



Healing as Teaching, Teaching for Healing

“FOR THE TYPE OF STUDENTS THAT ENDED UP AT ICS — MANY OF THEM WERE BRIGHT STUDENTS FROM EVANGELICAL OR FUNDAMENTALIST BACKGROUNDS — THE TRADITION REPRESENTED A KIND OF LIBERATION WHERE THEY COULD CONNECT THEIR VERY INTENTIONAL HEARTFELT COMMITMENT TO BASIC CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE BIBLE WITH THESE BROADER CONCERNS [OF PUBLIC LIFE], ESPECIALLY IN SCHOLARSHIP.”

— AL WOLTERS, COMMENT APRIL 2015
(www.cardus.ca/comment/article/4452/creation-regained-at-thirty/)

by DOUG
BLOMBERG

Reverend Richard Johnson / from the collection of the State Library of NSW
William Wilberforce & Billy Graham from Wikimedia / Public Domain



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I was struck by something recently – something that will strike many as commonplace. Jesus was a teacher *and* a healer. Not a teacher who occasionally did some healing. Not a teacher who healed to draw attention to and authenticate his teaching, but a healer *and* a teacher. Indeed, Peter’s message to Cornelius was that Jesus “went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10:38). In Jesus, words and deeds are integrally incarnate, for healing.

When I was converted at the 1968 Billy Graham Crusade in

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Doug Blomberg

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Sydney I was given the *Gospel of John*. Ten years later, this was the Gospel included in the Year 12 Biblical Studies course I taught; John Marsh's commentary was the secondary text. Perhaps this influenced me to regard Jesus' miracles – including the miracles of healing – as *signs* rather than *substance*, pointing to something else, namely, **Jesus' teaching**. Given the environment in which my faith was initially formed, it is not surprising I should come to think words more important than deeds. Sydney Anglicanism was staunchly evangelical (in that context, Calvinist). By my time, this was evangelicalism in which doctrine, piety and evangelism were prized and social engagement limited severely.

I was once told by the diocesan evangelist that pastoral ministry is but preaching one-on-one. This cannot be. Pastoral care is meant for healing. It complements teaching, but if teaching is for healing, one must not merely broadcast, one must *know* and speak into the lives of those for whom one cares. One must have wisdom, not just doctrine, to care aptly: one must *act* for and with those who suffer. This goes to the core of what ICS stands for, I believe: words in service of justice and mercy, scholarship in service of and accountable to everyday people living everyday lives. Lives in which suffering is all too prevalent.

I was born in Sydney – and born again, by God's "amazing grace", in John Newton's words – because of

one basic circumstance: my forebears were convicts on the First Fleet, among the reluctant founders of the British penal colony in 1788, on that "fatal shore". Rev. Richard Johnson and his wife Mary were also on board, largely because of Newton (no longer a slave-trader but rector of Clapham) and William Wilberforce. Wilberforce, who fought tirelessly to abolish the slave trade and then slavery itself, was also a member (and often founder) of more than fifty societies dedicated to social betterment, mission and biblical literacy. He was of the privileged class, a close friend of Prime Minister Pitt the Younger, and before a dinner party he would prepare what he called "launchers", designed to initiate a conversation about the gospel.

For Johnson too, conversion and social action went hand in hand. Not surprisingly, he was the colony's first schoolmaster. When the Johnsons had a daughter, they gave her an Aboriginal name, Milbah. Even more tellingly, they welcomed an Aboriginal girl into their family. Governor Arthur Phillip prohibited slavery in the colony and refused retaliation against an Aboriginal who had speared him in the shoulder (and in later life, he was a lay preacher). These men were for mercy. Yet this "proto-neo-Calvinism" of the "Clapham Sect" soon withered in New South Wales, rehabilitation often giving way to retribution, amity with Aboriginals overtaken by colonising acquisitiveness (despite the King's decree that they should, as his subjects, be treated fairly and equally).

It has for a very long time struck me (yes, twice stricken!) that Jesus chose not to give content to the "Kingdom of God" when he began his ministry with a call to repentance. He assumed his hearers should know, for had this not been proclaimed for a millennium? The good news was that this Kingdom was "at hand" (Mk 1:15). God's reign, through God's people, God's kingdom come, his glory filling the earth. A kingdom of justice and peace, a place of healing.

I took great inspiration from

a book by Henri Nouwen, lent to me many years ago by dear friends, parents of a child born with *spina bifida*. They have said I could mention Iain by name, reminding me that this Scottish variant of "John" means "gift of God". They testify to learning much about themselves, their faith, and healing, through Iain and his suffering, and their own also. When Nouwen set to write what he thought his final book, the Apostles' Creed was to be his template. He changed his mind. He wrote instead about the man with severe disabilities for whom he had been caring many years at *L'Arche*, not far from here in Toronto. This book was *Adam: God's Beloved*, structured so Adam's life parallels the life of Jesus. The Lord spoke profoundly to Nouwen through Adam Arnett. The Lord speaks indeed through the weak and hungry, the imprisoned and the homeless, "the least of these". He speaks through those who suffer. If we have ears to hear.

