEREAFTER. ALTHOUGH NOT BLESSED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FORMAL SENSE, GERALD RECEIVED AN HONORARY DOCTOR OF LETTERS FROM ICS. IN 2001, HE WAS AWARDED THE ORDER OF CANADA.



Gerald Vandezande

Born on a snowy Christmas Day in 1933, in Ymuiden, the Netherlands, Gerald Vandezande lived his life reading and sharing the Gospel with others. 'Gerry,' as he liked to be known, believed that Christians must integrate the teachings of the Bible into all aspects of life. He became Canada's most renowned proponent of public justice – a true force for social change.

At a wonderful memorial evening in February, 130 friends gathered at the First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto. Organized jointly by CPJ and ICS, with many of Gerry's friends assisting, the event was titled, "Hungering for a New Politics: The Life's Work of Gerald Vandezande."

Nobody who knew Gerry would envision him sitting tight while friends sang his praises (or for that matter, fixated on his foibles). A highlight of the evening featured the premiere showing of a DVD of Gerry himself, speaking his own heartfelt

beliefs. In another film, Prof. Bob Goudzwaard reflected on Gerry's contributions, and all who attended were touched by the gracious presence of Wynne, Gerry's dear wife. Daughter Karen and grandson Jason movingly spoke from the Vandezande family's memory bank, with Karen noting how she didn't always agree with her Dad's causes – as a lover of malls, she wasn't always sure that Sunday shopping was so bad.

John Olthuis, who co-founded CPJ with Gerry back in 1963, remembered how they worked to defend the rights of the Dene people of the Northwest Territories. These Aboriginal peoples challenged the Mackenzie Valley pipeline – and won. In a fetching turn of phrase, John remarked how "Gerry was Prime Minister of the Justice Party – and played the role of Minister in every portfolio of government."

The Rev. Susan Eagle quipped that Gerry, an "activist theologian," was more often at Queen's Park than any elected MPP. And the Honorable John McKay, MP for Scarborough-Guildwood, complained that he never knew whether his friend Gerry would have actually voted for him. McKay quoted from a letter from current Liberal Leader, Bob Rae, which referred to Gerry as a "crystal spirit" in the words of a George Orwell poem. The following day featured panel presentations and workshops on issues that Gerry was passionate about: family and child poverty, government advocacy, welcoming the neighbor among us, and

preserving environmental integrity. Javed Akbar noted Gerry's commitment to interfaith action. John Hiemstra's masterful presentation captured how Gerry's deep immersion in the reformational philosophical and theological tradition stood him in good stead as a basis for his public life, and the roots of CPJ's charisma.

As we learned from the title of one of Gerry's books, justice is not about "just us." We'll miss the man who was mentor, voice of conscience and faith-filled friend to so many proponents of a more just future. ●

Joe Gunn is the Ottawa-based executive director of Citizens for Public Justice, cpj.ca, an ecumenical organization that promotes justice, peace and the integrity of creation.



Bob Sweetman and Joe Gunn

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— Robert Gibbs, Director, Jackman Humanities Institute and Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto

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We thank God for His grace and guidance in our mission and for His provision of new and faithful members like you.

Sincerely,

CHRIS GORT
President

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BOOK

**After Secularism: Rethinking
Religion in Global Politics (2011)**

by Erin K. Wilson



Wilson rejects modern secularist accounts of religion in international relations that establish an either/or dichotomy – religion is either

institutional or ideational, individual or communal, and rational or irrational – reduce religion to three of the dimensions (institutional, individual, and irrational), and exclude religion from the public sphere. She proposes a “relational dialogist” framework that because of its both/and thinking acknowledges all six dimensions as characteristic of religion. In addition, relational dialogism suggests the concepts of the religious and the secular are fluid – they constantly interact and their meanings change historically – yet theoretically manageable and of practical use since the continuity of the concepts arises from the fact they exist in relationship. This revisiting of the definition of religion and blurring of the boundaries between the religious and the secular is a welcomed addition to discussions regarding what philosophers and social theorists have identified as an emerging post-secular era.

