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Beginning with the French Revolution, and at an increasing pace during the past century, a divide has grown that now effectively separates reason from faith. Ideas and theories that relate to matters of religious faith have been pushed to the margins of both the humanities and the sciences, and relegated to that now back corner of the university: the theology department. A long line of prominent intellectuals from Voltaire to Bertrand Russell to Richard Dawkins has argued vociferously that faith has no place in the halls of the academy. During the same time period, many faithful religious people have become increasingly distrusting of reason. They prefer to ignore, rather than incorporate into their worldviews, discoveries of the modern Academy; to deny the possibility of evolution; to staunchly oppose any mention of global warming; and, to completely distrust the Academy to the point that some Christian parents fear sending their children to secular institutions.

Given this apparent estrangement between reason and faith, it is worth remembering that things have not always been this way. The first European universities all arose in close collaboration with the Church. More recently, and closer to home, many of our own local places of higher learning—not only Harvard and Yale, but Amherst, Mount Holyoke and Smith—have pedigrees in which Christian faith was central to the founding vision. When it comes to universities and colleges, the words of the late Pope John Paul II are no exaggeration: as a matter of historical fact, they have indeed been “born out of the heart of the Church.”

Historical origins notwithstanding, few would dispute that the last century has seen the wedge between Church and Academy driven deeper, and the divide widened, with many on both sides of the divide making the case that this is a good thing. It is in everyone’s best interest, argues Daniel
Dennett, Christopher Hitchens and others like them, that the Academy has been unshackled from religion. And, on the other side of the divide, even university and college presidents well known for their devout Christian faith (including Charles Eliot at Harvard in the 1900s) have argued that faith should keep to its own realm, and that higher education is not of great importance for the Church.

We who are starting this new journal happen to disagree completely with both sides.

As Natalie Sargent explains in her feature essay (p18), however, we are not saying that reason and faith are the same thing. It is self-evident, surely, that baptized Christians with strong faith do not automatically have well thought-through views on beauty or truth any more than their faith automatically makes them an expert on quantum physics or topology algorithms. St. Augustine of Hippo, a leading philosopher and Bishop in the 4th century, worried that Christian believers would misuse Scripture to argue against things known to be true by the learned, thereby bringing disgrace on the church. Having witnessed this more than once in our own lifetimes, we understand (and share!) the frustration of many academics at the shoddy treatment of reason by some people of faith. That said, there is, so we believe, a side of the discussion that has not been adequately examined: what has the academy lost when reason and faith are kept completely separate?

In his 2006 book *Excellence Without a Soul*, Harry Lewis, former dean of students at Harvard University, makes the case that while striving for excellence in education, universities have forgotten their core purpose: to raise up people of character who will take responsibility for society. In our
opinion, this loss of the university’s soul is by no means unrelated to the dampening of the dialogue between reason and faith.

It is, then, for this reason that we have launched Slant: A Five College Journal of Reason & Faith: there is much to be gained by a richer conversation between the spheres of reason and faith.

Many of the great intellectuals, philosophers and scientists throughout the ages have thought long and hard about how reason and faith interact. When the Academy cuts faith out of the discussion, vital voices are no longer heard. Furthermore, faith provides enriching perspectives on beauty and aesthetics—from art to mathematical theory to sustainability, human flourishing, and social justice—all topics dear to the university. Of all these, human flourishing is probably the most important. It is, or should be, the core of the Academy. From scientific advancements to poetry, every corner of the University is interested in contributing to human flourishing—and this is, when properly understood, one of the main concerns of faith. There is still a lot to be learned by both sides.

The chief editorial goal of Slant is to provide a space where the dialog between reason and faith can be advanced, and where the search for Truth can be properly explored.

We take our name from a poem of one of Amherst’s most renowned citizens, Emily Dickinson: Tell all the truth but tell it slant. “The Truth must dazzle gradually / Or every man be blind.”

We hope that you will enjoy the essays, poetry, reviews, and much more that Slant offers, but most of all that you will join us in the discussion by contributing to the dialogue with your own submissions.

John Christopher Bowers, Founding Editor

John is a PhD candidate in Computer Science at UMass Amherst.
He enjoys rock climbing and proving complex origami algorithms.
Last week I spent an evening immersed in two parts of my university world. The first part began with hosting a reception at the University Club for a group of faculty friends – we are a disciplinarily mixed-up crew from eight different university departments, but all of us share overlapping interests in sustainability teaching and research. Our stated excuse for enjoying an hour of conversation at the end of the workday was a 7 p.m. evening public lecture by author Charles Mann on his recent book *1493*. A gifted historian, Mann has a fine flair for storytelling, and his talk on sustainability was humorous, insightful and thought provoking.

Listening to him reminded me how wonderful it is to be part of a university community, or as they called it in the middle ages, “*universitas magistri et scholarum*.” It was therefore with some reluctance that I dragged myself away 10 minutes before the end of Mann’s talk, however I had, several months before his public lecture was scheduled, agreed to address a weekly gathering of some 70 undergraduate Christian students. Serendipitously, Charles Mann’s lecture was in the Student Union Ballroom located directly next door to Earthfoods Café where the student gathering was held, so I slipped out the door at the back of the ballroom, walked a dozen steps down the hallway, and snuck into the back of the room. There a violinist, acoustic guitar and keyboard player were leading the group in singing a beautifully lyric version of a contemporary worship hymn.

I’d been asked to speak on the theme of Moses’ ancient injunction to the Hebrew people to love God with all their *mind* as well as with all their heart; I’ve been thinking about this theme for a good many years, and was glad to share some ideas. The students seemed engaged, and the Q&A session at the end went on another 30 minutes after I had done speaking.
Arriving home that night, I couldn’t help reflecting on how odd it is that these two groups of people – my fellow-faculty and my fellow-Christians seem to regard each other with so much distrust. Perhaps you would accuse me of exaggeration if I said that the contemporary American academy and the contemporary American church view each other as antagonists, but few would argue that church and university are natural allies. For a moment, I imagined an alternative universe in which the two audiences somehow arrived at the wrong events only to find me speaking to the sustainability audience on faith and intellect while Charles Mann addressed the Christian audience in the Earthfoods Café and spoke to them about Chinese soil erosion, Brazilian rainforests and sustainability.

Personally, it was no stretch to be at both events one after the other: I happen to love the academy and the life of the mind, and I happen to love the church and the cross-cultural experience of worshiping alongside people from many different walks of life. Because I coexist in both these “worlds” I find myself wondering why so many people perceive reason and faith at odds with each other. Although there are some distinctively 21st century facets to this particular brand of mind/soul dualism, it is neither a new nor modern problem.

In the 4th century A.D., one of the Church’s most prominent African theologians, a brilliant lawyer and intellectual named Tertullian said famously (and with not a little scorn), “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” In other words, said Tertullian, faith is faith, and the sacred things (epitomized by Jerusalem) are, well, sacred things. Reason, he was saying, is something different, and perhaps even something a little corrosive of faith. The life of the mind, the academy (epitomized by Athens), the intellect, all those things belong to a different order, and it would be better for Jerusalem not to allow herself to be tainted too much by the faith-corrupting influence of Athens. Today in the academy the scorn runs in the other direction: “Of what possible value is Jerusalem to Athens, for crying out loud?”

Reason or faith. Athens or Jerusalem. Academy or Church. I think that many of my church friends tend to agree with Tertullian (“universities corrupt well-brought up Christian kids”), and my secular friends agree with him too, _mutatis mutandis_ (“we’re a public institution – those students’ private religious ideas have no bearing on my academic discipline.”) The result is that the two worlds are treated as oil and water. The underlying ideology is (at best) that reason is epistemically neutral, or (more likely) that faith is
for the immature, for those who aren’t intellectually honest enough to ask the tough questions and face up to the hard truth that God is one of those myths which all right-thinking people grow out of.

