

Wabash Center Small Grant Final Report
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Narrative Report

Deepening our work together: How new theological work should/could reshape our pedagogies with regard to engaging racism

This grant project sought to enhance and deepen an ongoing discussion of the pedagogical implications of new work within theological inquiry on the origins of race as a category. We brought the author of the signally important new book, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, Willie James Jennings, to Luther's campus for a discussion with a group of faculty who had been reading the book together, and for a broader public discussion aimed at catalyzing a deeper discussion of the pedagogical implications of this work for our curriculum.

It has long been established that racism is not only an interpersonal problem in the United States, but also an institutional and structural problem. Christian theologians have clearly articulated racism as sinful, something for which Christians are called to account, and drawn and graced by God to overcome. Yet Christian churches are still remarkably segregated, and Christian seminaries still continue to struggle even to engage race and ethnicity theologically in an explicit way. Instead we engage in these kinds of discourses often in subtle but unspoken ways that are destructive. What we need pedagogically are ways to talk about the theological dimensions of identity in a full and engaged way.

Luther Seminary is a Christian institution which has had a long commitment to addressing racism, yet for the last decade or so we have been unable to make any substantial forward movement. Two years ago a foundational new book was published, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, which draws on significant new work on race and ethnicity in mission history, as well as in biblical studies, to make the claim that at key points in history, specific wrong turns were taken in theological discourse. These imaginative turns led Christian communities away from a deep engagement with confessing the intimacy and relationality of a missional Trinitarian God, and towards, instead, a "place-less," uprooted, supersessionist understanding which provided the foundational frame and dominant metaphors for the categories of race that have forever after shaped and deformed our knowing and our testimonies.

The primary goal of this project was to engage the pedagogical implications of Jennings' new work with Luther's faculty, and to do so in a way that contributed to renewed engagement with issues of racism, theological education and preparation for ministry in a diverse society.

In the fall of 2010, a small group of Luther's faculty began meeting to discuss Jennings' book. Taking the argument of the book seriously meant that there had to be pedagogical implications for our shared work together. We brought Willie James Jennings, himself a seminary professor and former academic dean, to campus to do two things. First, we wanted him to engage with our book group, giving us the opportunity to further explore

with him the pedagogical implications of this work. Second, we wanted to invite him into broad engagement with our faculty. Luther's faculty is a deeply ideas-driven group of colleagues, and we believed that the best way to get at the pedagogical challenges of disrupting and dismantling racism was to go at them in theological ways. Jennings' book provides a trenchant theological analysis, one with which most of our faculty have not engaged. We planned to provide both time and reason to do so by bringing Jennings into deep discussion with our faculty.

While we succeeded in engaging a portion of our faculty, we were not successful in engaging the entire faculty. Indeed, the simple invitation to our evening events so irritated at least one faculty member that this person sent out a strongly worded email cautioning some of our colleagues against coming to the events we had planned.

What obstacles did we encounter, and what did we learn from them?

To begin with, we were unable to convince our Academic Dean that the events we planned were important enough to hold them at times during which faculty attendance, if not mandatory, would be at least strongly encouraged. Our desire had been to utilize a previously scheduled faculty seminar time, but neither our Dean nor our Faculty Concerns Committee felt that the discussion was sufficiently central to our work together to prioritize it in that way.

This response is fairly typical of work engaging racism at Luther Seminary. There is generally little overt hostility to the idea of dismantling racism, but there is also very little personal investment in doing so. Our institution is thoroughly permeated by white privilege, and historically has been unable to "see" it, let alone address it. Our desire to bring Dr. Jennings to campus grows out of this recognition, because unlike other theologians who have explored dismantling racism through sociological analysis, psychological analysis, or even economic analysis in their theological reflection, Dr. Jennings' work goes straight to the heart of our reflection on God, particularly our Trinitarian commitments.

It will not be surprising to note that as a book group we were disappointed that we were not able to rely on structural support for our events, but at the same time that particular constraint led to our decision to hold, instead, an evening public lecture to which all faculty were invited – including faculty from other theological schools in the area. We also decided that we needed to reach out to a broader segment of our teaching community – those pastoral leaders who serve as mentors and contextual educators for students in the communities surrounding Luther Seminary.

We offered free copies of the book to both faculty and pastoral leaders, and in the end were successful in attracting an additional 19 people into discussion with the book (five faculty and 14 local pastoral leaders). While we had originally thought we might hold some meals just for the original book club, instead we held a lovely evening meal immediately prior to the event to which faculty, staff, students and pastoral leaders were invited, and in which we held a focused discussion of the implications of the text for our work together. Of the 28 invitations issued to that meal, 19 pastoral leaders joined six faculty from the book group, all of us having read the book in advance, prepared and eager to discuss its implications for our shared teaching ministry.

In addition, our public lecture was very well attended, with more than 50 people present – a much higher number than is usual for this sort of lecture in the waning days of the fall term. The conversation after Jennings' lecture was quite energetic, and in the days following we often heard from faculty, staff and students who had been present and found the lecture enlightening.

Finally, on the day following the evening lecture we held a panel discussion with three Luther faculty who were specifically tasked with reflecting on the pedagogical implications of the book, one from each of our divisions: Eric Barreto, Bible; Amy Marga, Systematic Theology; and Chris Scharen, Leadership. This event was not as well attended as the previous evening's lecture, but we still had close to 25 people there.

We video-recorded both the evening lecture, and the following morning panel, and they are now available at our DiscerningMission.org website:

Jennings' lecture / <http://www.discerningmission.org/default.aspx?m=3957&post=1272>

Faculty panel / <http://www.discerningmission.org/default.aspx?m=3957&tag=connect&post=1296>

What were the ideas with which people were most engaged?

We made available, both during the evening lecture and the following morning's panel discussion, question sheets that people could offer feedback on. Given that Luther Seminary is currently involved in a curriculum revision process, such feedback has even more pertinence than usual. We did not, however, receive any written feedback. That being said, there was a considerable amount of conversation in the next few days. We offer here a representative sample, drawn from personal conversations and a final meeting of the book group:

“There is such a striking convergence between our OT search taking place right now [we had a finalist candidate on campus during the time Dr. Jennings was here], and Willie's presence on campus. Could this be a fruitful case study of what we still have to learn? What might it illustrate?”

“In reading his book, and listening to him speak, the interactions we've had with Willie, part of what I'm noticing is that this not about a kind of 'which side are you on?' politically-correct stalemate, but rather a deep look at the theology, at the really fundamental theological substratum of these challenges... That's where we, at Luther, should be going.”

“Taking the idea of belonging to, having your identity in Christ framing the discussion of identity differently – what does it mean that everyone belongs in a different place, belongs to Christ in that place, rather than in a relationship with Christ where you bring people in... the idea of what is home? That gets scrambled, and opened up differently in his work.”

“One take away from the book and listening to him, is that if Christian theology is going to actually survive, it has to be self reflective to the point of understanding it has dealt with race and different racial/ethnic issues, and in order to be an academically honest

reflection, his research needs to be taken seriously.”

“These aren’t really new questions, they’ve been at the center of theological reflection for a long time, hidden, perhaps submerged, but present – so we have the theological resources both for better and for worse, to reflect on these questions that are pressing for the church. If we believe in equipping students to equip others, it has to include a conversation about race in today’s world.”

“It’s not honest to do theology these days without thinking about these issues, it’s at the core of how we think about God, these questions were at the heart of the biblical formation. It’s like Anne Lamott says – “you know you’ve made God in your image when God hates everyone you do.”

“What Jennings does with the theology of *place*, and the absolute significant of *place*... you have to know your history, the land, the place... that has powerful implications for the culture of *this* place, here at Luther. Placed-ness, the locations in which we do our work, and how the place-ness of helps us to see who we are and who we’ve been and who we are becoming... How do we understand our location, our history, and how do we help our students to do this work?”

“One of the hard things about knowing about your place is that it challenges our privilege, it challenges our identity, it requires us to see who was here before us...”

“There was so much discussion about multiple places of belonging in his discussion, and the ways in which multi-faith marriages work, and multi-located spaces.... There was much from his discussion that contributed to this “multi-ness” – but how much of what we do with our students instead attempts to ‘squash’ that multi-ness into singularity or uniformity?”

“Jennings draws a lot of stuff together, a kind of agile synthesis of an enormous amount of literature and research, into a place that connects across various elements.”

