

I'm nobody! Who are you?
 Are you - nobody - too?
 Then there's a pair of us!
 Don't tell! They'd advertise - you know!

How dreary - to be - Somebody!
 How public - like a Frog -
 To tell one's name - the livelong - June -
 To an admiring Bog!

-Emily Dickinson

Michelle Gaffner Wood

An Integration Paper: A Journey of Life, Faith, Teaching, Service, and Scholarship

Three years ago I attended a session called “Women in the Profession” at the national conference for the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. Frances Smith Foster, pioneering scholar in the recovery of nineteenth-century texts written by African-Americans, welcomed all of us crowded into the room and then opened the session by reading Emily Dickinson’s poem “I’m nobody! Who are you?” The rich cadence of Foster’s reading made the conference attendees hold our collective breath. I was deeply moved by her heart-felt reading of the poem, and I wondered why Frances Smith Foster might identify—as her reading so clearly suggested—with invisibility. After all, this conference room could not fit one more person into it. The panelists’ names alone drew in the big crowd for this particular session. Foster set aside the poem and explained. She told us her professional story. She recounted how she had begun her career as a middle school teacher, pursued a Ph.D. later in life, only to spend years as an adjunct “living out of her trunk.” When the other panelists, Susan Belasco and Kathleen Blake Yancey, told their stories, they also spoke narratives about the untraditional route they had taken into the academy from their own middle school teaching days. On that cold November day, all three of the panelists articulated their perceptions of an academy that made them feel invisible not only because of their gender but also because of the non-traditional and late entrances they

made into it. At the same time, they encouraged the attendees to keep on pursuing the work we had chosen. We were not alone.

The panelists that day affirmed for me, a forty-something graduate student working on her dissertation, that I had found a professional home. And maybe even more importantly, I walked away encouraged and affirmed that my professional journey has been and will continue to be in God's hands and on His time table. Before I had even attended that memorable and professionally-affirming panel, God had allowed my paths to cross with Dr. Nancy Mack, author, scholar, and teacher, and Dr. Tom Romano, author, distinguished professor, and nationally acclaimed scholar and practitioner in Language Arts. Both of these scholar-teachers had begun Ph.D. work after successful teaching careers in middle school and high school respectively. Tom and I became friends, and he told me not only his story of leaving his family in Ohio after seventeen years of high school teaching to pursue a Ph.D. at a school on the East coast, but also how he dropped out of the degree program in his first attempt. He encouraged me that it was never too late to begin a Ph.D. program if scholarship was what I wanted to pursue. In the first few years of my Ph.D. program, emails with the sender name TOM ROMANO would pop into my inbox encouraging me to keep going.

Since then and as a member of the Catharine Maria Sedgwick Society, I have met Lucinda Damon-Bach, scholar-author-teacher, and former high school English teacher; Melissa Homestead, scholar-author-teacher, co-editor for the recovered edition of Sedgwick's 1830 novel *Clarence*, former lawyer who decided that the law was not for her; and Susan Roberson, scholar-author-dean. God has used these three scholars in particular to remind me that one can be a productive scholar, teacher, and writer no matter what her age is. Further, God has used these women who are actively working in my chosen field of study as examples to remind me that I

might have something not only to offer to Cedarville University in the future, but also that He might be enlarging the vineyard in which He would like for me to work as an active participant in a burgeoning, interesting, and meaningful field of study.

Of course the women and men with whom I work in the English, Literature, and Modern Languages department at Cedarville University can tell their own inspiring stories about how God has led them on some untraditional paths as they labored in his vineyard before they came to Cedarville University and then took up the task of laboring in the vineyard here at Cedarville, for some, later in life. All these scholars have encouraged me to value the untraditional journey and to prepare myself to make a positive difference both at the university and within the larger, scholarly community that I now call home.

In 2005, I wrote an integration paper for my first of two non-tenure track reviews here at Cedarville University. Even though the Vice President for Academics at the time accepted that paper, I have decided to rewrite most of the paper in order to account for how my Ph.D. work in Literature and Criticism, with a specialty area in nineteenth-century American Literature, has helped me consider anew how my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and my Redeemer as well as my conviction about the inerrancy of God's inspired Word inform my scholarship and my teaching. At the same time that this paper is an academic, researched-based Integration paper required for Cedarville University's tenure-review process, it feels to me a little bit like a memoir, too, because the paper recounts in many ways my journey of faith and teaching. For me, the two have been inextricably connected.

THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING—A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

For the first few years I taught at Cedarville I “stressed” about the fact that I might not be integrating faith and learning the “correct” way. Even though I had not read, because it had not yet been published, David Dockery’s *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education*, I fully assented with the idea “that the integration of faith and learning is the essence of authentic Christian higher education and should be wholeheartedly implemented across the campus and across the curriculum” (4). I also took (and still take) very seriously what Dockery indicates is an ongoing intellectual commitment “to think carefully and intentionally about the importance of integration faith and learning” in creating course syllabi, structuring course lectures, and crafting discussion questions (8). I think the reason that integration seemed so overwhelming to me was because I had a faulty premise about what integration meant. The “integration of faith and learning” implied to me that the two entities—faith and learning—were separate, and that I as the classroom professor needed to bring these unfriendly rivals together and to make them comfortable with each other, even to the point of friendship.

A few years ago and as a result of reading Scripture and thinkers such as Leland Ryken, I realized that for me, a Christ-follower, that faith and learning had never been two separate entities. I realized that I had been interpreting the phrase “the integration of faith and learning” incorrectly. I didn’t need to bring peace between the two as if they were two unruly children in the back seat of a very small car on a cross-country trip, rather I realized that my faith had always been my motivation for learning and for teaching and that I didn’t need to collapse a binary, ie., “integrate,” as much as I needed to articulate how my faith in One True God and the Incarnate Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit God has given to indwell me has always informed my reading, my writing, and my teaching.

When I was six years old, I asked Jesus Christ to forgive my sins and to be my Savior so that I could become His Child. At that time, He gave me a new heart and a new mind. I didn't realize it then or even until much later, but when God gave me the Holy Spirit as the down payment for my redemption, the Holy Spirit transformed and continues to transform my mind (Eph. 1:13-14; *New American Standard Bible*). Romans 12: 2 reminds me that I must also continue to seek transformation "by the renewing of [my] mind, so that [I] may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." In light of integration, this means that at the same time the Holy Spirit and Scripture already integrate my faith and learning in light of the fact that I have a new mind, I must always be pursuing a faith that keeps on transforming my mind. In fact, the Greek verb "transformed" means "to keep on being transformed" and that this "being transformed" is an attitude and an action that is ongoing. Because I desire to renew my mind in order to "prove what the will of God is," I see my faith and learning journey to be already connected. Colossians 3: 1-2 also indicate that one who has decided to follow Jesus Christ should "set [her] mind on the things above." Understanding an active pursuit of transforming my mind and setting my mind on things above has freed me from the misunderstanding that I have to reconcile faith and learning. In my work now, I try to articulate how a transformed mind informs the questions I ask and the conclusions I draw. Of course, my faith in God for my eternal salvation and for His daily renewing of my mind is based on my belief about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, creation, humankind, and how I can seek to understand truth.

The triune God has always existed. God existed before creation and Jesus Christ existed with Him in fellowship (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-2). After Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven after his death and literal and bodily resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit to his followers in order to

empower them to complete the tasks He asked them to do. He still empowers His children with the Holy Spirit, “who is given as a pledge of our inheritance” (Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4; Eph. 1:14). Because I affirm that the Bible is infallible, I trust what it says about the fact that God has always existed and that He is the creator and sustainer of all things. II Timothy 3:16 and 17 affirm that Scripture is “inspired by God,” and II Peter 1: 19-21 explain how the Holy Spirit “moved” people to write the words of God. Of course, arguing for the existence of God based on a God-breathed scripture seems like circular reasoning. Al Monroe, retired Cedarville University social science professor, argues that people with depraved, finite minds cannot really think beyond circular reasoning without making some assumptions about people and God. He argues that a person will either begin with “God and end with God-interpreted facts or begin with man and end with man-interpreted facts” (2). Monroe suggests that both Christ-following thinkers and secular thinkers cannot escape circular reasoning. The most important issue is the circle in which one places herself. The person who presupposes that God has the answers for life and godliness will reason from God to truth and knowledge and end up back to God. The person who presupposes that humans have the answers for life and morality will reason from humans to truth and knowledge and end up back to humans (2). When I argue that God exists because the Bible says so, and then go on to say that the Bible is true because God inspired it, I am reasoning from the perspective that God is the beginning and the end of knowledge.

I also trust the witnesses. John, a historical person and one of the apostles of Jesus Christ affirms, “[w]hat was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you

also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I John 1:1-3). John’s reference to “from the beginning” hearkens back to what he wrote in the Gospel of John chapter 1 verse 1 when he verifies God always existed and that Jesus Christ is in fact God in the flesh. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The reader knows that John has heard, seen, and touched the Incarnate God—Emmanuel—and that John is proclaiming to us the message that the manifest God gave to John and to the original followers. John emphasizes the reality of the presence of Jesus Christ with him by referencing hearing twice, seeing six times, and physical touch once. I get the feeling John knows Him, and I trust his eyewitness account.

