The dialogical relationship between spiritual and professional identity in beginning teachers: context, choices and consequences

by

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In the
Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2010

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Degree: Doctor of Education
Title of Thesis: THE DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN BEGINNING TEACHERS: CONTEXT, CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights unique contours of Christian spirituality and their relationship to the development of teacher identity. It provides insights for beginning Christian teachers seeking to become spiritual persons who teach, as well as, teacher educators and educational leaders who desire to support a spiritual way of being in the classroom that is an appropriate and meaningful expression of the personal in a public space. The study weaves together the lead researcher's personal story and the personal narrative dialogues of nine participants reflecting on their choices to reveal or conceal their spiritual identity in a public setting over a period of five months. The participants were asked to consider their choices in relation to a metaphor of “veiling” because of its multi-layered and paradoxical meanings which paralleled the temporal, political, contextual and interpretive flow between public and private or professional and personal identity reconciliation.

The narrative dialogues of the participants were interpreted in four different ways: “the veil as trauma”, “the veil as giving an account of oneself”, “the veil as sanctuary”, and “the veil as an ascetic of love”. These interpretations reflected the lived experiences of the participants as well as a general progression of understanding with regard to their spiritual identity. They began to move from an understanding of identity as rooted in an autonomous epistemological process of role negotiation towards “personal being”, an ontological and communal path of becoming. Their new understandings about identity also revealed possible life-giving responses to ongoing issues in education: the issue of conformity, the issue of prioritizing the moral and ethical nature of the practice, and the issue of the teacher's quest for personal integrity. The study concludes with a
consideration of the possibilities of personal being as an inherently respectful and redemptive dialogical stance in the public secular context.

**Key words:** teacher identity formation; personal being; Christian spirituality; conformity in education; integrity in education; teaching as a moral/ethical practice; shared narrative inquiry as a quest for virtue; veiling as Judeo-Christian metaphor; silence as a dialogical stance.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my participants, Lori, Greg, Ben, Julie, Christie, Sherri, Mariah, Cassandra and Janine, for their willingness to share with me and all future readers the gifts of their stories and thoughts.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot adequately express with words my gratitude to the many people who have made this thesis journey possible, but these brief words are my humble attempt. My first expression of loving gratitude goes to my husband, David, for holding my being within his being through his patience, continuous encouragement, unconditional love, care and practical help. Any good that I do is made possible by his self-emptying love for me. My children, Braden and Garrett, also deserve much appreciation for their patience with a mother who was often distracted and unavailable, for their willingness to help in practical ways, and for often keeping my head out of the clouds.

I would also like to sincerely thank my senior supervisor, Dr. Peter Grimmett for his thoughtful, challenging and caring mentorship and guidance, and for persevering with me throughout this very long journey of twists and turns. His appreciation for the final direction and development of my thought was especially encouraging and made it possible for me to boldly go where I hadn’t gone before. Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones also deserves much gratitude for his willingness to serve on my committee and for his input with regard to developing coherence in my work, a difficult task when a text has been crafted over a period of eight years. He continues to inspire me with further avenues of thought and has always offered me the ‘sacrament of a brother’.

My beautiful and brilliant sister, Cherie Enns, also working on her doctorate at the same time, has also been a great support to me. Our many seaside walks provided opportunities to share our progress and clarify our thinking. It was so helpful to have someone close who understood the burden of this task, who was always interested and who always had helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to my colleagues at Trinity
Western University for their ongoing care, support, encouragement and inspiration. In particular I am grateful to Dr. Harro Van Brummelen, who has been both a spiritual and intellectual mentor for many years.

I am also very grateful for the prayers and shining incarnational radiance of the Theotokos, St. Barbara, St. John the Beloved, St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Nikolai Velimirovic, St. Silouan the Athonite, and Elder Sophrony Sakharov. Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Fr. Michael Gillis, my spiritual father, for the many hours of conversation, wise counsel and care, and for continually calling me from being to well-being.
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INTRODUCTION:

This thesis is concerned with a type of learning that is not motivated by mere curiosity or a desire for power over the world or others but a learning that is rooted in compassion (Palmer, 1983). When one is moved by a strong sense of and care and respect for what or who is to be known, the result is a relationship that wills the best for what is to be known rather than the desire of the knower. Palmer encourages us to imagine the subject sitting in the centre and exhorts us to be compassionate knowers recognizing the covenantal relationship between the knower(s) and the known, as well as, a humility based on our inability to know completely as individuals. Knowledge entered into in this manner expects change or transformation of both the knower(s) and the known, thereby demanding a relationship forged in love, encompassing openness, hospitality, and a bounded space to explore.¹ Held within this approach to knowing is the need for trust, ongoing respect, sensitivity, conversation and wonder or awe. Palmer calls this kind of knowing, “knowing as we are known”, believing that this how we are known by God and that to know compassionately is to become the image of God.

