

The Fifth City: Toward a Post-Enlightenment Seminary

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Note: This paper is my personal contribution to the conversation regarding how we should be preparing people for the Christian ministry. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the board, faculty, or administration of the Institute of Lutheran Theology.

Since 2000 North American seminaries of all descriptions have experienced a decline in enrollment, especially in the Master of Divinity program, the standard preparation for ordained ministry.¹ Many seminaries have tried to “fix” the problem by adjusting their curricula to appeal to more people. But the “fixes” usually mean dumbing down the curriculum and watering down its biblical and confessional integrity. In the long run, the seminary loses its educational integrity, its identity and mission, and the loyalty of its constituents.

Rather than rushing to seek fixes, I propose that we rethink theological education from the beginning. The current crisis in the church and in society requires that we step back and critique the models for theological education we have inherited from the past. But undertaking such a critique requires that we rethink how we can attain a critical stance at all—and so we find ourselves, along with our whole age, confronting the failure of the Enlightenment project.

The question, then, is: How to find our way forward to a *post-Enlightenment* seminary? This question is not just the concern of a few specialists within the church—theology professors, denominational officials, and the like. It is actually the most important question anyone could ask. It is the question of how the gospel of God’s new kingdom is to be proclaimed in a post-Enlightenment age. And, as a consequence, it is the question of how we are to build up a culture in the midst of the post-Enlightenment nihilistic anti-culture, how we are to shape *this* world as we await God’s new world.

In what follows, I suggest a new kind of theological education that could prepare people to address these momentous questions. This new approach draws on the deep roots of the Lutheran theological tradition to propose a way forward that neither withdraws from the world nor compromises with it, but engages with it to proclaim the God who has fully come into it and to embrace the worldly and creaturely life God intends for us. It proposes a way forward that is neither an attempt to retreat into a premodern world nor a collapse into postmodern nihilism, but a way *through* modernity to a new, more faithful model of theological education. But before we can understand this new approach, we need to analyze the existing models for theological education.

¹ Barbara G. Wheeler and Anthony T. Ruger, “Sobering Figures Point to Overall Enrollment Decline,” *In Trust* (Spring 2013) 5-11. Accessed 12-29-2015 at <http://www.intrust.org/Portals/39/docs/IT413wheeler.pdf>.

The Four Cities

David Kelsey has offered a binary typology of theological education, designated by the cities that epitomize their origins, Athens and Berlin.² Robert Banks has enlarged the typology by adding another “city,” Jerusalem³ and Brian Edgar has suggested a fourth city that designates a confessional identity. For him, that city is Geneva, but for Lutherans it would be Wittenberg.⁴ The fourfold typology that emerges is a useful tool for becoming conscious of our own assumptions regarding theological education and examining them critically. The typology becomes more enlightening if we consider the cities chronologically, in relation to each other and in relation to their own historical context. The resulting typology, then, is: Athens, Wittenberg, Berlin, Jerusalem. (Please note that what follows builds on the work of the above named authors, but in many ways is my own take on these four types.)

Athens

The first model of theological education is called *Athens* because the church from early on modeled its educational process after that of the Greek academies. In this model, the goal of education is the formation of the student in virtue in order to come to know the good itself, or to know God. Though originally oriented toward training in virtue for public life, *paideia*, as this form of education is called, became more and more oriented toward a process of inward conversion to wisdom and knowledge of God. Early Christian teachers thought of Christianity itself as *paidea*, “divinely given in Jesus Christ and the inspired Christian scriptures, focused on a profound conversion of soul, and divinely assisted by the Holy Spirit.”⁵ Christianity as *paidea* is Christianity conceived of as a life-long upward journey of progress in virtue and holiness, empowered by grace and culminating in final union with God. Influentially institutionalized by the catechetical school in Alexandria, *paidea* became the model for catechetics and, by extension, for the education of the church’s pastors and teachers. It was the main model for theological education through medieval times and continues into the modern age.

In this model, the pastor is trained to be a *spiritual guide* who should be further advanced on the spiritual journey than most parishioners but who in any case is equipped by knowledge of authoritative sources to help and guide them on their way. The skillful administration of the sacraments is the foundation of ministry. In the west, the focus was mostly on the Sacrament of Penance; the pastor was trained to discern the penitent’s spiritual state and prescribe the penance and disciplines that would be most helpful for purging the penitent of sin and making progress toward holiness. Not only penitential manuals and training, but also the dialectical methods introduced by scholasticism provided tools for pastors

² David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological about a Theological School*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

³ Robert Banks, *Re-envisioning Theological Education*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁴ Brian Edgar, “The Theology of Theological Education,” http://brian-edgar.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2010/05/Theology_of_Theological_Education.pdf (Accessed May 9, 2017).)

⁵ Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly*, 69.

to guide their flocks on the way to salvation. Athens continued to provide the basic model for Roman Catholic and Orthodox theological education after the Reformation, and it remained central for many Protestants as well. Pietistic and Wesleyan traditions tend to see the pastor mainly as a spiritual guide who knows how to lead people to a true conversion and growth in holiness.

But conceiving of Christianity as *paidea* creates an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, true wisdom and knowledge of the good or of God can't be communicated directly. It is something one must find within oneself through an inward act of remembering (*anamnesis*). The best teacher is, like Socrates, merely a midwife to this act of giving birth to oneself. On the other hand, Christianity is revealed knowledge that is external to us and must be taught. Christianity as *paidea* can never unite these two, the inward movement toward wisdom and virtue and the outward teaching about Jesus. In practice, Christianity splits into two ways, the *via contemplativa* that turns inward to seek unity with God and the *via activa* that aims to imitate Christ through outward acts of love in the world. The first way remembers that the gospel is about God coming all the way to us apart from our works, but in the end dispenses with the outward Word of the gospel. The second way remembers that works can only be done by grace, but grace inevitably evaporates into an abstraction and people are left to gain their salvation by their own efforts. God and the world are separate and humans are left on their own to make their way to God one way or another.