The reason I need to listen to John’s message and his eyewitness account is because I need the eternal life and the resulting “fellowship...with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” because as a result of Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God I was not only born with a sin nature but also born separated from God and the just deserver of His wrath (I John 1:3). In six literal, 24-hour days, the triune God created the heavens and the earth, and God called the creation “good” (Gen. 1: 1-31). God created people in His image and appointed “them [to] rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth” (Gen. 1:26). According to John Silvius, retired Professor of Biology from Cedarville University, “ruling the earth” (Gen. 1:26); “subduing” the earth (Gen. 1:28); and “cultivating and keeping it” suggest the idea of stewardship and a “steward who loves the Creator (John 1:1-3) [and] Sustainer (Colossians 1:17)” (par.7). But Genesis three reveals that Adam and Eve believed Satan’s lies when he undermined God’s plan, God’s words, and God’s infallibility. They disobeyed God and as consequence, sin has corrupted people and the earth God created. Sin corrupted the relationship between God and people; it corrupted the relationships among people;

and it corrupted the steward relationship between people and the earth (Gen. 3: 7-19). The original stewards were not faithful, and the result is not only corruption but also eternal separation from God and eternal damnation for all those who live after Adam and Eve (Rom. 5: 12-14).

God consoled Adam and Eve with a promise—the promise of a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15). Not only does the fallen steward love the Creator and the Sustainer, but also the faithful steward now loves the Redeemer (Silvius, par. 7). Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, came to the sin-cursed earth in order to take God’s wrath on Himself so that those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ can have restored fellowship with God during this life and during the life to come in a literal new heaven and new earth (John 3:14-17; John 10:30; Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 5: 6-11; Phil. 2: 6-9; Rom. 10:9; Rom. 10:14; Rev. 21-22). As humanity’s substitute, Jesus Christ took the wrath of God on Himself, perfect and sinless, when He died on a Roman cross in willing obedience to the Father and at the time the Father ordained (Phil. 2:6-8; John 17:1; John 18-19). Jesus Christ did not remain dead. As prophesized, God raised Jesus Christ from the dead three Jewish days after his death, and because He lives he has become the “first-fruits” of the redemption and as a result I can place my faith in Him to redeem my future and to resurrect my body from the grave, and I can also place my faith in Him now to redeem my mind, my relationships, and my stewardship of the world in which He has placed me (Matthew 28; Luke 24; John 20; I Cor. 15: 1-8, 12-28; Phil. 2:9-11; I Thes. 4:14-18; Rev. 1:15).

THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING—MY ROLE IN AND COMMITMENT TO CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

As a follower of Christ, I want to be a faithful steward whose love for the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Redeemer inform the work that He has prepared for me to do for His glory (I Cor. 15:58; Eph. 2:10; Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22). In God's sovereignty, I have been trying to practice faithful stewardship in the work God has asked me to perform at Cedarville during the past twenty years. Dockery argues that the starting point of the integration of faith and learning is "the Great Commandment...to love God with our hearts, our minds, our souls and to love others completely" (8). At Cedarville, I have been able to articulate the connection between the knowledge and truth God has allowed me to learn from the disciplines of writing and literature with a mind that God renews and transforms each day. Dockery explains that "[t]o love God with our minds means that we think differently about the way we live and love, the way we worship and serve, the way we work to earn our livelihood, the way we learn and teach" (9). When I pursue truth in my discipline, my love for God informs my quest for knowledge and my pedagogy.

In *All Truth is God's Truth*, Arthur Holmes of Wheaton College defines truth as "unchanging and universal" (32). According to Holmes, truth begins with God and is absolute as God is absolute. While truth begins with God and is inherent in His character, Holmes argues "truth is inherently personal" for created beings (34). The implication is that a thinker can trust God and can know truth from God for herself. Holmes demonstrates that while the idea of absolute truth in Scripture may be in noun form, Scripture reflects a person's pursuit of knowledge in verb form. Holmes explains that biblical writers use the verbs, *ginosko* and *epiginosko*, for *knowing* that suggest an action (36). Truth does not just descend upon the thinker, but the thinker must pursue truth by pursuing knowledge. Holmes argues that since God created people as rational beings, "we have a capacity for knowing. Nor is this capacity destroyed by

human sin, for it depends on God more than on us: so Paul declares that men can know something of truth without being personally truthful (Rom. 1:19-25)” (35). Truth and knowledge are slightly different concepts then. Truth is found in God and is absolute, yet a person with God’s help may increase her knowledge about God’s truth through Scripture and through the world around her in general revelation.¹ I think that is the crux of the integration of faith and learning. Scholars pursue knowledge within the discipline in which God has placed them and in that pursuit of knowledge in a particular field along with consistent Bible study, prayer, and the active pursuit of renewing of the mind, scholars learn truths about God and His plans for his followers in a variety of unique ways. It is this process that is the integration of faith and learning.

THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING—THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SCRIPTURE/SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES AND MY DISCIPLINE, SPECIFICALLY THEORIZING SPACE IN LITERARY TEXTS

One of the reasons I wanted to write a mostly new integration paper was to explain how my study of Literary Theory during my Ph.D. program gave me a better understanding of how God’s plan for His followers while they are still living here on the earth is truly radical. The theoretical approach I chose to inform my reading of nineteenth-century women’s writing for my dissertation was spatial theory, or at least, I theorized space based on the work of philosophers, geographers, and literary critics.

The intersection of geography, philosophy, and literary studies has interested literary scholars for the past few years. In his translator’s preface to Bertrand Westphal’s *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, Robert Tally Jr. contends that “[i]n recent years, *space*—along with

such related concepts or practices as spatiality, mapping, topography, deterritorialization, and so forth—has become a key term for literary and cultural studies” (ix). One reason for this theoretical phenomenon might be that spatial theory allows scholars to connect the material and the ideological. Another reason that spatial philosophies present such fertile theoretical ground to literary scholars and why some have taken what Barney Warf and Santa Arias describe as a “spatial turn” (qtd. in Tally 171) is because texts as physical objects play an important part in either reifying spatial ideologies and social relationships or critiquing and resisting them.² In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre connects space and social relationships when he reasons that “social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no existence save in and through space. *Their underpinning is spatial*” (404, italics in the original). The idea that all relationships are constructed and exist within a social space is another reason why literary scholars find spatial studies intriguing because spatial studies provide the theoretical language scholars can use to talk about a variety of oppressive social relationships that occur in social spaces. That is, social relations exist within physical places, but those social relationships are the result of the ideologies that construct both the physical realm and the social relationships that occur within physical places. According to Lefebvre, three elements construct all social spaces. A **dominant ideology** informs both how a **physical space** is arranged and the subsequent **social relationships** that take place in that physical space (38-40). A typical classroom in Tyler at Cedarville University exemplifies a social space. The room itself is arranged with desks facing the front of the room. Students sit in the seats and the professor stands and lectures. The dominant ideology represented in the room is that education is the result of one person talking and twenty others listening and maybe or maybe not taking notes. The ideology and the physical footprint of the room indicate and dictate a hierarchal relationship between the professor and the students.

Lefebvre contends that there are many different kinds of social spaces, but he is particularly interested in solving what he sees to be the problem of western social spaces. He argues that nineteenth-century dominant ideologies in the western hemisphere created social spaces that have validated sameness and at the same time have marginalized difference and creativity (52). Gillian Rose adds another concern that troubles some geographers about space. She argues that space can be especially painful for women and for people of color who feel as if they do not fit in because they are aware of their being constantly watched and judged (145, 150). Sara Ahmed also argues that people of color are often so unwelcome in some spaces that their bodies are literally “stopped” from moving through physical spaces by those who have more power than they do (159, 161). What Lefebvre ultimately argues for in *The Production of Space* is the complete revolution and transformation of what he calls “abstract” space (harmful because it produces homogeneity) into “differential” space in which people can live together in unity and at the same time be different from one another and accepted (52).

Philosophers and geographers are not the only ones who are interested in social spaces. At the same time that God has a plan for time, He also has a redemptive plan for social space that His followers can experience at this moment on earth. This redemptive plan for social space is the church. What spatial studies has allowed me to see is that the church God designed is a radical space and a spatial prototype for what so many secular scholars desire. The church’s dominant ideology is love. The church unifies. The church values and in fact survives and grows because of difference. Christ loved the church and “gave Himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). In Christ Jesus, we who “formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ” (Eph. 2:13). Jesus Christ not only reconciles us to God, but He reconciles us to other people who follow Him while we are still on earth. Christ removes the barriers between people

and unites them together. Even though people are different from each other—Gentiles or Jews—they become unified because of Jesus Christ who “is our peace” (Eph. 2:13). He is our peace because He “made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity” (Eph. 2:14b-16). Jesus Christ creates a third space within Himself where people can exist and experience peace. Ephesians describes this space of peace and unity as “in Himself” and as “a body.” The passage also uses a third metaphor of a physical building to represent this space constructed from love and organized so that there is peace among the inhabitants. Emphasizing again how people who are different come together, Paul writes, “[s]o then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and are of God’s household, and having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the Cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22). Our peace in Jesus Christ takes away boundaries between each other and creates a new space of unity. Ephesians describes the church as “one new man,” “one body,” “one Spirit,” and “God’s household.” These descriptions exemplify the radical space that many secular spatial scholars seek.

I Corinthians 12 further develops the metaphor of the church as a body to emphasize that not only do people in the church have different backgrounds but also that those same people who are now unified in the Spirit have a variety of God-given gifts that each is supposed to use “so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one

another” (I Cor. 12:25). The metaphor of the church as a body indicates that members are not marginalized or oppressed, and it also emphasizes that everyone contributes to the body whose head is Christ. The idea that we would use our gifts in order to “care for one another” represents a radical space, one that spatial theorists and many nineteenth-century writers would like to create. At the same time that theorizing social spaces helps me to analyze nineteenth-century ideologies and their influences on nineteenth-century physical places and social relationships, my work in literary theory and my faith indicate to me the radical ways in which the church is supposed to redeem space now.

