

INTRODUCTION

Connections

THIS BOOK BEGAN as a debate—a playful debate about whether Calvin College should host a conference or write a book about academically based service-learning. A number of us had participated in a faculty development workshop on the “scholarship of engagement” (Boyer 1996) to consider creative ways to connect teaching, scholarship, and service.

We all came from different starting points. Some of us had begun to explore the ways academically based service-learning could transform a class. Some of us were interested in exploring how our research could become more community based and collaborative. Others wanted to connect what they were doing in the classroom in academically based service-learning to larger conversations in their disciplines about the engagement of the academy in pressing contemporary issues.

At Calvin, we had seen rapid growth in academically based service-learning in recent years, and we were receiving many inquiries about our program from other universities and colleges—particularly faith-based colleges. We began to wonder how to meet the need to explain what we do to a larger audience. Thus, the playful debate—should we host a conference? Should we write a book? Do we have something to contribute to the public discourse about how higher education *connects* to contemporary civic, social, economic, and moral problems? More particularly, could our faith-based perspective add to the growing literature about service-learning in a way that has been largely absent to this point?

Our experience has shown us that service-learning can be a bridge that connects faculty and students in concrete ways to issues and problems faced by people who, like us, struggle to make sense of their life experiences. Service-learning connects head and hand and heart in immediate and lasting ways. Service-learning connects theory with action, action with emotion, and emotion with theory. Service-learning connects teaching and scholarship and service, leading faculty to lives of greater integrity and purpose. Service-learning connects college and community as college and community members develop working partnerships to address real human problems. Service-learning connects current school experiences to future lives of purpose and commitment.

All of these connections have been examined and celebrated in an extensive literature on the purposes, logistics, and outcomes of service-learning. This book is about yet another level of connection—the connection between service-learning and lives of faith. It is our thesis that service-learning, as articulated and practiced by the authors of this book, works as the connecting link between the mission of a college to equip students “for lives of Christian service” and the actual skills, virtues, knowledge, and passion needed for those lives. Additionally service-learning can function for faculty as a significant connection between scholarship and service, leading the college into a renewed, wholistic relationship with its various communities.

An Introduction to Service-Learning

Service-learning as a term was first coined in the late 1960s to describe the efforts to link educational goals for students with their active participation in the local community. The term reflects the desire of educators to move students beyond “doing good” toward a richer understanding of themselves, their communities, and academic course content. Robert Sigmon, an early service-learning pioneer, describes the purpose of service-learning as “the linking of service with learning to create a congruent service ethic throughout the campus culture and within the curriculum” (Sigmon 1994, 1).

Service-learning prospered in the 1990s as colleges and universities searched for ways to equip students to meet the expanding social needs in their communities and in the world. The popularity of the service-learning movement in the 1990s also dovetailed with an exploding interest in the ways in which colleges build character. This movement has focused on citizenship

development—a model that emphasizes active learning in and with the community. Current examinations of service-learning explore the impact of service-learning on students, faculty, and the communities where service-learning is practiced.

The current volume joins this examination of service-learning but with a distinctly Christian voice. We have asked practitioners of service-learning at Calvin College, a Christian liberal arts college in the Reformed Protestant tradition, to present their experiences with and analyses of service-learning. These authors do not simply describe their attempts to incorporate service-learning, they use the tools of a variety of disciplines to articulate both the reasons for and the impact of service-learning in the college curriculum.

We believe there are challenges in this volume for both Christian and public institutions of higher education. The Christian higher-education community too often thinks of service as charity and needs the focus of justice and active citizenship that is provided in the larger service-learning movement. Within the Christian community, service-learning is about more than educating students for active citizenship; it is about preparing students to live a life of faith and modeling reciprocity between college and community. For public colleges and universities, this book asserts that service-learning, motivated by faith, contributes to the common good and is an important resource within the public square. It demonstrates that the critical thinking, empathic capacity, and passion for justice that arise from service-learning are central to a life of faith—not contrary to it.

Much of the contemporary service-learning movement has religious roots. Stanton, Giles, and Cruz (1999) compiled the stories of the pioneers of the service-learning movement and noted that several of these pioneers described their roots in a faith tradition. The authors note three characteristics that motivated these pioneers. The first was

a drive to be of service, whether that service meant helping those in need or changing society, which was nurtured by parental and community role models, challenging friends and mentors, and a turbulent society struggling with the demons of war, racism, and poverty.

The second was

a critical, questioning stance toward life, society, and its institutions, a stance nurtured as well by the social, spiritual, and political movements of the time.