“The people who are different from you are that much closer, and more willing to be different in front of you... that deeply impacts how we think about what it means to *desire* being in relationship with each other, and in difference.”

“This community doesn’t seem to know how to be a community very well, and so students aren’t learning how to do this... 30 years ago our homogeneous community taught this, but our new and emerging sense of who we are hasn’t yet been drawn into the curriculum.”

“Belonging and intimacy are different words than community and identity... he’s trying to get at something more complex than what we’re currently able to contain with our language..”

“John Zizoulus in his ‘Communion and Otherness’ argues that these things are involved in the doctrine of God; that otherness is not an inconvenience to communion, but an irresistible element of communion, a constitutive element of communion... what would it mean if we took that seriously in our curricular work?”

“This is about who God is, and therefore it’s about who we are. Perhaps the seminary

knows about history, and feels like it knows about ethnicity, and we think somehow it's the same thing as race; but race and ethnicity are different, and we ought to pay attention to these distinctions. This institution doesn't have a self-understanding that allows us to get to this."

Where do we go from here?

The question of where this work goes is a difficult one to pin down here at Luther, not least because we have a very "episodic" kind of approach to change. We tend to get all excited about something, briefly, but never find ways to connect it to deep structural change.

Clearly the faculty who were impacted by this event are seeking to bring ideas from the process into the curriculum revision process. It is as yet unclear what effect we will have, but there are at least three threads of discussion we believe are important to bring forward into further thought in the midst of our pedagogical work together:

(1) ideas vs. bodies: what would it mean to understand the varied histories that make up Christian community over time if we paid attention not only to the "ideas" in Christian theology, but to the consequences to actual human bodies that those ideas had? Much of Dr. Jennings' book traces the embodied, em-placed, elements of Christian imagination. How could we do that richly, diversely, in wholistic ways in our curriculum?

(2) desire vs. control: there was significant discussion about the elements of Dr. Jennings' work which focus on what it would mean if desire rather than control was the focal element of a Christian curriculum. What would it mean, for instance, if we worked to cultivate desire to be in relationship with people as an intimate part of our desire to be in relationship with God? There is strong work emerging in relationship to "inquiry-driven" pedagogical models, and much that might connect between Jennings' work and that pedagogical insight.

(3) issues of violence in Christian thought: we noted in several ways that Dr. Jennings' work traces ways in which Christian intellectuals, even if they don't intend violence to happen, have a very high tolerance for a certain kind of violence in the name of protecting their theological narrative. How do we resist such a dynamic? What would go into a curriculum that invites us into relationality that leads away from such a high tolerance for violence in the name of protecting orthodoxy, and perhaps instead towards a humility and grace that eschews protecting ideas and instead promotes openness of learning and even the risking of ideas?

In other arenas, there were two very concrete outcomes that grew out of student activism. Three students who attended the lecture connected with local synodical activists who were hosting a sustained series of dismantling racism discussions in the spring. All three signed up for the several months-long process, along with a staff member from Luther. That group has, in turn, facilitated the reading of two additional books at Luther – James Cone's *The Cross and The Lynching Tree* and Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. These book discussions have consistently drawn both staff, students and faculty – a mix of participant that is actually very rare at Luther – and continued throughout the summer. It is likely that some kind of book group will continue into the 2012-2013 school year.

The second piece grew out of the students' participation in the ASDIC circles of dialogue with the synod, and that is that Mary Hess and Vivian Jenkins Nelsen (who lead the anti-racism workshop at Luther), have been in dialogue with Herbert Perkins and Margery Otto, who lead the ASDIC process, about the possibility of bringing together all of the faculty and adjunct faculty from the Twin Cities theological consortium who work in this area, so that we might pool our learning and collaborate more effectively.

Budget Report

Stipend for Dr. Jennings	\$1000
Airfare, travel, lodging for Dr. Jennings	\$407.70
Hotel	\$144.02
Books for pastoral leaders (10)	\$218.50
Books for faculty (5)	\$109.25
Dinner for evening event with leaders	\$620.73
Total expended:	\$2500.20

Selected Bibliography

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An Exploration of Current CYF Curriculum in Relation to Supporting Multicultural Ministry, Choi (Luther Seminary MTH thesis, 2011).

Being Black, Teaching Black: Politics and Pedagogy in Religious Studies, Westfield, ed. (Abingdon, 2008).

The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race, Jennings (Yale, 2010).

The Cross and the Lynching Tree, Cone (Orbis, 2011).

Disrupting White Supremacy from Within: White People on What WE Need to Do, Harvey, et. al. (Pilgrim Press, 2004).

The Handbook of Race and Adult Education, Sheared, et. al. (Jossey-Bass, 2010).

The New Jim Crow, Alexander (New Press, 2010).

Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions, Hess, et. al. (Krieger, 2008).

That They May Be One: Catholic Social Teaching on Racism, Tribalism and Xenophobia, Dawn Nothwehr (Orbis, 2008).

The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-framing, Feagin (Routledge, 2009).

Appendix

Transcription of the Faculty panel discussion

A video recording of the full panel is available here:

<http://www.discerningmission.org/default.aspx?m=3957&tag=connect&post=1296>

Willie James Jennings Panel

Mary Hess: Rejoining the conversation that began last night in the public lecture with Dr. Willie James Jennings. And this morning we've invited three of our colleagues: Chris Scharen, Amy Marga and Eric Barreto to briefly reflect on what they think might be some of the pedagogic implications of Willie's work for our conversation together and so we'll have each of them present, and then we'll give Willie a chance to respond to the three of them in a conversation. So you guys can have some time to chat amongst yourselves and we'll listen in. Then we'll have a wider conversation with the whole group. Again, welcome. Who is starting?

Chris Scharen: It's great to be back. I've been on leave through this fall. Missing Luther. Missing teaching. Thanks for this opportunity to reflect on this very profound book and its implications for my teaching. First. With my colleague Dirk, I teach a second year MDiv course on Worship.

I timed this, so don't worry, it's 5 minutes.

The course is an historical and theological engagement with Christian Worship. At the same time it is a course on the practice of worship leadership. The basic structure of the worship course flows through in an initial set of weeks recounting some of the history: Jewish origins, development in the east and west, global expansion, along with focus on key themes, including the Nairobi statement on worship and culture. Before marching through the pattern of worship part by part, gathering, the word, sacraments, life passages, sending and concluding with a retreat on the three day feast: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil which the students plan and lead. I have regularly presented on some key study of missionary encounter not unlike Jennings' case study of Hosea Acosta in Peru. Sometimes I've talked about the Jesuit Spanish Missions in Paraguay, among the T____ G____ people and other times the French Benedictine Missions in Senegal among the W____ people. Both display the displacement that marks the first part of Jennings' book, but both show more than what Jennings calls pedagogical imperialism. The European Missionary posture of always being the correctors of thought.

I've done this in part, because I, like Jennings, think that history is too complex to tell without using stories. After engagement with Jennings I have two main pedagogical implications to take back to this aspect of the class. First, I ought not think of these as primarily historical moments, but integral aspects of our present theological imagination. So rather than worrying that I give them too much time in an already overcrowded syllabus, I need to introduce them more fully and integrate them more thoroughly. So that their implications for our embodiment of Christian faith and worship today is made plain.

Second, I ought not think of these as historical moments, but deeply theological moves related to a longer trajectory Jennings traces in terms of, especially our performance of a doctrine of creation. If we do this work in the course we will further disrupt what Jennings calls on page 115, the current pedagogical schemas that separate missionary texts from theological texts. Missiology from theology. Both historical and systematic. A practice he calls immoral given our current situation. That's a very strong claim to grapple with and I want to grapple with it. So that's the worship course.

I told Dirk I didn't ask him first about these reflections so I would act first and ask for forgiveness later. (coughing, can't hear)....implications for our syllabus in time

Second with my colleague Dwight Zscheile, I teach the first MDiv course on Congregational Mission and Leadership called Reading the Audiences. This course serves as an introduction to the curriculum and to theological study. Marshalling resources from Bible, History, Theology and Sociology for understanding congregations and their communities for the sake of missional leadership. The course blocks proceed through three parts that embody key moves of Luther's curriculum. The course begins with God's life and mission, roughly corresponding to the first curricular move, Telling the Story. Followed by ecclesiology and context, corresponding to the second curricular move, Interpreting and Confessing. And ending with missional leadership, corresponding to the third curricular move, Leading in Mission.