Another reason I am interested in spatial studies and reading texts from a spatial perspective is that I am also interested in theorizing movements—physical, rhetorical, metaphorical—that people represent/make in texts in order to influence the ideologies and the construction of physical spaces and social relationships. According to Lefebvre, movement initiates changes in social spaces and often times that movement begins within the artistic sphere (383, 395, 349). What I call *volitional movements*, as opposed to enforced moves such as Native American removals and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, can bring about powerful changes, and texts that illustrate the *volitional movements* of the narrators and/or the characters symbolize how movements transform the narrators/characters and the social space itself.

The connection between willful movements, social space, and personal and spatial transformation is also represented throughout the Bible. The New Testament and the Old Testament use the images of walking and following to indicate a radical life practice that will in fact change us and the world around us. In the New Testament, the way that Christ’s followers continue within the ideology of love is to “walk in love” (Eph. 5:2). The Bible also indicates that our walk is our choice to live in obedience to God and to His word. Ephesians 5:15 warns, “be

careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise....” By choosing to obey God in our walk, we strengthen the bond of unity with each other in the church (Phil. 2: 1-16).

In the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament, God talks with Israel through the prophet Jeremiah. The nation had forsaken the Lord and it was not sorry about forsaking Him (Jer. 2). The Lord characterized the nation’s betrayal as a willful movement away from Him. He asks, “What injustice did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me and walked after emptiness and became empty?” (Jer. 2:5). Along with the people, the prophets also willfully walked away from God. “[T]he prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things that did not profit” (Jer. 2:8). Israel refused to repent. The Lord tells them to “[s]tand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls but they said, ‘We will not walk in it’” (Jer. 6:16). The book of Jeremiah characterizes obedience to God as “walk[ing] in all the way I command you . . . but [Israel] walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward” (Jer. 7:23-24). Israel’s decision to walk away from God along with their refusal to repent had physical consequences for their nation. If the nation would have walked after God, their willful movement would have influenced the nation itself. In Jeremiah 7: 5-7, God promises, “For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.” Israel chose not to “walk after” God, and ultimately God destroyed the space of the nation when the Israelites were carried into captivity.

Of course, after seventy years, God returned a remnant of the captives to the land. Much later, He gathered the nation back together in 1947, and He will ultimately establish new literal, physical social spaces—a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem—from which Jesus Christ will rule and reign. The Bible indicates that both willful movement and social spaces are important. This suggests to me that Christian scholars need also be concerned with social spaces and the ways in which Christ-followers engage not only in the critique of spaces that oppress people who are in a variety of ways described as “different” but also in the construction of spaces that reflect biblical ideologies of both love and justice.

THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING—THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG FAITH, PRACTICE, LIFESTYLE, AND PEDAGOGY

In the Survey of American Literature course, my students and I analyze texts writers wrote on the North American continent between around 1650 and 1900. In our study, I emphasize the fact that colonial and nineteenth-century texts represent, among other things, the quests to create social spaces and the conflicts over ideologies, physical places, and social relationships that ensue as a result of humanly-constructed social spaces. Many North American writers represent the land as a new Eden, suggesting that many white writers hoped to create a new utopian social space outside of a corrupted Europe and what they considered to be a satanic African continent. We study how texts represent and respond to the spatial ideologies that construct physical spaces and social relationships in North America. During the first unit in the course, we study colonial texts. I introduce students to Early Modern ideologies, and we analyze how writers such as Anne Bradstreet and Mary Rowlandson negotiate their identities both as women writers and colonists removed from the European metropolis. We have talked about how

Bradstreet's "Contemplations" contemplates both time and space and how the poem indicates that even within the context of the Puritan project to establish a community upon the foundations of "grace," "justice," and "love"--what John Winthrop calls "a city upon a hill"—on the North American continent, human beings cannot establish a new Eden or a perfect social space on earth.³ The critical issue is the depravity of the human heart and that issue remains constant no matter the space humans try to construct on earth.

A study of American literature is really a study of the conflict of ideologies and the struggle for dominance. The students and I analyze the ideological conflict that Rowlandson represents in an original genre and structure most often attributed to Rowlandson—the captivity narrative. *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, together with the faithfulness of His promises displayed; being a narrative of the captivity and restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* indicates that Rowlandson must defend her own spiritual identity to a metropolis that has constructed her as a potentially degenerate person based solely on the physical space she occupies and her project to write about it. At the same time, the text indicates how Rowlandson negotiates physical and ideological boundaries in her captivity and return home. The contest over space, even after the integration of Native Americans and Europeans at Lancaster, indicates not only how physical places influence our identity but also the fact that humans again fail to bridge the divide and come together within the bond of peace.