Wittenberg

This set the stage for the Lutheran Reformation and the *Wittenberg* model of theological education. Luther's Reformation was a reformation of the church's message, not first of all a reformation of the church. It emerged from the collision of Luther's study of the Bible with his ministry in the confessional. Luther came to believe that the Word of promise *is* the presence of Christ to take away the penitent's sin and be the penitent's righteousness. The art of being a proclaimer of the gospel, a true theologian, is to distinguish God's Word that is the instrument of his wrath—the law that only accuses—from God's Word that is the full, bodily presence of Christ as gift to save—the gospel as sheer promise. These two are distinguished in their unity only in their contingency, in that God sends a preacher to say it to us. They never resolve into a synthesis that becomes our possession, giving us a certain security and status over and above the rest of the world. We are thrust totally into the world, utterly dependent on this external Word. We remain under the cross, driven by the law again and again to the promise. The most personal transformation and the contingency of the revelation are held together in the external Word that is never at our disposal. God truly does become God to us, fulfilling the First Commandment and making us righteous by faith alone in that Word. The Christological expression of this theology is the assertion that the communication of attributes between the divine and human natures of Christ is real, not just a manner of speaking, and therefore the eternal and the temporal, the infinite and the finite are united in Christ, fully within this world, given in the Word and Sacraments.

The curriculum reform at Wittenberg's university under Philip Melancthon was designed to prepare students to proclaim this message. Melancthon based the curriculum on the *trivium*, but with the Renaissance humanist emphasis on returning to the sources, which meant learning the original Biblical languages as well as Latin. Students were trained to become

skilled interpreters of the Bible in order to uncover in it the pure standard of doctrine rediscovered in the Reformation, and they were trained in logic and rhetoric so that they could defend that doctrine and proclaim it effectively. The ultimate goal was that future pastors learn the art of distinguishing law and gospel. But Melancthon's own humanist predilections and the political pressures leading to the process of confessionalization in Lutheran territories served to reinforce an emphasis on theology as doctrine, truths that could be set forth as propositions. The curriculum then reflected various things one could do with those propositions. "Exegesis drew the truths out of scripture; dogmatics arranged them in coherent systematic structures and defended them polemically; church history traced changes in practices and teachings that either exhibited faithfulness to those truths or decline; practical theology reflected on how the truths apply to daily life."⁶ Theological education involved learning how to move from the source of truths to their application in pastoral practice.

Consequently, Lutheran theological faculties tended to educate pastors to be *authoritative teachers*. The emphasis has historically been on reinforcing confessional identity, especially over and against Roman Catholics, the Reformed, and the other Christian groups. The confessional renewal in the nineteenth century pushed back against the Enlightenment erosion of doctrine and decisively shaped many of the Lutherans who immigrated to North America. Most Lutheran seminary education in North America until the mid-twentieth century followed the Wittenberg model and it remains the dominant model in the seminaries of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and similar church bodies.

Of course, Lutherans never lost sight of the fact that the purpose of doctrine was to lead people to saving faith and transformed lives. So it was natural that, beginning with Melancthon himself, Lutheran doctrine was construed as giving an *ordo salutis*, a series of steps one had to take in order to be saved. And when some Lutherans seemed to emphasize the pure doctrine as an end in itself, the pietist movement emerged to put the emphasis on living the *ordo salutis*, not merely preserving it as pure doctrine. But the *ordo salutis* itself is a sign that Luther's reformation had been lost. The Word and the Spirit are disconnected. The Bible becomes information about what to believe in order to get "saved" and how to live. The decisive movement of "faith" is an inward, wordless, direct reaching out to a disembodied God followed by a life of obedience, in which one attempts to conform one's life to the abstract ideals found in the Bible. Law and gospel are never distinguished in their unity. The outward is not identical to the inward. The inward becomes wordless experience and the outward becomes active *imitatio*. As in Athens, so also in Wittenberg, people are ultimately left alone to make their own way to God.

Berlin

The *Berlin* model of theological education is named for the university where it was pioneered in the early nineteenth century. The new research university founded in Berlin was decisively shaped by the Enlightenment's refusal to submit to any heteronomous authority, but to subject every object of study to critical examination based on autonomous reason. Both Athens and Wittenberg studied authoritative texts, especially the Bible, with the intention of internalizing them and being mastered and transformed by them. But the Enlightenment is a

⁶ Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly*, 86.

rejection even of the attempt to internalize the texts. Instead, it's initial move is to *distance* itself from the text in order to gain mastery over the text and be able to place it within a larger and ultimately universal conceptuality. The standard of criticism is extra-textual: individual humans contain within themselves the capacity to know the good and the true, whether through autonomous reason or through integrative intuition.

The research university was a completely new model of education built on this critical stance. Authoritative inculcation of knowledge and skills stopped with the end of secondary school. At university, students were initiated into the habits and disciplines of critical research as junior partners of the professors. In the humanities, the familiar features of modern higher education appeared: research seminars, research libraries, and research papers. The goal no longer was to produce persons formed in wisdom and virtue by deep knowledge of the authoritative texts. Nor was the goal to produce persons who could authoritatively teach the truth. The goal was to produce independent researchers who would be able to generate new knowledge.

The proposal for a new university built on this basis posed a grave question for theology. Not only was theology demoted from being the queen of the scientists. Now it seemed there was no place at all for it within the university.

Friedrich Schleiermacher made a case for the inclusion of a theological faculty in the new university by building on changes in theological education already introduced by the Wittenberg model, especially as that model was refracted through pietism. The orthodox thought of theology as objective doctrine that could be stated propositionally. Pietism subtly transformed those objective propositions into a body of theory that could be applied to ministerial practice. So exegesis uncovered the content of scripture, dogmatics derived a body of theory from that content about the practice of the Christian life, church history helped one understand one's present situation, and practical theology was for gaining the skills necessary to help others practice the Christian life.

Schleiermacher transferred the pietist construal of theological education to the critical era. He argued that the public ministry is a *profession*. Just as the study of medicine provides the cognitive theoretic foundations for an essential public good—the physician's practice of medicine—so also the study of theology provides the cognitive theoretic foundations of a profession that provides a service essential for the spiritual and moral health of society and the state, justifying the inclusion of theological faculties in the universities. The critical study of Scripture, dogmatics, and church history as phenomena of history provides the basis for those theoretic foundations. This part of theological study is pure *Wissenschaft*; the same critical standards apply to the study of the sources, including the Bible, as apply to any other sources. In addition, philosophical theology shows how Christianity, as a particular expression of human religiosity, fits within the general structure of human consciousness. With a mastery of the historical sources of the Christian community and an understanding of the general structure of human consciousness at their command, clergy are able to formulate theory to guide them in shaping Christian communities that accord with their historical, "positive" character. It is this *theory* that is normative, not the sources themselves.

