Paul J. Griffiths, *The Vice of Curiosity: An Essay on Intellectual Appetite* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2006). Norman Klassen and Jens Zimmermann, *The Passionate Intellect: Incarnational Humanism and the Future of University Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

Although their style, purposes, and intended audiences are very different, these wise books pursue the same goal of healing the subject/object dichotomy that catalyzed the Enlightenment and is now questioned by postmodernism.

The more unusual effort is provided by Griffiths, who, through treating "the vice of curiosity," provides a fresh take on timely matters, useful as almost a meditative resource for anyone interested in rethinking the Western style of organizing scholarship and academia. Griffiths, offering the 2005 J.J. Thiessen Lectures on which the book is based, draws on Augustine to provide a lens to see how troubling are the effects of the modern faith that humans can separate themselves as knowing subjects from the objects they claim to know. As he observes, in contrast to the Enlightenment/modernist valuing of curiosity often uncritically assumed in Western culture, "Curiosity for Augustine is nothing other than the ownership of new knowledge" (7).

Throughout Griffiths's short yet deep tome, the problem with curiosity turns out to be the quest for ownership and the consequences flowing from it. Curiosity's drive for ownership of knowledge yields people "bent on living according to themselves and thus also upon hugging the knowledge to themselves, delighting in knowing themselves as knowers, embracing as their own what can only properly be loved as God's" (12). We who are curious in this way are responsible for setting up the modern university as a site valuing discipline, mastery, and novelty. Griffiths summarizes the effects of this unholy trinity:

> Students and scholars … are disciplined into thinking of their studies as a device whose principal purpose is to provide them ownership and mastery of their chosen fields [disciplines]. Novelty is sought and rewarded and the display of the mastered and sequestered object of knowledge is undertaken when the reputation of the one doing the displaying will be most enhanced….(59)

The antidote? Studiousness. Studiousness involves grateful and delighted participation in the gift of what is being studied, which is ultimately God's world. Studiousness is not anti-intellectualism but redeemed use of intellect.

Though the language is different, the above view is approximately the starting point for *The Passionate Intellect,* whose authors follow a path overlapping with that of Griffiths. Their core strategy is to show the fatal flaws in the subject/object split, then to sketch out the intellectual credibility that Christian thought can reclaim once thinking is defined not in subject/object but in embodied humanistic terms. Their path is indebted to the postmodern critique of Enlightenment tendencies. They show how figures like Heidegger, Gadamer, Levinas, Foucault, and Lyotard have helped clear a space for a recovery of the human through the awareness that no one of us can think as a disembodied observer above what we study, and that we are already enmeshed in Being, or tradition, or bodies and their desires, before we begin to study. At the same time, Klassen and Zimmerman make helpful distinctions between the more humanist (Gadamer, Levinas) and more antihumanist (Heidegger, Foucault, Lyotard) postmoderns, and how such figures complement and critique each other.

Their intent is to make room for Christian faith as part of the humanist project, and their name for this is "incarnational humanism." If no one can start to think from any fully disembodied, objective perspective, then starting from within Christian faith is no less legitimate than starting from other vantage points. In addition, incarnational humanism solves problems not otherwise solved in either Enlightenment or postmodernist thought, because

> [H]uman dignity, the dignity of nature, and the interpretive nature of truth become possible without fragmentation or totalization. Thus incarnational humanism allows for considerable common ground with postmodern scholarship even as it maintains a distinctively Christian orientation. (147)

The Passionate Life risks giving short shrift to nearly any topic it addresses. But that is in the nature of a resource intended as a guidebook for Christian university students beginning to wrestle with intellectual currents

of the day and seeking to understand how they can both learn from and address such currents with integrity. Within that context, the book does its job well.

My main discomfort with both books is that each risks hiding its light under a bushel by making it a gift primarily for the Christian community. In Griffiths this happens in startling comments that seem too stingy to match the generosity of thought surrounding them. In seeing the implementation of his vision as perhaps requiring alternative institutions of education – itself a potentially stingy approach – Griffiths suggests that "every student and every teacher would be encouraged to find his or her primary and most direct audience in the community of the baptized" (78). I'd have little problem with wording along the lines of "encouraged to include the community of the baptized as *one* significant audience." It saddens me, however, that precisely when postmodernism is making Western intellectual currents more receptive to such a vision than has perhaps been true for centuries, Griffiths urges that the baptized community, rather than *any* community wounded by the subject/object split, become the primary audience.

The overlapping move made by Klassen and Zimmerman is this: They contend that "only the incarnation enables a recovery of humanism as the heart of university education because the incarnation allows us to retain the best elements of the greater humanist tradition *and* of its postmodern critics without repeating their shortcomings" (147). This is not a thoughtlessly stingy move; they stress that "common grace" enables persons of different or no faiths to nurture each other (181-82). They make a good case for their perspective, and as a Christian I say yes, such incarnation-based wisdom *is* a gift my faith offers.

Yet I feel the same sorrow on reading this as I do whenever encountering similar moves. After all the wrestling with alternate perspectives is over, it is explained that, amidst all we can learn from others, we must congratulate ourselves: *We* are those who know the truth. Maybe there is no way fully to embrace what I'd wish to: the ability simultaneously to hold passionate Christian convictions yet to acknowledge in radical humility that any truth entered with conviction tends to look convincing to its holder. But I do wish it were possible to speak of the incarnation in a way that does not make

its persuasive power so dependent on belonging to the Christian in-group. Even stated ever so gently, as in Klassen and Zimmerman, such arguments are still rooted in control: We Christians control the truth. Might we model our argumentation more radically on the Incarnate One – who died rather than exercise control, relinquishing to God the next moves?

I raise such concerns not to denigrate these valuable projects. Rather, I hope their light radiates to far corners. Amid polarizations, our era does provide avenues for rejoining subject and object, for thinking "within" and "through" and not just "above" our traditions, biases, bodies, faith commitments, or objects of study. Christian *and* not-Christian, we need such books to help us conceptualize, critique, and share in this moment of opportunity.

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Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007.

With popular interest in Jesus fanned by recent epic films, bestselling novels, and announcements about the discovery of ancient gospels and artifacts, one is not surprised by the appearance of yet another book on Jesus. However, in the bewildering mix of sensationalizing declarations and novelistic embellishments of the story of Jesus, *Recovering Jesus* comes as a refreshing resource. As the sub-title indicates, this book intends to facilitate serious encounter with the New Testament witnesses to Jesus.

Yoder Neufeld wrote this book having in mind students in his college classroom, who come with a range of prior attitudes toward Jesus "whether religiously indifferent, highly skeptical, or passionately Christian" (9). He writes as a scholar and teacher eager to guide students in their study of Jesus and the various first-century claims made about him. He also writes within