The third was

an impulse to connect thinking with action or vice versa—to bring about “useful” education or more thoughtful service (Stanton, Giles, and Cruz, 1999, 50).

Many of the heroes described by these service-learning pioneers, activists such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Luther King Jr., lived lives of sacrificial service grounded in a deep understanding of the demands of a religious vision of the world.

A Context for Faith-Based Service-Learning

Faith-based service-learning exists at the crossroads of several important contemporary conversations: conversations about the role of faith in the public square, about the role of higher education in the development of communities, about the role of education in moral and civic development of students, and about the integrity and spirituality of teaching and learning.

Faith in the Public Square

A lively intellectual conversation surrounds the role of faith in sustaining civil life. Can people of faith contribute to civic discourse on important social, economic, and political issues? Does service offered in the name of faith necessarily mask the hidden agenda of religious conversion? Can strong religious convictions coexist and make space for pluralistic discourse? For many observers of the American political scene, a discussion of the role of religion in public life conjures up images of the political involvement of the religious right, the intolerance of religious agendas, and the mission to save souls at the expense of bodies and civility. The more recent academic conversations about the role of religion in the public square, however, are more hopeful and more nuanced.

The debate over the role of faith in the public square is not just an ivory-tower exercise because political parties and state agencies make platforms and decide funding contracts in relation to faith-based organizations. The 2000 presidential campaign included conversations about Charitable Choice, a provision of welfare-reform legislation that prohibits discrimination against

religious service providers in the awarding of government service contracts. The recent initiative by the Bush administration to implement Charitable Choice through the establishment of a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has the potential to contribute to American communities through the generation of *institutional* social capital (in addition to physical and financial capital). Part of the impetus for this legislation is the realization that religious social-service agencies and their holistic service provision have been effective in meeting many social needs. This legislation recognizes that service providers cannot just leave their religious convictions and commitments at the door, and that, in fact, religious commitments may strengthen the service that is provided by the agency. Charitable Choice allows state and local governments to work more closely with faith-based groups that help the poor and provides strong protections for the religious freedom of clients who are receiving services from faith-based organizations. Controversy about Charitable Choice legislation is raging, and the role of faith-based institutions is being scrutinized and argued in the public square as never before. Because of the implementation of Charitable Choice legislation, hundreds of religiously based social service organizations are finding enhanced funding for the work that they do, and government agencies are finding new and valuable allies to provide social services.

Central to the argument that supports the role of faith in sustaining civic life is the conviction that both the values of religious people and the structure of religious institutions are good for community life (e.g., Smidt, forthcoming). Andrew Greeley, for example, calls religion a “powerful and enduring source of social capital in this country, and indeed of social capital that has socially and ethically desirable effects” (Greeley 1997, 592-93). Religion, he argues, is not only a source of social bonds and volunteerism within religious institutions but a significant source and motivator of service *outside* of the religious sector. Religious social capital alone cannot generate a renewal of trust, but it is a source that must not be ignored. Richard Wood (1997) describes the success of church-based organizing in the central city when most other organizing efforts had failed, and he concludes that it is the presence not only of trust and respect but also of broad social networks in religious institutions that contribute to the success of these efforts.

If faith-based agencies and faith-filled citizens are assets to the public square, then it makes sense to look more closely at the faith-based institutions of

higher education that are preparing future citizens for an active role in the public square. Is there a particular role for faith-based *institutions* of higher education to play in shaping public discourse about the need for societal transformation?

Role of Higher Education in the Development of Communities

Although much of the service-learning literature focuses on its effects on higher education, a growing emphasis within the movement is a focus the role that universities play in their communities. Bringle, Games, and Malloy (1999), for example, argue that universities and colleges are abdicating their moral obligations unless they bring their teaching, scholarship, and service to bear on pressing community needs. “Public and private colleges and universities have been subjected to a steady stream of criticism throughout the 1990s, both for a lack of research that addresses our major environmental, economic, and social problems and for a failure to prepare graduates fully to meet the challenges of socially responsible citizenship” (Reardon 1998, 57).

The establishment of ongoing partnerships between the university and the community is one way in which educational institutions have attempted to enrich students’ educational experiences and encourage faculty to conduct research relevant to the community. Community residents are not enthusiastic about being treated merely as “subjects to be studied” because, in the past, university research into the causes of social problems often failed to address potential solutions. An emerging research paradigm, participatory action research, seeks to enhance the problem-solving capacities of community participants by actively involving residents, business leaders, and elected officials in every phase of the research. Ernest Boyer, former president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, stated that in order for higher education to advance intellectual and civic progress in this country, the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems (Boyer 1996, 11). He calls for higher education to broaden the scope of scholarship to include the scholarship of engagement so that the rich resources of the university or college will be connected to addressing societal problems.