My hope is that the scholarship of ICS will be of service to those who yearn for healing, for themselves and for others. For our words – our theorising, teaching, learning – are authenticated by healing, though not in the way I first thought. Healing is the desired *outcome* of teaching also, for mind, body and spirit, for our whole selves.

All suffer in this fallen world. Some suffer mightily more than others. Jesus' promise is that all may be healed. I bore the brunt of a (well-meaning) joke in an English church(!) about "the stain" I bear because of my reprobate ancestry. But redemption has been possible for Australian convicts and their heirs, as for Israelite slaves. Exodus may be the route to new life. May God's Kingdom come in its fullness. ●

Lessons from a Not so Vacant Lot

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF *PERSPECTIVE*, WE PUBLISHED BOB SWEETMAN'S LAUDATIO WHEN RACHEL MCGUIRE'S PHD WAS CONFERRED. BOB COMMENTED ON THE EMBEDDEDNESS OF RACHEL'S SCHOLARSHIP IN HER "COMPLICATED VOLUNTEER WORK AMONG THE VULNERABLE" OF ROCHESTER NY, WHERE SHE SERVED AS A BAPTIST PASTOR. WE INVITED HER TO SHARE SOMETHING ABOUT THIS WORK. RACHEL IS CURRENTLY A CONSULTANT WITH COLGATE ROCHESTER CROZER DIVINITY SCHOOL, DEVELOPING A SIX-YEAR PLAN FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION, ONLINE PROGRAMS, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

by RACHEL
MCGUIRE

"...then the Lord God formed the human being out of the dust of the ground ... and the Lord took and put the human being in the garden of Eden to till it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:7 and 15)

Around four years ago, after many years of working hard and thinking big about social justice, in desperation I pulled some strawberries out of my back yard, threw them into a cardboard box with a trowel and a watering can, and drove over to the corner of Denver and Parsells. I'd been feeling the pain of young people in our city, and that morning read in the paper that incidents of youth violence were increasing on that corner. I also knew that a struggling sister church in my denomination stood there. Having exhausted myself with every effort and strategy imaginable to work for change, I collapsed into the only thing I could think to do – plant strawberries.

I arrived to a dusty trash-covered lot across from a convenience store where young people, mostly men, gather. The dirt was dry and hardened with evidence of the foundation

of the demolished house that once stood there. (Rochester has thousands of such lots. Neighbors come out and watch the contractors who demolish the houses to ensure that they don't bury the poisonous waste after the city inspector goes home for the night.) In a fit of utter irrationality, I climbed out of my car and plopped myself on the grass near the fence line, and began hacking at the concrete-like earth, pressing green plants into it for what was likely to be (and indeed was) a brief existence. After a few minutes a young man (maybe 12 years) came tentatively toward me and asked what I was doing. I explained about the strawberries. He looked at me suspiciously, saying, "I think they need water." I said, "I know, but I don't have any." He offered to get some, and soon this small-framed boy was dragging a heavy full watering can down the street from a neighbor's home. I treasure this

image, and also seeing him later in the season, literally dragging a zucchini home that nearly matched his size and weight.

I began dedicating myself to

"I began dedicating myself to showing up weekly, at the same hours, so that the children and neighbors would know when I would be there – no agenda, no big plan for social change, simple friendship and solidarity. . . ."

showing up weekly, at the same hours, so that the children and neighbors would know when I would be there – no agenda, no big plan for social change, simple friendship and solidarity – and, of course, as Los Angeles gardener Ron Findley says, "you get strawberries." And cabbages, and collard greens, and herbs, and tomatoes, and flowers, and all manner of holy wonder. And hopeful human to human relationships in the midst of struggle.

This dusty abundant lot is off the

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WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!



Julia de Boer, *1st year MA*

I decided to come to ICS for two very important reasons. Firstly, the tight-knit academic community and the chance to learn through conversation and open dialogue. Secondly, the knowledge that at ICS I do not have to separate or conceal my emotional or spiritual responses to the material I study. Rather, it is encouraged! I am a participant in an academic environment that acknowledges my whole self. These factors made it an easy decision, and I am struck, already in my short time here, by the dedication to high-quality scholarship and the deep sense of community which is present.

Hector Acero Ferrer, *1st year PhD*

My courses at ICS posed many challenges to my previous ways of thinking, pushing me to re-evaluate what was truly at stake in my concerns and questioning my premises. What started as an uncomfortable experience became, in fact, the perfect combination of multidisciplinary inquiries about faith, society, and the history of ideas for which I was yearning. That is why I decided to continue my academic journey through the PhD program at ICS!