Along the way students are studying a particular congregation and its community for the sake of discerning how God might be at work there. And the implications for chiming into the ongoing to the ----- . The trajectory of the course as we teach it is unfortunately subject to what Jennings calls the massive gap of conceptual imagination.

Our academic training in the largely western trajectory of history/philosophy and theology tends to ghettoize missions and contextual voices as a topic on the side of the core trajectory. In the summary of the three parts of his book's argument Jennings writes that the problem with this is "how curricular sensibilities betray the concealment of modern identity formation with its constant social performances of detachment, distorting translation and failed intimacy." If Jennings is right and the Christian social imagination is diseased and disfigured, especially in relationship to supercessionism and the replacement of race for place in our preferral to the document creation, then at the very least I think we need to make more clearly that argument in our construal of the doctrine of creation as we unfold the sense of God's life and mission in the first part of the course. If we do so, then it will be much clearer why we cannot simply tell stories of congregations that begin with the arrival of hale and hearty immigrants from Norway in the 19th century. Luther Seminary's own institutional histories begin with this immigrant story, ignoring the deeper histories of peoples on this land and the intertwining of Christianity with the displacements that ripped open the possibilities of life in the Twin Cities as we know it now.

Amy Marga: We're going to keep going and talk at the end? OK. Thanks Chris. My name's Amy Marga. As you know I teach the Systematic Theology courses here: the Creation and the Triune God, and Jesus the Savior and the Triune God and I also teach Ethics and some electives. I don't have a ... I have a couple of points I would just like to say and a question I actually have for Dr Jennings.

I learned three things from the book about teaching and about myself as a teacher and

about the way I conduct my classes. They are all really obvious. You all may be, like, hello... we all knew that, you didn't. Now I know it too. The first one, when it comes to thinking about teaching and teaching history is that we really have to do it differently. I know it's obvious, but I think in our doctrine courses here, our theology courses at Luther Seminary, we're still really happy to teach a history of ideas. I think we really have to teach a history of ideas, but you can't really any more. There's no such thing as a history of ideas, because every idea actually had an effect on someone's body and that's just... we need to start thinking about teaching the history of the development of Christian Doctrine that takes into account the displacement of bodies. The use and abuse of bodies and the effect that certain theological doctrines have had on families, kids and the native people who were in the lands before the Europeans came and especially....

I was especially struck by, I'm going to say all these names wrong, I'm very sorry, Acosta and your chapter on Peru and how the ...like Chris said, the lack of imagination of what to do with this new world. There was no way to be able to figure out how to think about what these people, what the Portuguese were experiencing in the new world, so they ended up forcing all the people who were already there to make a change so that they looked like them and there's a real failure there in thinking about themselves as historical figures as well.

I feel that I've not done a good job necessarily in thinking about the effect of history on people. And people's bodies, so the first thing I would like to do, based on this book, is think more clearly about how I'm incorporating history and telling the story of history, because you're exactly right: either you tell the story or you're not really getting at what really happened on the ground, just the bottom line.

The second thing that really helped me kind of clarify something that I guess I already knew is that, and I'm putting this in a harsher way than you did in the book, but theology can actually be utilized in a violent way, like a weapon. I've always thought about the fact, I've dealt with that aspect, the danger of Christian theology from the perspective of feminism, feminist theology, theology done out of trauma, out of sexual abuse victims and where theological imagination is formed out of this intimate violence by people who maybe didn't intend for it to be that way.

But what I think your book shows is that Christian intellectuals, even if they don't intend violence to happen, have a very high tolerance for a certain kind of violence in the name of protecting their narrative, their theological narrative. That was a learning for me as well. I really want to think more deeply about how we can deal with Christian doctrines in our classes and show the dark side or the way that there have been failures of using these doctrines. Or how doctrines have given us certain blind spots to the very people who are right in front of our faces. So that's a second way that I would like to figure out how to take some of the information and the thesis of your book and bring it into the classroom.

The third thing that I'm going to do, and it's just, again, this is something that was probably latent in me but needs to come out and it ties to the first point. I will really start asking the question of (wait what do I say here now?) ... To ask, to begin theological reflection with some of the questions you asked last night which are: how is our church situated on the land? How are we either connected to our neighborhoods and the land and the animals and the people, or how are we alienated from that? We do a little bit with Sally McFague, Supernatural Christians. She talks about that as well, about

changing the gaze on to nature. And what does it mean to actually mean to love the things around you, love the nature and the animals and the people around you. I think that needs to be actually a framing question rather than, as Chris says, something you ask at the end of the whole lesson or the whole unit or something like that. It needs to be a framing question and I think that's one way that I'll definitely be changing that. Part of it again is, part of that question besides just relating to the space, and the people and the animals and the plants and the neighborhoods around us and the land is really how does Christianity require us to use our own bodies and how do we as a Christian presence in a particular place require other people to discipline or use their bodies or not use their bodies. To me that was a very important question to start thinking about at the beginning of my reflections.

Finally, I wanted to ask you this last night and it's still kind of pressing on me, so I'm going to ask it here, and I feel vulnerable asking it, but I'm going to take the opportunity to do it. Forgive me for my total white ignorance. I'm a white privileged woman from New Jersey. I'm not sure if that means anything in this narrative here, but (laughter). You can figure that out yourself. Let me see if I can ask this question really really briefly. The question actually has less to do with the thesis of your book in particular and more to do with black/white relationships in America. Yesterday in the lecture you talked about paying attention, listening, learning the other person's language, desiring to be with them and wanting to be with people. I want to share with you an experience I had this semester with some of my students in my Christology class when we read James Cone. I don't know what you think about James Cone. But we read James Cone. A Couple of students in the class loved James Cone until we read God of the Oppressed part (part of God of the Oppressed). Loved loved loved James Cone until the very end when he basically said that white Christianity is hopelessly racist and I agree with that. I'm not going to deny that.

But what I think what was interesting for me in hearing what you said about desiring was that white people, I want to speak for white people, many white people have this desire to empathize and they think they're doing it and yet they need some kind of help, they still need kind of an invitation and it struck me the way you talked last night that people desired to want to speak like Cone, but then when he's finally stood up for himself they didn't like it anymore. I don't know if that's even a question that you understand that you can speak into. It's really more about race and about the way white, religious people view themselves as empathetic creatures in the world and what are, what in our imagination is not allowing us to empathize even when someone takes a stand and claims their voice. What prevents us from still paying attention even when we don't quite feel invited into a particular theology or a particular perspective? That would just be an open question that I have. Sorry about that – I went long. Thank you.

Eric Barreto: I want to start with two vignettes. I read a lot of blogs and the other day I read a blog by a southern Baptist minister in which he makes, virtually makes a case of the old covenant is wholly abolished, wholly obsolete, a thing of the past altogether. I was just struck by the rampant supersessionism found in there. About a year ago, I was in NYC at a pretty progressive church at this conference. There was a bible study being led on the widow's mite. The aim of bible studies was to show that this story isn't really about stewardship. Right before the widow's mite what we hear is Jesus denouncing the religious leadership for devouring widows' houses, then we get a picture of a widow's house being devoured in front of us. So as he was laying this out people were

responding back and this in the shadow of Wall Street. And this is a few months before This is a group of liberal Christians.

Instead of looking down the street at Wall Street and saying that's what that looks like today, instead they assailed the temple and started dismissing the temple as a place where God might be present. To me, I think that demonstrates _____ one of the most important parts of this book and has become increasingly important in my teaching. The way the Christian theology around Judaism and around Israel has been misformed is wide and pervasive and escapes all sorts of ideological boundaries.

So here we have a southern Baptist who would not allow women to preach at his church and these liberal Christians committing the very same mistake. I think that's one of the things I take away from this book. I want to continue incorporating into my teaching is a deeper appreciation for the way that racial and ethnic discourse, whether it's on Israel or other forms of race and ethnicity has really shaped and often misshaped our theological imagination. I think in particular this means taking seriously the Jewishness of Jesus and Paul. Not just as a kind of an optional or disposable character that they shed once they became Christians, but something that was so integral to their lives.

Paul, for example, spent a whole letter to the Romans trying to unpack what this all means. For Israel and for the gentiles. Reflecting on that... for notions about our relationship to Israel are so misformed, is it any surprise that our relationships across and in the midst of racial discourse, are also so misshapen that we start from the wrong place when it comes to thinking about difference and what it means to....