The Berlin model was widely adopted by North American seminaries over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but Schleiermacher's particular approach was not influential in the long run. Instead of defining professionals as persons specially educated to

perform an essential service for society, Americans defined professionals in a more functional and individualistic way: Professionals are persons who have skills that meet a need—needs that are defined by their clients. Consequently, seminaries widened the scope of the kind of theory that pastors needed to learn. In addition to historical and philosophical theory, pastors also needed to know social and psychological theory. But with so many fields to master, it was no longer possible for theological students to become skilled in forming theory. Now they could only learn *about* theories and *about* how others have applied them. In the end, modern North American seminaries in the Berlin model merely offered a smorgasbord of options and perspectives, each having their own intrinsic normativity, and students were no longer skilled in deriving their own normative theory from the original sources—from the Scriptures, dogmatics, or church history. These sources generally are authoritative only insofar as they illustrate the various theories or political and social ideas that are the students’ real models for ministry. It is this model that shapes the accreditation standards of the Association of Theological Schools.⁷

Since the initial move of Berlin is to gain critical distance from the Bible and the other Christian sources, there is no chance of a union of the inner and the outer. Scheiermacher tried to mediate such a unity through a theory about human consciousness, but his theory didn’t survive. The outer remained at an infinite distance from the inner. The inner takes the form of assumed generalities--“We’re all children of God, etc.”—with perhaps an occasional foray into various forms of introspective “spirituality” drawn from various sources. Meanwhile, the outer is where the real action is. Pastors draw on the various psychological and social theories they have learned in order to help people feel better and to mobilize them for various causes of social and political reform. But their knowledge in these areas is usually quite superficial and their effectiveness minimal. In light of this, it is no wonder if some people begin to think that seminary education is not very valuable.

Jerusalem

The Jerusalem model takes its name from the apostolic imperative recorded in Acts 1:8, “... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (NRSV) and so harks back to the earliest roots of Christianity. Nevertheless, the Jerusalem model of theological education arose early in the nineteenth century and is entirely modern: it parallels the Berlin model, even as it self-consciously opposes it. In the Jerusalem model, the pastor is a *missional leader* who mobilizes people to become involved in mission. Theological education is about inculcating the skills needed to motivate and activate people to be involved in the church’s mission. “Mission,” of course, can mean many things, from “winning souls for Christ” to feeding the hungry to engaging in political activism. Jerusalem’s approach begins with an idea of what mission is and then concentrates on strategies and techniques for carrying it out. So, although there might be a lot of talk about the Bible, careful study of the Bible or the Christian tradition is ultimately considered “impractical” compared to the urgent imperative of carrying out God’s will on earth. Modern (especially American) enthusiasm for “what works” and increasing anxiety about the church’s declining membership

⁷ Association of Theological Schools, Accreditation Documents, General Institutional Standards, pp. 5-9, and Educational Standard, pp. 2-3. Accessed 6-8-2017 at <http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/accreditation-documents.pdf>

and influence have helped to bring the Jerusalem model of theological education to the fore. The drive is to equip pastors with a suite of techniques that they can deploy to gather and “disciple” people into their churches. The pastor is the expert at mobilizing and organizing people to conform their lives to God’s will and extend God’s kingdom. This can take both “conservative” and “liberal” forms. The “conservative” forms concentrate on inculcating fervent piety and traditional personal morality, while the “liberal” forms concentrate on inducing people to get behind efforts to make the world more tolerant and peaceful. But both presuppose the “missional leader” model of ministry and require the similar model of education.

Charles Taylor’s concept of “the Age of Mobilization” sheds light on this model.⁸ According to him, as the “secular age” came into its own and unbelief became a public option around 1800, the churches of the west underwent a subtle but decisive shift in emphasis. The church’s message was re-construed from knowing God to knowing God’s *design* for human life. In the ensuing “Age of Mobilization” (from 1800 to about 1960) the churches aimed to mobilize people to conform their lives to God’s design so that, in turn, they would work to conform the world around them to God’s design. This was the basis of the great missionary and reform efforts of western Protestants (and Catholics too, in their own way) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to Taylor, the Age of Mobilization began to give way to the Age of Authenticity in the 1960s. People were less and less willing to be “mobilized” for whatever vision of God’s design for their lives the pastor might have. Instead, they began to search for ways of life they felt were authentic to their own sense of who they were. In that case, perhaps the Jerusalem model of theological education is facing a decline. Nevertheless, it still is very persuasive to church people who are alarmed by the church’s decline and want their pastors to be leaders rather than scholars.

But Taylor’s discernment of the shift from knowing God to knowing God’s design is suggestive. In terms of the theological motif of the inward and the outward, this shift is a complete divorce of the two. In exact parallel to the Berlin model, an “essence” is extracted from the Bible, though in this case the critical standard is pragmatic rather than the canons of historical-critical method. The “missional leader” distills an idea of “God’s plan” from the Bible and uses his or her skills to get people to internalize it and enact it. But even the most skilled leader doesn’t succeed in making people new. “God’s design” remains an external ideal and people are left on their own to try to make it an inward reality in their lives.

The Fifth City

Athens, Wittenberg, Berlin, and Jerusalem, then, all finally fail to unite the inner and the outer. What is needed is a *Fifth City* that acknowledges the legitimate concerns of the four other “cities,” but forges a new path. It is not a move back behind the Enlightenment to Athens or Wittenberg, and it is not a compromise with (and co-opting by) the Enlightenment, as with Berlin or Jerusalem. It is post- Enlightenment in that it renounces both pre-modern and Enlightenment appeals to a foundation outside the Word. Neither does it collapse into post-

⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007) 423-272.

modern nihilism. The Fifth City is a comprehensive conception of theological education that grows out of a recovery and development of Luther's reformation, in which the inner *is* the outward and the outward *is* the inner

The Word

The Fifth City begins with the gospel proclaimed in Word and Sacrament. It stands between proclamation and proclamation, reflecting on that which has been proclaimed for the sake of a new proclamation. That is to say, the Fifth City is a function of the church, the community created by the proclamation and charged with the mission of proclamation. The Fifth City is dedicated to fostering a true proclamation of the word and so the characteristics of this word of proclamation determines the shape of the Fifth City. Three crucial characteristics of this Word are contingency, finitude, and temporality.