To be fair, I suspect most of the prejudices I hear from both sides are due to ignorance. Many of my Christian friends, like most normal people who live outside the weird bubble of academia have no clue what the work life of a faculty member looks like. And many of my secular faculty colleagues have very little idea of what really goes on in churches on a Sunday morning, or at a weekly evening Bible study group.

But I suspect that neither sets of my friends have ever wondered why nearly all the older European universities were originally founded as schools of theology, or why so many American colleges and universities, including Harvard (1634), Yale (1701), Amherst (1821) and Mount Holyoke (1839) were founded to train ministers and missionaries. If it is true that reason and faith are inherently at odds, it seems strange that so much of the story of higher education in the west is essentially the story of Christians creating institutions for the rigorous study of philosophy, theology, and the humanities. All these so called “branches” of learning, theology prominent among them, were long seen as being connected to the trunk of same tree, constituting an integrated epistemological whole, each shedding light on and informing the other. I have a theory that if my church friends and my faculty friends would only get to know each other a little better, they’d find a whole lot to like about the other group.

First, they might both find that the chasm between what the Church does and what the Academy does is narrower than they think it is. Remove prayer and singing and the fact that it happens every week, the student meeting at the café is not as different as a public lecture in the Student Ballroom, and a graduate seminar reading Durkheim around a table bears some interesting similarities to a Bible study group reading first century texts around a coffee-table.

Second, my Christian friends could benefit from the love of rigorous thinking and argument that is deeply embedded in academic culture. I’m not talking about being obnoxiously argumentative: the Christian virtue of charity leaves no room for that. Truth-seeking, as Harvard Law professor William Stunz has pointed out, is a deeply Christian enterprise, and our churches should be swimming in it.
Thirdly, universities could become better, richer places if they would take some lessons in humility from the church. We all know stereotyped Christians who are a little too full of themselves, but in my experience, most Christians are deeply aware of their failings and willing to admit that they don’t have all the answers. In the world of academia on the other hand, arrogance and pride are never very far beneath the surface. Anyone who has explored the frontiers of their discipline in the course of writing a PhD should have a healthy view of how much they don’t understand, but somehow our graduate training imbues us with the crazy notion that our expertise and learning entitle us to look down on others because (supposedly) they know so much less than we do.

I have been focusing on ways that the groups might learn from each other, but there are also areas in which there are deeply-held common values. For example, many faculty and students at our university have a deep concern for social justice and the poor. Our church has a long record of helping lower income families with food, and (more recently) an active service to house the homeless during the bitter winter months. By and large, however, the Christians have their own social service programs, and the university has its own. Could more be accomplished if more of these programs partnered together, given that the goals and concerns are so similar?

As I reflect on these things, it strikes me that the reactions of these two groups to each other might be based in fear. Why should Christians get defensive around scientists and rigorous academic debate? Is it perhaps due – at least in some instances – to an underlying fear that God’s love for them or their own intellectual grasp of the faith may not be secure enough to withstand hard questions? Carl Sagan once said “We can judge our progress by the courage of our questions and the depth of our answers, our willingness to embrace what is true rather than what feels good.” I wonder whether some Christians have embraced faith merely because “it feels good” rather than because it is true, and have never had the courage to dig deeply into what they believe and why. How many Christians steer away from the life of the mind out of misplaced fear?
...universities could become better, richer places if they would take some lessons in humility from the church.

And why do so many academics scoff at faith? Could it be a smokescreen covering the fact they feel unsettled by the existence of the supernatural? Deep down do we fear, as C.S. Lewis did, that “giving in and admitting that God is God” might lead to radical changes in their thinking and indeed their own lives? Is it easier to sneer at faith and to hold onto the Carl Sagan ideology, namely that “the Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” The beauty of Sagan’s Weltanschauung is that it allows us to remain the captain of our own lives, and to remain behind the shield of our great learning, our disciplinary expertise, and our hard-won PhD titles. It is humbling—and perhaps unnerving—to admit that we are not in control and that we understand only a little about the world. How many intellectuals steer away from religious faith out of misplaced fear?

Many wars have been fought over fear of differences, but this is one that doesn’t need to happen. There is no need for my tree-hugging sustainability friends at the Charles Mann lecture and the Christians meeting at the Earthfoods Café to live in two parallel universes, much less to treat one another with distrust or hostility.

If our hearts’ deepest longings as people imprinted with the imago dei is to know Him and love Him, then we shouldn’t be expected to check our soul at the door when we walk into the lecture hall, the seminar room or the University Club.

The love of serious ideas, the humility that comes from honestly admitting the limits of human knowledge, and a commitment to the poor and social justice: I wish these things were embraced equally by both my faculty friends AND my church friends. If only my two groups of friends could lower the separating barriers. If only they could learn alongside each other, teaching one another the best virtues associated with reason and faith; imagine what they could accomplish. Amherst and Jerusalem working together. They may even change the world.

Craig is the Director of the Sustainability Science program at UMass Amherst.
T.S. Eliot and the Incarnational Intersection

Buddhism and Christianity in “Little Gidding”
In a 1965 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, when Lawrence Durrell told T. S. Eliot that he seemed more like a Buddhist than a Christian, Eliot responded, “Perhaps they haven’t found me out yet?” A devout Anglo-Catholic after his baptism in 1927, Eliot incorporated his faith into much of his later work, leading scholars to emphasize the Christian elements of his poetry at the expense of fully acknowledging the influence of other religions. However, Eliot displayed a keen interest in Eastern philosophy and religion throughout his life, and that interest manifests itself in his poetry. “Little Gidding,” the last of his Four Quartets, attempts to create a synthesis of Eliot’s Anglo-Catholicism and Buddhism by contemplating the interrelated natures of time, humanity, and the divine. The poem does not merely borrow Buddhist elements and translate them into the idiom of Christianity; it presents those elements on their own terms. At the same time, it asserts the all-encompassing nature of the Incarnation, which subsumes the positive elements of Buddhism. Therefore, the poem is both thoroughly Buddhist and thoroughly Christian, but all within the framework of the Incarnation.

The very first lines establish the central tension of the poem: “Midwinter spring is its own season / Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown, / Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.” Here, Eliot hints at the existence of the timeless within the temporal, a sacramental state that parallels the
existence of the timeless God within the temporal figure of Christ. Furthermore, time is blurred with space in the idea of a season simultaneously suspended in time and suspended between a polar region and a tropical region. The poem thereby indicates a nirvana-like state that transcends time and space, yet that state is presented as a very specific season that exists in a very specific time and space. The notion of nirvana thus serves the notion of the Incarnation, in which the human manifestation of God offers transcendence only through inhabiting a specific era and region. This causes a tension to arise in the poem between locality and universality. If God is infinite and transcendent, then why are specific places like Little Gidding particularly suited for prayer and salvation? The poem does not resolve this tension, but examines it and maintains the paradox. G. K. Chesterton, who Eliot said “did more than any man in his time...to maintain the existence of the [Christian] minority in the modern world,” describes how the Catholic Church’s preservation of this paradox enables great art: “By defining its main doctrine [of the Incarnation], the Church not only kept seemingly inconsistent things side by side, but, what was more, allowed them to break out in a sort of artistic violence.” This violence is the dynamo behind the creative power of “Little Gidding.”

The tension between immanence and transcendence, Christianity and Buddhism, appears again later in the poem’s first section:

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid.