I like the way you talked about this last night, the way that we join in somebody else's story. If we get that wrong, then it's no surprise that we get things wrong later on as well. Another implication for the way we teach, I think we need to help students root themselves as interpreters of texts. And not so they can shed all their particularity, but be aware of their particularities, see them as resources to draw upon when thinking about reading scripture. Then also, value, I think, the particularity of others and the particular readings of biblical texts that others might bring. Maybe a white student will never read a biblical text like an African-American, but having read that text will see possibilities in the biblical text.

One question that I wanted to ask last night – one of your three questions last night was wondering whether ecclesial identity can ever be as powerful as our racial identities. I'm wondering how you imagine the relation between those two. I think for most ... I've seen this in biblical scholarship a lot. Biblical scholars tend to imagine an early church in which differences are made void, in which we're all made the same. So on the one hand we have a Judaism that's nationalistic ethnocentric and law based. In Christianity on the other hand is universal and open to all people and grace based, so Judaism is everything that is bad and Christianity is everything that is good. But I see early Christians actually engaging in ethnic discourse and working with these categories. Do you mean that ecclesial identity will overtake racial identity? Will build upon racial identity? Certainly there is some racial imaginations that I think we want to dispose of, but are there some racial imaginations that we want to nurture and keep and let that feed our sense of ecclesial imagination?

Willie James Jennings: great question. Well, let me begin by a few words of thank you first to my colleagues who at the end of the semester to do anything (laughter) is an

absolute gift. First of all let me thank you and then I want to thank my brother who's been on sabbatical to come in (laughter)... you deserve a star in your crown. If I were on sabbatical (can't hear around laughter). So thank you all, not only for being here and being willing to do this, your wonderful comments, very thoughtful. I also want to thank my dear sister, Mary Hess, for setting this up. I am ... any time I can hang around Dr Hess, it's always a great joy. Absolutely fabulous mind, so creative. I'm trying to find a way to steal her from you all. I haven't figured it out yet.

Someone: the room just turned on you (laughter)

WJJ: But thank you all for being here. Thank you Dr Hess for setting this up. Great comments.

If I could ... let me start with the immediate comments you just made and then I want to maybe work my way down, because I think everything that was said, we could spend hours. It's so healthful and it's healthful for me to hear people thinking along what I'm trying to weakly say through this text.

Let me start with this question about the relationship between ecclesial identity and ethnic racial identity. The question I asked last night about whether ecclesial identity can be more decisive. The way I like to play with it, that helps me figure these things out is the difference between definition and determination. I got this primarily from Eastern Orthodox theologian Pianist Nilas who plays with this in a completely different context, but I stole it for this.

In some ways we're not talking so much about definition, the way peoples define themselves. We're talking more about the determination for how one would live life. How one would judge the true, the good and the beautiful. How one would imagine the step forward and who among us do we imagine walking with them as they make those steps forward. And here is where the racial imagination has been so absolutely powerful and so absolutely more flexible and sophisticated than the ecclesial imagination.

I do hope my hope is that an ecclesial vision, an ecclesial imagination can be created that would be far more compelling and persuasive for how people want to determine what to do with who they are. But I do want to just for a moment, barrel inside the question of definition. As most people are trying to think through these matters recognize, there have always been ways by which peoples have identified themselves, that have to do with visual markers. Would most now recognize those visual markers are coordinated with the larger set of markers? Like we talked about last night – the trees, the deer, a particular landscape. Those are the coordinating realities tied to the visual markers.

The tragedy is when all those points of coordination disappear, so that it is simply a matter of skin. And I do think one of the challenges for biblical scholars is not to read back that alchemy into the bible. OK, you know, we see... I'm not sure that's what we see. I don't want to tell on my colleague, but I have a colleague in ... another colleague, I can tell you this colleague's name, because Norman Wiersma who does a lot of work with land and ecology; he was giving a lecture and another colleague who shall remain nameless, I won't even hint so you can figure it out. Only Norman gave this great lecture on the importance of land, the importance of space and the colleague said, "Well, when I read the Bible, land is not that important." (laughter) And Norman said, "I don't know

what to say.” He said, “land and animals aren’t that crucial especially in the New Testament.” And Norman said, “I don’t know what to say.” Then he said, “I don’t think, I think it would very hard for us to find any chapter in the Gospels where something about an animal or some aspect of the land is not mentioned.” But this person had never seen it.

So I think if it’s possible, two operations need to happen for us. The one is to think about what would it mean to return to scripture, trying to discern the points of coordination. Where are the animals? Where is the land? Well, it’s there! We have taught ourselves not to see it, but then, in terms of an ecclesial imagination, the issue here is what are the precise contours of a Christian determination of identity? What I say to my classes that this has a lot to do with the story tellers. I don’t believe in ethnicity or race. I believe in story tellers. And the story tellers are really what’s at stake here. It is the story tellers of a family, of a community of a plan that tell people, invite people into a narration of who they are. The challenge of course is that as Christians we are at war with the story tellers. That’s not to say we’re trying to kill them, we’re simply trying to redirect the story.

That’s kind of how I understand the beauty of the opening chapter of the Gospel of John, right. Starts with that big cosmic thing, and then here’s John. Then there was a guy named John. I think that’s right. The thing about supersessionism is so deep. I’m trying now in all the theology courses I teach, when I try to do my constructive turn. Like I just finished my doctrine of creation course. In every aspect of the loci (?) I mean every aspect within the loci of the doctrine of creation, I tried to start to renarrate those aspects beginning with gentile existence. So I kept trying to make this move, that we were those who stood there in the crowd listening to Jesus arguing with his own and we overheard the conversation and that’s how Christian doctrine begins. We overheard. Which also means that it wasn’t our conversation. We are interlopers.

Now, what does it mean to begin your doctrinal thinking knowing that you were an interloper only outside. Listening to somebody’s else’s conversation and trying to make judgments about what they said.... That would give you a very different posture to think about what I call the righteous weakness of Christian theology. We were the people who made up stuff based on what we overheard. Christian theology begins with the overhearing of the great Shema. It wasn’t spoken to us. We overheard it and said, “That’s right.” And the people to whom it was spoken said, “Who cares what you think.”

And that’s a very good thing. (laughs) It’s a very good thing, if for no other reason, it sets up the right kind of humility that has been missing within the collective imagination of Christian theologians. I think that’s very important

EB: there’s a biblical image for this. I mean, the olive tree, right there. It’s right there at the center of Paul’s big argument there... I think we neglect, we forget that we’re branches that could easily be broken off.

WJJ: I think it’s important to try to historicize the kind of intellectual humility that we should embody as Christians and not just say we need to be humble. Because, as we all know, that goes nowhere. That drops on the floor. We should be humble. But if we can historicize it and say that the nature of our humility is precisely as goyim – those outside – that’s the nature of our humility. That we have a weakness even as we can speak properly about God. There is a people who can always say to us, “of course you’re wrong.” We have no comeback other than faithfully saying, “we hope that it’s true.”

That's beautiful.

I'm going to jump to this thing about Cone which is really... He wrote *God the Oppressor* 1975. To this moment when students read that book, they still get angry. That's an incredible power of a book (Laughter – can't hear)...still pisses students off. He's an old man now. He can't hurt you. What that book does, it draws us into what I call the deeper racial currents. That's what you so eloquently put your finger on. These deeper racial currents that are a part of our lives that we really don't know how conceptually to pull in. The anxiety. The anger. The hurt. The fear of rejection. The fear of not being able to have a serious relationship, but also the hope.

I think what I try to do when I, especially when I do Cone, I try very hard to ask students to access the emotional currents here. In the theological academy we have to have a pedagogical holism if we're going to talk about race. We cannot simply talk about the concepts. We have to talk about feelings, because the feelings are crucial. When you start talking about the forms of our bodies, the formation of our bodies, the ways we've been taught to interact and not interact.