Contingency

We begin with the fact that we find ourselves within a concrete community formed by a particular narrative. That particular narrative is the narrative of the Bible, set in motion by the promises to Abraham and culminating in the fulfillment of those promises in Jesus, leaving those shaped by the narrative waiting in the power of the Spirit for the final consummation of the promise in the perfect union of God with his people in Jesus. We are part of a particular people carried by a particular Spirit of a particular God who is determined by the contours of a particular human life.

This contingency excludes any larger conceptuality that would somehow make the Word intelligible, whether that conceptuality is metaphysical account of reality or a description of human subjectivity. With regard to the Word, the categories of necessity and possibility are completely out of place. The Word cannot be shown to be necessary or even possible a priori, as in much traditional and modern apologetic theology. Nor can the Word be shown to be necessary a posteriori. As utterly contingent, the Word cannot be placed on a foundation outside of itself.

Finitude

This Word is contingent because it is entirely within this world without remainder: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and the humanity of the Person of Jesus defines God's own being. The Fifth City stands in the tradition of the church's struggle to preserve and proclaim this Word, to find the language that would truly proclaim Christ. The Trinitarian and Christological reflections of the ancient church strove to express the reality of God truly here, in the flesh, for us, in the Sacraments and in the Word. Luther and his followers brought this development to its point in the teaching of the communication of attributes between the human and divine natures in the one Person of Christ. Jesus, who became sin for us and submitted to death is God's own life, in whom sin and death are swallowed up and brought to an end. Jesus became pure promise for sinners, taking their sin and death and giving his righteousness and life. This Word of sheer promise, the Word with the washing of water that simply gives the gift, the Word that gives the gift of Jesus' death in mere eating and drinking—this Word is the end of us. We can only live by faith in what is given to us outside of ourselves in the physical sound of the word ringing in our ears, in the physical water comprehended by

the command and promise of the Triune God, in the physical bread and wine with Jesus' promise that this is his body and blood. These all put an end to our striving for infinity and all the spirits that lure us on toward it. God--*this* God--succeeds in becoming our God, in whom we trust for all things. No longer grasping for the infinite, we live within finitude, as creatures, reflecting the goodness of the Father to our fellow creatures.

The Fifth City, therefore, is a community dedicated to hearing and proclaiming the God who is fully within the world. It does not pursue an illusionary transcendence external to this physical world, nor does it succumb to modern or post-modern relativism or nihilism. Instead, it recognizes the true transcendence that is purely this-worldly, at the boundary between the humanity of Jesus and our own. The external Word of the promise is the real presence of Christ, the one true God. Speech about God is finally not at all analogical, but is utterly real. The whole of the humanity is communicated to the divinity: God died on the cross for us. And the whole of the divinity is communicated to the humanity: the human Word of promise contains the whole of divinity and the Word, the water, the bread and wine *are* therefore God's final and trustworthy electing Word, Jesus the Messiah himself.

Temporality

In bringing this Word to expression, spatial language (as in the concept of "natures" or the traditional metaphors of metaphysics) breaks down. The gospel gives the gift of "incessant temporality."⁹ The gospel as the Real Presence gives us a "today" precisely in that it gives us a future and a past. Our past is given to us here and now in reading the Bible, where we read the course of our own life in a history that has already occurred, the history of the Jewish people, culminating in Jesus Christ. This Word gives us, not only a past, but also a future that is unsurpassably new. So we are fully immersed within time. In faith, we live God's history, not our own. We don't create our own origin or goal, a past and a future, for ourselves. Nor do we find a center for ourselves within us. Rather, our center, our present, is given to us in being addressed by the Word made flesh, and so we have God's past as our present and God's future as our present. We have a present that is full of all times in the Triune God's self-giving in the Word of promise.

Thus, we have no perspective above time, from which we could master past or future, not even an imagined divine "timeless" perspective. Though spatial language is perhaps not entirely avoidable, the Fifth City is disciplined toward a hearing of the Word that closes off all such perspectives. It actively works to ensure that the spatial language does not ultimately determine our thinking. Instead, it actively seeks the Word that closes off heaven and brings us fully into time because it gives all times—past, present, and future—in the present, here and now, in the word of promise. Consequently, the Fifth City also is disciplined toward resisting all attempts to master the past or the future as if we had direct access to either apart from the past and the future given to us here and now in the promise of the gospel. Instead, the Fifth City seeks the prophetic word made flesh, by which God makes time for us, a today, in which we are free to live before him.

⁹ Johann Georg Hamann, "Golgotha and Scheblimini!" in Kenneth Haynes, trans. and ed., *Johann Georg Hamann: Writings on Philosophy and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 180. "I know of no eternal truths save as incessant temporality."

Truly temporal existence, which is given to us out of the middle, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the *sine quo non* of all knowledge. By faith in the God who has all times in his hand, we gain a true “today,” in which we can truly read the texts that are present to us now—the book of history and the book of nature. We do not master time by tracing chains of causes and effects that we comprehend from a stance somehow above time. Instead, illumined by the promise as Real Presence here and now, we can make a beginning at comprehending the sources we have access to now. Such knowledge is fragmentary and provisional and always subject to revision. And yet it is true, insofar as it is comprehended within the Word of the one who has all times in his hands.¹⁰

Temporality means freedom. The Fifth City is free-time, time cleared for leisure to read and write. Its members are free in their reading because they are seeking to hear the Word of the cross that again makes them free. Their only constraint is to fight against everything that would block the way to the external text and freedom. And they are completely free as they write because they are free to use the time that God has made for them in full responsibility before him. There is no separation or alternation between the *via contemplative* and the *via active*, between the inner and the outer. The Fifth City lives the *via passiva*, in which both are united. The Fifth City is the church under the cross, a continuous Sabbath in the midst of a continuous fight.

Learning How to Read

Coming to Our Senses

Since God gives himself through the external Word, he communicates himself to us fully and without remainder through our senses. Reading is a sensory experience and learning how to read begins with training the senses.