Narsingh Srivastava points out that the words “sense and notion” relate to the Buddhist idea of liberation from the categories of existence, the very idea that forms the foundation of the Bhagavad Gita. John of the Cross and Augustine promote a similar path of self-denial, and so Srivastava asserts that the poem achieves a synthesis between Catholic philosophy and the Bhagavad Gita. While it is true this synthesis appears in the poem, it is also important to note that the Buddhist casting off of sense and notion is the starting point in this passage, but the destination is a sensible place where “prayer has been valid.” Moreover, the starting point is universal, unaffiliated with any specific time or place, but the destination is the specific Christian locality of Little Gidding. Here, contemplation of transcendence leads to immanence. Thus, while the starting point of the passage reflects the teachings of Buddhism, the passage as a whole most closely resembles Christ’s command, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and
follow me;” in the poem, the self-denial of Buddhism has the ultimate purpose of enabling individuals to follow the specific figure of Christ.

The very next words of the poem are:

And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment

This passage illustrates one of the doctrines of the Apostle’s Creed, namely the Communion of Saints, in which the dead in heaven intercede for the living to God. The dead have this power because they partake in God’s being more fully than the living; their language is “beyond the language of the living” because it partakes in Christ, who is the perfect Word, and their language is “tongued with fire” because it partakes in the Holy Spirit, who is associated with fire due to Pentecost. This passage also shows that humans simultaneously partake in the immanent and the transcendent, existing in the “Incarnational intersection” between time-bound material and time-less spirit. The dead who are saved can intercede for humanity throughout time because they partake in the timeless and eternal God. Because humans exist in this “intersection,” they can strive for the transcendent “grace dissolved in place” (in the words of Eliot’s poem “Marina”) through the Incarnation. That is why the “timeless moment” is “England and nowhere,” both immanent and transcendent.

The third section of “Little Gidding” begins with the most explicitly Buddhist passage of the poem:

There are three conditions which often look alike
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
Being between two lives—unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle.

From the perspective of Buddhism, Harold E. McCarthy explains that this passage condemns indifference, the compromise between attachment and detachment, because indifference is not true emancipation, but death that masquerades as life. McCarthy elaborates that true emancipation “is not to be found in insensibility, which denies change, but in detachment from
self and from things and from persons, detachment from change. If we are at the heart of Eliot’s vision here, we are also at the heart of the vision of Buddhism. But while the poem incorporates the Buddhist teaching of detachment on its own terms, it juxtaposes that teaching against the Christian view of attachment. Eliot is not totally condemning “attachment to self and to things and to persons” as he is with indifference, but rather positing a limited value in such attachment. By juxtaposing attachment and detachment without a negative judgment on either, the poem establishes a paradox completely in line with Christ’s paradoxical command to give up material goods to follow his own material figure. Eliot reserves his negative judgment for the indifference that would compromise that paradox. Chesterton once again provides helpful clarification of Christianity’s promotion of paradox and condemnation of compromise, saying that the Church “has kept [seemingly opposite elements] side by side like two strong colours, red and white, like the red and white upon the shield of St. George. It has always had a healthy hatred of pink. It hates that combination of two colours which is the feeble expedient of the philosophers.”

The very next words of the poem elucidate how the Christian Incarnation paradoxically unites attachment and detachment:

This is the use of memory:
For liberation—not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country
Begins as attachment to our own field of action
And comes to find that action of little importance
Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,
History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

From within the Buddhist perspective, P. S. Sri offers an analysis of this passage that is equally applicable from within the Christian perspective: “The still point is thus not freedom from time and space, but freedom from the feeling of being confined by time and space; not freedom from desire, but freedom from the slavery to shifting desires.” The Christian view of the passage would add that slavery, or attachment, does not totally disappear, but transfers from shifting desires to the concrete person of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22). Indeed, the passage asserts that both servitude and freedom, attachment and detachment, are retained but transfigured by divine love. The word “transfigured” reveals that the poem’s synthesis between Christianity and Buddhism is occurring within the overall framework of Christ’s Incarnation; the Transfiguration of the incarnate God is the event by which seemingly opposing elements are synthesized, since that event reveals that Christ is simultaneously fully human and fully divine.
In addition, the passage takes a sacramental view of the nation. Love of God can be ignited by love of a nation, since the limitations of the nation force that national love to expand beyond the nation toward God. In other words, the love of God is the fulfillment of the love of the nation: although the nation is never completely worthy of the love given to it, the God whom Christians worship certainly is indeed worthy. In Eliot’s Anglo-Catholic view, God is the fulfillment of the partial goods that are often first perceived in the nation. Just as the sacraments enable individuals to approach God simultaneously through and beyond matter, love of a nation can enable individuals to approach God through and beyond a particular country. Eliot explains this Aristotelian and Thomistic view in his lectures *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, applying it to romantic love instead of national love:

The apparent “glorification of the body” appreciated by many admirers of Donne is really a puritanical attitude. And the conception of the ecstasy of union between two souls is not only philosophically crude but emotionally limiting. [Dante’s] expression of love as contemplation of the beloved object is not only more Aristotelian; it is also more Platonic, for it is the contemplation of absolute beauty and goodness partially revealed through a limited though delightful human object. What is there for Donne? This union in ecstasy is complete, is final; and two human beings, needing nothing beyond each other, rest on their emotion of enjoyment. But emotion cannot rest; desire must expand, or it will shrink. Donne, the modern man, is imprisoned in the embrace of his own feelings. There is little suggestion of adoration, of worship.

Both this lecture and the passage from “Little Gidding” promote an expansion of desire that is deeply rooted in the world but not limited to a worldly object. Such desire is attachment insofar as it is anchored to a worldly object and detachment insofar as it reaches beyond that object toward God. In uniting attachment and detachment in this manner, the sacramental worldview is capable of incorporating Buddhism on its own terms.

However, the passage on expanding desire from “Little Gidding” contains not only implications that stem from the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation but that also conflict with the Buddhist view of history. Even though each of our actions in history should come to be seen as “of little importance” compared to the transcendent God, indifference or even pure detachment should never arise because the Incarnation invests history as a whole with transcendent value and meaning. History is not destroyed or proven illusory by the Incarnation, but rather “renewed” and “transfigured,” conveying transcendent truths through immanent means. The historian Christopher Dawson (whom Eliot considered to be the most powerful intellectual influence in Britain) explains in *Progress and Religion*:

While the philosophers of India and Greece were meditating on the illusoriness or the eternity of the cosmic process, the prophets of Israel were
affirming the moral purpose in history and were interpreting the passing events in their age as the revelation of the divine will. For them there could be no question of the return of all things in an eternal cycle of cosmic change, since the essence of their doctrine of the divine purpose in the world was its uniqueness. There was one God and one Israel, and in the relations between these two was comprised the whole purpose of creation.

Dawson contrasts the Buddhist view of history as a confining cycle of change with the Judeo-Christian view of history as a meaningful, linear narrative. He thereby clarifies what Eliot means in the passage on expanding desire from “Little Gidding”: we come to love God beyond our history by receiving Him in our history. We are capable of receiving Him in this manner because He has given Himself to us by entering history through the Incarnation. Thus, history is not necessarily confining, since God reaches us through it. Eliot indicates the interpenetration of the time-less God and time-bound history later in “Little Gidding”: “A people without history / Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern / Of timeless moments.” Because the Incarnation forces Christianity to view history differently than Buddhism does, and because the poem uses the Incarnation as the framework of its synthesis between Christianity and Buddhism, Eliot ultimately relinquishes Buddhist view of history in order to incorporate other Buddhist elements on their own terms.