—*John-Harmen Valk, junior member*

The In-House Review

BOOK

Artifice and Design (2008)

by Barry Allen



As Protagoras said, *anthropos* (human being) is the measure of all things – in that whatever measure or significance there is, it comes

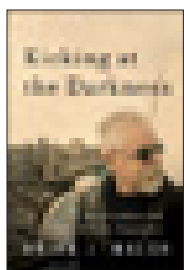
from us. Barry Allen refines his philosophical anthropology in *Artifice and Design* by developing concepts of art, artifice, knowledge, technology and tool in order to explore how art and technology are mutual terms and how that relationship shapes our human experience. With clear arguments and refreshingly well-written prose Barry Allen explores an increasingly important topic: the interrelatedness of technology and human nature.

—George Deibert, junior member

BOOK

Kicking at the Darkness: Bruce Cockburn and the Christian Imagination (2011)

by Brian J. Walsh



Through an exploration of the music of Bruce Cockburn, Walsh invites the reader to marvel at a world of wonders, plumb

the depths of its brokenness and, in hope, to see “just beyond the range of normal sight.” He points to profound insights in Cockburn’s art that help not only to answer the questions “Where are we? Who are we? What’s wrong?” but also to reawaken a Christian imagination with which to answer the ques-

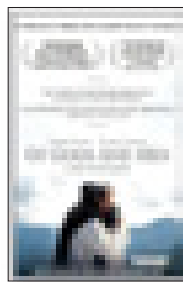
tion, “What is the remedy?” In so doing, Walsh also provides an example of how Christians might engage culture more broadly – to be open to the possibility that the voice of God might be heard through “the other,” and to create the space in which God’s voice can be heard where and when it is not.

—John-Harmen Valk, junior member

FILM

Of Gods and Men (2010)

directed by Xavier Beauvois



Winner of the 2010 Cannes Grand Prix, this film provides an extraordinary account of a group of monks in Algeria faced with a wrenching decision of

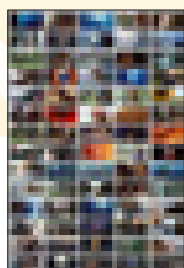
whether to leave their monastery, and the impoverished village with which they have established a close relationship, because of the threat posed by a rising fundamentalist faction in the region. Writer/director Xavier Beauvois weaves an incredible array of thought-provoking themes within the storyline – the relationship between freedom and loss, faith and reason, religion and violence, rootedness and separation, to name just a few. Mark this film at the top of your to-do list.

—John-Harmen Valk, junior member

FILM

The Tree of Life (2011)

directed by Terrence Malik



Do see *The Tree of Life*, but prepare before you go. This is not a beginning-middle-end story in film.

It is a visionary’s artistic and

unconventional treatment of finding life after death in a family struggling with a beloved son’s death. The main setting is Waco, Texas in the 1950s, where the author was raised and where his brother died. The movie is therefore also personal. But the grand long portrayal of the birth of the universe is certainly not a personal ’50s Texas story. There is very little narrative in the film, since the most significant wordings come as whispered voiceovers. Catching those helps interpret the movie. And the music, magnificent as it is, is not meant to entertain but to help feel the mystery of God. The opening text from Job: “Where were you when the foundations of the earth were laid,” is framed by what the nuns taught the mother: there are two ways and we must choose. So after having shown us the laying of earth’s foundation the filmmaker engages us with the struggle to choose, and in the end reveals how the way of love is the way that leads to reconciliation.

The movie is very controversial and, again, preparing by reading reviews (via Google) and background stories is essential. Though many find this fake and cheap religion, I see in it a contemporary engagement with love in way unrivaled and therefore perhaps not recognized. I have seen it six times and hope more will follow.

—Henk Hart, senior member emeritus

Social Justice and Human Rights Conference

"Justice and rights are the most contested part of our moral vocabulary." Nicholas Wolterstorff



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Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology Emeritus, Yale University

Dr. Melissa Williams

Professor of Political Science at University of Toronto and former Director, Centre for Ethics

Other conference highlights include

"Religion and Human Rights in Canada"

Plenary panel with Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina, Rabbi Roy Tanenbaum and the Very Rev. Lois Wilson

"Must Love and Justice Forever Be at Odds?"

A public lecture by Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff

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PANEL AND WORKSHOP TOPICS

- Tensions between justice and other norms
- Restorative justice
- Aboriginal rights in Canada
- Rights of children
- Rights of refugees and immigrants
- Rights of people with disabilities
- Poverty and rights
- Environmental rights
- Women's rights

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