This means resistance to the temptation to think of the senses as a mere stepping stone, the goal being to move beyond the senses to a direct experience of the divine. Keeping up such resistance is a difficult discipline because it means resisting habitual dualisms, ancient and modern, such as the distinctions between the material and the immaterial, the actual and the ideal. Especially pernicious is the modern Cartesian self, utterly disembodied and cut off from the world, but having within itself the basis for knowing the truth about the world. The Fifth City rejects the entire modern foundationalist project of trying to find a basis in pure reason for the truth of our knowledge of the world.

The Fifth City is founded on the basis of Johann Georg Hamann’s insight that reason is entirely dependent on language and not the other way around.¹¹ We are all flesh and blood human beings dependent on tradition, experience, and language and who show, by our speech and actions, how we have read, heard and judged. There is no pure reason on the basis of which people can come to a perfectly transparent understanding with one another. Reason is

¹⁰ On the concept of “created time” as found in the thought of Hamann, see Oswald Bayer, *A Contemporary in Dissent: Johann Georg Hamann as a Radical Enlightenment*, trans. Roy A Harrisville and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2012) 193-208.

¹¹ Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 156-158.

entirely dependent on language and, in the post-Babel world, languages and their consequent rationalities are irreducibly plural and in competition. In this situation, God has emptied himself into human language, the word of the cross, the promise that gives the gift of God's own death on the cross in order that we might live by the power of God's life.

The Fifth City is therefore an esthetic education. While only the Holy Spirit can give a fully embodied and temporal life, theological education must be shaped *toward* the reading of the Bible that gives that gift, and hence, it is aimed toward opening up the senses. The gospel is not an appeal to an "I" that somehow lives beyond the senses. We only acquire an "I" through the senses in reading the biblical narrative. We suffer the humiliation and death of the false "I" and learn how to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell that the Lord is good. We need to cultivate all the senses to receive every kind of art, but faith comes first of all through hearing and therefore hearing needs special training. Music is essentially temporal and opens to us the time within which Jesus' death and God's life both come to expression united in the Word, Jesus Christ. Music opens up the Sabbath, the time that God makes for us to hear *the* Word that is Jesus Christ as promise and gift.

It is in this context that the Fifth City nurtures the love of words. In order to read the Bible (and, through the Bible, all texts) students must engage deeply with the ancient trivium—grammar, logic, and rhetoric. We must understand how the Word, and therefore all truth, is incarnate in the utterly contingent phenomena of language (grammar). We must understand how the union of Jesus' death and our life in the one Person Jesus Christ governs the right use of language and therefore all sound reasoning (logic). And we must understand how the Biblical writers employ language in order to draw us into the truth—to put us to death and raise us to life in Christ (rhetoric).

In view of the utter linguisticity of our existence, the return to the trivium is more than a recovery of ancient wisdom. In the pre-modern west, the trivium's importance rested on the acknowledgement of the authority of the Bible and other texts and the necessity of interpreting them correctly. But the goal of Biblical interpretation was to move beyond the text, to the "spiritual" meaning of the text and the correct "spiritual" meaning was ultimately normed from outside the text, by the church's official teaching. As we have seen, the inner (essentially wordless) meaning was separated from the outward word. Modernity moved even further in the same direction. If the Biblical text (or any text) had any authority at all, it resided in moral and religious truths distilled from the text, which are in any case accessible by reason or experience apart from the text. But if the Word became flesh, and that becoming is a real communication of attributes between the divine and the human in the unity of the one Person, then the text is all-important and the language arts are the foundation of all knowledge. The study of the trivium is an effort truly to come to our senses, to direct us to an embodied life in which we live by what we hear.

The Cross

The Fifth City aims toward hearing the Word that is utterly embodied, the external promise that is the very being of Jesus Christ to unite within himself our sin and death with his own divine righteousness and life. The Fifth City is in training to hear the promise as distinct from the demand, the gospel as distinct from the law. In other words, the Fifth City is disciplined to hear the word of the cross.

This means coming *to* the text of the Bible in such a way that the text stands over and against us as the Real Presence of Christ, true transcendence. When that happens, there is nothing more that the reader can do. The reader is at an end. The Fifth City disciplines readers of the Bible to stay with the external text, the letter as the word of the absence of God (the law) in order to hear simultaneously the letter as the embodied Word who gives himself for us (the gospel). This entails the reader's death, so that the reader must live outside himself or herself by faith in the crucified, risen, and exalted Jesus Christ.

The law-gospel hermeneutic assumes that the great thing Jesus gives us is his death to this age of sin and death, so that we may live by faith alone in the Word of promise that is the fullness of God with us, in hope of the resurrection and in the communion of love for one another and for God's whole creation. Reading the Bible brings upon us the end of the ages, with the outpouring of the Spirit who creates and carries us into God's own future. It brings us fully into finitude and creatureliness, fully immersed in time, suspended between creation and consummation. Hence, the major task of the Fifth City is to discover and expose all false eschatologies, any breaking through of the eschatological horizon to a world "beyond" the text, to any scheme of salvation that will keep the old sinful self alive. The Fifth City seeks the end of any hope that somehow we can do anything at all to help ourselves and is engaged in a constant reading of the Scriptures in search of the one death that brings such hopes to an end. The Fifth City is disciplined toward the fulfillment of the First Commandment, when God himself succeeds in being our God by means of the voice that raises the dead.

None of this happens, of course, by human willing or working, but only by the Spirit. The work of the Fifth City is to live a disciplined life under the Word. The church is the locus where the Scriptures are rightly read, as law and gospel, and the Fifth City is that part of the church with the calling to sustain and guide the church in the right reading of the Scriptures. This involves penetrating and creative intellectual work that at the same time is intensely personal. Luther's "Three Rules" are the center of the Fifth City's life: The Fifth City lives in prayer as it mediates continually on the Word, which proves itself trustworthy over and over again through trials and suffering.¹² In other words, the Fifth City is disciplined toward its own death with Christ. It is fully sacramental in its practices and daily life. It is dedicated to constantly remembering that it is buried with Christ by Baptism and it gathers at the Lord's Supper, where Christ himself gives his death, so that the community lives entirely from his promise of life. Reading the Bible means living life together under the cross.

