

## EVIL AND TERRORISM

### The Role of Religion in International Affairs

The events of September 11, 2001 certainly raised the question of the role of religion in international affairs. Is religion the cause of violence or can it possibly be part of a solution? Is there even a place for religion in politics? Can it be used in international diplomacy, conflict resolution and peacekeeping or does it create even more problems?

Scott Kline (St. Jerome's University) examined these delicate questions in his presentation to the Interdisciplinary Coffee Talk Society last September. The *Forum* is pleased to publish an article written by Prof. Kline based on his talk. (Page 3)

### THE COURAGE OF HER CONVICTIONS

Fifty years ago, Saskatchewan academic Hilda Neatby caused a sensation with her book, *So Little for the Mind*. Her critique of Canada's education system still resonates today. Written by James Pitsula of the University of Regina and reprinted from *The Beaver*, published by Canada's National Historical Society. (Page 6)

**The FAUW is interested in hearing accounts of problems encountered by faculty when applying for benefits. (See p. 16)**

### PREP101 – COMING TO A UNIVERSITY NEAR YOU!

Actually, it's already here. PREP101 is a tutoring service "founded by university students and operated by university students for the benefit of university students." In addition to operating at Toronto, Guelph and Western Ontario, PREP101 is currently offering sessions for five first-year courses at UW. It is trying to recruit UW graduate students to teach prep sessions and is informing UW's "stakeholders," i.e., instructors, of its mission. (Page 10)

### ACADEMIC STATUS OF UW LIBRARIANS: BARELY EXISTENT?

Anne Fullerton (UW Library) summarizes the events of a recent CAUT Librarians Conference entitled, "The Academic Status of Librarians: Under-valued? Under Threat?" At the conference, she presented a history of the situation of UW librarians, including two failed attempts to negotiate their representation by the FAUW. (Page 18)

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Catherine Schryer  
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Greetings and Salutations!

The FAUW has accomplished much this semester but much remains to be done.

Here are some of the highlights of events that occurred this semester:

- Thanks to TRACE we were involved in an event welcoming new faculty members. Our involvement included participation in a workshop that outlined ways to balance research and teaching and yet still achieve tenure. We also co-hosted an evening event for new faculty and their companions.
- Thanks to Frank Reynolds and the members of the Political Relations Committee (Rob Mann, Ray McLenaghan and Ken Westhues) we co-sponsored, together with the Staff Association and the student federations, an all candidates' meeting in the week prior to the provincial election. The meeting, held in the Student Life Center, was well attended by faculty, staff and students.
- The Hagey Committee, led by Conrad Hewitt, organized a very successful lecture and visit by Atom Egoyan, a well known Canadian director of such films as *The Sweet Hereafter* and *Ararat*. Despite taking place on a wet, miserable evening, the lecture was well attended by faculty, staff, students and members of the wider Kitchener-Waterloo community. The lecture explored the difficulties involved in directing and producing *Ararat*, a film that explored the effects on Armenians of the Armenian massacres that occurred in Turkey at the turn of the last century. Audience members clearly found the lecture engaging, as evidenced by the wide ranging question period that ensued and the large attendance at the reception that followed. According to all accounts,

the student workshop that occurred on the following day was also well attended – with many students asking questions about the details of writing, directing and producing films. Thanks to members of the Hagey Committee, Heather Carnahan, Garry Rempel, Laura Johnson, Prabhakar Ragde, Paul Wesson and especially Gerd Hauck, for all their help in arranging this event.

- Our personnel committee consisting of Ray McLenaghan, Melanie Campbell, Frank Reynolds, and Pat Moore successfully navigated the University's complex hiring procedure and hired our new staff person, Sandra Rung.

The FAUW also continued its work on the Faculty Relations Committee (FRC) with special attention being paid to two issues: The Pensions and Benefits (P & B) Committee and the PeopleSoft software system that currently structures student registration, course organization and program development. This semester the P&B has been of particular concern to the Board as part of each P & B meeting has been held in confidential session. This process effectively prevented the Board from communicating with its own P&B members on an issue that could have had some significance. Thanks to intervention at the FRC and our own spokespeople on the P & B committee (Sandra Burt, Jock Mackay, and Alan Macnaughton) we have reached an agreement with the Administration that includes clearer guidelines regarding confidential sessions and an understanding that such sessions will be exceedingly rare.

The members of the FRC have also been questioning the implementation of the PeopleSoft system. Our position is that academic concerns must predominate and that a software system cannot overrule such concerns. We have secured ongoing updates on the system and promises that all academic units will be consulted on the implementation of the system.

Still much remains to be done. We are in the process of developing the Council of Representatives (CoR). The CoR consists of representatives from every department and school, and we depend on this group to keep us up-to-date on issues of particular relevance to faculty from all areas of campus. The role of this body has shifted over the last few years. We now actively seek input from this body and try to keep them informed through an email list about local, provincial and federal events that could affect faculty. At present, we do not have full representation from all departments on this group – a situation which we intend to correct.

Finally, this year we expanded our annual Fall General Meeting plans to include a reception and welcome to new faculty members. Members who attended the Fall General Meeting held December 3 at 3:00 p.m. in DC 1302 were also invited to attend the reception for new faculty.

## The “Axis of Evil” and the “War on Terrorism”: The Intersection of Religion and International Affairs

by Scott Kline  
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Invoking the moral and religious language of “evil” has long suited the political interests of U.S. Presidents. In his first inaugural address in 1913, Woodrow Wilson lamented that the riches of the United States had contributed to a debased form of individualism, and that the government, especially under the Republican leadership of President Taft, had become a debauched “tool of evil.” In his 1941 inaugural address, Franklin D. Roosevelt praised his administration’s ability to “put away many evil things” that preceded the Great Depression. In June 1982, Ronald Reagan delivered the first of his famous “Evil Empire” speeches in the British House of Commons. In this speech, the ostensible leader of the free world comforted the British, and the rest of the Western world, with knowledge that “the forces of good ultimately rally and triumph over evil.” Reagan used the language of good triumphing over evil to bestow moral legitimacy on his decision to escalate the nuclear arms race against the “evil” Soviet empire. And more recently George W. Bush, in his 2002 State of the Union speech, denounced Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as constituting an “axis of evil.”

While the moral and religious language of evil is by no means new in political discourse, the events of September 11, 2001 have raised the issue for some policy analysts, foreign affairs strategists, and academics regarding the role of religion in international conflict. The recent spate of articles, editorials, and books on Islamic fundamentalism, the political histories of Islamic regions, and Islamic cultural practices (for example, women donning the burqa in Afghanistan) attest to the growing interest in the religion of Islam and the leaders who identify themselves as Muslims. Likewise, numerous articles in popular media, including *Newsweek* and *The Economist*, have focused on George Bush’s Christian commitment and his spiritual journey from spoiled child of influential parents, to family man with a drinking problem, to born-again Christian, to owner of the Texas Rangers baseball team, to leader of the war on terrorism. Scholarly works, such as Mark Juergensmeyer’s *Terror in the Mind of God* (2000, 2003) and John L. Esposito’s *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, have been published and in some cases reprinted to address the religious dimensions of both the “war on terrorism” and the U.S.-British led occupation of Iraq.

In all of this work, old questions once again resurface: In liberal democratic societies, is there a place for religion, or at least religious discourse, in politics? Does the inclusion of religion in international diplomacy, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping only create more tension? Should nation building exclude religion from the newly installed political and legal institutions? And, as recently asked at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, is religion the cause of violence or the solution?



Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Prize Winner and Chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Photo by Megan Shore)

Questions raised in the aftermath of 9/11 about the relationship between religion and international affairs were certainly not the first of their kind raised in the U.S. At the onset of the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1979, the Jimmy Carter administration, the CIA, and the Pentagon all found themselves scurrying to find foreign service agents, intelligence officers, and military personnel who could work in Persian – the primary language of Iran. Just as important, they also sought out trusted political scientists and other academics who understood the kind of revolutionary Islam preached by Ayatollah Khomeini. There were few. While there were many reasons for faulty or lacking intelligence, one of the key reasons was the shortage of agents, officers, and military personnel trained to deal with the religious aspects of the hostage crisis. As a result, the newly-elected Reagan administration vowed to restructure the intelligence community and

revise the foreign service curricula in order to meet the challenges presented by Iranian clerical rule and, to a lesser extent, the Libyan dictator, Muammar el-Qaddafi. One aspect of these changes was a new emphasis on studying the nature of religion and politics in Islamic countries. Soon after this, however, rising Cold War tensions once again refocused foreign affairs on the movements of the Soviet Union and its efforts to install communist governments in strategic locations. Ironically, during the 1980s, the U.S. intelligence community and the military were often working closely with the Muslim mujahideen (“holy warriors”) in the Afghanistan-Soviet war. Yet, because the relationship was framed by the political realist terms of the Cold War, the U.S. failed to understand the religious dimensions of Afghanistan’s resistance.