The second section of “Little Gidding” offers further insight into the synthesis that the poem is attempting to achieve. More than half of that section is written in terza rima to echo the form of Dante’s Divine Comedy, and this portion describes a “familiar compound ghost” who represents the authors constituting the tradition of European literature, including Yeats, Mallarmé, Swift, and Poe. In attempting to unite different strands into a single tradition through the terza rima form, Eliot self-consciously employs Dante’s method of approaching incommensurable schemes. Alasdair MacIntyre explains this in Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition:

Is there any way in which one of these rivals might prevail over the others? One possible answer was supplied by Dante: that narrative prevails over its rivals which is able to include its rivals within it, not only to retell their stories as episodes within its story, but to tell the story of the telling of their stories as such episodes.

Dante’s approach of judging which narrative prevails over its rivals mirrors the Thomistic approach of judging which philosophical tradition achieves rational superiority over its rivals:

Just as a later stage within that tradition is held superior to an earlier stage only if and insofar as it is able to transcend the limitations and
failures of that earlier stage, limitations and failures by the standards of rationality of that earlier stage itself, so the rational superiority of that tradition to rival traditions is held to reside in its capacity not only for identifying and characterizing the limitations and failures of that rival tradition as judged by that rival tradition's own standards, limitations and failures which that rival tradition itself lacks the resources to explain or understand, but also for explaining and understanding those limitations and failures in some tolerably precise way.

Dante in poetry and Aquinas in philosophy promote entering into rival viewpoints on their own terms and incorporating those viewpoints into a larger scheme that can compensate for the limitations that those viewpoints can recognize in themselves. Because Eliot admired both of those thinkers and shared their central Christian beliefs, it is likely that “Little Gidding” takes those thinkers’ approach. Just as the poem’s section in terza rima tries to meld various authors into one tradition that can make those authors more intelligible, the poem as a whole tries to incorporate Buddhism into the Christian tradition that can offer fulfillment for Buddhist teachings on their own terms. The poem therefore seeks to perfect Buddhism within the Incarnation, since Christ fulfills its goal of detachment. That is why the poem presents Buddhist teachings on their own terms; according to Eliot’s Dantesque and Thomistic approach, those terms simultaneously shed light on and are perfected by the Incarnation.

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I bike a trail on a spring day surpassing itself with summer heat in the Province Lands, the place the Pilgrims fixed their eyes on sunlight’s rays, fearing the soil beneath their feet.

It seems like a whirlwind scooped the landscape from inland dunes and pitch pines that twist from sun-hued sands. I find it all heaped at the tip of the Cape as I ride the land’s asphalt spine.

The path is narrow, not wide enough for a car, nor short enough to go by foot. The humble logic of the bike is the only means of crossing the bluffs, of cresting the shifting gold plateaus.

I speed with my jacket zipped down, the breeze filling the fabric’s shape so that my sleeves flap and strain their limits. As I coast up a dune to reach its crown, the fabric flies like a hero’s cape.
“Faith-Reasoning”, Part I
from Oxford to Rome
been housing the chapel worship services since 1869. In the brand new space, the first floor functioned as the college library, and on the second floor was the chapel proper, where faculty and students met for prayer and worship. Learning and piety, both under the same slate roof, reason below and faith upstairs. During the next fifty years the campus expanded; so did the holdings of the library. By 1935 the book collection had outgrown its little space on the first floor of the Chapel, and the college library was moved 250 feet to the west into newly constructed Goodell Hall. Here it remained until 1973, when a 28-floor brick-clad tower rose into the sky. This is the feature that now dominates the campus skyline. At 296.5 feet tall, it is the country’s tallest library building. If you were cross the lawn outside the Blue Wall windows, walk between the pond and the Library and approach the Old Chapel, you would find all the doors locked. Walk towards the Library now, and as you get to the

Editor’s introduction: If you walk out of the UMass Amherst Campus Center and look over in the direction of Northampton, you will see two buildings pointing up to the sky. The less obvious one, the Old Chapel, is noticeable only because its steeple and clock tower rise just above the tree line. It is an elegant building, the work of the same architect who designed the Worcester Art Museum and Christ Church Cathedral in Springfield. When the UMass Chapel was built in the 1880s, the Chemistry building had
entrance, a sign casually announces that is open 24 hours a day, Sunday morning through Friday night (and also 9am-9pm on Saturdays).

What a difference a century can make. Back in 1912 at this state-supported land grant college, reason and faith belonged in the same building, learning taking place downstairs and worship upstairs, all encompassed within the same walls of local Pelham granite and Longmeadow sandstone. Today in 2012, the depository of reason towers 28 floors above that quaint little stone building. The chapel doors remain locked – who needs to worship or pray anyway? – but the library is open and accessible night and day.

In 1969, just a few months after ground was broken for the Tower Library, a 46-year old Polish philosopher visited the USA for the first time, and although he did not come to Amherst, he did spend several days in New England, visiting both Hartford and Boston. Karol Wojtyla had written his doctoral dissertation on one of the great proponents of phenomenology, the German philosopher Max Scheler, and his philosophical roots in phenomenology were to inform much of his later thinking and writing. Wojtyla, however, was no ordinary academic. Before receiving his doctorate, he had been a playwright and actor, a manual laborer in a limestone quarry, a seminary student, and, following his ordination to the priesthood in 1946, a campus chaplain, a professor, an auxiliary bishop, archbishop, and then a cardinal. As a Christian intellectual, Wojtyla held deeply to the conviction that there is “a profound and indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith.” To him, having a building on a university campus that housed both books for study (first floor) and pews for prayer and worship (second floor), would be not only a normal, but indeed desirable state of affairs.

Less than a decade later, this same philosopher-cardinal was elected the 264th pope, and became known to the world as John Paul II. Between 1978 and 2005 he wrote dozens of official apostolic letters and exhortations, as well as 14 major encyclicals. In one of these encyclical letters, Fides et Ratio, John Paul II focused specifically on the relationship between faith and reason, and in the following pages Smith College senior Natalie Sargent explores his thinking. This is the first in a two-part series, and in it, Natalie compares John Paul II’s ideas to those of two 19th century Englishmen, the journalist G.K. Chesterton and John Henry Newman. Part II of this feature will appear in the next issue of Slant.
he classic teaching of the Christian church has long held that faith and reason are dual faculties that lead us to truth, although the question of precisely how they interact is not a simple one to answer. One way to address this question would be to ask what light is shed on the question by writings in the Hebrew scriptures, and then to progress chronologically (Tertullian and Augustine, for example, have a part in the conversation, and later on so does Thomas Aquinas and the scholastic philosophers, down to the phenomenologists of the 20th century). What I will do here starts in the opposite direction and moves backward in time.

When John Paul II addresses the interrelationship of Faith (fides) and Reason (ratio), he begins with a consideration of questioning and philosophical thought in the East and West.

“Through philosophy’s work, the ability to speculate . . . produces a rigorous mode of thought; and then in turn . . . it produces a systematic body of knowledge . . . Yet often enough in history this has brought with it the temptation to identify one single stream with the whole of philosophy.” This leads to what the pope calls philosophical pride, which he says “seeks to present its own partial and imperfect view as the complete reading of all reality.”

For John Paul II, a Thomist relation between theology and the sciences is necessary to rehabilitate reason, which “in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women
are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them.” Reason has been influenced by philosophical trends. Reason drives philosophy, but philosophy has also misguided reason. Philosophy must therefore recover its original vocation of leading people to truth.

