

Conversations

A newsletter from the Trinity Forum Academy
Spring 2008



Dear Friends,

Spring marks the Academy's transition from wrestling with the question "Who is God?" to the question of application – "What difference does it make?" The core components of this season are the Fellows' teaching time and their personal research projects. The teaching time is essential for the community to form a robust perspective on important cultural issues. Each Fellow teaches on a topic within their expertise and invites leaders in the field to speak to the group. Included here is a reflection by a current Fellow, Josh Britton, on the importance of place to our concept of home, as well as a contribution from alum Wendell Kimbrough, who is literally taking the research he pursued at the Academy to the streets.

If you would like to learn more about how to participate in the lives of the Fellows or engage more with the speakers and presentations given here throughout the year, we'd love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Staff of the Trinity Forum Academy
academy@tff.org

Updates in this issue

Academy Fellows teaching topics, the Class of 2009, alumni support, recent events and speaker, as well as an announcement of publication of our Executive Director's new book

Features

Louisiana in the Distance

An Academy Fellow considers what he's left behind. By Josh Britton (Class of 2008)

Loving Your Neighbor in the City

Reflections on an urban ministry conference by Wendell Kimbrough ('07), Ali Phillips ('08) and Will Weir ('08)

Fellows Teaching Topics

The third part of the Academy program is based around Fellows' teaching time. This year topics included T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, the ethical considerations of litigation lawyers, examining determinism, survey of issues in American healthcare, considering the impact of short-term charity work, cosmology and the origins of the earth, basics of neuroscience, appreciating modern art, Southern literature (Walker Percy and Flannery O'Connor), gender themes in Percy's *The Moviegoer*, characteristics of a healthy church, international communication, themes in Marilynne Robison's *Gilead* and for fun, a lesson in ballroom dancing.

Class of 2009

We are currently reviewing applications for the Class of 2009 and will be conducting interviews for the final round in the next several weeks. For more information please contact the staff at academy@tff.org.

Alumni to Provide a Future Fellowship

Last November, Board Members of the Trinity Forum Academy offered a challenge its sixty-four alumni. They would match dollar for dollar all monies raised or pledged for 2008 up \$25,000. We are proud to announce that 86% of the alumni participated, generously, pledging over \$14,000 during the Challenge. Due to the success of the Challenge, the Academy has decided to pledge these gifts towards the new Legacy Fund. The establishment of the Legacy Fund is the next step in laying a firm financial foundation for the future of the Academy.

Some of our Recent Speakers & Events

See our full list of speakers and activities here.

- o March 6: The Friends of the Academy Annual Dinner hosted at Osprey Point. **Dr. Os Guinness** was the keynote speaker.
- o March 16: Guest Speaker – **Dr. Francis Collins**, director of the Human Genome Project
- o April 8: Guest Speaker – **Dr. Michael Lindsay**, author of *Faith in the Halls of Power*
- o April 9: Guest Speaker – **Gary Haugen**, founder and President of International Justice Mission

New Book Published by Academy Executive Director Dr. David Norman

Brain, Mind and Soul in the Theological Psychology of Donald Mackay, 1922-1987

Click here to read the forward by Dr. Malcom Jeeves, former President of The Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Forward to Dr. David Norman's

Brain, Mind and Soul in the Theological Psychology of Donald Mackay, 1922-1987

by Emeritus Professor Malcolm Jeeves, C.B.E., F.Med Sci., F.B.Ps.S., F.R.S.E., Past President, The Royal Society of Edinburgh

The United States government named the 1990s the Decade of the Brain. The current decade has been labeled the Decade of the Mind. The media daily report exciting discoveries made by those studying the relation of mind and brain. But debates about the relation of mind and brain are not conveniently confined to cognitive neuroscientists and philosophers of mind. They spill over into the concerns of theologians, ethicists and those concerned with debates about how free we are to act and behave as we would choose.

For more than half a century the views of one neuroscientist/philosopher, the late Professor Donald MacKay, had a major influence on debates about mind and brain and soul and body. Donald MacKay's views continue to influence discussions not only amongst philosophers of mind and brain, but also amongst philosophical theologians. This widespread influence calls for as clear a statement of the views that Donald MacKay had on a series of important issues at the interfaces of science and faith. This book provides it. David Norman has performed an invaluable service to scientists, philosophers, theologians and all those who take their Christian faith seriously.