In the aftermath of the Bloodless Revolution in East Germany in 1989 and the dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1991, there were U.S. policy analysts, policy-makers, and academics who proudly proclaimed the final victory for the democratic-capitalist West over the communist U.S.S.R. One theorist, Francis Fukuyama, went so far as to proclaim the end of history. His thesis was that, with the dialectical tension between Cold War enemies gone, the emergence of the U.S. as the only superpower would initiate a period of unprecedented global peace (“End of History,” *The National Interest*, 1989; *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992). Not long after publication, Fukuyama’s argument provided a basis for George H.W. Bush’s declaration of a new world order. With international politics stabilized by a Hobbesian-esque Leviathan, namely the United States, capital could now move freely between trading states, or so the theory went. In effect, trade was supposed to become the mechanism for peace in this new world order, and Thomas Friedman’s Golden Arches Theory – “No two countries with a McDonald’s have ever waged war” – would provide anecdotal evidence of trade’s power to foster the new peace (see *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, 1999).

In response to Fukuyama, Samuel P. Huntington, a noted political scientist from Harvard University, argued that despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, global conflict would continue to arise and threaten the United States. This new pattern of conflict, Huntington posited, would be a conflict between civilizations based on clashing values and identities. In other words, even though the Christian West had won the Cold War, the West was inevitably going to face aggressive opposition from among the rest of the world’s seven civilizations, which include the Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Christian Orthodox, Western, and Latin American civilizations. In particular, he argued, Islam posed the most immediate threat to global conflict as throngs of angry young Muslims, many enamoured by the lure of Islamic fundamentalism, would rise up against the values of the

Christian West (“The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* 72 [1993] 28–50; *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of World Order*, 1996). To Huntington’s credit, he was the first influential political scientist to theorize the role that religion may play in post-Cold War global politics. Yet, as the Canadian political theologian, Gregory Baum, has observed, Huntington’s thesis was essentially a call for the renewal of Western civilization, which, according to Huntington, had become soft and uncertain of its Christian inheritance. Because of this agenda, Huntington’s thesis failed to treat the complex nature of civilizations and their capacity for peacefully reconciling conflicting values.



President Bush and Pope John Paul II exchange formal greetings in May 2003. The Vatican opposed the US-British “preemptive war” on Iraq. (White House photo)

By the early 1990s, religious studies scholars and conflict theorists interested in global politics and religion had also started to examine the role of religion in a world recovering bipolar superpower domination. The groundbreaking anthology entitled *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (1994), edited by Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, brought together members of the Center for Strategic and International Studies to assess the prevailing style of diplomacy, which, the author contended, tends to exclude or misunderstand the role of religion in foreign affairs. The general thesis of the book is that, if religion has played a part in international or domestic conflict, then religion must play a part in diplomatic discussions, peacebuilding, and truth commissions. In other words, to ignore the religious worldviews, symbols, and language of those involved in conflict is to avoid the reality of the world in which people live. Consequently, the dominant style of modern diplomacy, which tends to be suspicious of religion, must be reexamined in light of the actual context in which people frame their ethics and politics. To this end, Mark Juergensmeyer, a sociologist of religion, rightly argues that the religious framing of a community’s context, even in fundamentalist terms, is often the only way in which

the chaos, the injustice, and the violence of that community's world can be understood and explained. Replacing that religious framing and narrative with such values as political liberalism and free-market consumerism, often creates more confusion, fosters bitterness toward the colonizer, and provides the conditions for violent resistance. Indeed, many scholars of religion fear precisely such a scenario unfolding with the Bush administration's approach to Middle East nation building (e.g., Douglas Johnston, ed., *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, 2003).

R. Scott Appleby, author of *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (2000), and Marc Gopin, author of *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (2002), are two religious studies scholars who are working within this new framework of religious peacebuilding. Both Appleby (Director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University) and Gopin (Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University) resist the liberal temptation to privatize religion and, at the same time, to see inter-religious contact in the political sphere as essentially violent. Rather, they argue that religion in the public sphere of politics may provide the means to negotiate both justice and peace.

In the months immediately following the terrorist attacks on the U.S., the Canadian Centre for Policy Development initiated a series of consultations regarding Canada's relationship to Islamic states and communities with significant Muslim populations. I, along with other

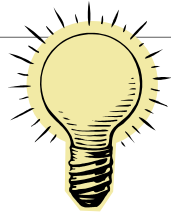
academics from the field of religious studies – Gregory Baum from McGill University, Rabbi David Novak from the University of Toronto, Riffat Hassan from the University of Louisville, to name a few – were invited to participate in these consultations in order to provide some perspective on the role that religion will play in “the war on terrorism” (published as *Canada and the Muslim World: A Summary Report on Expert Meetings*, 2003, <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>). At a recent conference entitled “Evil and International Affairs”, sponsored by the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, my U.S. colleagues, who were from various disciplines and institutions, including the U.S. Army War College, were astonished and yet enthused by the Canadian government's openness to bring in scholars of religion at any level of foreign policy development. Indeed, today it is essential that political scientists, diplomats, politicians, and policy analysts understand the social, moral, and political complexities of the world religions – Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This will require a commitment to open dialogue between political scientists and religious studies scholars as well as a commitment from universities and government to support this kind of interdisciplinary work.

*This article is based on a presentation delivered in the Fall 2003 term to the Interdisciplinary Coffee Talk Society, organized by Dr. Achim Kempf (Applied Mathematics).*

*The Forum thanks Dr. Kline for preparing this article.*

## HAGEY LECTURES

The Hagey  
Lecture  
Committee welcomes  
suggestions for future  
speakers. Please send your  
suggestions to Pat Moore,  
FAUW Office, MC 4002 or  
[facassoc@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:facassoc@uwaterloo.ca)



## FAUW FORUM

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## The Courage of Her Convictions: Hilda Neatby and the Great Education Debate

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Fifty years ago a book was published that accomplished what very few Canadian books have been able to do. Hilda Neatby's *So Little for the Mind* not only soared to the top of the bestseller lists, but also sparked a national debate on an important topic. Her attack on so-called "progressive" trends in education provoked lively comment from friend and foe alike. One admirer wrote, "You have this day lighted such a fire!..." while another enthused, "Thank God someone with the ability to do so has at last taken the pains to expose these frauds posing as educators!" The *Montreal Gazette* labeled her "the lady who has caused the biggest dust-up in Canadian education this year." Close to 8000 hardcover copies of the book sold in the first year, necessitating four printings and a second edition. The Toronto public library in 1954 cited it as their most frequently borrowed non-fiction book. Editorials and letters to the editor in newspapers from coast to coast discussed the issues that Neatby had raised, and Parent-Teacher Associations across the country made it the focus of their meetings. Although Neatby said that it was not quite true that like Byron she awoke one day to find herself famous, she did become something of a national celebrity. The publicity garnered the University of Saskatchewan history professor a nomination as Canada's Woman-of-the-Year.

But fame came at a price. The book drew sharp criticism as well as fulsome praise, and some of negative reaction was painfully personal in nature. An anonymous critic sent a postcard that read,

Frustrated virgin  
thrice-ambitious-vain  
whose mindless thoughts  
spawned by neurotic spleen  
loosened the clots  
of her encrusted brain.

The Director of Educational Research at the Ontario College of Education dismissed her ideas as "not worth a nickel each," and the Saskatchewan Minister of Education compared her book to the Kinsey Report on the sexual behavior of American women, also published in 1953. The comparison was a strange one, since the books had nothing in common except that they had both attracted a good deal of publicity. The Minister described Neatby's approach to her topic as "emotional," and accused her of having dipped her pen in poison not ink.

To top it off, he dubbed her the "educational McCarthy," after the American senator who used smear tactics in his Communist witch-hunt.

In the face of all the criticism, Hilda Neatby held her ground. She had given no quarter, and she expected none. Quoting Shakespeare, she assured a friend, "I am in blood steeped so far, I have no intention of turning back." Besides, she had many supporters, some of them among the most prominent thinkers in the country. Historians A.R.M. Lower and Roger Graham, political scientists R. MacGregor Dawson and Eugene Forsey, philosopher George Grant, and Charlotte Whitton, Mayor of Ottawa, conveyed their congratulations. In addition, countless "ordinary" Canadians wrote to give approval and encouragement. Some were teachers who felt oppressed by the system they worked under; others were parents who worried that their children were not learning very much in school. A large number were women, who identified with a member of their own sex under fire from the predominantly male education establishment. Their concern may also have stemmed from the traditional maternal responsibility for the raising and nurturing of children. It was their children who were at risk if the schools were failing to their job. The letters poured in and gave Neatby a much-needed boost.