Since truth is a product of God’s revelation, known through faith, “the knowledge which the Church offers to man has its origin not in any speculation of her own, however sublime, but in the word of God which she has received in faith.” Here John Paul II cites the First Vatican Council in raising the dichotomy of the “two-fold order of knowledge”: that of reason-knowledge and faith-knowledge. Clearly he sets faith-knowledge above reason-knowledge. We reason to faith in using our own interpretative faculties in deciding that anything is knowledge, whether it stems from faith or from reason.

Obviously our “interpretative faculties” play a crucial role, but John Paul is not opening the door to haphazard and purely subjective interpretation:

By the authority of his absolute transcendence, God who makes himself known is also the source of the credibility of what he reveals. By faith, men and women give their assent to this divine testimony. This means that they acknowledge fully and integrally the truth of what is revealed because it is God himself who is the guarantor of that truth. They can make no claim upon this truth which comes to them as gift and which, set within the context of interpersonal communication, urges reason to be open to it and to embrace its profound meaning.

Not to make claims on what we take to be divine is impossible. It is up to us to interpret any message (for one thing, as message itself) and what it means (if anything). John Paul II concludes the chapter, “the truth made known to us by Revelation is neither the product nor the consummation of an argument devised by human reason. It appears instead as something gratuitous, which itself stirs thought and seeks acceptance as an expression of love.” According to our sense of the word, reason does not devise arguments; rather, it recognizes and accepts truth in arguments which may not be physically manifest.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia contains a concise summary of Chapter 2, “Credo ut Intellegam”:

Biblical texts reflect a “conviction that there is a profound and indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith.” The Old Testament writers understood the use of applying finite reason within the context of the human relation to the mystery of God. Saint Paul holds that reason can know God, but that this capacity has been damaged by human disobedience to God.
The word choice is significant: “indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith.” Human beings know both faith and reason implicitly (cf. Anselm’s Proslogion), but faith and reason may not be implicitly one. Indeed, as Richard John Neuhaus pointed out, the First Vatican Council affirmed the rapport between faith and reason and yet emphasized the distinction between the two (writing in First Things, Dec. 1998).

The third chapter, “Intellego ut Credam,” stresses the human search for truth. The pope advances the Anselmian view that humans are born with the desire to know God, and the Augustinian view that our essential freedom lies in choosing to follow God. “Human beings would not even begin to search for something of which they knew nothing or for something which they thought was wholly beyond them.” Thus in freely choosing to search for ultimate truth they are following an instinctive desire.

In believing, we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people. This suggests an important tension. On the one hand, the knowledge acquired through belief can seem an imperfect form of knowledge, to be perfected gradually through personal accumulation of evidence; on the other hand, belief is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person’s capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring.

Thus it would appear that one act of our human freedom is choosing to engage in trust with other human beings. “Most of what we know, we do not experience directly but believe on the testimony of others” (Catholic Encyclopedia). Even with regard to the scientific theories in which we believe, we are not always seeking to prove theories or laws for ourselves, but believe what we are told is true. We take it as a matter of faith that we can never assume anything. Yet we believe, not in what we can yet see before us, but in what we believe we know to be true.

It is productive, then, to combine the terms “faith” and “reason” and produce a third, “faith-reasoning.” I do not mean a kind of system of counter-intuitive fideistic justification, but rather a process of thought in which certitude can be approached through human mental faculty combined with assent—that is to say, with an awareness that we know, and an acceptance that we may not know how we know it. We believe in things which we know are possible, though the mechanics of plausibility may remain unclear. In the words of Saint Paul, “Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12).

In “The Relationship between Faith and Reason,” John Paul II traces the
historical dialectic of the two. Crucial to his account is the unification of Christianity and Greek philosophy, further developed through the Church Fathers of East and West.

As I have noted, theirs was the task of showing how reason, freed from external constraints, could find its way out of the blind alley of myth and open itself to the transcendent in a more appropriate way. Purified and rightly tuned, therefore, reason could rise to the higher planes of thought, providing a solid foundation for the perception of being, of the transcendent and of the absolute. It is here that we see the originality of what the Fathers accomplished. They fully welcomed reason which was open to the absolute, and they infused it with the richness drawn from Revelation.

Again, pure reason is portrayed as corruptible, following the Pauline tradition. Only “reason which was open to the absolute,” i.e., the process of “faith-reasoning,” could aspire to ultimate truth.

asserting logic as either good or bad assents to certain unseen principles.

G. K. Chesterton is another Catholic thinker crucial to a discussion of faith and reason. Where John Paul II viewed reason as the primary motivation behind philosophical thought, Chesterton attributed his philosophy to faith. As opposed to the ministerial spirit of Fides et Ratio, Chesterton’s Orthodoxy is an individual account, unabashedly subjective. His purpose was to explain, not whether the Christian Faith can be believed, but how he personally had come to believe it.

Chesterton began with the double spiritual need of humanity for the strange and the secure, for faith and reason. By faith he meant a system of belief rather than a faculty for apprehending truth. In his view it was the combination of faith and reason which together allowed human beings to be “happy in this wonderland, without once being merely comfortable.” In the pre-modern era “all thoughts and theories were . . . judged by whether they tended to make a man lose his soul,” but he found his own beginning point in the discovery that “all modern thoughts and theories may be judged by whether they tend to make a man lose his wits.”

What Dryden said was this, “Great wits are oft to madness near allied”;
and that is true. It is the pure promptitude of the intellect that is in peril of a breakdown. . . He was talking of a cynical man of the world, a sceptic, a diplomatist, a great practical politician. Such men are indeed to madness near allied. Their incessant calculation of their own brains and other people’s brains is a dangerous trade. It is always perilous to the mind to reckon up the mind. A flippant person has asked why we say, “As mad as a hatter.” A more flippant person might answer that a hatter is mad because he has to measure the human head.

Acceptance and assent to what we shall not understand provides a relief from such “incessant calculation.” We can be at peace in realizing that truth may lie beyond our grasp, but not beyond our reach. Otherwise, we risk hitting a psychological brick wall once we find that our “pure promptitude of the intellect” refuses to yield immediate answers to our natural questions of existence: what is the meaning of life, what happens after I die.

Perhaps most pertinent to an understanding of the Chestertonian line is his discussion of the faith implicit in reasoning. This description forms the precursor to our term “faith-reasoning”:

Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a sceptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, “Why should anything go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic? They are both movements in the brain of a bewildered ape.” The young sceptic says, “I have a right to think for myself.” But the old sceptic, the complete sceptic, says, “I have no right to think for myself. I have no right to think at all.

The relation of our thoughts to reality bears the mark of faith-reasoning in that asserting logic as either good or bad assents to certain unseen principles. The young sceptic thinks that belief not rooted in sense-experience cannot be valid. The old sceptic puts aside the dignity accorded to him by Christianity and denies his right to freely choose anything, much less to choose to follow ultimate truth. “For we can hear scepticism crashing through the old ring of authorities, and at the same moment we can see reason swaying upon her throne. In so far as religion is gone, reason is going. For they are both of the same primary and authoritative kind. They are both methods of proof which cannot themselves be proved.”

For Chesterton the authority of the Church and the organic orthodoxy he came to realize through intellectual enquiry were one. In that “the Christian Church in its practical relation to my soul is a living teacher, not a dead one” he submitted to it “as a faith [whose meaning here is more closely allied to our broader description], instead of merely picking up hints from it as a scheme.” His belief in the truth of the vision surpassed his finite comprehension of the tangible world.
We turn now to John Henry Newman, another extraordinary apologist who, as their predecessor, essentially laid the foundation for the philosophies of John Paul II and G. K. Chesterton. Newman was ordained an Anglican priest in Oxford, England in 1825, and his conversion to Catholicism twenty years later caused quite a stir in English church circles. A sermon he preached on St. Peter’s Day, 1840, was therefore prior to his conversion to Catholicism, but characteristic of his distinctive mode of thinking. The sermon began with a meditation on faith and reason in the figure of St. Peter.

