

UNDER CONSIDERATION

DR. C. JOHN SOMMERVILLE, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH HISTORY, EMERITUS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, IS A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF THE CHRISTIAN STUDY CENTER. He has served on the board and as an advisor; he developed the first programs and publications of the Center and has shared his wealth of wisdom and knowledge at the Center. Currently he is moving to North Carolina, but we want to benefit one more time from him as he teaches on beauty and desire at the heart of faith (Friday and Saturday, Mar 14/15), and on the difficult life of C.S. Lewis (Saturday morning, March 15). Friday evening there will also be a post-lecture reception in his honor.

You've been involved in universities all your life. Will you share some of your thoughts?

I've always thought of universities as a mission field. I went into academics because I wanted to have an impact. I loved teaching and telling people what's what, but I was very discouraged in my career. As an historian, I felt confident, but as a Christian I never felt that I was making the impact I wanted. It was hard to find other Christians on the faculty who were concerned about the same things. There were Christians, but they did not see ways to relate their disciplines and their faith. Of course history is easy to relate; the entire Bible is history.

Did you ever imagine something like a Christian study center?

All the time I was teaching, I could imagine what a Christian study center next to a university might mean. And when I suddenly heard the exciting news that Jay (Dr. James Lynch, founder and president of the board) was involved in a start-up here, I thought of some things that would be wise to avoid, so we met and it was clear he had many of the same ideas, particularly about not being unnecessarily confrontational.

You've been a great resource to the Center. How did you see your work changing with the presence of the Center?

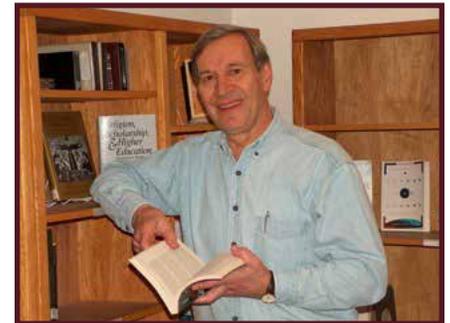
The Center provided a place to explore more deeply my work as an historian and as a Christian. I could relate my thoughts to colleagues in the context of a study center that faculty could also relate to. In the course of time the talks I have given here

have become two books, one of which, *The Decline of the Secular University*, made some impact around the country. It led to invitations to give talks around the country, even in places like the Renaissance Weekends, where I have totally secular audiences. Although it was late in my career, it gave my sense of mission a new start.

That's encouraging for people to realize that God can do something new in your life at any age. It is also good to hear that your work for the Center played a role in your publications.

You've been a scholar of history for 40 years. How have you seen things change at universities?

The university is a needy place. I think that is truer now than in the 1950's when I was a student. Student rebellion, post-modernism, and the business management model have battered the university. Much of the old academic self-confidence is gone. I think some of the departments across the street see the value of the Center. They can see the point of a Christian worldview on questions they are having trouble with themselves. There are all kinds of concepts the university does not deal with well—anything having to



do with the human difference or the human good—things like community, care, justice. All of these ideas are controversial in the university. Since all of our professional programs aim at service, that means they all have an ethical dimension to them. The university is nervous about getting into that sort of thing. But students are waiting to consider such issues, not that they will follow everything they hear, but they will have a sense of the possibilities. They realize they are going to have to make decisions. Religion is all about the basis for one's decisions. So it's got to be relevant to almost every discipline in the university.

Continued on page 3



Art in the Nathan Johnston Memorial Gallery

Kyle Strawn, a University of Florida student from Southern California, hopes to evoke positive feelings through his colorful art. Through his paintings he invites people to appreciate Christ as bearer of our burdens.



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

There are some contributions that only the passage of time can make.

In our early years we attempted a few times to apply for funding from foundations but with no success. We barely existed at the time, so we could hardly expect a funding institution to take notice of us. Twelve years later, however, things have changed. This past summer the Lilly Endowment did take notice. They invited us to apply for funding through their “Theological Exploration of Vocation for Campus Ministries Initiative,” and we are now very pleased to announce that the Lilly Endowment has awarded us a grant to fund a new, three-and-a-half-year initiative on faith and vocation. Because “the work itself” has always been a central theme for the Study Center, we are delighted at the prospect of how this grant will serve both the vision of the Lilly Endowment and the purposes of the Christian Study Center.

We are extremely grateful to the Lilly Endowment for their generous support. We are also very thankful to all our friends and partners whose generosity over the past twelve years has brought us to this point and whose support will remain crucial. God has been good, and we are thankful.