At the annual meeting of the Regina branch of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation in 1954, Miss Margaret Messer, a local teacher, introduced a motion condemning an article that had appeared in the STF Bulletin. It was a reprint of a letter to the *Vancouver Sun* from one Dr. D.C. Smith, inspector of schools at Nelson, British Columbia. The letter characterized *So Little for the Mind* as "an almost hysterical diatribe," which would be "unacceptable even at the undergraduate level of research." Miss Messer asked the convention to affirm the pride of teachers in Hilda Neatby's contribution to the education and culture of Saskatchewan and Canada. Miss Louella Lovering seconded the motion, but it went down to defeat. Mr. J.E. Cooper advised delegates to let sleeping dogs lie. "If ever a bow-wow needed a rest, it's this one."

Such adjectives as "hysterical" and "emotional" would not have been applied to the book if the author had been a man. Far from being hysterical, it was a well-reasoned and richly documented inquiry into the state of

elementary and high school education in Canada. It was also fun to read. As one reviewer noted, “The wit is really corking.” The main theme was exactly captured in the title. Neatby maintained that Canada’s schools had deteriorated to the point that they were frankly anti-intellectual. They were so busy “socializing” children and indoctrinating them with correct attitudes that they no longer nourished their minds. Part of the problem was that teachers’ training colleges focused on “method” to the neglect of “content.” The traditional method of requiring children to learn a body of knowledge had been abandoned in favor of teaching concepts and “learning skills.” For Neatby, the opposition between content and process was a false one because the mind needed something to think on. One might as well say, “The important thing is not to consume food but to digest it.”

At a deeper level – and this was a point that most of the critics missed – the book condemned the school’s failure to transmit the intellectual and cultural heritage of Western civilization. Students were being denied access to “the greatest that has been thought and said.” Neatby defined education as the discovery that the world is more interesting than oneself. From this discovery came humility, a sense of awe and wonder, a forgetfulness of self, and moral and spiritual growth. She wrote that all that is required of a teacher is two things – to love his subject and to love his students. All the teaching techniques in the world will not help, if these two elements are missing. She liked to quote the Renaissance physician and scholar, Sir Thomas Browne, “Reason is the debt we owe to God, the homage we pay for not being beasts.” We are endowed with minds and are expected to use them. In Neatby’s judgment, intellectual development was the *main* purpose of schools. If they did not accomplish this goal, first and foremost, they failed to achieve their mission, regardless of the other good things they did in the way of instilling “cooperative attitudes” or preparing youth for “democratic citizenship.”

Her book and the debate it generated were unusual events in the 1950s, a decade known for conformity and clearly defined gender roles. A highly intellectual woman making a strong statement in the public sphere was a rare phenomenon. Television sitcoms like *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It To Beaver* modeled the ideal family in which women deferred to their husbands and stayed at home looking after their children. What made Hilda Neatby different?

Part of the answer lies in her upbringing and the formative influences of childhood. The Neatbys emigrated to Canada from England in 1906. The family consisted of Andrew, a medical doctor, his wife, Ada, and 8 children: Edith, nearly 15; Walter, 12; Alan, 10; Margery, 8; Kenneth, 6; Leslie, 4; Hilda, 2, and infant Ronald. Although the baby died soon after they arrived, Ada gave birth to daughter Kate in 1907, restoring the

family to 10 in number. Despite his professional training, Dr. Neatby was not a good provider, at least not as far as material things were concerned. He liked to withdraw to his study to read, allowing his medical practice to wither. Those few patients he did attract were put off by his insistence that they abstain from alcohol as part of their treatment.

The family settled first at Earl Grey, Saskatchewan, a village about 40 miles north of Regina on the CPR branch line. In an attempt to mend their fortunes they took up a homestead in 1908. The idea was to supplement Dr. Neatby’s meager income by the production and sale of wheat and livestock. He consented to the plan only on the condition that he be allowed to take with him his library of 3000 books. Sons Walter and Alan, then aged 14 and 12 respectively, had to make 4 trips hauling the cargo across open prairie by ox cart to the homestead site, about 10 miles southwest of the town of Watrous. Despite his failure to support the family, his children admired their father’s idealism and devotion to literature. It is easy to understand where Hilda’s great love of learning came from.

The children attended the local country school, where Hilda was treated as an outsider, partly because of her English background and partly because of her braininess. A schoolyard bully harassed her, and on one occasion, which remained vivid in her memory, she ran away and then was caught with her back to a wall facing a semi-circle of children taunting and mocking her. “I can’t explain it,” she later recalled, “but it is the most dreadful experience I have ever had and associated with the rather queer life we lived, I think it gave me a fear of my fellow man that is permanent. Such things are brutalizing at the time, but I suppose in the long run they may be good.” She learned there was no point running away from a fight. The enemy had to be faced head on.

Life on the homestead was far from easy. The first house, which was little better than a crate, had a leaky roof. The younger children spent one rainy Sunday afternoon under an umbrella in the living room, while their mother read to them. When the cold weather set in, the youngest boy was assigned the task of plugging the cracks around the windows with dough. Even so, the temperature fell below freezing at night, and in the morning ice had to be melted for cooking the daily porridge. A frozen loaf of bread was placed on top of the heater, and, as it thawed, slices were cut off and distributed one by one to the family gathered around the stove.

Toil and suffering can break a person, but it seemed to strengthen the Neatbys. All of them grew up to lead useful and productive lives, and some of them achieved distinction in their chosen fields. Exposed from an early age to good literature, they acquired the habit of reading. Leslie, Hilda’s older brother by 2 years, had by age 9

already read Charles Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*. But intellectual achievement was never viewed in isolation, but always placed in the context of moral and spiritual development. Dr. Neatby was a deeply religious man, who enjoyed debating points of theology. In later years, he preached for the Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon and nearby towns. His strict religious convictions rubbed off on Hilda, and her Presbyterian faith became the sheet anchor of her life. Religion for her was not just a matter of fuzzy warm feelings. It was important to know precisely what you believed and why you believed it. It bothered her that "progressive" educators seemed to know so little about the philosophical foundations of what they were doing. She always insisted on getting to the root of the things.

In 1919 the Neatby family left the homestead and moved to Saskatoon, mainly to give the younger children the opportunity to attend better schools. Hilda studied at the University of Saskatchewan from 1920 to 1924, graduating at the age of 20 with a B.A. Honors degree in history. Her professors sized her up as shy, but brilliant, and always ready to debate a disputable point. After her first history class, she decided that she wanted to be a university professor. In the fall of 1930, she began doctoral work at the University of Minnesota under the supervision of A.L. Burt and received an assistantship, which paid her tuition and covered living costs. She had friends and an active social life, but apparently no romantic relationships. It is not clear why she never married. Michael Hayden, who wrote a short biography and edited her writings, concluded, "she liked to associate with men, she liked to be flattered by them, but above all she liked to argue with them. Hilda could not live without intellectual argument." She came to believe that most men did not like women who were intelligent.

Neatby graduated with her Ph.D. in Canadian history in 1934, the worst possible time to be looking for work. Because of the economic depression, academic jobs were scarce, and those that were available generally went to male candidates. Out of desperation, she took a job as supervisor of a boarding school for girls for \$25 a month and board. Then, miraculously, she received an offer of a contract teaching Modern European History and French at Regina College, a junior college operated by the University of Saskatchewan. She jumped at the opportunity. The hours were long and the work hard, but on the whole she enjoyed it. The uncertain status of women in academe is suggested by the remark of one of her female colleagues as to the proper way of addressing a woman with a Ph.D., "It does seem wrong to call a woman 'Doctor.'"

Neatby could not help noticing how poorly prepared her students were. They came to college expecting to be spoon-fed and without the "faintest idea of how to think or even how to work." She thought standards had declined even in the short time since she had attended

high school. One student interrupted her lecture to ask, "Are these points you are giving in the text?" He had apparently just started to read the text, and it had dawned on him that that the lectures were different. "I am beginning to understand," Neatby confided to her sister Kate, "why so many of them sit and gape without attempting to take notes." Despite or maybe because of her high standards, the students respected her. She was a particular favorite of the ex-servicemen who enrolled in the college after the Second World War. They liked the fact that she did not pull rank. If a student offered an opinion different from her own, she considered it seriously, provided he could back it up with evidence and logic.

The influx of veterans caused university enrolments to soar, and professors were suddenly in demand. The Saskatoon campus decided in 1946 they wanted to hire Neatby – after failing to find a suitable man. She moved from Regina to Saskatoon and settled into the Department of History and a life of teaching and writing. Then in 1949 Vincent Massey invited her to serve on the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. She toured the country hearing briefs and helped compose the final report. The Commission, a landmark in Canadian cultural history, recommended the creation of the Canada Council to support arts and scholarship.