The exercise I have students do a lot at the beginning of the semester, well I have them do biography all the way and we do journaling all the way through, but one exercise I have them do at the beginning is to write up, "when is your earliest memory of being Christian. Tell me when you became Christian." So they do that and I say, "now I want you to give me your earliest memory, tell me when you realized that you are white or black or whatever." Then I ask them, "which came first?" And some will say this came first, that came first. Some will say they came together. Then I ask them, "let's try to access the emotions you felt when you did this exercise." It's really important and sometimes they tell very powerful stories. I remember one student told the story – in the south, had a black maid working in the house, she was a little girl. She loved her. She was 7 or 8. Got up on a chair, reached over and gave her a kiss on the cheek. Her mother walked into the kitchen at that exact moment and saw her kissing the maid on the cheek. She snatched her from the chair, pulled her into the other room. She'd never seen her mother so angry. Her mother put her face next her face and "don't you ever let me see you kissing her again." She said, "this was when I realized I was white." That's real. She accessed that. I think part of what's always at play is how do you move into those ... to the realities of those feelings?

The other aspect, the other question you asked, my dear sister, which was so powerful. I'm trying, I'm still struggling, trying to think my way through the high tolerance for violence in theology. The high tolerance for violence. And it could be that the word violence, we probably have to suspend in order not to become defensive with one another

AM: maybe that was a harsh word

WJJ: But I think you're right. I'm trying to say these things delicately now, because I don't want people to put up walls and become defensive. I try to make the distinction and probably some of you work with the same distinction, I'm trying to make the distinction between subject position or a subjectivity, and who a person actually is. I know this is a difficult thing to try to work out. I'm trying to get, especially graduate students, to think of the subject position, the kind of subjectivity that is being created for them that they have to step into to be seen as a serious mind. A rigorous think. Let me just go ahead and say

it. Unfortunately it tends to be very masculinist. Very white guy, and I don't mean to pick... please don't walk away. Well, what I mean is... I'm talking about a certain kind of subject positionist, a certain kind of subjectivity that a rigorous strong thinker is one whose ability to ability to keep emotion completely at bay in the very process of intellection is crucial. One who can look coolly and calmly at the most horrific actual act and determine its precise contours – all of this is a part of the subjectivity one has to step into to be seen as a serious mind. This is a really really sick thing, it's a really really sick thing.

The question is, is there a way to redescribe precision, rigor, clarity, depth of thought, paying attention that isn't tied to all that masculine crap. Isn't tied to all that ... I'm still trying to figure out what that will look like. A dear colleague of mine gave me an image to work with. She was saying, "why don't you think about sewing. Think about precision, detail, rigor, paying attention, all the traits it takes to do a really good crochet. What if that became the image. Let me try to work with that.

What you're getting at is really the deeper problem that bodies don't matter. I was trained by a wonderful... I love all my professors. I have this article that I'm working on. It's called, "Why I love white men" (LOL) and it's about all they do to train me. I'm lovingly talking about, Richard M. was one of my mentors, Jeffrey Wainwright, Tio Torrence, god rest his crochety soul. Love, love those dudes. Try to talk about what they meant to impart and what they did not mean to impart that they imparted anyway.

And so, I'm trying to get that figured out. You put so many wonderful things on the table. The one thing that I want to put on the table for us is really the immigrant trajectory of intellectual life in America. There hasn't been enough work done on this yet. I don't know if any of you know the work of Michael Fry Jacobson. He's written several books. He's got one called, *Barbarian Virtues*. Before that he had *Race of a different Color*. *Whiteness of a different color* was the title. He's done wonderful work on immigrant angst and anxiety.

Years ago I gave a paper at Calvin College, my alma mater, in which I tried to talk about what it was like to be in the midst of an immigrant school. That's still... you still feel the immigrant anxiety, the immigrant angst. What I tried to say in my, love my professors, I tried to say to them that is was... the story has not been told. Is what it means to be an immigrant church, trying to make it in America. Trying to be accepted and respected. And to have your intellectual life and agenda shaped inside that anxiety and that desire to be accepted. It's really important, it's really important, because then you can start to see the shape of the intellectual life inside the aspiration to make in the new world. And the shape of Christian intellection barrels deep inside that same anxiety and that same desire to make it, to be seen as acceptable in America.

I loved my college. Calvin took being Christian very seriously. And took very seriously what it meant to think as a Christian. As I said to the folks when I was there, what I said, was that no one ever really talked about, what we knew was in the water, but what no one ever talked about was the immigrant angst that drove the intellectual and the Christian project... Immigrant angst – driving so much of Christian intellectual work. And many of us are deeply inside the legacies of that angst and don't even realize it. It has to do with not only what fields people enter, but how institutions get shaped, how institutions imagine their future, how institutions imagine that they matter.

They are carrying out the wishes of the ancestors to be seen and respected in America. That's really important to understand and put on the table. You cannot understand your own story... I like to say to my own students, you cannot understand your own story unless you understand, not only the hopes of the slaves, but the hopes of the immigrants. I don't know if any of you saw, this came out a few years ago, a movie called "Gangs of New York". If you haven't seen that you ought to see it. It's a frightening movie. I always say I would never want to meet Daniel Day Lewis ____ (LOL). But you know there's a scene in that movie where he's sitting at the table, where he's a butcher in the movie and he's cutting that piece of meat...and he starts talking about these damned dirty immigrants coming here polluting America. I thought, man, that is a powerful scene, so true to life.

I thinking it's probably enough. ... some comments...

Mary Hess: can you guys help moderate, because you can see the whole room. So, now let's join the conversation.

Paul Chung: I thank you very much for your speaking here and hopefully your discussion about ... (can't hear very well, others are talking). I'm extremely intrigued about the way you deal with ____ mission ____ in regard to racism and frustration. ____ part of my teaching, the Mission of the Triune God II and ____ dialogue. In my teaching of interpreting of the religious style I always include the ____ mission. Colonialism.... Learn from our past.... Learn from our present.... So I come from Minjung theology from Asia. Minjung theology always emphasizes the how to abandon ____ of those vulnerable and fragile and victimized through which Jesus speak, challenge and transform, so at this point I really share your creative thinking. My question is: when I introduce a kind of history of mission in Japan and also in Asia ____ I like to help to distinguish ____ very much racial, strongly insist an understanding of mission from a congregation (?). Francis Xavier, ____ very substantial form developed in the indigenous understanding, indigenous understanding of the name of God, etc. At this point, I like to add one more thing. I'm still, in addition to erasing inculturation, there is an economic ____ so many kind of missionaries ____ Jesus Christ is the refrain. And still such a kind of argument continues to do. In the context of the ____ empire. At this point would you help me how to articulate such a kind of very complex issue of racism inculturation and economic ____ in our own ____ological development ____ critical and constructive manner.

WJJ: this is a great question, Dr. Let me start with the first one, the velanano (?) point you made, because part of what ... I'm still looking for this. I would really like, all of this ties from ____ to the... and I have to keep using this word, the immorality, of the separation of reflection on mission from the larger theological enterprise we are engaged in.

I say it's immoral, because it profoundly hurts the kind of depth of thinking we all must do in whatever field we are in about this thing we call theological education. It's absurd that what actually happened in the world, on the field, has not factored back into what we imagine we're doing in more substantial ways and there are questions that point to this. What I don't have access to and I'm really trying to find ways to get access to, are all those missionaries who, to use the crude phrase that's always used pejoratively, those who have gone native. We desperately need an account of the attempt to enter in as a part of the Christian theological imagination.

There are some ... I've seen a few fragments of stories of people who were kicked out of mission boards or who were said to be kind of heretic or said to have left the faith – all because they all entered in. We don't have any ... nobody's kind of drawn that together in any kind of helpful way, help us think inside "what was that about?" So, we desperately need that.

I've a dear colleague who said to me, "you know you should have done a chapter on ____" and I thought, well, next month. But I'm thinking he's exactly right – we don't have that, nor do we have the accounts especially from the late 14th century for indigenous attempts to think as Christian. There is a book I'm trying to get to, my Spanish isn't good enough, I'm trying to get my Spanish better, a book on Filipe Guamenpuma (?) who wrote the first serious theological text by an indigenous person in Peru. A 500 page letter to the king of Spain, complaining about the behavior of the priest and everybody else. It's been translated, it's a marvelous document, because he's clearly thinking as Christian, he's clearly wrestling with.... I mean it's a fabulous document. It's simply I want to try to think inside of what he's trying to think about at that crucial moment.

The other thing, the other question you raised which I think is so important – in the latter half of my course on racial identity and Christian life, I try to tell the story of how the basic contours of how we imagine and we relate build upon the interpenetrating work of three kinds of people. Merchants, missionaries and soldiers. If I could redo the curriculum I would have a required course on the interrelationship between merchant, missionary and soldier.