If ever Faith forgot self, and was occupied with its Great Object, it was the faith of Peter. If in any one Faith appears in contrast with what we commonly understand by Reason, and with Evidence, it so appears in the instance of Peter. When he reasoned, it was at times when Faith was lacking. “When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid;” and Christ in consequence called him, “Thou of little faith.”
Newman’s “Great Object” is truth, sought by humans via seemingly separate avenues of faith and reason. The faith of Peter, two millennia old, opposes modern conceptions of reason based on evidence. When Peter reasoned on evidence, it was when faith was lacking. The Peter of little faith had great fear of the wind and little belief toward Christ: his faith-reasoning was lacking, because he did not assent to what he could not see (i.e., that he would be saved).

Faith and Reason, then, stand in strong contrast in the history of Peter: Yet it is Peter, and he not the fisherman of Galilee, but the inspired Apostle, who in the text gives us a precept which implies, in order to its due fulfilment, a careful exercise of our Reason, an exercise both upon Faith, considered as an act or habit of mind, and upon the Object of it. We are not only to “sanctify the Lord God in our hearts,” not only to prepare a shrine within us in which our Saviour Christ may dwell, and where we may worship Him; but we are so to understand what we do, so to master our thoughts and feelings, so to recognize what we believe, and how we believe, so to trace out our ideas and impressions, and to contemplate the issue of them, that we may be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us an account of the hope that is in us.” In these words, I conceive, we have a clear warrant, or rather an injunction, to cast our religion into the form of Creed and Evidences.

Peter’s sense of unified faith and reason was split during moments in which he was not faith-reasoning, but reasoning according to sense experience. Only as an Apostle did he teach us to use the means of faith and reason toward the end of our Great Object, truth. The dogmatic products of the faith-reasoning process, then, are Creed and Evidences. “When he said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,’ he cast his faith, in a measure, into a dogmatic form: and when he said, ‘To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,’ he gave ‘an account of the hope that was in him,’ or grounded his faith upon Evidence.”

Faith . . . though in all cases a reasonable process, is not necessarily founded on investigation, argument, or proof; these processes being but the explicit form which the reasoning takes in the case of particular minds. Nay, so far from it, that the opposite opinion has, with much more plausibility, been advanced, viz. that Faith is not even compatible with these processes. Such an opinion, indeed, cannot be maintained, particularly considering the light which Scripture casts upon the subject, as in the text; but it may easily take possession of serious minds.

Newman maintained the distinction between faith and reason without confounding the two. He also argued against segregating the two. Faith for Newman was the “reasoning of a religious mind . . . which acts upon presumptions rather than evidence; which speculates and ventures on the future when it cannot make sure of it.” Newman upheld the validity of such
faith-reasoning, even when the person who reasons in this way cannot give an exact account of it.

All men have a reason, but not all men can give a reason. We may denote, then, these two exercises of mind as reasoning and arguing, or as conscious and unconscious reasoning, or as Implicit Reason and Explicit Reason. And to the latter belong the words, science, method, development, analysis, criticism, proof, system, principles, rules, laws, and others of a like nature.

Newman identified two types of reason: implicit and explicit. Implicit reason is necessary because we must assume something before we can reason at all. Assent to our pre-existent assumptions leads to implicit reasoning, while a search for proof based on external criteria leads to explicit reasoning. To follow explicit reasoning alone denies humanity’s innate underlying impulses and produces naturalism and atheism.

I have been engaged in proving the following points: that the reasonings and opinions which are involved in the act of Faith are latent and implicit; that the mind reflecting on itself is able to bring them out into some definite and methodical form; that Faith, however, is complete without this reflective faculty, which, in matter of fact, often does interfere with it, and must be used cautiously.

Just as faith can be led astray to doubt (as in the case of Peter), reason can bend under the demands of external proof. And yet faith is complete in its sanctity, whereas fideism denies the human dignity of freely seeking and questioning the divine. Thus the “double spiritual need” (Chesterton) and the “twofold order of knowledge” (John Paul II) remain balanced on the scale of Newman’s “Great Object,” ultimate truth.

Now that I have looked at faith-reasoning through the lens of Fides et Ratio (written by a pope), Orthodoxy (written by a Catholic apologist), and a St Peter’s Day sermon (written by an Anglican who became a Catholic Cardinal), you may well be asking the question “so what does this mean for us in the university, and particularly those of us who read this journal but do not share your rather particular religious and philosophical presuppositions? Why should we care about the thoughts of three Catholic intellectuals?”

That, however, is a much larger question, one which Slant intends to address in every issue, and which I hope to tackle head on in a future edition.

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THE THRILL AND THE LOSS

A critique of Lech Majewski’s film
The Mill and The Cross

reviewed by Patrick Harner

The Thrill
Have you ever watched a movie trailer that you could not stop thinking about? Or one that got you viscerally excited about life and art and beauty and everything good in the world that makes you want to write a poem? This was my experience of seeing the trailer for The Mill and the Cross for the first time. I couldn’t stop talking about it with folks, especially my newly married wife. This would be the perfect movie for our date night (or so I thought).

We sat down in the cozy theater that is Amherst Cinema, and we were immediately swept up into Peter Bruegel’s painting The Way to Calvary, which depicts Christ and a slew of people on their way to see his crucifixion. But we don’t just see it; we are in the middle of it. We can see the faces of people and what kinds of feathers they have in their hats. We can see the whites of their eyes. But the painting is not just a painting anymore; we see the horses gently move, the sway of a dress in the wind, and folks shifting their weight from one foot to another. The painting is on the verge of coming to life. My wife and I were
almost breathless being sucked into the world of Breugel and Majewski.

There is one scene in particular that is emblazoned in my mind. Bruegel, wonderfully played by Rutger Hauer, is explaining his thought process of creating this painting to his friend (perhaps commissioner). He sketches out the scene and begins to describe many of the paintings of his time: “In most paintings God is shown parting the clouds looking down on the world in displeasure. In my painting the miller will take his place. He is the great miller of heaven grinding the bread of life and destiny.” And as he says this, our eyes are directed to Christ, the Bread of Life, literally being ground out beneath a heavy cross on his way to a grinding that will take his life. The painting was on the verge of coming to life...

The Loss

And then no one spoke for the next two hours. I could hear Maximus, from Ridley Scott’s Gladiator, shouting in my ears, “Are you not entertained?!”—and I wasn’t. I don’t think it’s unacademic to say that movies should be entertaining. Majewski’s goal is to suck us into the world and story of Brueger and his painting, but he stops at getting us into the world and gives us no story, which is a huge element in making movies entertaining. It would be like going to Harry Potter World without ever having read the books or never hearing anything about J. K. Rowling. Sure, the roller coasters are fun and butter beer is delicious, but did you get to experience the nuances of the relationship between Ron, Harry, and Hermione?

Did you get to see this world she created out of a life filled with hardship and overwhelming love for her children?

We were left with portraits of characters from the colossal painting. But they stayed portraits. We may be got to meet some of the characters, but we didn’t get to sit down and have a long cup of coffee with them. We were given a glimpse of a life here and a peek of a life there. And maybe that was the point, but I don’t think so. If Majewski wanted this thing to come to life, why didn’t he give these characters stories in which we get to see them change, respond to oppression, react to a perfect man about to be crucified? Why did they stay trapped in the 2D world of a painting? The commentary on the painting is excellent by the way, but I could have gone to a museum for that.