Neatby hit it off with Vincent Massey, and their platonic relationship continued after the Commission had finished its work. When he was appointed Governor General in 1952, he asked her to write speeches for him, which she did for several years. They shared similar opinions on many subjects, including education, and it was he who encouraged her to set down her ideas in a book. He secretly arranged a payment of \$2300 from the Massey Foundation to underwrite her research expenses. Work on the book began in May 1951, and it was published in October 1953.

As many readers acknowledged, a large part of the book's appeal was the writing style, especially the barbed wit. Neatby satirized the "busy work" that often passed for teacher training. Students enrolled in "normal" schools, as colleges of education were then called, were forever making posters, composing scrapbooks, and doing "art" work of all sorts. According to progressive education theory, "children learn by doing," and they must be engaged in "group activities." Neatby made reference to an illustrated article in a teachers' journal on what the students had accomplished in a normal school class. The pictures showed tables and walls "covered with an immense quantity of bric-a-brac over which presumably adult teachers had spent a six weeks' summer course." They included a model Indian village and a mock bakers' shop, the latter decorated with magazine cutouts of cakes and buns. In the background a mural depicted grain elevators, as well as numerous other drawings, charts and models. "It may be well," Neatby



wrote, “to teach a child who does not know it, if there are any such, that cakes are made of flour and flour in turn from wheat. But the innocent ‘layman’ wonders if there is not some better way of teaching him than by him having cut out a picture of a cake and paste it on cardboard, or some better way of teaching the teacher to teach him than by having the teacher, in turn, cut and paste pictures of cakes”. She was reminded of Wackford Squeers, the “pioneer progressive educator” in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Following the “practical mode of teaching,” he set the boys to work washing the windows. “C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, winder, a casement. When the boys knows this out of the book, he goes and does it.” At least, as Neatby sardonically noted, the windows got washed. “One feels that if Mr. Squeers had been in charge of the project on wheat milling, real buns, would have been produced, if only for the Squeers table.”

In another delightful passage, she mocked the progressive educator’s obsession with “motivating” students. Children, it seemed, could not be required to learn simply to dispel their ignorance. According to the Saskatchewan *Elementary School Curriculum* guide, the teacher was to stimulate interest by having the subject of the lesson arise out of a “situation.” For example, a thunderstorm, the burning out of a fuse, or static on the radio could lead into the study of electricity. Nor was it sufficient simply to teach the lesson. It had to culminate in a tangible production, such as a booklet, a model, or a “dramatization of the life of Edison.” Neatby dryly observed, “It would not do merely to ask, ‘What is known about the nature of electricity?’... Instead the teacher must begin by surreptitiously shorting a circuit so as to blow out a fuse, and then exclaim: ‘Well, well, isn’t that interesting? A fuse has blown! Doesn’t it make you want to study electricity? Wouldn’t you like to learn all about it, so that we can produce a play on the life of Edison?’” Progressive educators wanted to deny the fact that the teacher exercised power in the classroom, even the purportedly “child-centered” classroom. Neatby argued that children were intelligent enough to see through the ruses designed to make them feel as if they were in control. As one little boy said, “Cooperation means you gotta.”

What really raised the hackles of Department of Education officials, school administrators and normal school instructors was Neatby’s challenge to their authority. They were, in her opinion, men of technical expertise rather broad culture and general learning. Few had a scholarly acquaintance with an academic discipline, except perhaps for psychology. Forgetting the “glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome,” they turned their minds to the latest in child psychology and school administration. Perhaps her unkindest cut was the suggestion that educational experts were of mediocre intelligence. Rhodes Scholars and winners of the

Governor-General’s Medal were not found in their ranks, and they tended to come not from the top but from the second or third ten per cent of university students. Young men of “neat appearance” and “pleasant personality,” they had an indefinable air of sameness about them. “If you meet Tweedledee in Halifax, Tweedledum meets you in Vancouver.”

This devastating portrait raised a storm of injured protest. Even Neatby admitted that she had been rude to the “experts,” and it was only to be expected that they would be rude to her. What disappointed her, however, was their failure to engage her arguments at a serious level. They vilified her personality, style, scholarship, and “emotionalism,” but evaded the substance of what she had to say. But it wasn’t only her enemies who missed the point. Many of those who liked the book latched on to minor issues and overlooked the central message. They interpreted it as a rallying cry for a return to the 3 R’s and for the restoration of discipline to the classroom, but Neatby’s theme went much deeper. She warned that young people were being denied the cultural, intellectual, and moral legacy of Western civilization. They were left “weak for lack of nourishment and blind from want of vision.” No longer did they have the opportunity to enter “the company of the great in history, in literature, and the arts; and into the mystery and beauty of the world in which they live.”

Neatby had the courage to write *So Little for the Mind* and withstand the criticism it generated because she believed in the truth of what she was saying. As far as she was concerned, education was second only to religion in importance. She learned that lesson from her book-loving and devout Presbyterian father. Growing up in a freezing shack on a prairie homestead, she rose early on winter mornings, huddled at the kitchen table and pored over her books, while the rest of the family slept. As a woman and an intellectual, she knew from personal experience what it was like to be an outsider. By dint of natural ability, but most of all through sheer hard, brutal work, she rose to the top of her profession. A person of her force of character and depth of conviction was not likely to shrink from doing battle for what she believed to be a good cause. *So Little for the Mind* made a mark on the Canadian cultural landscape, one that has not been entirely blotted out. We continue to turn to its pages for enlightenment and inspiration. Its passion still stirs, while its humor brings a smile to the lips.

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Hilda Neatby, *So Little for the Mind* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1953), 44-45.

Hilda Neatby, *A Temperate Dispute* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1954), 87.

*The Forum thanks Prof. Pitsula and The Beaver for permission to reprint this article.*

The following is provided as information for faculty members and NOT as an advertisement.

## **PREP101 – A NEW TUTORING SERVICE FOR STUDENTS AT UW**

Recently, instructors of several first-year courses at UW and graduate students of departments that normally provide teaching assistants for these courses have been contacted by PREP101 ([www.prep101.com](http://www.prep101.com)) a tutoring service “founded by university students and operated by university students for the benefit of university students.” According to the PREP101 website, “Prep Sessions – priced as low as \$9.99/hour – pay major dividends for a minor investment in terms of time and money. Our objective is to ensure that you Ace your Tests/Exams!”

PREP101 currently offers its services at the Universities of Guelph (4 courses), Toronto (12), Waterloo (5) and Western Ontario (4). At present, the UW courses for which prep sessions are being provided are: CHEM 120, ECON 101, MATH 115, MATH 135, MATH 137.

Copies of (i) the letters of information sent to instructors and (ii) the recruitment e-mails sent to graduate students are reproduced below for information.

The Editor wishes to thank both the instructor and graduate student who made these letters available to the Forum.

### **Letter to Course Instructors**

Dear Professor xxxxxx:

My name is Andy McDonald-Romano and I am the Executive Director of PREP101 – a tutoring service founded by university students and operated by university students for the benefit of university students. This is to advise you that PREP101 will be offering Prep Sessions to help students prepare for final exams in a few courses at the University of Waterloo. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about PREP101 and to address the legitimate concerns you may have about our service.

I was privileged to be a university student for many years and I harbor the deepest respect for both the institution and the dedicated individuals who work there. Nevertheless, my experiences during several contracts as a teaching assistant convinced me that a growing cohort of undergraduate students would benefit from extra academic help. At the same time, I was an instructor with a private company that “preps” students for the LSAT/GMAT and realized that undergraduate students would benefit from this teaching model. Finally, it was evident that many highly capable graduate students are eager to teach but are thwarted by the scarcity of opportunities. All of this culminated in the founding of PREP101 in 1999 to fulfill, in some modest way, the following objectives:

- 1) To help undergraduate students prepare for exams by emulating the teaching methods employed in prep courses for the LSAT/GMAT;
- 2) To offer graduate students an opportunity to refine their teaching skills;
- 3) To provide an effective and affordable alternative to independent private tutors;
- 4) To give students an opportunity to run a small business on campus.

Undergraduate students manage PREP101 operations at each campus and we also employ a large number of undergraduate

students and graduate students. All of us take immense pride in providing a terrific service at a very reasonable price – \$9.99/hour including a PREP101 Course Booklet – and we offer bursaries to students who cannot otherwise afford our services. We also provide our services at no charge to students with physical and/or learning disabilities. We believe that PREP101 is an honourable undertaking. This faith is continuously buttressed by the gratitude of undergraduate students – many hundreds have thanked us for helping them to get better grades or simply to pass the course – and the enthusiasm of our instructors.