Radical Temporality

If we have died with Christ, then the only access we have to the past and future is in the present moment, which contains all times. We have no direct access to the past or to the future. To the extent that we attempt to rise up above time to determine the truth of the past based on the evidence at hand, we can only use a standard of truth we already possess and the narrative construction that results from our study will simply reproduce that standard. We create a past that ratifies our own pre-understandings. The same is true when we attempt to

¹² See Martin Luther, "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings," (1539) in *Luther's Works*, Volume 34, ed. Lewis W. Spitz (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960) 283-288.

master the future; trapped in ourselves, we cannot create anything truly new. But the Fifth City focuses on the text of the Bible, which is outside of ourselves. From the death that we encounter there, we read off both our past—we are creatures who are trying to be God and so are condemned to death—and our future—Jesus, who gave himself for us at the cross, is God’s final Word of election to life. The Fifth City is on its guard against spatial language that compromises radical temporality. There really is nothing we can do but *wait* for God’s new world and so we have no choice but to live as mere creatures, looking to him for every good thing and trusting his Word as it leads us in our callings to serve our neighbors and all creation. The Fifth City is dedicated to disarming readers who are tempted to stand outside the finitude and contingency given us in the gospel and master time itself, both past and future.

This gives us a critique of both historical-critical method and the doctrine of verbal inspiration and a new way forward that incorporates the truth of both. The historical-critical method attempts to reconstruct the history of Biblical texts, working backward from the texts as they have come down to us to their literary sources, to their sources in oral traditions, and, if possible, to “what actually happened.” The original purpose was to gain distance from the historical particularities of the text in order to distill from them that which is still valid for us now. In this way differences regarding the contingent particularities of the texts would not have to be the cause of religious persecution and wars and everyone could agree to live in peace on the basis of the natural religion (the “real message” found in the Bible but also in most other religions) accessible to everyone by reason. As we have seen, the Berlin model aimed to create competent historical critics who would know how to derive this religion (usually in its particularly Christian form) from the texts as the theory that they would then use to shape their pastoral practice. Historical critics themselves have since become much more modest in their claims; they have less confidence in the likelihood of their historical reconstructions and few would claim to be able to get back to “what actually happened.” Yet most still use their own presuppositions to judge the particularities of the Bible’s historical narratives in order to distill from them their own ideals and discredit those parts of the Bible that seem to contradict those ideals. This is a power stance over and against the Bible, a refusal to live within the radical temporality that only the Bible can give, a refusal, finally, of the cross.

The doctrine of verbal inspiration, though it seems at first to express submission to the authority of the Bible, is a similar power stance over and above the Bible. Adherents of verbal inspiration generally accept all the canons of historical criticism when studying sources other than the Bible. But for the Bible they make an exception. They believe that the Spirit so guided the writers of the Bible that everything it narrates precisely corresponds to “what actually happened,” or, in the case of prophetic predictions, what will happen. Adherents of verbal inspiration, therefore, have at their disposal assured information about the past and the future that makes them masters of time. Unlike the historical critics, however, there is no chance that they will become more modest in their claims about what they know about the past and future because to do so would mean, in their view, denying the truth of the Bible. This stance militates against a reading of the Bible that actually encounters God hidden, and yet revealed, in his humanity and in the cross. There is great danger that people believe they are justified by their superior “knowledge” and by their submission to and defense of that knowledge. Moreover, many unbelievers are likely to be turned away from Christ because they get the message that believing the Bible means uncritical submission to this knowledge and those who

wield it. People encounter a human bid for power instead of the God whose power is his becoming pure promise for sinners in the human being Jesus Christ.

In contrast to both of these approaches, the Fifth City renounces any claim of direct access to the past or to the future. Suspended between the protological and the eschatological, it is radically temporal and its only assured access to the past or the future is through the present Christ in the justifying Word. The text of the Bible *as it is* gives us the truth of the past in that it gives us Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and therefore the gift of the eschatological future it promises. As for “what actually happened” or what actually will happen *within* history, about such things we have only provisional, fragmentary knowledge. In the Fifth City, these questions are always in principle open. We do not have privileged, assured knowledge that cuts off historical or scientific inquiry.

Unlike classic historic-critical method, the Fifth City is truly critical in its reading of the Bible and unlike the most adherents of verbal inspiration, the Fifth City truly acknowledges no other authority other than the Bible. The Fifth City is truly critical in its approach to the Bible in that it employs a standard of criticism internal to the Bible itself and is therefore *self*-critical. It insists that the text be what it is, in its full humanity. It refuses to allow the interpreter to impose an interpretation on the text that would protect God from the cross. Because it is truly critical in its reading of the Bible, the Fifth City truly submits to the authority of the Bible, so that the claim that the Bible is the only source and norm of the church’s faith and life is not a mere human assertion, but a gift that is continually sought. The historical-critical method is justified to the extent that it is in service to the truth of the Bible by illuminating what the text actually is as an entirely human historical and cultural artifact. The doctrine of verbal inspiration is justified to the extent that it is in service to this truth by teaching us to come to the text with the expectation that here God himself is present to speak to us his creative, judging, and redeeming Word. As a post-enlightenment seminary, the Fifth City points the way beyond the impasses created by Christianity’s entanglement with autonomous reason to become a community of free inquiry precisely *because* the Bible is its sole source and norm.

Reading the World

The Fifth City does not merely read the Bible or the texts of the Christian tradition that would guide us in reading the Bible. The Fifth City is interested in the entire realm of knowledge, both historical and natural. It rejects any bifurcation of knowledge, as if theology were a special realm of knowledge distinct from other realms. Instead, theology takes its place as the queen of sciences. But its monarchy is of a peculiar nature. Instead of reigning over all the other sciences, it engenders them. By reading the one Book—or rather, by being read *by* that Book—the Fifth City gains the ability to begin to read the word that God has written into creation—the meaning of history and the meaning of nature. Nature and history, otherwise seemingly mute and meaningless, begin to speak to us. To be sure, in this in-between time marked by sin and death, the knowledge we gain thereby is provisional and fragmentary. Nevertheless, we can have some confidence that we at least begin to glimpse the truth. The modern quest to found knowledge on reason has failed, but we are not lost in a sea of relativism. The Fifth City is a seedbed for a re-founding of the university, where the Word become flesh is the ultimate basis of all words read from the Book of Nature and the Book of History.

Learning How to Write

To read is already to write, since all reading is interpretation, showing how we have read. Yet writing as deliberate communication is a second step, a turning from the text to the other to speak and the ultimate purpose of the Fifth City is to educate people to be effective communicators of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So the Fifth City is intensely occupied with learning how to write, in the broadest sense of the term.