When we study the eighteenth-century, I spend several days helping the students to read Benjamin Franklin in order to help us consider how Enlightenment ideologies influenced colonial social spaces. We discuss that even though many North Americans confuse Franklin's aphorisms with the Bible, the aphorisms themselves convey an ideology that indicate that an ordinary person can be his or her own moral arbiter. The aphorisms also suggest that a person

can determine a morality that benefits himself or herself. At the same time, the aphorisms in Franklin's almanacs (1733, 1734, 1738, 1739) and "The Way to Wealth" (1758) suggest that a person's morality does not begin with a heart change that will fit the person for heaven, rather the person's morality intertwines with how the person appears and fits him or her, instead, for earth.

In our study of the nineteenth-century, we analyze how texts represent the young Americans' obsession with constructing space. Of the many nineteenth-century spatial ideologies I might mention, I choose to focus our attention on the ideologies of new nationalism, disestablishmentarianism, reform, manifest destiny, and modernity in the second thematic unit in the course. Based on Toni Morrison's observations on early nineteenth-century American literature in *Playing in the Dark*, we analyze how texts such as Bryant's "The Prairies" convey both the hope and the unease white writers felt as a result of the project of constructing social spaces that excluded, enslaved, and exterminated many. In a third unit, we analyze the secular nineteenth-century ideologies of home, propagated and reified by Catharine Beecher and later by her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, in order to establish a place from which white, upper-middle class women might have some power and become "ministers of the home" so that they might influence the state.⁴ In *American Domesticity*, Kathleen McHugh argues that domesticity discourses, whose intent was to empower white women during the time when they were becoming systematically disenfranchised state by state between 1787 and 1840, intended that white women might have some sociopolitical importance and influence the state by bringing the world into the home (39). Our study of the nineteenth-century includes the study of the ideological construction of national/home spaces as well as personal home spaces, and we analyze how writers either help to construct or resist dominant nineteenth-century ideologies of

domestic spaces. At the same time we note how the texts indicate that nineteenth-century humanly-constructed national and personal domestic spaces exclude many and likewise fail to bring peace and unity.

In “Song of Myself” Walt Whitman comes closer than many other nineteenth-century-writers to an ideology of a biblical social space in which the dominant ideology of love creates a space in which diverse people become unified in the bond of peace when he imagines American democracy as “the self [as] the social.”⁵ Yet even though he has hope for the American community, unlike Irving, Emerson, and Thoreau, he like the aforementioned contemporaries imagines the space of nation in terms of the individual and his solitary work as a redeemer-poet. In the course American Women Writers, we examine how many women writers were “writing community” at the same time that their nineteenth-century male counterparts were disparaging and running away from community spaces that even early on in the American experiment already demonstrated the flawed construction of human social spaces. The course is designed to introduce students to nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century writers whom literary scholars overlooked during the formation of the American literary canon in American universities during the 1920s, 1930s, and the 1940s. In the 1980s, American literary scholars began to “recover” and teach texts that earlier literary scholars had ignored. Many of the ignored texts had been written by women or by people of color. Current scholars suggest that these texts were not originally included into an American literary canon because early scholars constructed “standards” that did not apply to ignored texts; scholars dismissed texts that emphasized community and empathy; and scholars disdained texts that reflected religious ideologies.⁶

The first time I taught the American Women Writers course in 2015, the students and I analyzed how Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* (1827), Caroline Kirkland’s *A New*

Home, Who'll Follow? (1839), selected *Clovernook* sketches (1852, 1853) written by Alice Cary, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), and Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892) both represented and influenced small and large-scale community formation. We also began work on a recovery project of our own—the journals of Martha McMillan (1867-1913)—for which the Centennial Library has constructed a digital commons site. In the course, thematically entitled “Writing Community,” we consider how women writers illustrate community building that emphasizes connection and empathy. We also discuss and correct traditional literary definitions of the term “sentimental.” Though disparaged by some in literary studies, the term and texts it represents means a text that is about empathy and connection. We evaluate how texts that promote empathy and connection might help us to contemplate how we might be involved even now in constructing social spaces based on love that reflect empathy and connection. In this course, we see how literature, according to Ryken, “performs a threefold function: it presents human experience for contemplation, it offers an interpretation of that experience, and it presents form/technique/beauty for a reader's enjoyment. It is a time-honored axiom that literature is both useful and delightful” (23). This course allows students to read texts that help them contemplate what a meaningful community might look like, and it introduces students to aesthetically good and pleasing literature that is both “useful and delightful.”