In the present volume, Gail Gunst Heffner argues that faith-based colleges often have religious perspectives and convictions that lead them to engage with the local community in ways that can build social capital. Christian colleges

have a unique contribution to make because of the religious social capital they can draw upon and simultaneously build. This is accomplished in two ways: first, by strengthening the bonds of mutual trust that exist between the faith-based college and the existing denominational or parachurch social-service agencies, and second, by connecting people, who did not previously know each other, to work together on issues of common concern. Heffner describes the work of Calvin College in developing academically based service-learning as a serious attempt among faculty and students to learn *with* the community, *through* the community, and *from* the community, not merely *in* the community. It is important for the Christian college to build relationships beyond denominational and cultural lines while maintaining its own unique sense of vision.

Faculty and students in psychology often experience a tension between their training in empirical research methods and their personal concerns with forming helping relationships. Glenn D. Weaver describes a collaborative approach to research, which brings students, professor, and family members of Alzheimer's dementia patients together as an investigative team to explore the dimensions of change that Alzheimer's patients experience over the course of the illness. Through in-depth interviews, family members describe their loved one's experience of change over time. These interviews have brought family members into a process of collaboration through critiquing specific interview questions and through raising new questions to be considered. Their comments have enabled the researchers to refine and change the research question(s) as the researchers' understanding grew of the larger contexts of meaning as expressed by family members closest to the Alzheimer's patients. There are several ways this collaborative research effort exemplifies academically based service-learning. As a serious initial attempt to investigate a set of issues not previously addressed in empirical studies, the major objective of the interview project has been to develop new knowledge, not only for the student service-giver but also for professor, family members, care facilities, and, as the program matures, eventually for the larger professional community through publication. The findings are generating considerable helpful local knowledge that allows families to learn from one another's experiences and suggests ways in which both families and institutional staff can be more sensitive to considering patients' spiritual needs. The research project has given the professor (and the students) opportunities to develop a variety of research skills in addressing

challenging empirical questions for which no single method of investigation has been widely established and to be of service to a larger community simultaneously.

The Nursing Department was one of the first departments at Calvin College to recognize the value of establishing a community partnership to undergird the academic work it was doing with students while at the same time moving beyond merely using the community as a laboratory. Gail Landheer Zandee describes her experience of using service-learning as an opportunity to teach students how to be community advocates by modeling this in the development of clinical experiences. The goal is to teach students “the value of involving the communities in improving the community’s health [but] we don’t always model it in how our clinical experiences are arranged” (Bellack 1998, 99). Zandee’s chapter describes how service-learning partnerships have the ability to demonstrate to students the essential elements of health promotion. Partnering with Catherine’s Care Center, a neighborhood health clinic, Zandee has been able to draw upon community resources to help her teach her students that to be an effective community health nurse, they must learn to truly listen and collaborate with community members. Instead of teaching nursing students that they need to rescue a hurting community, students need to recognize that the community is an expert that needs to be listened to and respected as a partner in the process of moving to a higher level of wellness. Partnerships take time to develop—for trust to deepen, for reciprocity to happen, and for sustainability to be achieved. Then when real partnerships develop, there is mutual benefit for the community and for the college.

Listening to community voices as an initial step in community development is echoed in the chapter by Daniel R. Miller. He argues that the study of history can go beyond the transmission of cognitive knowledge to provide students with an empathetic understanding of the people and groups they study. Miller’s motivation is drawn from the Old Testament when God called the Israelites to show hospitality to the aliens who came to reside among them, since they too, were once strangers in the land (Deut. 10:19). In his chapter, Miller describes several examples of how academically based service-learning builds the capacity for empathy among students by their involvement with diverse peoples. Several departmental undertakings have managed to combine methodological training and cross-cultural experience and have afforded students the opportunity to form relationships with people whose

ethnicity, religion, and historical experiences differ from that of most Calvin students. In particular, Miller has integrated a service-learning assignment in his Latin American history course as a concrete way to understand U.S. immigration. Miller contends that whatever opinions students form about Mexican immigration or any other issue involving Latin Americans, they should be shaped at least in part by personal contact with the people most directly involved. By listening to and preserving stories of immigration and survival, the students helped give voice to a marginalized community. The gift of these stories to the Grand Rapids Museum allowed community members to value their own stories as an important contribution to the larger community.

