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Letter from the Editor

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Letter from the Editor



**Garrett B. Trott, *TCL* Editor-in-Chief
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I have always desired to serve God in some capacity. When I was in my early 20's, I saw pastoral ministry and/or missions as *the* road to pursue if I wanted to serve God. Subsequently, I enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at Trinity Western University. I was accepted in the program. A good friend offered me some counsel as I shared with him what I was doing. He had known me for several years and made the suggestion that I should really look at pursuing librarianship. I followed my friend's counsel and changed my program at Trinity Western from a Master of Divinity to a Master of Theological Studies program. When I finished that program, I started my MLS.

I finished my MLS and about a year later, I began my interviews for my current position at Corban University. I was really struggling at this point in my life. I came back to the question, "how can I serve God?" I really did not see my current job (at the time I was working for a library vendor) as serving God. The only element of serving God that I saw at that time in my life was being involved with a local church (which I was at the time and still am). I really struggled that I spent so much time in my job (and, so I thought, not serving God), but so little in the church (and serving God). Obviously, an invalid dichotomy had developed of how and where I can be of service to God. When I got the position at Corban University I kind of had this idea: "OK, now I am working for a Christian institution of higher education. I am certainly serving God now, right?" I was (needless to say) disappointed. By that, I do not intend to say that Corban is, or was at that time, a bad place to work, nor am I suggesting that they had poor leadership, it was nothing of that whatsoever. It was a matter of an internal quest and the development of an invalid sacred/secular dichotomy, along with a heart that was not content.

My first spring at Corban University it was announced that the faculty (my position was and still is faculty at Corban University) would be working through a book through the next academic year: David Claerbaut's (2004) *Faith and Learning on the Edge*. Claerbaut's work is one of many works related to faith and learning in higher education, but his work was my first exposure to the dialog, and subsequently, I drank of it deeply. The struggle began to dissolve and I began to see that my presuppositions that drove this sacred/secular dichotomy were false. I really started absorbing anything and everything I could that would help me understand further how I could play a role in understanding my role as a librarian as a work that could glorify God.

I chose to be involved with ACL when I first heard about the association through a fellow student in my MLS program. It was interesting, but my involvement was minimal. When I got my job at Corban University, they had professional development money allocated and the individual who was then director encouraged me to look at ACL. I looked and joined again. I quickly got involved as a writer of book reviews, which I enjoyed. My first ACL conference was not until 2011. I was at Cedarville University that year. I had left home early that Monday morning to catch a flight to a nearby airport in Ohio. My colleague picked me up and drove me to Cedarville. After a long flight, I was very tired, exhausted and drained. But, in spite of this, I went to the reception that evening which was at the ACL home office. I walked through the office that evening and I recall seeing ACL's vision on one of the walls:

The Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) is an influential, vibrant, growing community that integrates faith, ministry, and academic librarianship through development of members, services, and scholarship.

Even though I was tired and exhausted that evening from a long flight, an early morning, and a three-hour time difference, I felt this confirmation and excitement that this is where I need to be. It seemed to fit my passion for the gospel, my profession as a librarian, and the drive I had to see them integrated. Subsequently, I chose to become more involved with ACL.

As I was involved with ACL, there were some dynamics of it that I really enjoyed, others were disheartening, however. The fellowship was great. However, soon after my experience, I learned that the editorial staff of *TCL* had stepped down. After a bit of dialog, I learned that one reason was due to the lack of submissions, which some felt was due to the attempted addition of a peer-review component. Having convictions regarding the critical nature scholarship played for the gospel (and the role that peer-review plays in scholarship), I was incredibly discouraged (I was not editor-in-chief at that time). I saw *TCL* (and its peer-review element) as a venue through which scholarship and faith-integration could be manifested (not the only one by any means, but in my opinion, a critical one).

I started with the question of "so what?" That is, "Is scholarship important?" "If it is, what kind of role does it play (if any) in manifesting the gospel through librarianship?" "Again, if scholarship is important, what role does it play in faith and learning integration?"

At about this time, I was reading one of Dallas Willard's (2009) books, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge*. His statement jumped out at me:

One of the greatest challenges facing spokespeople for Christ in higher education is how to understand the relation of the basic things they believe as Christians to

their responsibility for knowledge in their professional field. One thing is for sure. Until institutions of Christian higher education and their faculties break out of a posture that holds genuine knowledge to be secular, and until they carry out their task of developing and conveying distinctively Christian knowledge – in the free, open, and rational manner that characterizes the life of the mind and of scholarship at its ideal best – those institutions will, despite all appearances, be a primary hindrance to the “Jesus project” on earth. They will leave the impression, now almost universally held, that being a follower of Jesus Christ is simply a matter of what one believes and feels, a “personal preference” as is now said, not something essentially involving knowledge of truth and of a reality that everyone must come to terms with. No “integration of faith and learning” – so often spoken of in Christian academic circles – is possible under the weight of that smothering impression, because “faith” and “learning” (knowledge) are taken under it to fall into different life categories, where no intellectually coherent contact is possible (loc. 3036).

After reading this book (and others) my “so what” was answered: Christian scholarship speaks to the validity of the gospel (what Willard terms “the Jesus Project”), and dare I say that Christian scholarship plays a critical role in advocating for the gospel. If the gospel impacts my work as a librarian, what does that look like? What should it look like? Can I present my experiences or recommendations of how the gospel impacts librarianship based upon literature reviews and/or qualitative/quantitative data? If all truth is God’s truth, then the answer is “yes” – it is just a matter of doing it.

With the development of scholarship, *TCL* hopes to play a role in advocating the vision of the association.



Soli Deo gloria

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