Prep Sessions span 12 hours over 2 days. They are designed to help students to perform better on exams by honing problem-solving skills and foster effective study skills. Each student is given a Course Booklet (80-120 pages) comprised of course review materials, hundreds of practice questions, exam-writing strategies, and study tips. Prep Sessions involve methodically working through the Course Booklet until students are better acquainted with the problem-solving skills that are essential to academic success. Time is also left over for a question and answer period and the instructor provides an email address to students who wish to email questions later on. Finally, students are given a number of take-home practice exams and we post the solutions online a few days later so students can grade themselves.

We also have great confidence in the expertise of our instructors. To even merit consideration, each prospective instructor must possess a graduate degree and extensive teaching experience. Applicants who possess these credentials undergo a rigorous screening process: 1) an aptitude test in their academic field; 2) an audition where an audience of undergraduate students evaluates their teaching skills; and 3) a preview of a Prep Session where an audience of undergraduate students evaluates their teaching skills. Only applicants who score above 95% on the aptitude test and above 5/6 on student

evaluations at both the audition and the preview have any chance of being hired. Indeed, undergraduate students effectively select PREP101 instructors because evaluations at the audition and the preview determine which applicants are ultimately hired. Similarly, the employment status of each PREP101 instructor is entirely dependent on positive Student Evaluations of their teaching skills at each Prep Session.

PREP101 also prides itself on high ethical standards. We have addressed the legitimate concerns about our service that have surfaced in the past. Among other things, please be assured that:

- PREP101 does not sell old test/exams either with or without solutions;
- Teaching Assistants are strictly prohibited from working for PREP101 in the same course at the same university to avoid any conflict-of-interest;
- PREP101 gives refunds to students who do not benefit from our service;
- PREP101 offers bursaries to students who cannot afford

our service;

- PREP101 marketing is geared to diligent students trying to improve their grades and not to indolent students seeking a “quick fix”.

In any event, please consider this letter to be an attempt to initiate a constructive dialogue with stakeholders at the University of Waterloo. In furtherance of this, I would like to discuss any concerns you may have about PREP101 in order to develop lines of communication and protocols to proactively deal with these.

I can be reached by telephone at (416) 929-3558, by e-mail at [andy@prep101.com](mailto:andy@prep101.com), or by regular mail at Unit #3, 18 Dundonald St., Toronto, M4Y 1K2.

Sincerely,

Andy McDonald-Romano B.A., LL.B.  
Executive Director, PREP101

## E-mail Letter to Graduate Students

From: [instructors@prep101.com](mailto:instructors@prep101.com)  
To: [xxxxx@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:xxxxx@uwaterloo.ca)  
Subject: Waterloo Grad Student: Recruitment of Instructors

Dear Graduate Student:

PREP101, a tutoring service founded by university students and operated by university students for the benefit of university students – has immediate openings for highly qualified instructors in the following academic areas:

- Accounting (Financial, Management)
- Business (Introductory)
- Economics (Introductory, Intermediate Microeconomics, Statistics)
- Chemistry (General, Organic)
- Calculus
- Linear Algebra

Preferred candidates will have completed or be enrolled in a graduate program and will possess ALL of the following attributes:

- 1) Excellent command of spoken English;
- 2) Dynamic lecturing skills;
- 3) Thorough lecture preparation skills;
- 4) Previous teaching experience;
- 5) Ability to work autonomously.

PREP101 offers competitive remuneration: \$300 for 6 hour Prep Sessions; \$450 for 9-hour Prep Sessions over 2 days; and \$600 for 12-hour Prep Sessions over 2 days. PREP101 also offers profit sharing to instructors with a proven track record of

teaching excellence.

Instructors typically teach between 8-12 Prep Sessions per academic year.

Prep Sessions are conducted during afternoons on weekends so as not to interfere with other academic or work obligations.

PREP101 currently operates at the University of Toronto, York University, and the University of Western Ontario, and is expanding to the University of Guelph and the University of Waterloo in the fall of 2003.

Applications should be sent by e-mail with an attached c.v. and/or resume to Andy McDonald-Romano, Executive Director at: [instructors@prep101.com](mailto:instructors@prep101.com)

Please indicate your academic field in the Subject Box of the e-mail. Please note that graduate students under contract as teaching assistants cannot work for PREP101 in the same course at the same university. Graduate students employed as teaching assistants can, however, conduct Prep Sessions students in a comparable course at a different university or in a different course at the same university.

For more information about PREP101, visit our website at: [www.prep101.com](http://www.prep101.com)

All the best,

Andy McDonald-Romano  
Executive Director, PREP101

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **The Question of God: C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life**

Dr. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr.  
Free Press, 2002

If you wanted to contrast the secular and Christian world views, you might well resort to the approach used in *The Question of God*: choose two famous exponents of these outlooks, and have them engage in a mock debate by quoting from their public and private works. You could compare their views on a variety of subjects: Is there a god? What is the source of human happiness? How should we view love and sex? What can account for pain and suffering? Is death final? In answering these questions, you wouldn't have to rely on their ideas alone; their life stories would also serve to convince readers about which choice works better.

Ah, but whom to choose?

If you wanted the non-believers to win, you could choose Isaac Asimov versus discredited evangelist Jim Bakker. If you wanted the Christians to win, you could choose Woody Allen versus Mother Teresa (although, as Christopher Hitchens demonstrated in *The Missionary Position*, Mother Teresa wasn't quite as saintly as claimed).

Armand Nicholi, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has chosen C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud in his well-written but ultimately unconvincing book, and therein lies the problem. Why choose Freud as a representative of non-believers? After all, Freud's "scientific" theories are now largely discredited. Freud and Lewis came from completely different backgrounds. Freud led an unhappy and unfulfilled life. Born in 1856 and dying in 1939, Freud was born 42 years before Lewis and died 24 years prior to Lewis' death. Probably they never met and they weren't exactly close contemporaries.

It's not as though there weren't any other possible choices to represent the atheists. Indeed if you're looking for someone who shared Lewis's language, was, like Lewis, associated with Cambridge University, whose life span encompassed Lewis's, and is widely viewed as a representative of the secular viewpoint, one man leaps immediately to mind: Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), the British philosopher and mathematician. Why wasn't Russell chosen to debate Lewis? I suspect the reason isn't just because Nicholi is, owing to his profession, intimately familiar with Freud's ideas. No, I suspect the

real reason is because the outlooks of the Christian and the non-believer are not symmetric.

To a Christian, the failure of others to adhere to his religion is not simply regrettable; it is deleterious and even deadly, since the non-believer's very soul is at risk. Since the danger is so great, no tactic to remedy the situation can be eschewed. As Martin Luther candidly admitted, "What harm would it do, if a man told a good strong lie for the sake of the good and for the Christian church? [...] a lie out of necessity, a useful lie, a helpful lie, such lies would not be against God, he would accept them."

On the other hand, to most non-believers, theists represent a vaguely annoying puzzle. We can't understand what's so convincing about the god story; to us the tales surrounding various gods are evidently myth and superstition. We find theists are often earnest, but a little misguided, and it would probably be better if more people were non-believers. As long as theists leave us alone and don't demand we worship their gods, though, we're not too troubled that there are others that don't believe as we do.

*The Question of God* illustrates this dichotomy perfectly. At the beginning, Nicholi adopts a pretense of objectivity, claiming "We will look at both views as objectively and dispassionately as possible and let the arguments speak for themselves." But by the end of the book, all pretense is gone. Nicholi urges his audience to read the Bible, and the book concludes with the following sermon by C. S. Lewis:

"We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere *incognito*. And the *incognito* is not always easy to penetrate. The real labor is to remember to attend. In fact to come awake. Still more to remain awake."

Upon reading this passage, I felt as if I had narrowly escaped a tent revival. What could be more insulting to the non-believers? According to Nicholi and Lewis, those who do not accept Christian dogma are just "evad[ers]". They are asleep and not "awake". This is not rational argument – it is merely cant. And it puts the lie to the claim of objectivity.

But it's not just the concluding passage where Nicholi's bias is evident. He never disputes any aspect of Lewis's thought, but he often takes issue with Freud, as in the following excerpt:

"Freud calls his worldview 'scientific,' because of its premise that knowledge comes only from

research. Of course, this basic premise cannot itself be based on scientific research. Rather, it is a philosophical assumption that cannot be proven.”

Along the way, Nicholi resorts to some howlers. He falsely claims that “logically one cannot prove a negative”; in fact, I prove negative statements all the time in my theoretical computer science classes. He claims that “historians rank Freud’s scientific contributions with those of Planck and Einstein”, but his source for this claim is an article in *Time* and a book on “mood genes”. There is no mention of the work of Frank Cioffi, who has convincingly demonstrated that Freud was a pseudoscientist.