Service-learning does not automatically produce improved conditions for those in need. When not carefully monitored and evaluated, service-learning can fail to address real community need, and, instead, it merely creates a charity mentality in the service providers. Kurt Ver Beek issues a strong word of caution in his chapter on international service-learning. Many service-learning experiences that seek to “serve” the poor neither understand nor address their true problems and consequently provide service and learning that is mediocre at best. Students and professors intrude into poor people’s lives, often trying to fix problems they do not understand. The service learners end up thinking better of themselves, worse of the poor, and become too busy doing to take full advantage of learning opportunities. Ver Beek argues that this so-called service without understanding does not empower the poor nor build up their capacity. It is often neither equitable nor sustainable. Christian colleges and universities have a particular responsibility to learn more before they seek to intervene in the lives of the poor; and a solid understanding of what development means is essential. Ver Beek suggests that development is about people, not about factories, computers, tractors, or money. True development is about transforming people, empowering them to change their own future, to make a better tomorrow for their children. Thus, true service-learning is about development and must focus on solving core community problems. Ver Beek asserts that until service-learning takes true development seriously, the service they provide will be of little or no benefit to the poor, and the learning they acquire will be mediocre at best.

Role of Higher Education in the Moral and Civic Development of Students

If faith-based colleges and universities have a particular contribution to make to public discourse and civic engagement at the community level, then we must also look more closely at the kinds of faith-based education we provide to future citizens of this public square. How is this education best accomplished? What are the skills, virtues, and knowledge needed by our students? What pedagogy works toward the development of these virtues? These questions are at the heart of the third area of active conversation relevant to a consideration of faith-based service-learning. Writing in *The Journal of College and Character*, Thomas Erlich of the Carnegie Foundation summarizes the convictions of many educators when he says,

We believe that higher education must aspire to foster both moral and civic maturity and must confront educationally the many links between them. . . . Institutions of higher education have the opportunity and obligation to cultivate in their graduates an appreciation for the responsibilities and rewards of civic engagement, as well as to foster the capacities necessary for thoughtful participation in public discourse and effective participation in social enterprises (Erlich 2001, 2).

What is the best way to build character in college? Erlich describes both the central skills, knowledge, and virtues associated with character development and the need for active pedagogies that “engage students in the practice of grappling with tough moral and civic issues, as well as examining them in theory” (Erlich 2001, 6). He highlights service-learning as a pedagogy that has demonstrated effects on students.

In this present volume, John E. Hare argues that higher education can play a role in the moral development of students and that service-learning in particular can significantly contribute to moral growth in students. He cautions against expecting this contribution to carry too much weight, however. Service-learning can produce *an occasion* for the acquisition of virtue but cannot produce the virtue itself. He argues that students have been sitting in classrooms for fifteen years, and they inevitably go into various modes of engagement and disengagement reserved only for the classroom. This is a kind of habitual screen. What service-learning does is enable students to get past the screen, at least briefly, and it confronts them with an opportunity to engage in a different kind

of task. They have to interact socially with a group of people they tend to dismiss, and this enables them to do ethical thinking on the other side of the screen.

Developing a capacity for increased empathy is a significant contribution to the moral development of students (and faculty). As Robert J. Hubbard outlines in this volume, current trends in performance-studies emphasize cross-cultural communication and performance as a tool in the creation of empathy. Hubbard describes the use of academically based service-learning in the performance-studies classroom as a way to engage with the community in an honoring way while building empathy in the lives of students. Students collect oral histories from community members, translate their stories into monologues and perform their stories in a community setting. The concept of performing as a sign of tribute or as a living offering dates back to the very origins of art. Sometimes students become uncomfortable when collecting oral histories that express less than rosy portraits or troubling revelations from their interviewees. Through this experience, however, students gain a richer, more complex understanding that far surpasses simplistic, idealized, and one-dimensional views that students often carry into the project.

Recent Calvin College graduate, Laura Hoeksema Cebulski, articulates the impact that service-learning has had on her education and on her life. In this chapter, Cebulski describes the dilemmas she has faced and the lessons she has learned in her various service-learning experiences. Her words are testimony to the power service-learning can have.

A college that places emphasis on service takes the training of the mind and synthesizes it with training of the heart. Not emotionalism, devoid of reason, but rather thoughtful, meaningful, useful compassion to the community it resides within. This intersection of mind and heart is what I found in my service-learning experiences. Never did I find service experiences to mock my intellectual pursuits; rather they complemented my study with a good dose of reality, with a good dose of heart. It is a worthy goal of any college to produce graduates who cannot only think well, but also love well.