Not only do the texts we read help us to contemplate community, but also they help us to consider the significance of the ordinary life. Another reason some texts written by women have been disparaged in literary studies is because many times those texts represent the “hidden” activities of daily life—the mundane. The McMillan journals represent over ten-thousand pages of an ordinary life. But what students can contemplate as a result of reading these texts is the significance of the daily, mundane, ordinary life. The Christian life consists of daily dying to

self, of daily bearing one another's burdens, of daily kindness and forgiveness. The life of faith consists and exists within the daily and the mundane. When we read previously-recovered literary texts together with Martha McMillan's life-writing, we have begun to see how significant the ordinary life is and how God can transform the mundane into the spectacular. In this course, we study how women forged empathetic bonds to create communities and how their ordinary work, and specifically Martha's life of faith, can indelibly mark a community.

The English Grammar course is a course when at first glance one might not see the spectacular in the mundane, but a study of the history of the alphabet makes it clear that God's intervention in the written word is nothing less than miraculous. When I first began teaching the English Grammar course, I consciously tried to integrate faith and learning by emphasizing that God desires to communicate to human beings and that after the fall only human beings retained the ability to communicate with each other and with God through oral language. Further, I reminded students that John 1:1 represents Jesus Christ as the Word and that the Word represents the idea that the Logos or the truth of God was made manifest in human flesh. As a result of reading Walter J. Ong's book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, I realized that the incarnation of the Word in approximately 2 BC symbolizes both God's divine orchestration for the Word to inhabit physical space as the incarnate God as well as God's divine orchestration for the written word to inhabit the page in written language. In the essay "Thinking Christianly About Literature, Leland Ryken argues that Christ-following scholars respect literature because first and foremost "[l]iterature consists of words," and he makes the case that Christians value written texts because God has conveyed His love to us in a written text (24). He explains that "when Christians talk about literature, it would be easy to get the impression that literature consists of ideas," but Ryken reminds readers "[a] proper respect for language is a

prerequisite to producing and understanding literature. Christianity itself pushes us toward such a respect because it is revealed religion whose authoritative truths are written in a book” (24).

While this is true, grammarians and linguists might be interested to see how God’s fingerprints are all over the transition between orality as the primary form of communication between God and people as evidenced in the garden of Eden and the written word inhabiting physical space and symbolized by Jesus Christ’s advent in John 1:1.

Grammarians and linguists value the text and desire to explain how words that symbolize oral sounds first came to occupy space and then how the written words occupy physical space in order to convey meaning in different ways and in different times. Ong explains this transition from orality to written language when he describes the alphabet’s origin. He cites the fact that the Hebrews invented the alphabet that the rest of the world has used in one form or another since 1500 BC. He explains, “[t]he most remarkable fact about the alphabet no doubt is that it was invented only once. It was worked up by a Semitic people or Semitic peoples around the year 1500 BC, in the same general geographic area where the first of all scripts appeared, the cuneiform, but two millennia later than the cuneiform . . . [e]very alphabet in the world—Hebrew, Ugaritic, Greek, Roman, Cyrillic, Arabic, Tamil, Malayalam, Korean—derives in one way or another from the original Semitic development . . . (88). This fact suggests to me that God’s fingerprints are on the written word since his chosen people—the Jews—invented the alphabet through which God would eventually convey His truth to the world. God inspired people to write in Hebrew what we now know as the Old Testament. Ong also relates that at the same time that the Semitic alphabet was of radical importance for written communication, “. . . the Greeks did something of major psychological importance when they developed the first alphabet complete with vowels” (89). He adds that “[t]he Greek alphabet was democratizing in

the sense that it was easy for everyone to learn. It was also internationalizing in that it provided a way of processing even foreign tongues” (89). It seems as if the Greek New Testament specifically represents God’s intervention in the process of moving oral language into a written text so that His message might be made known to all people. Ong concludes that “[t]he phonetic alphabet invented by the ancient Semites and perfected by ancient Greeks, is by far the most adaptable of all writing systems, in reducing sound to visible form” (90). A scholar who has trusted Jesus Christ as her Savior and who also understands God’s sovereignty in the world realizes after reading Ong’s explanation of the linguistic transformation of orality to the written word God’s perfect plan to use the written word to tell the world about His Son, the Living Word. Near the same time that “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14), the written word had been developed and democratized so that the whole earth might read and understand how “the Word” had come to “save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

Understanding God’s intervention and invention of the written word helps grammar students to understand first that written language is dynamic and not static and second that the form and function of words and the ways in which words combine to create meaningful syntax is important to God and important to the mission of proclaiming the Incarnate Word to the world.