Dealing as MacKay often did with complex issues, and even given his remarkable ability to expound his ideas clearly, it remains the case that it has been, and still is, all too easy to misrepresent what Donald MacKay was really saying. David Norman sets Donald MacKay's thinking in the context of his personal background and beliefs and of his

activities as a scientist and leading apologist for the continuing relevance of Christian faith.

This book traces out, from MacKay's many published works, the way his thinking began, was presented and developed on topics such as complementarity, logical relativity, and individual eschatology and just what he meant by describing himself as a Comprehensive Realist.

As David Norman spells out the story, he highlights the pitfalls that even some distinguished thinkers have fallen into in interpreting some of Donald MacKay's many writings. How do we know the difference between a set of contradictory statements and a set of complementary statements? What is the relationship between brain stories and mind stories? What exactly do we mean by logical relativity and logical complementarity? And how are answers to these questions relevant to widespread debates about individual responsibility and individual eschatology? And he reminds us never to forget Donald MacKay's insistence upon the need at all times for 'Semantic hygiene' and, as a Christian, a constant recognition of our radical dependence on the sustaining power of our Creator. And he asks whether some of Donald MacKay's views changed towards the end of his life as he reflected further on topics such as re-embodiment and resurrection.

All of the issues listed above are elegantly expounded and sympathetically dealt with by David Norman and we are all greatly in his debt for doing so. My comments on this book are not as a disinterested academic. I met Donald MacKay towards the end of the Second World War and the

late 1940s onwards our mutual scientific interests and issues at the interface of science and our shared Christian faith led to frequent meetings and a deep enduring friendship developed. He was my best man at our wedding and I was with him a few days before he died. I, like all those who knew him,

will continue to give thanks for his life and his penetrating thinking. As someone who was thus privileged to know Donald MacKay as a friend, colleague, and co-author, for more than 50 years, I am delighted now to welcome and hope for the widest possible circulation of this timely book.

Louisiana in the Distance

by Josh Britton ('08)



If I feel a sense of responsibility for any place in the world, it's south Louisiana. I spent the first twenty-two years of my life there and I have been shaped by that place in more ways than I can count. Much of that shaping came from a dense network of family and friends. I went to college at LSU in Baton Rouge, just a short distance from the small town where I grew up amidst my extended family. Until I came to Maryland last August as a Trinity Forum Academy Fellow, the longest I had ever been away from home was two months.

It is perhaps unsurprising that much of my thinking and reading during my time at the Academy has concerned the notion of place - specifically, how relationships develop within the contours of shared places and how those places affect who we are and how we live. I began thinking seriously about place

after hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit my state in the fall of 2005, as I was starting my senior year of college. The damage was a local and inescapable concern for residents of south Louisiana. After the storms, we couldn't just change the channel or click a new link to escape the story. Even if the rest of the world moved on, we still had a devastated region and a dysfunctional major city to tend to.

Growing up, I thought New Orleans was just a smelly, crime-ridden, bizarre place. And while it is all of those things, after Katrina it also appeared beautiful and vulnerable. Louisiana's problems have been well documented, but the storms helped me appreciate how blessed I have been by my home state. Here was a place that had not only given rise to jazz and jambalaya in the French Quarter but had sustained the Otts, the Joneses, and the Brittons in Livingston Parish - generations of my ancestors who had planted themselves in one place and worked hard to make it better. Aware of all this, I decided to leave.

I wasn't tired of Louisiana, but I needed an opportunity to think critically about my future plans. The Academy was a chance to experience a new place and to gain perspective on my life, so almost two years to the day after Katrina, I arrived on Maryland's Eastern Shore for nine months of

reflection and study. I left the community I had known my whole life for a new kind of community - one consisting of eleven strangers with whom I would share a place that was new to all of us. Moving to a new place meant learning to adjust to its responsibilities: in this case, it meant attending matins, reading for class, working in the lodge, and learning to love the people around me. As I settled into the patterns of life here, I was tempted to see them as tedious and repetitive. But patterns and daily responsibilities are inescapable, and I'm learning to see them as opportunities for sustained faithfulness to this community. It is the small acts of daily life – every meal cooked, every prayer prayed, every toilet scrubbed – that work like so many little bricks to build something bigger: a community, a place, a home. This is as true for me here as it was for the generations before me in Louisiana.