The way in which we imagine we relate and should relate is built right on top of those three. You cannot understand the formation of the new world unless you put, especially the Christian new world, unless you put a merchant on one side of the missionary and a soldier on the other side. Because matching the missionary in courage is the merchant. Matching the missionary in desire to relate and understand people are the merchant and the soldier. And matching the missionary in decisive effect on the way lives would be reshaped in the new world are the merchant and the soldier. We desperately need some thinking about those three things. I would say in every site, if there's any interest in, if there's any colonial site, former colonial site, look at those three. You look at those three together you'll see things that other people just completely bypass. Even at this moment, you still a pretty good job at figuring things out by looking at the merchant, the missionary and the soldier. And their interrelationship.

Unknown woman's voice: I appreciated your discussion in regards to immigrant angst and I think this is particularly applicable to our state of Minnesota in that we only became a state in 1858 and there was lots of immigration after that point. Particularly within the Lutheran church, it was primarily by Scandinavians or by Germans. At this point in history in the metropolitan areas, churches are truly perhaps not even acknowledging this, but they are suffering from immigration angst, because now they're further removed and the tenants that built their particular group no longer exist and they don't have the same kind of relationships because it was based on nationality and culture. So now they see the numbers of their members drop and they don't know how to deal with that, but they still have this unspoken framework that was based on their beginnings within an immigrant population. They suffer greatly, but they don't know how to get themselves out of that.

WJJ: I think one of the tremendous opportunities for a number of communities. I think of

Grand Rapids as a perfect example. They haven't tapped into it yet. If there was a way to unearth the narrative of cultural anxiety, of being the stranger. To resurface that. And then to bring that into conversation with the new anxieties of immigrants. To ask what does our Christianity have to do with our anxieties? There's some tremendous possibilities.

At one level you can begin to put the storytellers together. Bring the stories together. When my great grandfather came here... I like to think of myself... My great great grandfather came and he owned nothing and you know, he was beat up, talked about him and he told those jokes, but he persevered, he got his education, blah, blah, blah. And then he became an owner of this. The Lord helped him all the way. His faith was important. Now, what does that story mean for how we should be church today? Of course we can make that far more complicated, but at least we can start to unearth those shared anxieties. That would be great. And most importantly I think, to try to capture the way we still function in society, those aspirations. A lot of people still function inside the aspirations of their ancestors. It's very important to figure that out.

JD: I'm Jessicah Duckworth. I'm new on the faculty here at Luther. Just landed in September. I'm trying to think about this notion of how do we access the stories of those people who have gone native? It speaks to my own formation as a pastor in some ways, because I did an urban concentration, I planned on being an urban pastor. At the Philadelphia Lutheran Seminary. My whole cohort, there were about 8 of us, we were all white, male and female and our entire existential experience of forming our identity was shaped around these two and more than two, but experiences of speaking with two different kinds of pastors.

Those pastors who were white in the midst of what was often a black community and the ways in which they negotiated their identity and their call in that community, and those pastors who were not Lutheran who were black, ministering in black communities. We never had... we didn't have as many encounters with black Lutherans ministering in all black communities, the Lutheran church is 98.2% white. And so that has a part of that narrative.

And so, but our identity for those 4 years, that was the crucial question, can we do this? Are we allowed to do this? Ought we to do this? If we want to do this, where would we find the community that could do this? My colleagues, 6 of them, are all currently leading communities that are white and I would still say that they're yearning from their hearts to work within more multi-cultural contexts and things like that, but the power structures placed them into different contexts. So that conversation is continuing, but I wonder a little bit about those pastors who are ministering in those contexts, cross-cultural contexts – whether their stories might give us some access to, because it's a current story and I wonder if that might be a way of getting at it, or would it still behoove us to go back and try to find an access in those missionary stories to you. I bet even around here there's some missionary stories or people who engage in that context.

WJJ: I think both are necessary and it would be great to have the stories of those pastors who are trying to enter in. What you point to is ... this is a pointed tension, I know for me with several of my colleagues, not only in my institution, but also in other places. I need to put my cards on the table. I don't believe in cultural purity. I don't believe in that kind of integrity. I believe fundamentally that we are transgressors. I think

every time we say we enjoy eating the body and blood of a Jew we ____ that. I just don't think

Now of course, here is the problem: we are facing one of the deep anxieties. I spend a lot time in my classes walking through the book of Ruth, I love the book of Ruth. Those of you in bible, you know the old argument about whether the book of Ruth was written as a kind of response to Ezra/Nehemiah or if it's an earlier period. I love the debate because in either case it does point to God addressing a certain kind of cultural/racial anxiety – right. The anxiety of the loss of a people through mixture. The anxiety of a loss of a story through the imposition of interlopers who are permanently there or there for a long time. That's a real anxiety.

But what if part of our story as Christians is that it is an anxiety we overcome, not by looking for purity, but by creating new loves. So that the stories of a people are not lost. The integrity is not compromised. It is carried on a people not of that people, but who are with that people. That is part of the problem. I do have colleagues, they think, well there's an integrity to an all black church or an all Hispanic church or all white church and I always go "thpppppp." I always say, 'that's just ridiculous. That's ridiculous.' I said, "it is an unholy desire and built on anxiety."

The integrity is when I learn to speak Spanish and know the stories. They have been a part of me and I carry them all. And they learn my stories. That's the integrity. That's when we step away from the false image of purity, bound to Babel. To the real one, bound to shared story. There are some people, they just believe what Christianity is about are cultural wholisms in that way. I don't. I think ____ was a very bad idea. Think it's idolatry.

Randy Nelson: I want to take a little different direction. You taught last night ____ about desire. I'm not sure if you did this I'm going to contrast that with control. Desire tends to be not under control. I would like all four of you to think about, use your imaginations to think about, what would our seminary curriculum look like if desire were the main virtue rather than control.

AM: ay, ay, ay

Mary Shore: Forde is culturally relevant here: "Now that you don't have to do anything – what you want to do?"

AM: Oh, that's how you would answer that, Mary?

MHS: Well no, that's Gerhard Forde's idea about what sanctification is. Now that you don't have to do anything, what do you want to do?

EB: I think something that was precipitated last time when you were talking about learning Greek and Hebrew and seminaries. I teach New Testament, so I want people to learn Greek and love Greek. An uphill battle. But I wonder if part of the way I teach Greek is more based less on desire and more on control. Being able to master the language, of having the right charts, of learning the right vocabulary, instead of trying to live into that language. Part of the difficulty of course is that it's been 2000 years, so it's not a living language in quite the same way, but it is for us Christians. It's texts, it's the word of God. So it might ... I wonder if it might reshape how I would teach Greek and

how people... how I would hope students would come to those texts. I tell them that, if you took Greek, it's not like the Greek texts are this puzzle. That if we just had the right, if you just know the right Greek word, you know the right grammatical form, all of a sudden it unlocks and everything makes sense. It's still a language. And it's still going to confound us. But I wonder if my practice lines up with that conviction as well.

CS: I was just thinking about the way in which the enterprise of theological education is really about human relationships and the change that transpires when we gather around this great thing and interact with that. In order to do that well I can't just set a structure in relationship to the great thing we're trying to learn about. I have to know who this person is I'm in a relationship with and the control aspect of a big seminary is getting people through. So, I don't end up knowing students in nearly substantial enough ways for desire to actually be at the center of that learning enterprise. Me learning from them, them learning from me and us together learning about this great thing that's in the center of our conversation.

I'm thinking about, especially the returning MDiv intern class, the 4th year on Preaching and Worship for Leadership of God's Mission or whatever the title is: Senior preaching and worship, I think it's called. And there's, I don't know, between 70-85 students in that usually and it ends up being sort of show and tell about moments in ministry and we have a series of lecture, presentations, either from David Lose and myself or whoever else is teaching that, or guest pastors. The students all file in and they sit there and they listen and they ask questions.

But last year I wanted to integrate their internship experiences into the reflection on these moments in ministry, like how do you do a funeral or how do you do a wedding. I met with probably 20 or 25 of the students from that class to hear a brief, obviously, versions of their internship year's story. That was like one little tiny glimpse of what it would really be like if that desire for real relationship was at the heart of theological education instead of the control function of a big class that people have to get through in order to graduate. That's a sort of depressing comment actually, but the hope in it is how powerful and generative it is when we actually have a space and time for those relationships that I think are REALLY what it's about. I mentioned the retreat Dirk and I do at the end of the worship class. That's awesome and I bet 10 years out that's the only thing students remember from our worship class. That's about their relationships that we build with one another and planning and doing a set of worship services together and it's... I mean, Like... They did it last week and it was cold and snowy. It was memorable. I wasn't there, but... I was thinking of them.