The heart of our theological exploration of faith and vocation will consist of year-long undergraduate seminars that will launch in the fall of 2014. They will consist of five to eight tracks defined by areas of vocational interest, one of which will always be church vocation. A second major component of this initiative will be three-day summer institutes on faith and vocation that we will offer in the summers of 2015 and 2017. These will serve not only undergraduate students but graduate students and Study Center alumni as well. Finally, the Lilly grant will enable us to expand our library and to bring our classroom technology up to the level it should be to serve students effectively.

In order to offer these new program initiatives and to do the additional financial development needed to build on this initiative, we are also announcing a new half-time position for a person who will assist in administering our programs on faith and vocation and who will also help create an alumni association. We now have hundreds of active alumni, and we are excited about the way that the Lilly grant will enable us serve them and incorporate them more fully into the life of the Center.

Please do not misinterpret this exciting development. These new funds will go 100% into the development of new educational programs that are above and beyond our regular, ongoing program. In short, as your faithful support in recent years has been crucial in bringing us to this exciting point, your continuing support will be more crucial now than ever. We trust that you share our excitement about this great step forward for us as an institution and that you will be encouraged to stand with us as we continue to provide a faithful, thoughtful Christian presence in the university community.

CONNECT WITH US

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NEWS & NOTES

SEEING JUSTICE, SEEKING JUSTICE

MIROSLAV VOLF, Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology, Yale University Divinity School and Founding Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture will conclude our series on *Seeing Justice, Seeking Justice* with a public lecture:

“Can Religion Help - or only hinder - Global Justice and Peace?” Thursday, February 20, at 6:15 p.m. in the Pew Center Auditorium, Room 170

COOL BREEZES: A/C FUND UPDATE

Thanks to you we raised \$27,751.65 for our new air conditioners! Thank you for your support.

PASCAL'S COFFEEHOUSE CONTINUES TO THRIVE,

and because of demand we have hired two more baristas, Will and Amy. Our baristas serve the Lord well as they craft quality drinks and create a welcoming atmosphere even through heavy workloads. Pascal's has also added five new tables and twelve new chairs that fill up every day.

MEMORIAL GIFTS RECEIVED:

- From Jim Lynch in memory of his wife, Carole Lynch, mother of board president Jay Lynch.
- From Martha Linder in memory of William Perry.

Conversation with Dr. Sommerville, continued from page 1

The University of Florida recently instituted a 3-credit course, “The Good Life,” that is to be taken by all students. Do you have any thoughts about the course?

I wish the course well, but I'm not real confident. The fact that the university president had the nerve to try it shows that the university is looking in the right direction. What it lacks now is a sense of the human good, which of course is religion's specialty. We thought we had given up on required courses like Western Civilization at the end of the 1960's. When I was at Stanford many of us taught such a class, but it was disestablished during student protests of that time, and suddenly the staff had to find new courses to give. I created a course on the history of attitudes towards children. That's tied up with a culture's basic interest in the future, in what's necessary to teach the new generation, and in ideas of human nature.

A lot of your work as a scholar was done in this area, wasn't it?

Well, I was able to publish two books on the topic, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood* and *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England*.

You have taught for 40 years, 34 of them at the University of Florida and your involvement with the Center was integral to your work in those later years. You've expressed how the Center has helped you involve your discipline with your Christian outlook. How do you see the Center benefitting students and patrons of Pascal's coffeehouse? It's lovely to see the students taking an interest in the programs that discuss deeper questions of meaning and good. I also enjoy the mixture of ages in the coffee shop. There is a family atmosphere that is helpful in such a big university. You see student religious leaders meeting with students, and people of all ages and situations being themselves. The university is supposed to be a cool place to grow, but it is a time of stress and self-doubt. I think Pascal's helps address that. I also love the classical music played in the morning. That alone would justify the existence of this place in my view!

Well, John, I think we will close on that musical note. Thank you so much for your time today and your service to the Center. We will all miss you when you move to North Carolina, but we look forward to hearing from you on beauty, desire and faith in March.



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SPECIAL EVENT FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

A Weekend with Dr. C. John Sommerville

MARCH 14 AND 15 AT THE CHRISTIAN STUDY CENTER

Dr. C. John Sommerville is Professor of History, Emeritus at the University of the Florida and he is a long-time friend and supporter of the CSC. To bid him farewell as he moves to North Carolina, the CSC will host a Friday evening lecture with reception to follow and two Saturday morning lectures with a continental breakfast provided. Please make plans to join us!

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

- 3/14 7:30 p.m. "What do Beauty and Desire Have to do with Faith?"
8:45 p.m. Reception
- 3/15 9:30 a.m. "How Beauty Leads to Faith: Some Case Studies"
11:00 a.m. "Turning Lemons to Lemonade: The Difficult Life of C.S. Lewis"
12:30 p.m. Optional lunch available for \$10 if reserved by March 12

This newsletter is a publication of the Christian Study Center of Gainesville which facilitates the thoughtful consideration of a Christian understanding of life and culture in the university community.



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