Kenotic Communication

In setting out to communicate the gospel, the Fifth City acknowledges the difficulty--actually, the impossibility--of the task. Here again, Bayer's exposition of Hamann's thought helps us understand our situation. As we have seen, in the present in-between time, we are condemned to a plurality of languages and a plurality of rationalities. We cannot speak with the expectation of being understood. We speak to people who hear from various perspectives and, in order to hope for any understanding at all, we must engage in the hard work of "translation." The goal of this translation is not to enrich the self by taking into itself these various perspectives. The goal is to respect "the unsurpassable strangeness of the other and his or her story."¹³ What is decisive is "the most precise locality, individuality, and personality."¹⁴ The languages of various rationalities are irreducibly plural and in competition, always attempting to impose themselves on others through seduction or the enforcement of distinctions. The violence of competing languages and rationalities can only be disarmed by "suffering erudition, aesthetic obedience to the cross." (161)

Hamann takes as his model for the arduous task of translation the work of a good teacher of children. Translating one's own language into the language of children consists in "descending to their weakness; becoming their servant when one wants to be their master; following them when one wants to rule them; learning their language and soul, when we want to induce them to imitate ours."¹⁵ This parallels the triune God's own kenotic action for us. Speaking in this way is an action, enacting a role. "This responsive *action* of the person as a speaker is at the same time a mimic representation, the action of an actor, a thespian who plays a role, with which the person must not be identical but can be distanced and for this reason 'feigns' it."¹⁶ This "feigning" is not pretense or hypocrisy, but an act of love by which the speaker kenotically bridges the gap with the other and his or her language and rationality.

This is the way all communication actually happens and is the basis of all our art, science, and social and political life. There is no such thing as pure reason, to which we could ascend and there find perfect agreement. In the competition of languages and rationalities, we encounter resistances that shatter the illusion of "unhindered, universal communicability" that "I can, as it were, painlessly think in place of another and form a concept of reason that the other must always be able to share and be able to agree."¹⁷ That universal and perfect

¹³ Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 160.

¹⁴ J.G. Hamann, "Ein fliegender Brief," quoted in Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 160.

¹⁵ J.G. Hamann, "Fünf Hirtenbriefe," quoted in Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 163.

¹⁶ Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 164.

¹⁷ Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 166.

communication is not possible is seen above all in the exchange of words between the justifying God and sinful humans. The gospel cannot be communicated like a product to be sold because it is “the kingdom of heaven and hell in us.”¹⁸ All communication involves holding together two things without losing either: the violence of our competing languages and rationalities (the kingdom of hell) and the love that kenotically disarms that violence in order to achieve a genuine communication (the kingdom of heaven.) This communication is suffering, but a suffering that affirms the world (unlike Kierkegaard’s indirect communication, in which suffering turns one away from the world.) The dialog is entirely worldly, both disclosing and shaping the world. It is the reality of who I am in the midst of the world. There is no “I” somewhere above my history. The fact that I do not dissolve as a distinct “I” in the midst of my continually changing relationships is entirely due to the fact that “God is the author of my life history as well as all world history.”¹⁹

Hamann answers the question of being with a theology and philosophy of language effective as action. The Word is the universal community of communication, the community of justified sinners amidst their fellow creatures and the authority that creates that community. God the Author communicates with humans and all creatures, performing the labor of translating by going to the cross, to address the creature through the creature. This is how God overcomes us who in our sin are blind and hard of hearing. Our communication of the Word cannot consist in arguments (communicative violence) but in kenotic engagement in the arduous task of translation. By faith in the one who holds the divine and human in the deepest unity of the one Person, we avoid the temptation to unite language and reason in our own version of the eschaton; instead, we allow the two to remain in tension. The very essence of reason is that it allows languages to be plural and in competition precisely because it *believes* that reason and language are united in the one Word, as will be revealed on the last day. Meanwhile reason concedes its entire dependence on language and dedicates itself to the self-emptying task of translation.

The Fifth City trains people for the art of kenotic translation. This kenotic translation does not consist in inculcating virtue so that people can progress in sanctification. It does not consist defending or arguing for the truth of the Bible or of Christian doctrine. Nor does it consist in deploying techniques for getting people to conform their lives to God’s design. Kenotic translation requires dying to oneself by placing oneself within the language of the other. It means dying to one’s own enculturation of the gospel in order to discover the language in which the gospel is enculturated for the other. In this dialog, both proclaimer and listener die to the hegemony of their own languages and find common ground in a new language that speaks Jesus, here and now.

A Transformed Rhetoric

We have seen that the Fifth City recovers the ancient language arts—grammar, logic, and rhetoric—in order to read the Bible, and, on that basis, other texts. But, of course, the language arts are also necessary for writing what we have read. The proclaimer of the Word needs to know how language works (grammar) in order to have any hope of incarnating the

¹⁸ J.G. Hamann, in a letter to Jacobi (1787), quoted in Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 167.

¹⁹ Bayer, *Contemporary in Dissent*, 168.

Word in language. Hence, the Fifth City involves intense practice in mastering the language in which students proclaim the Word.

In addition, the proclaimer needs to know how to construct theological narratives that conform to the logic of the biblical narratives, second-order discourse that, in turn, informs the first-order discourse of proclamation. The Fifth City trains people to think soundly, to deploy language to reflect on the biblical narratives in ways that bring us *to* that narrative and avoid ways of thinking that attempt to take us *beyond* or *above* the narrative. A thorough and critical study of the western philosophical tradition and of the church's two-thousand year struggle to think Christianly is essential for this task. In addition, it is necessary for the Fifth City to be vitally engaged with non-Christian traditions, including western secularism, in order to examine and test the truth of its own theological reflection and also to study ways of disarming itself in the face of those traditions in order to engage in conversation, in the hope of finding a common language that incarnates the gospel.

Finally, the Fifth City's intensive occupation with grammar and logic is for the sake of learning a rhetoric that expresses the gospel. Rhetoric is persuasive speech, the deployment of words to achieve a certain effect—to persuade people to buy a product or vote for a candidate or acquit a defendant. Rhetoric inspires people, for good or for evil, setting loose a spirit that claims people and carries them into a future. Rhetoric can unleash a spirit of cooperation that can unite people for a common constructive task; in another case, it can provoke a spirit of violence that can turn a crowd into a lynch mob.