Michelle R. Loyd-Paige describes the impact that academically based service-learning has had in her sociology courses on diversity and inequality in North America. She has found that the religious and ethnic backgrounds of students are often associated with distancing behaviors and the “color blind

syndrome.” When students articulate that “I don’t see color, I only see people,” a statement often made in an attempt to be sensitive and inoffensive, in reality they are dismissing the social significance of race in American society. However, merely creating *awareness* of problems—inequalities, exploitations, the suffering of others—can lead to despair if it is not combined with action that empowers students to bring about social change. In this chapter, Loyd-Paige describes the transformative process of change she undertook with this class over a number of semesters. In the beginning, pedagogically the class was lecture based, had no experiential piece and asked questions, but provided few answers. This strategy was intended to support critical thinking but had the latent effect of leaving the students without a context for viewing themselves as agents of change. To remedy this, a theme of biblical reconciliation was added in conjunction with a service-learning component. The goal was to help students move from an attitude of tolerance of diversity to active engagement in bringing about reconciliation through healed relationships. Service-learning helped students to experience first-hand both the simplicity of reconciliation (it is centered in relationships) and the complexity of reconciliation (it is a process that demands time and is not always rewarding).

Creating some level of disequilibrium within students can be the spark to challenge them to consider alternative perspectives on the world. Susan Schneider Hasseler argues that prospective teachers come to teacher-education programs with many strongly held beliefs about teaching and learning based on their own prior experiences as students in K-12 classrooms, and many of them have limited experience with issues surrounding poverty. These circumstances make it difficult for students to grasp the complexities of most urban school settings and can cause them to form conclusions about students and parents that are misguided and hurtful. Education professors have a particular responsibility for creating learning environments for education majors that will help students understand the complex contexts that impact teaching and learning and to develop the commitment and skills needed to understand and change the societal structures that so powerfully impact schools. In this chapter, Hasseler offers suggestions for constructing powerful service-learning experiences for teacher-education students.

Service-learning can provide opportunities for students to explore potential career paths and practice skills that are critical for success in a chosen field. Randall Brouwer describes how service-learning in a first-year engineering

course provides the opportunity for students to plan and implement a design project that can meet the genuine needs of disabled persons in the community. Community members contribute ideas about devices they would find useful, and students go through the entire design process to develop an actual prototype. Students learn something about what an engineer might do on a day-to-day basis and learn how engineers solve problems—from the point of defining the problem to the implemented solution. A student thus gains experience in working as a member of a design team that may prove to be valuable for the future. Equally important is the experience of interacting with and learning from community members. These various experiences contribute to the development of the skills, virtues, and knowledge needed by our students to become effective servants in the world.

The Heart of Faculty Development

A final area of contemporary conversation that provides context for this book is the focus on the spirituality and integrity of higher-education faculty members. Recent literature points not only to the profound impact service-learning is having on the lives of students but also to its transformative power in the lives of many faculty.

Academic service learning . . . can contribute to the renewal of the love of teaching that draws so many into higher education in the first place. Many faculty wanted, and still want, to have teaching and learning make a difference—for students, for themselves, and ultimately, for the world. Service learning not only makes that desire real again but also offers a way of affecting it. Second, because service learning crosses so many boundaries, it offers new opportunities to think more consciously and more creatively about relationships, including those of faculty and student, disciplinary and interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary knowledge, campus and community. Third, because service learning is an evolving field, those who enter it have the opportunity to contribute to its development. Fourth, because service-learning calls for a link between what goes on in the classroom and what goes on in a community, it offers a vehicle to faculty, students, and community partners for thinking and responding in new, collaborative ways to the critical issues that confront our local and global worlds (Weigart 1998, 9).

In his address to an audience of service-learning practitioners, Parker Palmer highlighted the ability of service-learning to unite the varied interests of college faculty. When a faculty member cares about a community issue, chooses to make that community issue a target of his or her scholarship, and joins with students to form genuine partnerships with community members, then wholeness and integrity are the result (Palmer 1998).

Others have written about the intersection of service, spirituality, and the teaching vocation. *Trying the Ties that Bind*, a recently published book by Michigan Campus Compact, is a collection of memoirs by faculty who have struggled to make connections—at many levels. The struggle cuts “across themes of teaching, faith, vocation, and community-building” (Cooper 2000). Faculty members in Christian higher education long for these connections as well.

One of the connections that is often missing in higher education is a connection to a specific place and people. Janel M. Curry calls for a deepened understanding of our sense of place as an antidote to the rootlessness that professors (and students) often experience.