Nicholi’s Chapter 2 implies that there are only two choices: either “the universe is ... simply an accident that just happened”, or there is a single Creator responsible for the order we see and intensely involved in our personal lives. But there are many other possibilities not explored; for example, there could be infinitely many universes, each with its own set of laws. Maybe god is a deist god, uninterested and uninvolved after creation. Perhaps there are many gods, each separately responsible for some aspect of the universe. What rules out infinitely many gods receding into the infinitely distant past, with god  $n+1$  creating god  $n$  at time  $-n$ ? We aren’t told.

Oddly enough, all these omissions and errors just happen to tip the scale in Lewis’s behalf.

It’s certainly true, as Nicholi points out, that many of Freud’s claims are not supported by evidence. Freud’s dismissal of religious conversions as “hallucinatory psychosis”, for example, is far too facile, and deserves criticism. Freud’s belief connecting numerology with the date of his death is too bizarre to be taken seriously.

But although Lewis’s ideas also turn out to be shallow and childishly naive in places, Nicholi never examines them critically. Here is Nicholi quoting Lewis on comparing two sets of moral ideas: “The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are in fact, measuring them both by a standard.... You are in fact comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting there is such a thing as a real Right, independent of what people think, and that some people’s ideas get nearer to that real Right than others.”

This is utter nonsense. Suppose I say that one type of music (say classical) is better than another (say jazz). Does this mean I am comparing them both with some idealized Real Music, and that some music gets nearer to the Real Music than others? No, it means that I judge music based on my own standards, using my own set of criteria.

Moral ideas can be judged in many ways. We can

compare them by estimating which ones result in the greatest total good, summed over all members of society. Or we can judge moral ideas based on which ones result in the greatest good for those at the lowest ranks. Or we can use some entirely different calculus. The choice one makes in no way implies what Lewis says, that there is some capitalized Real Morality independent of human existence, any more than the choices one makes to evaluate music implies there is a Real Music. To his detriment, Nicholi accepts Lewis uncritically here. (He could benefit from reading accounts of morality based on evolutionary considerations, such as Robert Wright’s popular treatment, *The Moral Animal*.)

Another problem is that Nicholi takes aspects of the lives of Freud and Lewis as emblematic of their world-views. But generalizing from one example to all exemplars is subject to the error of small sample size. After his religious conversion, Nicholi tells us, Lewis changed his outlook “from a focus on himself to a focus on others”. (Despite this, if Lewis ever spoke out with the goal of improving conditions in British society, there is no evidence of it in Nicholi’s account.) On the other hand, many atheists, agnostics, and freethinkers are and were concerned with social justice. Charles Darwin gave money to help the destitute Fuegians he met on his travels. Long before the American Civil War, Robert Ingersoll opposed slavery and advocated for women’s rights.

Lewis claimed that his conversion to Christianity was primarily “intellectual”. But an intellectual decision is supposed to be based on evidence. How much work did Lewis actually do to establish that the Gospels were factual? Not very much at all, it seems. Nicholi says that a crucial role in Lewis’s conversion was played by a chance remark by T. D. Weldon that the “historical authenticity of the Gospels was surprisingly sound”. But the historical authenticity of *Madame Bovary* is also very sound; this does not mean that Emma Bovary was a real person or that the events in Flaubert’s novel actually took place.

Lewis also attributed his conversion to his literary analysis of the Gospels: “Now, as a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that whatever else the Gospels are they are not legends... They are not artistic enough to be legends.” But there is at least one earlier story of a crucified man coming back to life: Herodotus told of the resurrection of Zalmoxis. Similarly, the Persian god Mithras has many features in common with Jesus: sent by a father-god, born of a virgin, and so on. Presumably Lewis would have dismissed those tales as a mere legend, but not the resurrection of Jesus.

Nicholi overstates the evidence for the historicity of Jesus by writing that “Lewis ... knew ... that He appeared in the writings of Roman and Jewish historians and therefore was more than a myth”. But Nicholi fails to mention

that at least one and possibly both of the mentions by Flavius Josephus are considered by many historians to be a later interpolation by Christians. He fails to note that the brief mention of Jesus by Tacitus was written about seventy years after the miraculous events were supposed to have taken place, and may only represent what Tacitus was told by Christians about Jesus.

To return to my question at the beginning of this review, why did Nicholi choose Freud and not Russell to represent the secularist viewpoint? Maybe the answer is that Russell lived a long, happy, and fulfilled life. Russell made significant contributions to both mathematics and philosophy. Russell spent much of his life campaigning for peace and civil rights and even went to jail for his beliefs. Russell wrote eloquently about the failure of religion in general, and Christianity in particular, to provide an intellectually compelling rationale for its claims, in famous essays such as “Why I Am Not a Christian”. In recognition of his literary skills, Russell even won a Nobel Prize in literature, C. S. Lewis’s own chosen profession. I suspect that Nicholi chose Freud because Russell would have cleaned Lewis’s clock. Freud, by contrast, was an easy target.

Despite the praise it has garnered, this one-sided comparison of the secular and religious world views is phony from start to finish. Nicholi can’t teach you much about what non-theists believe; for that you need to read Bertrand Russell, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Kai Nielsen, and a dozen others. It should come as no surprise that the University of Waterloo’s copy of this book is stamped “Donated by Trinity Evangelical Missionary Church”, or that *Touchstone* magazine’s Preston Jones labeled the book “a useful tool for evangelism”. *The Question of God* is not what it pretends to be: an objective and dispassionate look at the evidence. It is an evangelical tract in disguise. Martin Luther, I suspect, would have approved.

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## **Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity**

David Foster Wallace

W.W. Norton Great Discoveries Series, 320 pages,  
\$23.95

Math is the final frontier. Books affording popular treatments of difficult science – cosmology, biotechnology, geophysics – are proudly displayed in stores, and creep onto best-seller lists. Recently a few books have attempted to do the same for mathematics, discussing the concept of zero, Fermat’s recently-proved Last Theorem, and Riemann’s still-elusive Hypothesis. But the popular conception of mathematical work is that of a mysterious and incomprehensible gift of genius (think *Good Will Hunting*) often leading to madness (think *A Beautiful Mind* or *Proof*).

It’s easy to fall into this trap with Georg Cantor, the German mathematician who first gave a rigorous treatment of the concept of infinity, since he died in an insane asylum in 1918. David Foster Wallace notifies us in the opening pages of *Everything and More* (E&M) that he’s not going to succumb to melodrama. He also tells us that he disliked and did badly in every math class he’s ever taken, save one. Wallace, often mentioned whenever thirty-something American writers of fiction are discussed, is best known for *Infinite Jest*, a massive, sprawling novel that evokes the best work of Pynchon, Gaddis, and DeLillo; though he’s also written piercing and hysterically funny essays on subjects such as cruise ships and state fairs (published in magazines like *Harper’s* and the *New Yorker*, and collected in *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again*), he’s never before attempted a piece of what he terms “pop technical writing”.

The conceit of Norton’s Great Discoveries Series is that bright lights of American literature are assigned a scientist and their field of study to write about. Wallace, in an early essay, confessed to having a “math jones”; he’s a mathematical amateur, in the original sense (“lover”) of that word. E&M turns out to be an homage to that one math class he enjoyed and did well at, a high-school Advanced Placement (AP) class whose teacher ignored the dictum that the purpose of an AP class is to permit students to pass AP exams for AP credit and instead led his young charges through some seriously heavy-duty math (nowadays it would be a tossup if the students or the parents would lynch him first).

So Wallace is on a mission here, as he broadens the focus from Cantor to the entire history of infinity, starting with the Pythagoreans’ puzzlement over their inability to express the square root of 2 as a rational number (fraction) and Zeno’s witty and provocative paradoxes of motion, which demonstrated different kinds of infinity:

the infinitely many points through which an arrow moves, and the infinitely small instants it spends at each point. Aristotle attempted to dismiss Zeno by reducing infinity to a potentiality; when Thomas Aquinas and Augustine adapted his arguments to “proofs” of the existence of God, the resulting church dogma froze further developments for well over a millennium, until the practical success of calculus in explaining physical phenomena prompted a closer look at the mathematical underpinnings of its methods.

Wallace’s distinct authorial voice is very much in evidence. He carefully constructs the rhythms of casual language while revealing the artifice with copious footnotes (which in his fiction tend to contain either minutiae or important plot elements) and correctly-used obscure words. Philosophical concerns over the meaning of words nicely parallel the relationship of mathematical abstractions to real-world phenomena, especially as much of the weakness of early attempts to deal with infinity comes from ambiguity in natural language. Wallace’s style is worlds away from the grave, sincere tone of most popularizations of science, and makes for a fascinating and amusing hybrid.