The Fifth City's goal is a rhetoric that speaks God's electing Word as the real presence of Jesus Christ that sets bound sinners free. It is a rhetoric that is the actual coming of the Holy Spirit to catch people up out of themselves into God's new future. The Fifth City trains people to have the courage to hand over Jesus in our wholly human words.

This involves a refusal to regard the communication of attributes between the two-natures of Christ as a mere figure of speech in order to protect Jesus from his death. The divine being whose incarnation, suffering, and death are never quite real and the merely human Jesus who doesn't really die because he lives on in his moral teachings both give a Jesus who is just another law-giver. The substantialist language that thinks in terms of the two natures in Christ can all too easily be used to "see through" Jesus and so make him into someone who cannot die and therefore someone who is available to us to be used for our own purposes.²⁰ Such rhetoric invites us to choose him because he satisfies our need for supernatural help for our own projects, or at least provides divine approval for what we already believe and want to do in any case.

The rhetoric the Fifth City seeks is the rhetoric that puts the old sinful self to death, not a rhetoric that prolongs its life by appealing to the hearer's free will for a decision. The rhetoric itself brings in God's new age; it "does" Jesus' death to its listeners. It takes away choice and therefore takes away sin, giving in its place Jesus himself, truly present in Word and Sacrament. "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor. 3:6b) The letter is the whole of the narrative of Scripture, indeed, all of God's literal works, leading up to and culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus. The Fifth City fosters a rhetoric that steadfastly focuses people on the letter, the concrete, literal works of God that can only kill us. It is learning to let the death of Christ be the

²⁰ Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 90.

impenetrable end. It is the death of God and all we expect of him and therefore the death of us as people who are like God, for the end of those expectations is the end of us.

This focus on the letter that kills is only possible when, at the same time, we just as steadfastly proclaim the sheer promise, the life-giving Spirit that bestows forgiveness, righteousness, resurrection, and life to dead sinners. The rhetoric that expresses the gospel holds the death of Jesus and the life of God together in offering over to the hearer the One Person of Jesus Christ. In the speaking of the gospel, Jesus takes on himself the hearers' sin and death and gives in return his own life, which he has from the Father. The speaking of the gospel therefore brings the hearer to an end, so that all that is left is to live by faith in the promise. The rhetoric that the Fifth City seeks is the rhetoric that is the real communication of attributes in the one Person, which in turn is the repetition of the inner-Trinitarian communication between the Father and the Son, the Spirit's own coming to give life to sinners condemned to death.²¹

The Fifth City trains preachers of the Word and ministers of the sacraments in the art of proclaiming Christ in this way. Preaching is the art of handing over Christ as he gives himself in the Biblical text. The sacraments are the Word that the Lord himself has added to physical elements and must be administered in such a way that they are the gospel. Both arise in the context of pastoral care, the continual engagement with people in the self-emptying seeking of the common language that speaks the gospel to them to bring death and new life. Christian ministers need many skills but the specific skill that defines their identity is their mastery of a transformed rhetoric that speaks Christ to people. Or, more accurately, Christian ministers are themselves mastered *by* such a rhetoric and cannot help but wield it for the salvation of all who hear. The Fifth City is dedicated to educating such ministers of the gospel.

World-Building

We have seen that the gospel places us fully and radically into time. Because of this, the gospel gives us time to live before God, to walk by the power of the resurrection in newness of life. By giving us the end (the eschaton) and the beginning (creation) as gift in Christ, the gospel makes time for us to live fully immersed in this world, where we begin to exhibit the image of God in our service to our neighbors and fellow creatures. This interim time takes its shape from the gospel, and precisely thereby that shape is shown *not* to be the gospel. For example, marriage is a sign of the mystery of the union of Christ and the church and is normed by that union, and so marriage is revealed as God's provision for blessing this age, but only this age. It is not ultimate. Government, too, receives its justification in God's provision of justice as the world's only ruler—and precisely thereby government is prevented from claiming divine prerogatives for itself. Confined within time, Christians live a fully this-worldly life and, in freedom and responsibility, work to sustain this world as God's world, his creation.

The Fifth City trains people in how to narrate God's creative and sustaining work in this world in order that people may hear their particular calls from God to join in that work. In this

²¹ On this see Oswald Bayer, "Das Wort ward Fleisch: Luther's Christologie als Lehre von der Idiomenkommunikation" in Oswald Bayer and Benjamin Gledde, eds., *Creator est Creatura: Luthers Christologie als Lehre von der Idiomskommunikation*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007) 5-34.

way, the Fifth City contributes to the work of world- and culture-building. The Fifth City fosters the church as the light of the world and the hidden center of all of human culture, insofar as it imitates God's own work of creating in acts of human creating. All human relationships, all production of goods and services, all governance, all the arts and sciences—the whole of human culture—is founded on God's Word. The church does not attempt to impose this Word on the world by the exercise of worldly power. Instead, it embodies the Word in its own life, and attempts to find ways of revealing the beauty and goodness and truth of God's Word that would engage people and invite them to follow similar paths and, eventually, to hear and believe the Word made flesh who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The Vanguard

The medieval image is long dead, modernity—the long scramble to stave off post-modern nihilism—has failed, and we have nothing to stand on. Neither the great chain of being, nor pure reason, nor feeling, nor pragmatism, nor historical process, nor utopian hedonism will save us, but only God speaking through the creature to the creature. The Fifth City must be raised up to nurture persons who will be such creatures in whom God speaks to the creature.

The way forward is through repentance. The Fifth City will rise only from communities of people who pursue the hard and narrow way of following Jesus, praying and meditating on the Word in the midst of attack.

The way forward is through hard intellectual work. Obviously what is outlined above is little more than a pointer to what must be thought through. The Fifth City is the context where the conversation can continue and the necessary hard theological work can make progress.

The way forward is through institution-building. We must find the resources, gather the faculty, and design the community of learning and teaching that can embody the Fifth City. The Fifth City must be a real entity in the midst of this age.

The Fifth City is the vanguard of the future. The re-ordering of the theological education is a re-ordering, first of the church's witness and hence of its life. And it is a re-ordering, second, of the university and hence of the world. Nothing could be more important.