Dirk Lange: the pastor who hosted this said from his whole education that was the most transforming moment.

CS: And he's only a couple of years out, so he should remember more, than some... That's what struck me. Thanks, Randy for that question

AM: I think for me, I have just a couple really quick comments about that. I have to think it through. That's a really good question. I'm just going to say this, right, whatever fundamental mistakes.

If we take Dr. Jennings's thesis seriously, is that the first move of our curriculum is telling the story. Acosta told the story to himself, then when he entered into a new situation and

couldn't assimilate his story with what he saw in front of his eyes, a lot of bad things happened. I think... I'm not saying that we shouldn't tell the story, but I really wonder if we need to think through what it means when we want people... are we putting a certain kind of control on our students when we're requiring them to tell the story. The way we think about what each of the moments mean, telling the story, interpret/confess, lead in mission and then maybe something in vocation, like I don't know if it's there or not.

The way we decide how much those moments are going to control or open up desire for the other, I think is a really big question for us. I think, like our logo – what's our logo like – God can use someone like you? Really, if we took this seriously our logo should be: God sees and hears and is hanging out with a whole bunch of people who are totally different than you and he's lovin' doin' that and that means you are called to do that too. That should be our logo, if we really believe in the desire and the idea of paying attention to others and if we actually – I mean I'm laughing, but the theological commitment there is that God's doing that. God's doing that. We're missing it. If we believe in the missio dei and part of God's mission... God's going to show us the way to do that, so that's how I would kinda thinking about that question, because it's a fabulous question.

I guess that logo's too long for our web site.

(laughter covering words)

woman's voice: You mentioned last night that your wife is a minister as well as a therapist and we've been talking a lot about anxieties. You seem to be very disciplinary in your approach. I'm wondering what psychological resources you use as framework to further deepen your understanding of anxiety.

WJJ: none. (lol) I listen to my spouse. I would say probably like many of you, I believe very strongly in wholism, that I don't want to imagine myself as someone just concerned about the neck up. All those years as an academic dean, if there's anything it taught me, it taught me it is the whole person that is the mind. The mind is the whole person. It's a horrible image to work with if you are a teacher to think that you're just teaching the head. That's the deepest intuition that I've gained. It's really good to be, for me, ...

I think all theologians need to be married to therapists or at least have a therapist in their lives, it's really important to have someone look you in the face and say, "this is what you're saying. Is this what you want to say?" No that's not what I want to say. Well, why are you saying it? There are probably... I do like to read widely so there are a few therapists I like to read, but I think the truth of the matter is I'm around someone with deep wisdom about the soul, which I think all of us in our world need. We need somebody who can look us in the face and say, "talking stupid now".

RN: I think it might be telling that our first move in the curriculum is Telling the Story. That's a class in the first year, but what maybe what we do. The title, talk about aspirations and what we actually do and the aspiration is learning the story. So

AM: you're right it's learning the story, not telling the story

RN: all this listening would be (sorry Amy's talking over him and I can't hear) really different _____ from the posture if we took these kinds of metaphors to that action. First

enterprise, learning the story, particularly if it's construed like we learn the story, another people's thought. There are a lot of ways you could play with that – learning the story.

One of them could be in biblical studies and you have a place in the book where you talk about kind of coming and instead of being changed, you're always trying to be ratified. That really is instructive to me, but coming to the biblical story. Coming to it with the expectation that this might change me rather than ratify me. That's a very different posture for reading scripture.

Kind of a couple of reflections. Probably no questions sitting right there. In that same context you talked about that. You quote someone else who says that the outsider, at least people you give these stories, assigned the standards of classification and assign to themselves the right to classify. I wonder how often that's exactly what we do in teaching. We classify and we assign to ourselves the right to classify. And we classify students, we grade them. There's an inherent tension or irony and maybe even worse, in the way we structure a lot of education.

WJJ: I think you're right. _____ Let me come back to the last comment that you made about, as I was saying last night, one of the inherent realities to any theological institution is the work of evaluation. I've been living inside the difficulties, the problems of evaluation for a long time. Evaluation is a part of our life, the question is: have we thought about evaluation as Christians? I try not to stay on my pet peeves too long, because it's really dangerous, but I have yet to see a Christian reflection upon an evaluation. I'm not sure what that would look like yet.

unknown voice: Pass/fail

AM: marginal

WJJ: As we know, it's not just the end point of what a person's done. But how is evaluation a part of our lives? How has it gone through death and resurrection? How has it? I want to spend more time... I would love to get my institution to think about it, but you know, they just move right to it.

I want to say something about that point you made. I always like to tell the story in my class. It's a thought exercise. I tell the students, imagine you show up in church one Sunday and all the pews, all the bibles in the pew have the Old Testament and when people open it, it's all in Hebrew. And there's no one present who can translate it. What would you do? Then, let's stick with this thought exercise, what if down the street from the Church there was a guy. He's Jewish. He's not a very nice person. In fact, he does have an alcoholic problem, but he can translate Hebrew. And you have to go down the street, ask him to come into the church, come up front, climb up in the pulpit, stand in the pulpit, open the Hebrew Bible to Psalm 23 and then translate it. He walks in, he doesn't want to be there, he doesn't smile at anybody, he's still a little hung over, he's tired. I don't want to be here, but you need me. So, he comes up to the front and says repeat after me. The Lord is my shepherd (repeated). Say it in Hebrew. No you said it wrong, say it again. Not very nice. And he goes through Psalm 23. What would that feel like for you? That is precisely the beginning of your claim on the Bible.

Somebody who may not even like you has given you permission to know their words. How would that change the way you think about the Bible if that's what had to happen

every week? Of course, what that would mean is that at some point in time you would get sick of that. You would find ways to translate it yourself and you would never want him in your building again.

RN: One comment about assessment might be to start to think about that as listening as well. That would be the first one on relationships and the deep listening to what has occurred. For a learner as a result of what you ___ the time spent together and that might be much more amorphous at first and a bunch of bubble sheet answers about satisfaction with the class.

WJJ: I also think about the, how making judgment shapes us. That's what worries me. The kind of people we become after years of making judgments about other people. That's what I worry about. Can I just say, I have ... I love all my colleagues. (LOL) But some of them have come to the point in their life where they sum up people so quickly. They sum up people in terms of their intelligence or their weakness. Then they become dismissive of human beings. Because they are not smart or not smart enough. It's scary to see someone who is a Christian intellectual do that. That feels like demon possession to me.

unknown voice: You have me thinking about so many things. I want to ask the question about our ___ helping us understand how formations happen within other formations and then get carried forward in a way we can't see it any more. ___ and there's this formation of loss, displacement that gets carried forward in our bodies. It's a stunning way to think about this and help us reach for some new way of thinking about it and I have lots of questions about that. ___ my own training in feminism ___ think about the interlocking of relationships between race and gender, class and all of it. I'd like to hear you say some more about what you think gender does in this configuration, we're imagining ___ reimagine. What does it stand in for? I have some thoughts about it, but I want to hear what you have to say about. What, if grace is substituted for other ___ formations, what's gender substituting for in the human condition ___ and standing in for. We tend to reduce it and immediately dismiss ___ natural, logical, a given, but it's of course not that simple or straight forward. So what in your ways of thinking, you're reading these stories, ___ what are you seeing that's ___.

WJJ: The first things comes back to what I said earlier and I want to say tentatively, because I'm always worried about people getting defensive, but I am deeply concerned about the masculinist nature of the intellectual life in the west. If there's anything I've learned from feminist theory is we theologially, we have not thought enough about the masculinist nature for these matters.

I wrote this article, I don't know where to send it because it has a lot of bad pictures in it, but it's an article about the rise of the German nation as a colonial power. What I try to show in the article is the way in which the desire to be seen as a powerful globally significant man, like the other nations, drove German intellectual into the 20th century. And I try to show how it works in the theology of Barth and Bonhoeffer.

