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Introduction

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While there has been no attempt to collect papers that deal with issues of relatedness, it is hard to avoid the theme that seems to emerge from these articles. Relationships with friends, institutions, lovers, competitors, enemies dominate our ordinary lived world. How we get on with one another takes an extraordinary amount of our time and energy. As if not to be outdone, how we get on with God situates itself not far away from the fray, and first-class minds continue to wrestle with the result.

I should not have been so aware of the issue had I not been working recently on a study of Indigenous law in Canada, where, over and over, knowledge-keepers keep reiterating that existence was defined, not by 'beings' or entities so much as by relationships. Many great Aboriginal thinkers I have met argued that the process of coming to life/consciousness is embedded in relatedness, so that the whole web of existence is rooted in a sense of connectedness from the moment of our birth. Despite our conviction of separate entities, who we are and what we perceive as important is irrevocably linked to others.

As is to be expected, the papers in this collection make no attempt to relate to each other, yet they do when we look at them from a certain perspective. For example, David Fekete sees Rorty's functional analysis of language as a telling icon of Modernism; from that standpoint Fekete goes on to see the basic problem of contemporary society as the lack of a convincing language—the sense of unease and lostness prevails in our culture because we have no arching canon for relatedness to spiritual verities. Without the means to articulate a sense of connectedness, we turn to novels and stories to frame it for us. Fekete uses Updike's great *Rabbit, Run*, as an analytic tool to drill down to modernism's legacies that can be seen all around us. Hence his "John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*: A Quest for a Spiritual Vocabulary in the Vacuum Left by Modernism" is really a reflection on what he sees as our heritage of a world without convincing links to real-language.

Don Schweitzer approaches the issue from another direction. He looks at some critical thinkers within the Christian tradition as they try to conceptualize how the Christian notion of God can be related to the world. Schweitzer sees the disconnect going back far to a much earlier period than our modern period. Indeed, it seems to relate directly to the human situation. He wants some more cohesive vision of God than has been delivered. Exploring how Moltman, Bonaventure and Edwards frame the issue, he compares their theological strategies for solving how an all-powerful and all-knowing God could create and then relate to what is obviously an imperfect world. Moltmann maintains that God has to be radically transcendent for us to have any hope, so it will destroy the Christian conviction if God is somehow responsible for our failing situation. He offers a divine eros—God needs the world to express love. Bonaventure, on the other hand, sees the trinity as the feature that spurs the creative expression of God—though the communicativeness of God, the world comes to be, but the creative motivations arise from differences within the godhead. In effect each person of the trinity has a different creative direction, and that accounts for God's apparent variety of motivations. Edwards saw that making creation and God part of one language/being system undercut both, so he suggests that our notions of finite/infinite have to be modified. Once we do this, God can be related to the world, but infinitely separate from it. The article "Aspects of God's relationship to the world in the theologies of Jurgen Moltmann, Bonaventure and Jonathan Edwards" argues for a treatment that will bring some of the better tendencies in each of these thinkers to the fore.

In "The Doukhobor Problem: Media Representations of Sons of Freedom Women, 1952-1960," Julie Rak wrestles with how a tiny religious group were marginalized in Canada. She sees the media as in the business of defining relationships in our culture, and hence the way the media skewed perceptions of Sons of Freedom women was grounded in a pre-set cultural attitude towards women. She argues that the religious principles the group were in contention for are really quite clear, while the way the media chose to shape the issues depended upon perceiving the women as "crazy," and their religious rights thus publicly ignored.

The Social Credit government used the media slant to justify a legal case against public nudity and the forced confinement of Doukhobor children in a prison-like school. (In some respects, the case is reminiscent of the notorious residential schools). This allowed the genuine issue to go unaddressed, and a Canadian cultural hegemony to once again turn aside legitimate religious discourse.

Susan (Shya) M.Young's article "The Tale of Three Women: A Conversation with Anne Conway and Margaret Fell Fox" explores how two very articulate women, Lady Anne Conway (1631–1679) and Margaret Fell Fox (1614–1702) opted out of the usual "place" women were supposed to inhabit. They did this by classic Christian theological means—philosophy and theological discourse. By upsetting culturally-accepted positions on God's relationship to the world, they created a space for women in religion; they also contributed to a new position on inspiration—Christ speaking within the individual rather than in a disembodied Word. From this Young argues for a more sophisticated understanding of women in a religious culture; one with a more nuanced view than just a stereotyped "feminist" stance. Rather she sees these women as part of a conversation rooted in the deeper relationship of religion to self-transformation.

For most of us raised in Christian countries, conversion stories were part of the woodwork of churches. Often they gave a transcendent meaning to the nickels and dimes that disappeared into mission boxes. Walter Vanast shows us that conversion tales were about far more than proclaiming the Good Book. Indeed they can reflect the sorry side of our very human history. In his "The Bad Side to The Good Story: Vilhjalmur Stefansson and Christian Conversion in the Mackenzie Delta: 1906-1925," he shows that the contending personalities of scientist, priests and chiefs had a great deal to do with switching religions. Stefansson, long regarded as an authority on the north by a believing southern population had his own reasons for fighting with religion. Some of them were not honorable. Furthermore his battles with the missionaries could not be reduced to religious principle—some of them had to do with his attentiveness to the local women. On the other hand, the priests had their own ideas on what conversion should

look like, with bizarre results…starving populations who refused to throw a net on Sunday! All of this having much to do with how the missions related to financial sponsors, and what the public thought of the missionary life.

In sum, relatedness takes on many forms and demonstrates many shades of meaning. It reflects once again the complexities of religion in this complicated age.