Unfortunately, he lets his enthusiasms get the better of him at times. Cantor’s inspiration for his theory of infinite sets was his attempt to categorize the possible sets of discontinuities that still permit the Fourier series of a function to be unique. You’re not expected to understand that, though a couple of paragraphs would give you enough of an idea to move on. Wallace goes into this motivation in considerably more detail, piling on definitions in a pair of awkwardly placed and overstuffed “Emergency Glossaries”. While his style is irreverent, his respect for the material is evident.

His focus remains expository, though. There are only a few proofs here, mostly short, brilliant, well-known ones (there is no largest prime, the square root of 2 is irrational). The longest one is an example of the epsi-

lon-delta proof usually encountered in a serious calculus course; alas, Wallace’s attempt is about as successful as those of most freshmen. He can’t quite escape those courses in which he did badly.

Readers who make it through these minefields without blaming themselves for the occasional explosion are rewarded with a breathtaking historical sweep, as calculus broadens into what we now call real analysis, and Cantor shows there are different kinds of infinity that at times behave counterintuitively. There are as many rationals as integers; there are more irrationals than rationals; there are as many points on a line as in a plane. Cantor’s proofs of these statements, given here, are so clever as to serve as a definition of the word “clever”.

As we continue into the twentieth century, Cantor provides a question for Godel and Cohen to show neither provable nor disprovable, and a method of proof (diagonalization) that via Alan Turing would influence the development of modern digital computers (readers must wait for series volumes from Rebecca Goldstein and David Leavitt to learn more). The theme of each new explanation creating new questions and paradoxes persists to the end; having climbed this far, the reader can look up and see angels and devils chasing each other in the rarefied air above.

Wallace believes the book is accessible to those without college math, though such a reader might want to have a friend nearby to provide assurances, answers to questions, and permission to skip sections. E&M offers redemption to those who suffered a deracinated treatment of calculus that concentrated on technique or eliminated historical context and development. The rewards of this book justify the modest amount of effort required to tackle it. Math is too important to be left to the mathematicians.

*Prabhakar Ragde*  
*School of Computer Science*

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# FAUW PENSION AND BENEFITS COMMITTEE REPORT

*by Sandra Burt, Committee Chair  
Department of Political Science*

The Faculty Association's Pension and Benefits Committee has been assembled. The members are

**Sandra Burt**, Political Science (sburt@uwaterloo.ca),  
Chair\*

**Alan Macnaughton**, Accountancy  
(amachaug@uwaterloo.ca)\*

**Jock Mackay**, Statistics and Actuarial Science  
(rjmackay@uwaterloo.ca)\*

**Frank Reynolds**, Statistics and Actuarial Science  
(fgreynol@uwaterloo.ca)

\* Faculty Association representatives on the University Pension and Benefits Committee

The Faculty Association Pension and Benefits Committee met recently to consider past and future issues relating to pension and benefits at the University of Waterloo. We discussed the possibility of carrying out a comparative assessment of, in particular, the university's benefits package. A similar initiative has been undertaken by the Staff Association. We hope that the three employee groups can devise a common strategy. We welcome your comments and advice on this question. In particular, we are interested in hearing from you with accounts of either problems or successes that you have had when applying for benefits. One of the difficulties we face when assessing our benefits package is in finding a methodology that permits comparisons across plans with many differing characteristics. But it would help us if we had a better sense of the problem areas in our plan. Please forward your comments to any member of the committee.

The Committee also discussed the problem of attracting new members to the Pension and Benefits Committees, at both the Faculty Association and University levels. Over the years, we have noted that the same people volunteer to serve on both. Some faculty members feel they lack the necessary expertise. Others may consider that pensions are so remote there is no need to become involved while one is working so hard to establish academic credentials. But even for these younger members, the benefits issue should be salient. **We are urging younger faculty members to consider membership in the Faculty Association Committee, as a possible first step toward membership on the University Committee.** If you are interested, please contact a member of the Faculty Association Committee. The Faculty Association Committee meets only a few times each term and considers items that are before the University Committee, as well as other issues that are of

interest to faculty.

We also discussed the recent increase in the number of confidential sessions held by the University Pension and Benefits Committee. I am pleased to report that, in part as a result of our concerns, the University Pension and Benefits Committee has agreed to restrict the number of confidential sessions, to indicate to the university community the subject matter under discussion if such a session is deemed necessary, and to limit the session to discussion only, with the exception of regular financial and personal matters.

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*We are interested in hearing from you with accounts of either problems or successes that you have had when applying for benefits. It would help us if we had a better sense of the problem areas in our plan. Please forward your comments to any member of the committee. Your observations will be treated as confidential information.*

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At recent meetings of the University Pension and Benefits Committee we have considered the health of the pension fund. While there is currently no surplus in the fund, the University is able to meet its pension commitments. This is due in large part to the fact that a substantial part of the pension fund (~23%) is invested in fixed return bonds.

There is also some news on benefits. In May 2003 the University was made aware that the tuition benefit for children of faculty and staff did not meet the regulations set out in the Income Tax Act. According to the Act, "where an educational institution which charges tuition fees provides tuition free of charge or at a reduced amount to an employee of the institution, or to the spouse or children of the employee, the fair market value of the benefit will be included in the employee's income." The Committee is considering other options in an attempt to maintain the current program and still adhere to Revenue Canada's rules.

There has been a change in the start date of insured benefits. Benefits now take effect at the beginning of the first day of work, rather than after one day of work.



# CURRENT DISCUSSIONS IN THE PENSION AND BENEFITS COMMITTEE

*by Sandra Burt (Department of Political Science)  
Jock MacKay (Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science)  
Alan Macnaughton (School of Accountancy)*

This article describes discussions currently taking place in the University Pension and Benefits (P&B) Committee about changes to the Pension Plan text. We have agreed on the basic principles but not the implementation details of the proposed change.

## Summary

The P&B Committee has been discussing the consequences of the low rate of return of pension plan investments in 2001 and 2002. The major impact is that the employer, the University, is likely to have to make extraordinary contributions to the Plan.

In the past, both the University and the employees have benefited when there was a large surplus in the plan (early retirement provision, contribution holidays, SERP etc.). All Committee members agree that both parties should share the extra costs in bad times, like the present.

We propose that any extraordinary contributions should be viewed as a loan to the Plan from the University. Since money cannot be removed from the Plan, we suggest that the loan can be repaid by reducing the annual contribution of the University when the Plan has returned to a surplus position. The average annual University contribution over a number of years will at least match the employee contribution.

This proposal has no impact on individual pensions as currently specified and increases the long term viability of the Plan. The proposal requires a change to the Plan text as now, according to the Plan, the University must at least match the total of the employee contributions each year.

## Background

Each year, the Plan actuary calculates the value of the assets and the liabilities (the cost of present and future pensions for members of the Plan) to determine the status of the Plan. At the last valuation, the assets and liabilities were essentially equal. If the assets exceed the liabilities, the Plan has a surplus; if the assets are less than the liabilities, the Plan is in a deficit position. Based on the calculations and assumptions, the actuary also recommends the contribution of the University to the Plan as a percentage of the employee contributions. For example, this year, the recommended contribution was 131% of the employee contributions. The actual contribution, including payments to the Payroll Pension Plan, was 137%.

We must file a report on the status of the Plan to the Provincial and Federal Governments at least once every three years.

The University may be required to make extraordinary payments for two reasons:

1. If we file a report on the Plan when it has a deficit position, the University must make extra payments to retire the deficit over a period of five to fifteen years. In addition, it must contribute at the level recommended by the actuary – see point 2.
2. When the plan had large surpluses, improvements were made, including the early retirement package. It was agreed, at the time the improvements were introduced, that \$35 million of the surplus would be earmarked within the pension fund to generate income to pay for the plan improvements for current and future employees. Therefore, a reported surplus of \$35 million really means that the plan is breaking even since that amount has been committed to pay for the improvements. At the last evaluation, most of this earmarked surplus had disappeared due to poor stock market performance.

To pay for the loss of income from the earmarked surplus, the actuary will recommend that the University contribute about 165% of the employee contribution, rather than 131%. The extra 34 percentage points (about \$3 million) is an extraordinary payment to the Plan since it was agreed that the earmarked surplus was to be set aside to pay for the plan improvements.

## Proposal

The Committee proposes to treat the two types of extraordinary payments as a loan from the University to the Plan. The Plan will repay the University when there is sufficient accumulated surplus. In this instance, since we cannot remove money from the Plan, we are proposing that the loan can be repaid by reducing the amount of the annual University contribution.