The apostle Paul wrote that our citizenship is in heaven. We are indeed wayfarers and strangers. Yet we sojourners make our homes somewhere on earth, even in our transient society. And I have been given a special gift: I am truly "from" somewhere. I

wonder if that means I have a unique responsibility to Louisiana. Fixing a broken state government, transforming the economy, and restoring New Orleans are huge tasks that will require the sustained faithfulness of generations of people. But as a Christian, how can I despair of hard, incremental work? Can I not trust that even in Louisiana, in spite of the state's struggles, God is working out his mysterious redemptive plan?

I long to be back in the place I've always called home, but I suspect my journey is just beginning. In the years ahead, I may pursue jobs and a graduate degree in places outside of Louisiana. I wonder whether I'll feel at home in those places. The truth is, I may not feel at home even if I return to Louisiana, but I can't imagine a better place to plant myself. There is a lifetime of good work to be done there, and I love the state and its people. While it is not my eternal home, it is a place suffused with brokenness and hope, a place yearning for redemption and fulfillment – much like this native son who hears the faint call of jazz music everywhere he goes.

Loving Your Neighbor in the City

Reflections by three Academy Fellows

Wendell Kimbrough

2007 Academy Alumni. Wendell is currently working at Church of the Advent, a new church planted by The Church of the Resurrection in Washington, DC. As a member of the ministry team mapping out the future of the church, he is able to combine his passions for ministry to the poor, composing and performing music, and a vision for community renewal.

I had only been in DC for a few weeks when I went to the first planning meeting for the upcoming "urban ministry" symposium. A date had been set and a keynote speaker hired, but most of the details were still in the making. As a new staff

member at one of the three churches planning the symposium (The Church of the Resurrection), I was playing catch-up: learning my way around DC, trying to plan a conference on helping the poor in a city new to me, and learning how to partner with

other churches. What I got was a crash course in all three and a glimmer of hope about the movement of God's spirit in our city.

After months of planning, in January, the 2-day symposium titled "Loving Your Neighbor: The Church in the City" took place. Bob Lupton, a 30-year veteran of community development among the poor in Atlanta, was the keynote speaker. He told stories from his experience using skills and resources that were not traditionally considered "ministry skills"—real estate development, property management, and finance, for example—to help the poor turn their blighted communities into desirable places to live. The stories he told were encouraging and welcoming—leaving many thinking, "hey, I could do something like this."

In the adventure of helping to plan and host this symposium, two big ideas have begun circulating in my mind. First, simply the turnout at the event seems to indicate a movement in the culture of the churches in DC, perhaps nationally. For most of the twentieth-century it seems, "social justice" issues have been the concern of liberal mainline churches, while conservative Evangelicals eschewed social justice for evangelism. That general split—which has long been a scourge on the American church—did not manifest itself in the attendance of this conference. We had anticipated less than 300 people, mostly from our three churches (Grace DC,

Christ Our Shepherd, and Resurrection). Instead, 460 Christians from 42 different churches around the city showed up, over half of which were not from the three sponsor congregations. We saw Christians from churches across the political spectrum with an enthusiastic interest in loving their neighbors better.

The other idea that the symposium brought into my mind is the prospect of continued partnership between churches in DC. I think back to Paul's epistles that were city-centric, "to the church in Galatia," not to "the Presbyterian church in Galatia." And although I understand and appreciate the importance of corporate worship happening in multiple congregations with different cultural nuances, I am now thinking hard about how our churches could continue to partner across denominational and cultural lines in order to better serve the city we share as home. Having tasted and seen that partnership is possible and beneficial, I am now eager to continue in that path, and this is not something that was on my radar before.

I pray that the impact of our little symposium reverberates widely and that Christians in this city and others will begin to explore new models for laboring together for the Kingdom of God. Maybe God is at work prompting this movement even now. I certainly hope so.

Ali Phillips

Academy Class of 2008. Ali is working on a project to evaluate how a physician's assistant might best approach community health as a ministry to the poor and marginalized. Upon graduation from the Academy, Ali will work at Christ House, a DC homeless ministry in Columbia Heights, where she can gain the clinical hours she needs before applying to a physician's assistant graduate program. She recently led several days of class at the Academy on the current state of American health care.

I've had a hard time with the phrase "mercy ministry" ever since the fall when I first learned that what I wanted to do, namely, love

people, actually had an official title in the church (taken from Luke 10). My frustrations with the "mercy

ministry” label reached a climax at the conference on poverty.