In higher education, we work at challenging students to see issues in a framework that goes beyond the limitations of their parochial, or locally based, experiences—college is meant to be a broadening experience. In so doing, we often miss the sense of rootedness and commitment that can develop from making connections to a specific place. When we deepen our understanding of the places where we live, we gain a greater understanding of who we are, of the intricacies of our place, and of our responsibilities. Then we may in turn have the skills to learn to appreciate and care for other places. The Calvin Environmental Assessment Program (CEAP) is a service-learning initiative primarily in the natural sciences, which seeks to develop a habit of stewardship based on attentiveness to place. Faculty dedicate regular lab sessions or course projects to collecting data that contribute to an overall assessment of the environment of the campus and surrounding areas. CEAP is increasing our understanding of what it means to be embedded in a natural and social system and how this knowledge can be put to the service of the campus and the larger community. As Curry articulates in her chapter, CEAP is informed by recent debates in care theory and in the philosophy of science over the particularity versus the universality of knowledge—exemplifying the science of local knowledge and the importance of the embeddedness of knowledge in

relationships and real-life settings. CEAP has provided a basis for getting faculty involved in community issues, based on their expertise, and it has served as a way to bring diverse people together. CEAP has contributed to the development of faculty through an increase in cross-disciplinary interaction; the creation of a point of engagement with the college planning process; a growing connection between person and place; and a sense of the wholeness of research, teaching, and personal commitments.

Service-learning provides opportunities for faculty members to become re-energized about their teaching. Mary Ann Walters, winner of the Calvin Exemplary Teaching Award, describes how service-learning in her freshmen composition course has influenced not just her students but also her teaching. Pairing her students with residents in a nearby retirement home, the students interview and build relationships with senior partners who share the stories of their lives. All of the writings that the students do in this course revolve around the relationships they build with their senior partners. The final paper is a life review of the senior partner, which is then presented as a gift at the end of the semester. Many of the senior partners are models of faith, patience, endurance, and generosity. Walters argues that it is one thing to lecture about these virtues. It is much more persuasive to be with someone who embodies them.

Steven Vander Veen describes his work in service-learning as pursuing a call to be an agent of renewal in the context of small-business development. Vander Veen directs the Calvin Small Business Institute, which strives to develop individual and communal gifts for leadership and service in business. It seeks to give students the knowledge, skills, and values to make a difference in the world of marketing and business.

Our volume would not be complete without some history of the institutional support we have received all along the way as academically based service-learning has developed. Rhonda Berg describes the accomplishments and the stumbling blocks, the small steps and the turning points, that have led Calvin College to becoming a leader in service-learning among Christian colleges in the United States. This chapter may be of particular interest to those wanting to understand how to institutionalize service-learning so that it becomes a sustainable and lasting contributor in fulfilling their college or university's mission.

The Calling of the Christian College

Nicholas Wolterstorff, in an influential article, “The Mission of the Christian College at the End of the Twentieth Century,” argues that

people have come to see that scholarship itself is conducted out of differing perspectives and that the integration of faith and learning which beckons us does not consist in tying together two things independently acquired but consists of practicing scholarship in Christian perspective . . . rather, competent scholarship is seen to be a pluralistic enterprise . . . the calling of the Christian scholar is to practice scholarship in Christian perspective and to penetrate to the roots of that scholarship with which she finds herself in disagreement—along the way appropriating whatever she finds of use (1983, 15).

Wolterstorff continues,

the Christian college cannot neglect the suffering of humanity. It cannot neglect the suffering produced by alienation from God, and it cannot neglect the suffering produced by the natural world. But also it cannot neglect the suffering produced by the social world. It cannot burrow into culture while neglecting society. . . . To act responsibly in reforming society, one must know the structure and dynamics of that society (17).

He argues that the Christian college must enter into a new stage, not losing the contributions of earlier stages in Christian higher education (which focused on piety and evangelism, and the contributions of culture) but moving to a new focus on society—on the Christian *in* society. Wolterstorff articulated three particular challenges for Christian colleges at this historical crossroads:

1. A Christian college must become “much more international in its concerns and consciousness . . . American influence spreads throughout the world—sometimes for good, sometimes for ill; and in turn, our society here is profoundly influenced by what happens across the globe” (17).
2. A Christian college must “explore new ways of packaging the learning it presents to students. When our concern is simply to appropriate the stream of culture, then the relevant packages are available and familiar: physics, literary criticism, music theory, economics, etc. But when our

concern is to equip our students to reform society, then we walk in uncharted terrain” (17).

3. A Christian college must “be far more concerned than ever before with building bridges from theory to practice. Throwing some abstract political science at the student along with some abstract economics and sociology will not do the trick. The goal is not just to understand the world but to change it. The goal is not just to impart to the student a Christian world-and-life-view—it is to equip and motivate students for a Christian way of being and acting in the world” (17).