Jonathon Polce, *1st year MA*

I first encountered ICS two years ago as a graduate student at the Toronto School of Theology. At that time, I was looking for a few philosophy classes to buttress my studies in theology and ICS has a great reputation within the TST network. After only one class at ICS, I realized this was one of the most unique graduate environments I have experienced. The environment fosters success and growth in a communal environment, not competition in isolation. When I finished my degree at TST, I had a desire to pursue a degree in philosophy, and I knew there was only one institute in Toronto I wanted to call home.



Mark Novak, *1st year MA*

My background (Bachelor of Nursing and MA in Counselling) is slightly different from most other students here, but what attracted me to ICS was a desire to learn and do philosophy from out of a strong Christian stance and worldview. I am currently interested in philosophical and theological anthropology, and how having a clearer understanding of “what it means to be a person” is necessary for proper counselling and ecclesiology, as well as the co-contingency of man and God, and how both need and depend on the other in order to “be” in the world. I am certain that these interests and the research of them will be supported and enhanced by the professors here.

Dean Dettloff, *1st year PhD*

Last year, when the thought of PhD work naturally came up, I began to consider other programs. There were interesting courses and fields going on elsewhere, and perhaps, I thought, I needed to diversify my education. The more I thought about it, however, the more I realized I had found a special kind of place at ICS. Where else could I go where profs were willing to not only effectively teach their specialties but also go out for a spontaneous lunch? Where else could Emily and I find a place where we both felt affirmed and comfortable, as individuals and as a couple? True to form again, I applied to only one program, ICS, and I haven’t had any second thoughts.

Joonyong Um, *3rd year PhD*

ICS has always been a Christian institution with ears and hearts for the “small voices” of marginalised people. I came to ICS with a hope that I could be prepared for serving children from marginal families in Korea through my course studies and under the excellent guidance of faculty. This year I plan to study how they may be emancipated, with insights drawn from the book of Job and works of Paulo Freire.

Lessons from a Not so Vacant Lot

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Rachel McGuire

beaten path of most Rochesterians who are “making it.” And, yet, with patience and presence, it yields its lessons. I’ve learned a lot about the trauma of generations of institutional racism. I’ve learned that trust is very difficult to achieve under these circumstances, and that if I want real relationship I will have to endure discomfort and truth-telling and sometimes overt hostility. And that I can, and that it is so very worth it. I’ve learned about the abundance of the earth, and how it can overflow with riches when lovingly tended. And how children love the earth naturally, and welcome invitations to connect. As Chicago urban gardener Will Allen says,

“It’s all about the soil!” And this is true on all scales. The solutions to climate change are rooted in a new healthy relationship to the soil. Google “regenerative agriculture” and “carbon sequestration” if you want some hope on that front. I’ve had opportunity to contemplate privatization and public space. We saw Occupy Rochester and along with Occupy movements throughout the world put tents up in our cities – forcefully creating public space in a time of extreme privatization. This little public space available on a public lot generated gatherings and conversations about the struggles and challenges of common life. People who live deep within situations that I once only contemplated from a distance – people with the actual knowledge of those situations – gathered and shared knowledge and formed new relationships in ways that benefit the community at large. Public space matters. I learned a lot about the justice system and the constant breaking apart of families due to incarceration (often based on disproportionately applied drug laws), and about the differing experiences of policing, my experience of feeling protected while my friends feel dominated. I witnessed what Michelle Alexander researched in her

work on mass incarceration (*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*). She says that Jim Crow laws never ended. They just morphed into more hidden and sophisticated forms. There are more black men in jail, on parole, or on probation now in the U.S. than were enslaved in 1850. I had time week after week to contemplate the roots of colonialism and its assumption that the world is a blank slate – that neighborhoods and whole nations are canvases waiting for imperial and gentrified visions – and the violence of this way of thinking. So many times, I heard friends say, “there is no one downtown anymore.” And, yet I could see plainly that the streets were full. What could account for this sense of imagined blankness, this false sense that no one and nothing is in a place?

In the fascinating artistry of the Creator of the universe, the world and all its wonders can be witnessed and contemplated from a street corner – one that, I must now confess, after years of hugs and laughter and friendship and deep conversation and strawberries, was only vacant in my colonized and impoverished imagination. It always was and always will be full of the irrepressible and sacred life that is the heart of this creation. ●



The Rose (and God) Is Without 'Why'

JOSHUA HARRIS CAME TO ICS FROM TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY AND ADMITS TO BEING A LITTLE UNCERTAIN ABOUT PURSUING A PHD AT SUCH A SMALL AND RELATIVELY UNKNOWN INSTITUTION. HOWEVER, A FEW YEARS IN, HE SAYS, "ICS HAS PROVEN TO BE NOTHING LESS THAN A GODSEND FOR ME—ACADEMICALLY, PERSONALLY AND (MOST NOTABLY) SPIRITUALLY."