While there were many scenes in which my wife and I were caught up in the magic of the movie, we were left sleeping in the second third of the film.

On further reflection...

Then I woke up the next morning. And The Mill and the Cross still lingered in my mind.

I think Majewski was being Bruegel. He was making a faithful interpretation of his painting. One of Bruegel’s meta-themes, if not the meta-theme, is that when earth-shattering events are going on, events that will change everything, no one notices or pays close attention. And perhaps this is what Majewski wanted to let all of us know:
that we are very much 2D people, like everyone in the painting, completely unaware that Christ has just been crucified. And instead of seeing a risen, resurrected Lord, we see the crowd going about their business.

And then they begin dancing. All of them. The dance closely resembles the dance of the drunken man we see in the first third of the film, the man who tries to feel up the plump maiden going about her daily tasks and then starts rocking back and forth singing gibberish. The dance of a fool. It seems in the midst of tyranny and oppression, and in the midst of the most universally important event of all time, we, the common people, are found dancing a fool’s dance, choosing to ignore Christ’s work on the cross and the oppression we live in, or perhaps oblivious to both. 

Patrick runs a personal training business called Full Extent Fitness in Amherst.
Opinion pollsters tell us repeatedly that upward of 90 percent of all Americans believe in God. Of these, more than three-fourths claim that the Bible is “totally accurate in all of its teachings”. You would never guess this, however, from reading academic journals, where the cherished principle for seeking truth has long been sola ratio, reason alone. One result of this academic epistemology been a shift in how western scholars approach the person of Jesus. For many, traditional interpretations of the Gospels no longer seem adequate for accessing the historical Jesus; instead they look to a variety of literary and interpretive methods to reconstruct what really happened. Dale Allison is a highly regarded New Testament scholar and leading authority on the Gospel of Matthew; in his insightful 27-page essay in the recently published Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus, he surveys and analyzes the current state of the field.

Allison takes the reader through a survey of four widely-used criteria that contemporary scholars routinely apply to the Gospels to find out which stories are likely to be true. These four
criteria are: **multiple attestation** (stories that show up in more than one Gospels), **dissimilarity** (a story or saying that does not resemble what we know about Second-Temple Judaism or the early Church, and therefore unlikely to have crept in from another source), **embarrassment** (stories that thwart the Church’s mission or its portrait of Jesus), and **coherence** (lining up the Gospels with external literature, archaeology, and tradition). He then critiques each criterion on its own merits. For instance, regarding the criterion of dissimilarity, he notes, “The result... is a Jesus cut off from both his Jewish predecessors and his Christian followers.” Such a Jesus would have apparently been immune to the influences of his culture, speaking in terms completely alien to them – which would make teaching difficult to say the least.

The survey’s overview of the four criteria is not in itself remarkable: the same ground has been covered elsewhere, and more comprehensively. The real value of the essay is its sustained critique of confirmation biases in the field. Perhaps one of the strongest accusations against evangelical scholarship is that it finds what it wants to find. Skeptics ask how a person with an a priori commitment to Jesus as God and Savior can possibly be “objective.” Allison’s contribution is to expand the range of this criticism and to apply it evenhandedly to scholars who stand, as he himself does, outside the evangelical tradition. He comments, “Our criteria are typically rationalizations we employ to keep a clear conscience as we defend an image of Jesus we had come to believe in before wielding criteria.” In other words, he argues that it is not only Christian scholars who decide who Jesus is before they ever look at the evidence. Furthermore, he points out that it not only believers who employ methods to prove that their a priori picture of Jesus is accurate. Allison’s intellectual honesty allows him to acknowledge this tendency in his own work: “Speaking candidly... my own Jesus was apocalyptic and millenarian by the time I was twenty... The method that I developed later led straight to a Jesus congenial to the judgments of my youth.” This is an important acknowledgment that bias is inherent to the search itself, not necessarily the searcher.

If there is a shortcoming of this essay is Allison’s uncritical postmodernist epistemology – he believes that ultimately all we can know about Jesus is his literary form, what the Church used to assert its power. The real Jesus is forever out of reach. Whether this is right or not is another matter, but if Allison is hoping to help his readers break out of the constraints that hampered textual scholarship throughout modernity, he would do well to discuss how different philosophies have shaped historical research. Regardless, his essay provides a concise and clear-headed introduction to the field of Historical Jesus scholarship, and his frank challenges should be helpful to those on all sides.

Jeff majored in History and Classics at UMass Amherst, and is now doing graduate work at the University of Notre Dame.
The sacramental worldview of Catholicism is defined by a vital paradox: we must seek the God who is beyond the world by seeking Him in the world. The Catholic view of the relationship between grace and nature reflects this paradox; grace perfects nature and allows nature to transcend itself. Christ epitomizes this view, since he maintains a perfect human nature while transcending that nature with miracles that stem from his divinity. We ordinary human beings participate in this paradox by partaking in the extensions of his Incarnation, the seven sacraments. Through the sacraments, grace both heals our nature and allows us to move beyond our nature toward God. Yet our human nature is paradoxically defined by this yearning to move beyond our human nature, as Josef Pieper explains in Leisure: The Basis of Culture:

[M]an, of his very nature, reaches out beyond the sphere of the ‘human,’ touching on the order of pure spirits...[M]an participates in the angelic faculty of non-discursive vision, which is the capacity to apprehend the spiritual in the same manner that our eye apprehends...
light or our ear sound. Our knowledge in fact includes an element of non-activity, or purely receptive vision—though it is certainly not essentially human; it is, rather, the fulfillment of the highest promise in man, and thus, again, truly human (just as Aquinas calls the vita contemplativa ‘non proprie humana sed superhumana,’ not really human but superhuman, although it is the noblest mode of human life).

Because we exist in the liminal space between material and spirit, partaking in both, we require sacraments that address both. The sacramental worldview therefore requires us to move simultaneously through and beyond nature to God.

Complications arise, however, when we focus on the “through” at the expense of the “beyond.” For example, one of our greatest temptations is to idolize our current knowledge and memories instead of moving beyond them to God. After all, it is much easier to view our current knowledge and memories as the ultimate authorities in life instead of seeing them as a limited part of a living tradition that stretches through all time in the Church. So we must try to see our knowledge and memories as gifts from God; as gifts, they reveal God’s love to us, but if we rely solely on them for our joy, then our view of that love becomes stunted by their limitations. The only way to prevent such stunting is to remain receptive to God’s love through constant prayer, charity, and participation in the sacraments. These actions, which the Holy Spirit inspires within us, allow us to lovingly approach the fullness of God’s person instead of stopping at our limited perceptions of Him.

A poignant instance of the tension between “through” and “beyond” is the popular indie song “Casimir Pulaski Day” by Sufjan Stevens. Stevens is adored by the indie music movement, which is often anti-establishment and anti-religious, yet his music honestly handles the grittiness of lived faith. “Casimir Pulaski Day” is the firsthand narration of the death of a loved one within a Christian community. The song shows “all the glory” that God reveals through the beloved while it simultaneously conveys the pain of losing the beloved. The sacramental tension between “through” and “beyond” thereby arises; the speaker loves God through the beloved, so he has difficulty understanding God’s ways when he must pray in the grief beyond her death: “All the glory when He took our place / But He took my shoulders and He shook my face / And He takes and He takes. “ The speaker’s faith is still intact, since he recognizes and celebrates Christ’s sacrifice, but he is confounded by the mystery of loss. Yet this mystery somehow magnifies God’s glory even more: “All the glory when you ran outside / With your shirt tucked in and your shoes untied / And you told me not to follow you.” Even when the beloved

...we must seek the God who is beyond the world by seeking Him in the world.
runs away in sorrow sometime before her death, Christ’s glory is visible to the speaker. Indeed, that is the mystery of the Cross: Christ, the source of all joy, is closest to us when we share in his sorrow.