Currently, the University must at least match the aggregate employee contributions every year. To allow for loan repayment, we are considering changing this

*(Continued on page 19)*

# THE ACADEMIC STATUS OF LIBRARIANS: UNDER-VALUED? UNDER THREAT?

Notes from the CAUT Librarians Conference  
Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax NS, October 2003

by Anne Fullerton  
*Biology and Chemical Engineering Librarian  
UW Library*

“Status” means “position or rank in relation to others.” When UW librarians ask for academic status (they and the FAUW have been asking UW’s administration for such recognition for years), they are asking to be ranked within the academic staff group at UW – namely faculty – with respect to terms and conditions of employment. By conferring academic status to librarians, the majority of universities across Canada and the US have formally recognized librarian contributions to research and teaching programs and have given librarians a voice in the collegial governance of the university.

The CAUT Librarians Conference held in Halifax in October gathered 80 academic librarians from across the country to discuss the health and specific elements of academic status for librarians.

According to keynote speaker Janet Swan Hill (Professor and Associate Director for Technical Services at University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder, CO) the faculty-like tenure system for librarians accounts for the high level of creativity and accomplishments among librarians, as well as a high degree of collegiality with faculty. She reached this conclusion by comparing University of Colorado librarians to colleagues from her previous appointments, namely, (1) the Library of Congress, not an academic library but a research library and (2) the Northwestern University Library, where research and service were encouraged, supported and rewarded but not required. Discussions focussed on research support – annual 28-day research leaves, research terms, sabbaticals, mentoring, research discussion groups, clerical and technical support. We learned that many libraries grant librarians research days so they can pursue professional development, research, and scholarship as they see fit. Unused days are carried into the next year. Examples include: Concordia (28 days); Memorial (20 days), York (20 days).

Robert Leger, CAUT International Affairs Officer, reviewed the most recent CAUT salary data for librarians and focussed on eight measures of academic status. These include: leaves; appointment & review committee process; rank structure; academic freedom; salaries; academic research support; tenure; and sabbaticals.

Those universities at which seven or eight of these features of academic status have been granted to librarians have unionized faculty associations. At Guelph and Victoria, where librarians enjoy, respectively, eight and seven elements of academic status, the faculty associations

represent librarians but are not unionized. Only four of eight criteria for academic status are granted to librarians at UW, the Canadian Military Colleges, the University of Moncton and King’s College (London, ON).

Three presentations from the “Hot Spots” came next. As is the case at UW, employment terms for librarians at McGill are described in a handbook. In 1996 McGill librarians, facing the uncertainties of a new university President and a yet-to-be hired University Librarian, merged with the university’s faculty association (MAUT) by means of an amendment to the MAUT constitution. McGill’s group of librarians became recognized as a section of MAUT with a permanent seat on the MAUT Council. (UW librarians have a visitor’s seat on the FAUW Board of Directors.) A memo from President Bernard Shapiro confirmed the academic status of McGill librarians in 1997.

I presented a history of the situation at UW from the time that its Librarians Employment Handbook was created in the 1970’s. The Handbook granted librarians some features of academic status, including study leaves and promotion through ranks. After the loss of some benefits in the 1990s, 80% of UW librarians voted to join the FAUW. UW librarians also joined the FAUW certification drive of 1996. Since then, there have been two attempts to negotiate with UW’s administration the academic status of UW librarians and their representation by the FAUW. (These negotiations took place in 1998 and 2003 with John Wilson and Roydon Fraser, respectively, acting as the FAUW Chief Negotiators.) Despite these efforts, the representation of UW librarians by the FAUW remains an unresolved article in the Memorandum of Agreement and we continue to be members of UW’s Staff Association. Our UW Librarians Handbook is under review in order to address the support for research and other issues. As well, the UW Staff Relations Committee is currently considering the question of academic freedom for librarians and other staff members.

Reactions to my presentation generally began with “We support you and wish that there was more we could do. Keep us informed about what is happening. You really should certify.” No one at the conference could fathom the UW situation and how long it has been allowed to go on.

The final speaker was Diane Peters, of the Wilfrid Laurier University Library. Walking us through sections of the WLU Collective Agreement, Diane showed why WLU librarians have the best version of academic status for university librarians. It was most interesting to learn that the

WLU Library Council functions much like a faculty council in structure (includes faculty, staff and student representatives) and decision-making powers.

There were two talks about librarians and scholarship, defined as creative intellectual work that is validated by peers and communicated. The most interesting discussion revolved around how to create a research culture in a library where research or scholarship are optional or have lapsed due to understaffing, lack of support, etc. All agreed that mentoring was important, as well as time away from library duties in order to work on projects. Many participants were accomplished, published librarians who remain involved in vital research projects. They see a need to educate their colleagues in the library and throughout the university about the nature of their work, their research, and their unique contribution to the scholarly record. During these talks, I wondered how I could show the impact of my own research projects and grants on my library job. For example: Have they enriched my work? Have they been beneficial to users of the UW library?

There are always some frightening revelations at these conferences. (Unionized) librarians at the University of New Brunswick have a strong academic freedom clause, yet are afraid to use it because of possible repercussions within the library – management rights issues. University of Regina librarians (also unionized) have been harassed and intimidated by their university librarian for four years. Regina's Library Council was cancelled and replaced by a handpicked group. UPEI librarians and faculty certified in 2001 and are still working on their first contract.

And there was also some good news. York librarians,

who have faculty status, feel well regarded by faculty and have respectable salaries, as well as twenty research days per year. Brock librarians have a professional allowance of \$1,300.00 and report that the working environment in their library has improved significantly since they joined the faculty association. Concordia's latest collective agreement focuses on recruitment and retention of librarians. As a result, salary floors have risen 20-30% and Science, Engineering and Commerce Librarians are eligible for a market supplement of \$8,000.00. With the support of the University Librarian, Western Ontario is creating ranks and making other academic status provisions for its librarians. Starting salaries at UWO have also improved significantly. (Currently, librarians are signing cards for certification.) To maintain a critical mass of full-time members engaged in teaching and research, the Concordia collective agreement stipulates the total number of probationary and tenured librarian and faculty positions. When the number falls, there is a financial penalty to the University. This complement approach contrasts with simple workload clauses (hours per week, etc.) in most University/Librarian agreements.

In summary, the conference was a satisfying venue to share information and to learn about what is taking place at other libraries. As well, it provided the opportunity to gather ideas for other paths that the FAUW and UW librarians might explore in order to gain the remaining four aspects of their academic status (academic freedom, salary structure similar to faculty, tenure, sabbaticals). It was also a pleasure that my colleague, Jackie Stapleton, UW's Systems Design Engineering and Optometry Librarian, also attended the conference with support from the FAUW.

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#### PENSION AND BENEFITS DISCUSSIONS *(Continued from page 17)*

requirement so that the University contribution will at least match the employee contributions over a longer period. In a year when there is an outstanding loan and sufficient surplus, the University contribution may be less than the total employee contribution.

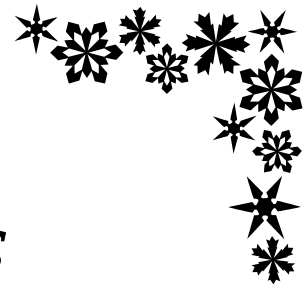
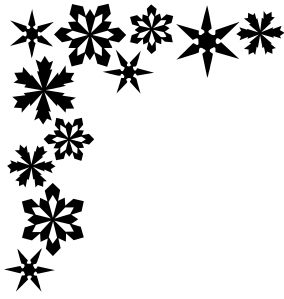
The Committee has agreed that a primary goal in getting the plan back to a surplus position is to replenish the earmarked funds that pay for the Plan improvements. We expect that the University will loan money to the Plan only if we have to file a deficit position but there may be other circumstances to be determined. We have not decided if the University would be repaid before the reserve fund is replenished. The Committee is still discussing the length of time for the averaging and other implementation details.

What are the consequences of adopting this proposal?

The University is responsible for the payment of pensions regardless of the status of the Plan. Over a long period, the University must contribute sufficient funds to keep the Plan viable.

The University has contributed on average about 115% of the employee contributions over the past 20 years. The P&B Committee expects that the University will continue to more than match the employee contributions over the long term.

Since employees' pensions are guaranteed, the amount of money available for each member on retirement will not be affected by this proposal. However, since the loans will effectively be repaid from the surplus, the surplus will be smaller and thus the chance of implementing further Plan improvements or contribution holidays will be less. For the University, the proposal will avoid extraordinary costs and allow for better budgetary planning. If the University is required to make significant long term extra payments, money will have to be taken from other areas of the budget and all employees will be affected. If the money is treated as a loan, these other areas of the budget will not be as threatened.



*Season's Greetings*  
*from the*  
*Faculty Association*  
*Board of Directors and Staff*



*Left to right:* Ray McLenaghan, Pat Moore, Danine Farquharson, Catherine Schryer, Anne Fullerton, Ed Vrscay, Melanie Campbell, Metin Rensizbulut

*Absent:* Sandra Burt, Mieke Delfgaauw, Roydon Fraser, Frank Reynolds, Sandy Rung