The point of that essay was to try to show how the obsession from the 19th to the 20th century of epistemology and how one knows has a lot to do with presenting a people as powerful defined by the bodies of their men and defined within the image of a powerful man. There was this famous picture, maybe you might have seen it, from the turn of the century. The first image of it is, it's a picture of Cecil Rose, you all know who Cecil Rose

was, right? It's a picture of him standing over the continent of Africa, spread eagle over Africa and the middle of part of his body is right over what was known as Rhodesia. And it was Woooooo hoooo hooo bad. You see the picture, like, there it is. He's stretched out like this and it represents the power of the British nation. He's a colossus man. The rules – right.

Later on there was another rendition of that same picture of Uncle Sam in the same position with his legs spread out over the US, but also over the Philippine's and also the other US colony – right. This picture is incredible. Then there's this picture, when Germany lost its colonial holdings at the end of the first world war, there is this image of, forgot the South African, it was Bolton, not the later Bolton, but the earlier Bolton. He's also positioned as a massive man and he's got an eraser and he's wiping away Germany's name over those colonial holding and writing South Africa. It's this image of a powerful man that becomes deeply imbedded in the performance of the intellectual life. That's one of the ways I'm starting to think about how gender factors into it. How gender becomes a way to display intellectual prowess. Actually tied to what conceptualities are very important.

The other has to do with... it's been said by several people, the person whose work helps me understand the most has been Carole Merchant. Magnus Mörter, the famed American historian, said it would be fine to understand the conquest of Latin America as a conquest of the bodies of women. What he meant by that is, what Merchant talks about that the bodies of women are imagined and equated with the land itself. So to rule the land also meant to rule the women, the indigenous women. We haven't thought enough about what that actually means for the formation of the church and the formation of the way in which domestic fear was configured by the church. But those are a couple of ways I'm trying to start thinking about what's really very important topic.

The next book I'm going to do is a book on obedience. I am really worried about the way we talk about obedience. There are some significant problems at work and it has a lot to do with gender subjectivity.

unknown voice: marriage vows?

WJJ: among other things.

Lois Malcolm: sorry I wasn't here last night because I lost my voice and was home resting, but I do have a gender question and I'm really interested in your angle on this. Mainline Protestantism fears the feminization of Christianity and that that's one of the reasons supposedly for the decline of mainline Christianity is that its robust identity and in terms of obedience this robust sense of athletic obedience is so there is a tremendous fear of the attention to gender questions that is going to lead to the loss of identity the loss of... So how do you understand what it means to raise consciousness about gender concerns while still dealing with the ... well first of all, male identity, how do you deal with the formation of male identity within communities that are aware of gender issues. Then, I guess related to that is just the general robustness of the community. I'm trying to think through how to ask the question in ways that get at the analytical concerns. I think you know what the problem is that I'm talking about.

WJJ: exactly. This goes back to something I said earlier and I'm trying to figure out how to do this. The question for me inside of what you're asking, because what you're putting

your finger on I think is really crucial. Those of us who have been assigned the role of helping facilitate the way the church thinks, for lack of a better word, what we have yet to get our minds around, what I said earlier, are we performing the same kind of masculinist desire in the way we do our intellectual work even if we think we're challenging this, that simply reinforces it.

That is to say, as you all know the rise of nationalisms carry inside of them this deep masculine performance – they do. That a nation is imagined as a powerful man, and that no nation wants to be seen as is female, weak, second. Let's put it crudely, well let's not put it crudely. But the point is, is that intellectual exercise, intellectual projects are seen in service to the presentation of a masculinist identity.

The question for me inside your question is there a way that we can present what it means to be a Christian intellectual, to do our work in ways that don't reinforce that. All you could do is to listen to our dear president talk about, we don't want to be a second nation. The hard sciences (no pun intended), are what will lead us back to the front. Having students who excel in math and science are going to lead us back to the front. So I think part of the way we get at it is to try to be very clear on what we mean by the intellectual life. And what we mean by a beautiful intellectual performance and the things that we witness and produce by that. But the other thing does have to do, and a lot of people are doing work on this, we have to get far more serious in thinking about domestic science. Thinking about the way we imagine family and home as Christians. That... many of us have punted on that and we can't punt on that anymore.

LM: so where do you go with that? Because that's the other ... that's the counterpoint to the question of male public leadership. It's also addressing the question of strong male leadership in the family. Do you know what I'm saying, that often the traditional Christian response is, if you give men strong male leadership in the church then they're going to be good fathers because they have a place in the families, but if women take over in the public space, both in the public sphere and in the home, men are in a sense, don't have a place.

WJJ: this is why my next project is on obedience, because for me the theological alchemy that's at the heart of that is the way we think about obedience. Just to kind of put my cards on the table: I don't think the way Christians often think about obedience is Christian. I think we have to ask what is the relationship between Jesus's body and obedience. We haven't done that. I want to come after this. This is the next thing I really want to come after, how we imagine the domestic in relationship to the idea of obedience. I'm putting together some really interesting stories about this very matter.

But I think you're right that this ... men's bodies are imagined as properly men's bodies if they are obeyed. Men are imagined as rightly ordered if they obey a higher power. There is a problem here. There is a very serious problem here. Of course, the problem is the relationship between how we imagine Jesus' obedience and all of this. Not to put too much on the table, but, of course the argument I'm going to make, in part, we don't yet understand Jesus' obedience, because we always have to remember no one saw him as obedient. Everybody saw him as disobedient. What does that mean that he was seen as disobedient?

MH: I think we have time for one more question.

unknown voice?: Part of my academic experience has been not so much what I thought, but what I could prove, or somehow prove other people thought credible. What do you say to an institution or an individual who is trying to prove their thought or their imagination to other individuals or institutions that don't necessarily view that thought as credible, or the resources those individuals are attempting to use as credible, or valued, or have no familiarity with them.

WJJ: If I may reframe your question a bit to make sure I've captured it all. Part of what you're referring to as I understand it, is the always constant negotiations with being inside intellectual traditions. As you know I'm from a place that loves to talk about tradition a lot.

I prefer to think about these things like an artist. I prefer to think about tradition artistically instead of the way it's often thought and talked about. That is, ... you want people to see themselves inside **of** something, but you want people to see **themselves** inside of something. That's the problem.

Often when we talk about continuities of thought, ways of thinking, people disappear and the issue becomes hearing the familiar words, hearing the repetition. At one level pedagogically that's right, at another level that can be so dehumanizing, because then you stop listening for the new. And the minute you stop listening for the new you are on your way to death, because then it really doesn't matter who's in front of you, because all you're waiting for is for them to say the familiar.

Why are you there? Just to be ears? Maybe what you want is to be surprised by the familiar, but in order to be surprised by the familiar you have to be the kind of teacher that invites surprise. That invites a musician to improvise. This is what I love about jazz. This is why you can hear Autumn Leaves a hundred different ways and love it every time. You're going to expect those notes somewhere, but how she got to it, how he got to it, ooh, did you hear that turn, I never thought about that, they dropped a little bit of Tupac in there. That was tight – yeaaaaaa! That's what you want.

The problem for us is that especially, I'm just going to use my own shop, students feel dehumanized very often, because, they know they are not being listened to. They know that the only thing that's going on that the professor is listening for is his own words. That's sick. But I think that's a part of the disease. We don't know how to help people do improvisation.

I want to become the kind of teacher, at the end of the day I want them to be Trinitarian, but I want them to get there in an interesting way. One that captures their soul and allows them ways to capture other people's souls as they got there. It takes patience, it takes risk and it also takes, it just takes help. You've got to have somebody who can encourage you to keep staying open, because, as I've seen a colleague who retired, he says, Willie you know it's just hard for me to keep reading the same mistakes over and over and over again. I understand. _____ the students keep making the same mistakes, but you don't want to get to the point where all you see are the mistakes. Don't you want to see a mistake that actually opens up to a new possibility, which I think means that we have to be better at improvisation than we tend to be. There's a great woman, I don't know if you folks ever heard of her, Virginia Wiles, who teaches at (I forgot now). Virginia, she's a New Testament scholar who's also just crazy in a beautiful way. She always says, I don't believe in mistakes. There are no mistakes. It's just opportunities.

MH: New Brunswick Theological

WJJ: New Brunswick, right. She's fabulous, because she knows how to work with what people give her. I think institutions increasingly have to figure out how to do that. Or you wind up having the situation where people pass through but you have absolutely no idea who they are and they never showed you. It's really bad when you don't care they never showed you.