The song’s ability to illuminate such vital paradoxes stems from its own sacramental quality; it celebrates the beloved and ultimately God through concrete imagery. For example, this is a particularly beautiful image of intimacy: “In the morning, through the window shade / When the light pressed up against your shoulder blade / I could see what you were reading.” Also, the image of a shirt tucked in with shoes untied occurs twice in the song, and it adeptly conveys sorrow by illustrating how life’s order continues after loss, with something always feeling out of place. A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible reality according to Augustine, so a sacramental piece of art hints at God through such concrete imagery. “Casimir Pulaski Day” is explicitly about a sacramental reality: “In the morning when you finally go / And the nurse runs in with her head hung low / And the cardinal hits the window... All the glory that the Lord has made / And the complications when I see His face / In the morning in the window.” When we catch a glimpse of God through this sacramental reality, we experience “complications.” Yet these complications are indications of grace, the hallmark of which is surprise, since they force us to move beyond our pre-established notions of the world and of God. Grace thereby forces us out of our confining spheres of pride and deeper into God’s reality. By cher-

We think that Tristan’s musical tastes will help him connect with high school students in his future vocation as an English teacher.
In 2008, *Twilight* was made into the first of an extremely successful movie franchise, finishing the work of Harry Potter in making children's books acceptable adult reading material on public transportation across the country. And a dystopian novel by a children’s television writer got some young adult librarians and book bloggers talking.

Of course, I totally missed it. I was 22 and living in rural Uganda, where the financial crisis reached us as a murmur and the historical presidential election meant only that lounging bodaboda drivers hollered “Obama!” to any white person who passed their way.

So it was only later, in library school, that I encountered *The Hunger Games*.

*The Hunger Games* introduces a girl, Katniss Everdeen, and her world, Panem, a nation risen from the ashes of the decimated North American continent. Panem is a nation comprised of “a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts.” To fuel its blend of classical Roman and contemporary American excesses, the Capitol keeps its districts trapped in a cycle of poverty, depending on the districts for the raw material of its decadent lifestyle. In punishment for a failed uprising generations ago, the Capitol carries out the Hunger Games each year, in which two children from each district are dropped into an arena and forced to fight to the death.

Perhaps you’ve heard of it. Maybe you’ve heard it’s the next *Twilight*, compulsively readable and propelled by a steamy love triangle (I’d argue it’s not). Or that it’s shockingly violent (I’m afraid this is true). There are arguments about whether it’s too colloquial, inconsistently plotted, flat-out poorly written.

But what I haven’t seen nearly enough of is discussion of how Panem reflects our own world.

Whether we want to admit it or not, you see, the Capitol is us.

We live in a world of prescription eyelash lengtheners, a world in which we eat ourselves morbidly obese, in which our television is littered with violent or ludicrous programs and I, at least, find the news too upsetting to watch.

The week after my husband and I returned from Africa, we got ourselves a dog. Standing in PetSmart that weekend, buying bags of dog food, a leash, a little bed, the power of American dollars to do real good in Uganda still fresh in my mind, I was overcome with guilt and confusion. A few years on, I still haven’t quite worked it out.
The Hunger Games, like any good fiction, helps us see. And what I see, in Katniss's impoverished District 12, are the dark places in our world, the places of suffering, the rampant, careless injustices. In the maimed and injured coal miners who beg on the streets of District 12, I see Festus, the man with his hand held out on the street of our Ugandan village, begging for a few coins. The hungry children working in the orchards of District 11 are the migrant workers across the American South. I almost recognize, from afar, Katniss's neighbors, “[m]en and women with hunched shoulders, swollen knuckles, many who have long stopped trying to scrub the coal dust out of their broken nails, the lines of their sunken faces.” Perhaps you’ve seen them, too.

We don’t want to see it. After all, the indulgences of the Capitol are so exaggerated. Katniss is horrified by the Roman-style vomitorium employed at a Capitol party, and these have yet to gain a new vogue for us. We don’t yet dye our skin, like “the oddly dressed people with bizarre hair and painted faces.” We shudder at the thought of children battling for our entertainment, but adults nightly have their dignity destroyed on reality television.

Collins holds up to us, Slant-style, that truth which must confront us again and again: We, as a people, are as caught up in our own pleasures, as willfully ignorant about how the rest of the world lives, as any citizen of the Capitol.

As Katniss discovers her world, she responds with alternating rage and tenderness. Her Capitol prep team, who gossip about parties as they prepare her for slaughter, are transformed in her eyes into “a trio of oddly colored birds,” caring for her in their own frivolous fashion. She reflects in wonder, “How would I spend the hours I now commit to combing the woods for sustenance if it were all so easy to come by?” When, in the third book, the stakes shift and tables are turned, Katniss, sometimes to her very frustration, shows mercy to those who were prepared to throw her away like last season’s fashion.

Christianity is nowhere in The Hunger Games, and it is everywhere. It is in Peeta, District Twelve’s male tribute, forever too good for Katniss. It is in Katniss’s sacrificial love for her little sister, prompting her to volunteer for the Games in order to save Prim. It is in questions of what is right in war and self-defense.

Katniss may be a prickly protagonist, the sort of “vile sinner” Ross references, but she doesn’t march blindly to her fate at the bidding of “the artificial candy Capitol.” Early on, she discusses the ethics of killing another human being with her hunting partner and best friend Gale.

“Katniss, it’s just hunting. You’re the best hunter I know,” says Gale.
“IT’s not just hunting. They’re armed. They think,” I say.
“So do you. And you’ve had more practice. Real practice,” he says. “You know how to kill.”
“Not people,” I say.
“How different can it be, really?” says Gale grimly.
Even with Katniss’s lousy provincial education, she is thoughtful, with a broader scope than the Capitol citizens, circumscribed in vision by their selfishness. She recognizes with disdain, “Everything is about them, not the dying boys and girls in the arena.” And ultimately, Collins suggests that hardship brings strength; knowing how to survive in a world of privation and scarcity is ultimately an advantage when Katniss faces off against the comparatively privileged Career tributes.

It is not until the trilogy’s finale in *Mockingjay* that we learn the meaning of the name “Panem.” A Capitol citizen explains, hearkening back to Juvenal, the early Imperial Roman poet:

> “It’s a saying from thousands of years ago, written in a language called Latin about a place called Rome,’ he explains. “Panem et Circenses” translates into “Bread and Circuses.” The writer was saying that in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power.”

Juvenal’s warning, applicable to ancient Romans and the future civilizations, is of course meant for us, too. *The Hunger Games* talks to us about how to live in this dichotomous world of privilege and suffering, and warns of the dangers of comfort and self-indulgence. It doesn’t tell us how to vote, or whether I can feed a dog in a world with hungry children, but it challenges us just the same. Katniss moves from rags to riches, and must navigate living in an unjust world in which one has had prosperity dropped in one’s lap.

Collins doesn’t have the answer, and I surely don’t. But her book, and, it is to be hoped, its movie adaptation, force us, at least, to confront the question. 

*Katherine is pursuing an MLS at Simmons/GSLIS West. She kept the dog.*

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**The Hunger Games**  
by Suzanne Collins (2008)  
*Scholastic*, 384 pages, $8.99

**Catching Fire**  
by Suzanne Collins (2009)  
*Scholastic*, 391 pages, $17.99

**Mockingjay**  
by Suzanne Collins (2010)  
*Scholastic*, 390 pages, $17.99
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