The authors of this volume contend that academically based service-learning is one way to meet this challenge to explore new ways of packaging the learning so that students are equipped to reform society and are motivated for the task of being, and living as Christians in the world.

We cannot dictate to students exactly how to live and be in the world, but we offer them opportunities to explore the world, to probe, to ask hard questions, to interact face to face with people whose life experience has been different from most of our students. We offer them opportunities to see how theories are actualized in practice and of how practice is informed by theory. Steven Garber, in his book *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, raises an important question. “How do students learn to connect presuppositions with practice—belief *about* the world with life *in* the world—in the most personal areas and the most public arenas?” Garber argues, “True education is always about learning to connect knowing with doing, belief with behavior; and yet that connection is incredibly difficult to make in the modern university” (1997, 43). It is precisely this sort of connection that service-learning helps to facilitate.

The Calvin authors of the chapters that follow find inspiration for, and articulation of, their teaching aims in the larger mission statement of Calvin College. Put most simply, Calvin College exists to “train young people, by means of a liberal arts curriculum and according to the Reformed tradition, for a life of Christian service in any vocation.” So service *and* learning are at the heart of the college’s mission—learning *for* the purpose of service. Calvin is a confessional Christian college, with living commitments to a particular religious tradition. Central to this tradition is the conviction that God created this world, its institutions, and its peoples for joy and delight, for shalom (Plantinga 1997). We do God’s work when we delight in the world, study its intricacies, and use

our creative gifts. But the world is not what God intended: human rebellion has corrupted both the natural world and the social world. People live with suffering, injustice, pollution, illness, war—a distinct lack of shalom. Our central task as a college is to equip students to do God’s reconciling, restorative work with people, societies, and the natural world.

All of our learning, and all of our service, is undergirded by the theology of the Reformed branch of historic Christianity. This Reformed tradition brings at least five historical strengths to Calvin College’s enactment of service-learning.

A Holistic Theology

The theology that finds expression in both the mission of Calvin College and the service work of its students and faculty is characterized by a holistic understanding of human personhood and a complex grasp of both individual and structural patterns of injustice. This service is done humbly in the name of Christ but must be based on a sophisticated understanding of persons and institutions. This service must minister to bodies and minds, individuals and structures, and the living and the nonliving worlds. “Saving souls” is not more noble than saving jobs or saving lakes: all are restoring what God intended in creation. Feeding minds and feeding bodies are essential but so is the study of food systems and political inequities. Artistic and creative pursuits, economic and academic work, all can be the work of service if they are done for the glory of God and the restoration of the human community. Our new core curriculum statement says it this way: “In the Reformed tradition, the life of Christian service is not limited just to the church and its missions, it is found in every vocation where God’s creative and redemptive purposes are pursued” (Calvin College 1999, 2). This holistic concept of service mandates high-level academic work.

An Emphasis on Learning

How is learning necessary as a grounding for service? If service is so important to the Christian life, why not just stop paying tuition, move out of the dorm and into the central city, and free up professor and staff to bring cups of cold water

to the thirsty world? The answers to these questions give power to Calvin College's mission as a liberal arts institution.

Since Tertullian asked his famous question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" the worlds of higher education and the church have been constructed as being in conflict with one another. But, of course, this has been a simplistic and misguided view. Much of the impetus for scientific discovery, philosophical inquiry, and artistic expression was found through a religious view of the world. Intellectual forebears of Calvin College such as Augustine in the Patristic era, John Calvin in the time of the Reformation, and Abraham Kuyper in late nineteenth century Europe all saw intellectual work as a central task of the Christian community. The bedrock belief that faith, learning, and service are central to each other forms the foundation for most Christian colleges. The Dean of the Chapel at Calvin writes:

I believe we could summarize our calling in Christian college education as follows: in an academic setting, with the peculiar tools, perspectives, and resources of academe, we have to equip ourselves with the knowledge, the skills, and the attitudes that can be thrown into the struggle for shalom, the battle for universal wholeness and delight. The calling is exceedingly broad. We must never narrow it down to personal piety. But our role in the calling at this place is particularly academic" (Plantinga 1997).

Christian colleges stand as testimonies to the conviction that learning itself is an act of Christian obedience and a preparation for work in the world.

A Tempered Transformational Vision

The college trains in doctrine and faith by engaging the world, by educating Christians beyond simple belief to effective belief, by equipping Christians to transform the world in their individual areas of calling (Van Harn 1996, x).