It is often suggested that classical arguments for the existence of God present a sort of hollowed-out conception of the divine—one that is better suited to *close down* the mystery of God than to *exalt* it. Merold Westphal puts the matter succinctly in his important book *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, arguing that the God of such arguments often serves as a drug for "those [who] have sold their soul to philosophy's project of rendering the whole of reality intelligible to human understanding." These are harsh words, indeed, for traditional theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, who offers his (in)famous "five ways" in order to demonstrate the existence of God in *Summa Theologiae*, 1.2.3.

While acknowledging that the

God of such arguments has indeed been employed this way in the past, I propose an alternative, *poetic* interpretation of Thomas' "second way"—one that is curiously similar to Angelus Silesius' profound poem, "*Die Rose ist ohne Warum*" (The rose is without 'why'). In other words, there is a sense in which Thomas' argument means *precisely the opposite* of what the overzealous theologians Westphal criticizes would have us believe. Indeed, for a technological world that is characterized first and foremost by its insatiable desire for the *Warum*, the God of Thomas' second way is precisely who he is because he is *ohne Warum*.

The crucial point of contention here is the meaning of Thomas' notion of the *causa efficiens prima* or "first efficient cause."

While it is tempting to render this divine name as "first" in the sense that it precedes every other member of a temporal or numerical series, this is not what Thomas means. On the contrary, it is crucial to recognize that Aquinas' "first" cause is nothing other than the perduring, nameless mystery which suffuses the existence of all things—including temporal or numerical series themselves. On this latter interpretation, Thomas' *causa efficiens prima* is a way of getting at the "why-ness" of Silesius' rose. Far from being something like the



"first domino" or "whatever got this whole mess started," Thomas' first cause is a name for the mysterious

by JOSHUA HARRIS

"Aquinas' 'first' cause is nothing other than the perduring, nameless mystery which suffuses the existence of all things. . . ."

thatness which is simultaneously the most intimate companion *of*—and the strangest foreigner *to*—the many investigations we hapless creatures conduct here below.

Now of course it is true that Thomas' argument is ultimately designed to bring us to "affirm" or "say yes to" the proposition, "God exists." For these purposes, though, I think it is fair to say that such arguments are more instructive when read for the more humble task of orienting us towards the full mystery to which this contentious (but true!) proposition ultimately refers. This is what Thomas' argument and Silesius' poem help us to do when considered together. ●



Finding Ways to Give Back



Perspective can be viewed online at
perspective.icscanada.edu

ICS GRADUATE AND MEMBER OF THE ICS AND FICS BOARDS, DR. MATT BONZO IS A PRIMARY "SENDER" OF STUDENTS TO ICS: FIFTEEN, AT LAST COUNT! HE IS MARRIED TO DOROTHE, SECRETARY AT ICS WHEN THEY MET, TEACHES PHILOSOPHY AT CORNERSTONE UNIVERSITY, GRAND RAPIDS, AND IS DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT THERE.

by MATT BONZO

My first contact with ICS was through an advertisement in *Christianity Today*. After completing a master's degree, I was looking for a Ph.D. in philosophy from a Christian perspective and came across a small ad about a graduate school that offered degrees in philosophy. I had read a little Kuyper but knew very little about ICS or the tradition in which it was placed. So before deciding to apply to the Ph.D. program I decided to visit.

As I walked away from 229 College St. after that first visit, I was struck with an impression that something must be going on there, though I wasn't quite sure I could articulate it. There was something beyond the wisdom of the faculty, the hospitality of the staff, the depth of the scholarship, the collegiality of students, and even beyond the aura of Dooyeweerd. The best description I could come up with is that there was a spirit about the place. 28 years later and I still sense that spirit at ICS. And in a limited sense, as a member of the Board of Trustees and the Friends of ICS board, I have been entrusted to care for that spirit.

Sometimes the duties of the board can seem mundane and sometimes they can be overwhelming, but the members of the Board, as well as so many faithful supporters, all recognize the importance of nurturing the spirit of ICS for another generation. My deep loyalty to ICS is rooted in gratitude for what I



have received. Rarely does a day pass when I am teaching or writing that I am not acutely aware of the gifts given me during my days at ICS. I can't begin to understand myself without reference to Jim Olthuis, Hendrik Hart and Cal Seerveld. They have poured more into my life than I could ever begin to repay. But gratitude should eventually turn into generosity and so I continue to find ways to give back. And my hope is that our loving God will take my small efforts and combine them with the many sacrificial gifts from faculty, staff, students and supporters so that ICS's spirit will continue to be poured out in abundance to thirsting people. ●

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