In the English Grammar class, students learn how to analyze the syntax of the English sentence. In Composition, students learn how to use words and sentences in order to more clearly communicate meaningful truths. Annie Dillard tells the following story: “A well-known writer got collared by a university student who asked, ‘Do you think I could be a writer?’ ‘Well,’ the writer said, ‘I don’t know . . . Do you like sentences?’” (58). I love this story because it exemplifies the main concern of composition—the sentence. Composition is the study of how to

use the words that God has given us to produce meaningful syntax, voice, and communication. Of all the courses I teach, Composition is the most difficult because in general students resist the course because they think that they already write well and that they do not need to learn anything more about writing. Most students are offended, and some angered, by constructive feedback about their writing. Since I have taught this course every semester/quarter since I began at Cedarville in 1995, excepting a parental leave in 2005 and a sabbatical in 2012, I have endeavored to try to find ways to make the course at least palatable and engaging in order to introduce students to the kind of writing that academic discourse requires.

Just this past semester, I revised the Composition course once again to try to help students perceive the relevance of the course. I constructed the course on the foundational question—“What does it mean to be human?” I hoped the course would help the students begin to answer that question for themselves as we considered together through discussion and writing how God intended us to live together in community as human beings made in His image. I wanted my students to discover what Caroline Weber so poignantly describes in her memoir, *Surprised by Oxford*. She writes that as a result of her undergraduate English major, “I began to understand my own spot of existence in relation to the history of ideas. I began to see, both scarily and comfortingly, that all I thought had been thought before. I began to see how studying the humanities illuminates *humanitas* or “what it means to be human.” What it means to become human. The decisions and the responsibilities of becoming truly humane” (21, italics in the original). Although the majority of students in the composition class are not pursuing an English major, all of the students participate and construct communities, whether they realize it or not, and further the students who profess faith in Jesus Christ are part of the church and responsible to become “truly humane” within the contexts of the local and the universal church.

In order to facilitate discussion and writing instruction, I organized the course around four question groups. First, what is justice? Second, what is kindness/compassion? Third, what is pain/grief? Fourth, what is work/leisure? Students discussed these seven concepts during the course of the semester in class. During the justice discussions in response to Plato's *Republic*, students wondered whether or not justice was relevant to New Testament believers. Many thought justice an Old Testament concept that God replaced with mercy in the New Testament. We discussed what Micah 6:8 might look like now in a community of believers. After reading Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych" and Alice Cary's "Uncle Christopher's" students discussed why kindness and compassion are so difficult both to give and to receive. After reading C.S. Lewis's *The Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed*, we discussed how "a loving God" might be a concept about which we might be misinformed and that God's love ultimately conforms us to His image, and many times that conforming process comes as a result of pain or grief. This past semester we read sections of one of Leland Ryken's books entitled *Work and Leisure in Christian Perspective*, and the students discussed how work and leisure might glorify God and how often times people pervert both work and leisure. During the semester, students learned how to craft sentences and paragraphs that might help them express these abstract concepts in concrete ways so that they might enter a significant and ongoing conversation about what it means to be human. Building from Helena Sullivan's "Spoiling the Egyptians: An Introduction to *Resuscitating Paideia*" in which she argues that "reading literature enlarges human sympathy and revolutionizes human character" (1), I hoped to introduce my students to conversations about the Christian life and Christian character that might not only be relevant to them but also revolutionary for their thinking, their writing, and their lives. Ultimately the class

asked us all to consider how we live within the social space of the church and if in fact we “have the same care for one another” (I Cor. 12:25).

AN ORDINARY STEWARD’S JOURNEY

Even though God has led me on an untraditional road to tenure-track, He has asked me to be a steward faithful to the everyday work He has asked me to do at Cedarville University. He has asked me “to love through what I love” (Weber 42). While my work has been many times ordinary and at times (grading composition papers) mundane, God has made clear to me that my continued efforts to articulate a vision of faith and learning with my students “is not in vain in the Lord.” “Therefore, [I will remain] steadfast, immovable [in the sense of a staying faith], always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that [my] toil is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58). I will be faithful in the ordinary; I will trust for the spectacular.

Notes

1. The preceding paragraph is taken from Michelle Wood's 2005 Integration paper that the 2005 VPA approved as a part of the first non-tenure track review. This paragraph is from the "Epistemology" section of that paper. The first paragraph on page 6 in which I use Allen Monroe as a source is also from my 2005 paper. See also Dockery page 12.
2. The first part of the paragraph is from Michelle Wood's dissertation, *Moving Toward Critical Counter-Spaces: Volitional Movements in American Women's Writing, 1839-1900*.
3. See John Winthrop's speech, "A Model of Christian Charity," pages 92 and 101.
4. See Catharine Beecher's *Treatise on Domestic Economy*. See also Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* for their explanation of "the family state" and "woman [as] its chief minister" (24).
5. See Stephen J. Mack's article "A Theory of Organic Democracy" in *A Companion to Walt Whitman*, pages 136-150.
6. See Nina Baym's "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors." See also Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs* and Joyce Warren's Introduction to *The (Other) American Traditions*. For a discussion about how nineteenth-century women's writing actually fits "traditional" criteria for "good" literature, see Josephine Donovan's "Women's Masterpieces."

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