Transforming the world is not a small task, and yet it is at the heart of the educational mission of many Christian colleges. This "transformational mission" is the direct result of a belief that education is not a morally neutral task but exists for the purpose of witnessing to God's purposes for the creation. But the Reformed tradition is permeated with an awareness of human weakness, weakness that can be found in both the servers and the served. It is this awareness of personal and institutional limitation that tempers our

“transformational vision.” Calvin’s mission statement puts it this way: “We are called to correct the exploitation and oppression of people, to alleviate pain in the world, and expunge evil from ourselves.” And our core statement echoes this need to know ourselves and our weaknesses: “Thus Christians learn to shun what is evil and to cling to what is good. In so doing, however, they also learn how often good and evil are twisted around each other, so that each seems to grow out of the other, generating the great ironies and mysteries that fill the history of our world. They learn how often we deceive ourselves about where real good and evil lie, and how such deception dulls and distorts our grasp of reality” (Calvin College 1999, 2).

A Legacy of Service

It is not difficult to make the case for the role of service in a life of faith. The biblical injunction to “let justice roll down like water and mercy like an ever rolling stream” (Amos 5:24) has been a rallying cry for service in the Judeo-Christian tradition since its very beginning. Our heritage of faith shares this mandate and embodies it through both individual lives of service and a rich legacy of service-oriented institutions. In the Grand Rapids metropolitan area, where our college is located, a large proportion of the nonprofit agencies were begun by religious organizations or with religious motivations to help the poor, cure the sick, or integrate the marginalized. The Reformed communities of which we are a part have national and international agencies that not only provide immediate relief, but work on long-term developmental projects throughout the world. Many of these institutions are more than one hundred years old. A large percentage of Calvin alumni find their life’s work in nonprofit service agencies, and many more devote extensive vocational time to volunteerism in their communities. Our legacy of service can be found in the long history of the volunteer and service-learning movement at Calvin, a history that is recounted in the chapter by Berg in this volume.

Genuine Partnership

The conviction that all people are created in the image of God demands that we always take others seriously. We can never do service to another, but rather, we

participate with the other in a partnership designed to mirror, in a very small way, God's intention for shalom in this world. Both the server and the served have inherent dignity, voice, and power, which must be respected and enhanced. The desire to see others as whole persons, the awareness of personal and institutional weakness, and the eagerness for learning and grace give us the motivation for developing genuine partnership with others. Because the Reformed tradition emphasizes the goodness of creation and created institutions, we can look for movements toward justice and peace wherever they are found and join hands with others in those movements.

Service and Other Christian Colleges

All Christian colleges are not alike, and differences in educational philosophy, faculty, and curriculum can be seen that are related to the theological commitments of each college. Most Christian colleges have a legacy of service and see education for service in the world as central to their educational mission. We have described some of the strengths of the Reformed perspective; other traditions bring different strengths to their understanding of and motivation for service in the world. Some traditions, for example, bring a strong emphasis on the role of service in developing or demonstrating virtue and personal piety. Other groups have had a particularly strong prophetic voice in the world with service as the enactment of that voice. Still other traditions focus on the experiential nature of theological understanding and stress the need for multiple voices for an inclusive theology. Yet other groups emphasize Christ's identification with the poor and our need to imitate that identification in our Christian lives. All of these traditions offer powerful, faith-filled motives for service, and all of them can enliven our understanding of the practice of service-learning. The chapters in this volume represent the reflections of one community of Christian scholar-teacher-servants. We invite faculty in other institutions, especially faculty with the rich resources of a theological tradition, to work out the implications of their faith for their own work as scholars, teachers, and servants.

Calvin College, the home institution of the authors of this book, has recently adopted a new core curriculum. The "Statement of Purpose" begins with these words—words that are also a fitting beginning for this book:

Of the several formulations of educational mission to be found in Calvin's Expanded Statement of Mission, none is more succinct or more precise than the following: "Calvin College seeks to engage in vigorous liberal arts education that promotes live of Christian service" (Van Harn 1996, 33). The distinctive feature of this mission is not vigorous liberal arts education, for hundreds of institutions of higher education across the North American continent are engaged in that very project. Nor is it to be found in the promotion of lives of service; for many schools are likewise engaged. Rather, it is the combination of these two elements under the heading of "Christian" (Calvin College 1999, 1).

Service, learning, and faith—this book is about the intersection of these three central elements of Christian higher education. Literally hundreds of books have been written about the ways that any two of the three concepts interact: i.e., how service and learning come together, how learning and faith are related, and how faith and service intersect and enrich each other. This book, however, combines all three concepts in what the authors believe is a natural alliance among three rich veins of treasure for the committed life.

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