I loved being around people who wanted to love their neighbors better, but I couldn’t help but feel a certain tension when people talked about loving the poor as an implicitly separate ministry within the church. Mercy ministry is loving people. We are all commanded to love people and this includes the poor.

At the conference Lupton focused on inner city justice problems, such as, affordable housing, health care, and quality education. After our weekend in DC, I was challenged to think more about my future as a physician’s assistant (PA) and how I want to love and advocate for people who experience marginalization within the health care system.

How do we advocate for members of our communities denied access to the current health care system? Is health care a right of each person or a gift? And if it’s a gift that not everyone has access to, what should the church do about this discrimination? These questions ultimately funneled down to the more basic question—how should we think about living and dying as Christians.

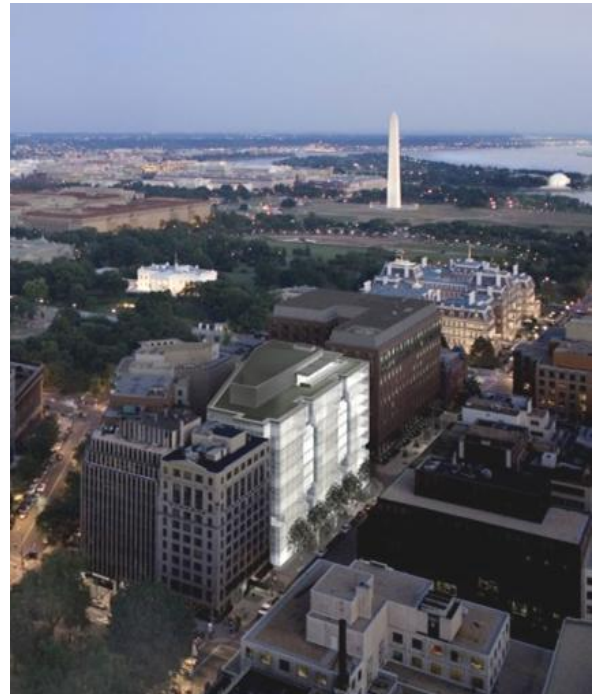
In Psalm 90, David asked the Lord to teach him to number his days. After reading this Psalm last week, it struck me how much David’s request contrasts the mindset that drives the current health care system to extend our days as much as possible. At what cost

Will Weir

Academy Class of 2008. Will is a gifted musician and literary thinker. At the Academy he is developing an assessment of the modern worship music movement and how musicians can worship God with integrity.

In the weeks leading up to the *Loving Your Neighbor* conference, I had honestly begun to prepare myself for what I thought would be a fifteen-

does this frenzied search for immortality come? Our hope rests in the Lord and this is the same real hope we extend to the people we love. However, Jesus not only forgave sins, He also healed the lame (Luke 5). My prayer is that I will follow Jesus’ lead in loving people well and offering them the only hope that endures.



Becoming a PA represents an opportunity for me to continue loving people and engaging structural problems present in the current health care system. And my hope for the church is that we will pursue transformation through the gift of the Gospel within the context of committed relationships and just institutions.

me, whose sinfulness and deficiencies always seem to form a roadblock on the way to that mission. But the conference didn't focus on the Church's insufficiency in the face of a task as large as caring for an entire city's poor population; nor was the focus on my or anyone else's failure to care for the poor. Instead, the conference was about God's absolute sufficiency and commitment to seeing that his will is in fact done on this earth.

Where I expected to experience a critical performance evaluation, I actually caught a vision for and evidence of God's work in interrupting and

overturning the cycle of poverty in our cities. Instead of only feeling guilty about my lack of showing Christ's mercy, I felt more like I had benched myself from participating in what God is already doing. The heart of the conference wasn't the burden of mercy ministry on our shoulders but the hope we have in God to carry out his purposes. Desiring to love the poor no longer has to be a duty-driven thing for me. Instead, the conference helped me begin to realize that I can love out of freedom and act out of hope: freedom from my guilt and inadequacies, and hope in God's faithfulness and provision.

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Note: The opinions, articles, and other media represented in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the Trinity Forum Academy, but serve to provide a forum for personal reflection, engaging culture and encouraging others to do the same.

About Us: The Trinity Forum Academy is a nine-month post-graduate program for young leaders who want to seriously investigate how their faith should affect their vocational calling. Fellows engage in a rigorous curriculum, life in an intentional community, and personal interaction with a range of academic and professional leaders. Upon completion of the program, Fellows are poised to go out and dramatically affect contemporary culture.