I would be less than honest if I didn't acknowledge that part of my motivation in entering such a formal research process or inquiry is rooted in the instrumental value of my work. However, I long for a different way of being and hoped from the beginning that

¹ Palmer describes the boundedness as the hospitality of a low backyard fence rather than a moat.
this research would help me emerge from battle to covenant, or “knowing face to face”. I wanted to be drawn to that which I am to know, rather than be driven by forces that would seek to use me. I viewed myself as being both invited to this thought and inviting this thought to change me. I had no idea when I began how much change would occur, but I am filled with gratitude for the gifts of thought that were given and greatly hope that my readers will find gifts of thought within this dissertation if they are so inclined.

Because of my desire to approach this study with compassion, expecting transformation and revelation, the shape of this dissertation reflects a journey of thought over an extended period of time and significant professional and personal change. Professionally, I began this dissertation as a beginning academic and faculty member in a small and newly accredited teacher education program at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, Canada, and I am ending this dissertation eight years later as a still beginning academic, but in my third year as the Dean of the School of Education in that same institution. Personally, this dissertation has been closely linked to a journey of faith that moved me from an Evangelical Protestant church to the Eastern Orthodox Church. This personal change, occurring in the midst of writing this dissertation, extended the journey, enriched the journey and added layers of complexity to the journey as I struggled with research questions and findings that were initially formulated, documented and written within a modern, post reformation paradigm—a paradigm from which I increasingly sought to emerge. As a result, readers may find changes from chapter to chapter reflecting this journey and my efforts to articulate a path that was shifting.

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2 Florovsky (1996) makes a distinction between countenances and faces. He compares faces to photographs or masks, an image that deflects and possibly deceives, and he compares countenances to icons, an image that reveals the hiddenness of ourselves over time and through relationship. I believe that Palmer’s use of the word “face”, in this context, is more closely related to the term countenance as used by Florovsky.
My inclination to think about the relationship between spiritual and professional identity is one that arose from my own experiences as a teacher and teacher educator, and my own struggle to live a life of spiritual integrity or a life “undivided” (Palmer, 1998). I was also very interested in teacher reflectivity and its connection to spiritual reflectivity, seeking for ways to help my students connect their teaching with their spirituality. I agreed with Palmer’s prioritization of the inner landscapes of a teacher, that the most fundamental question in education was, “Who is the self that teaches?” (p. 7). I was grateful to writers like Palmer and O’Reilley (1993; 1998) who were opening the door to the exploration of spirituality and teaching, and to the awareness of spirituality as an intrinsic part of our identity as human beings (Rolheiser, 1999). In my initial research I discovered that most teacher identity or diversity literature either ignored spirituality or assumed spiritual identity based on culture or race rather than a factor that often transcended all other diversity factors (Salili & Hoosain, eds., 2006). Even when spirituality was addressed, it was often done in a generalized manner or a moral/ethical manner that did not address the unique contours of various spiritual traditions (Hansen, 2001; Palmer 1998). Therefore, I hoped that this study would highlight the unique contours of Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality and its relationship to the development of teacher identity, providing insights for beginning Evangelical Protestant Christian teachers as they seek to become spiritual persons who teach, as well as, teacher educators and educational leaders who desire to encourage and support a

---

3 Although, now I realize that I cannot ask this question in isolation from those I teach. I become myself as I offer myself as a teacher to my students and colleagues.
spiritual way of being in the classroom that is an appropriate and meaningful expression of the personal in a public space.\(^4\)

I initially hoped to widen the conversation about Christian spirituality and education in two ways: first, as a potent moral source for the practice and, second, as a neglected aspect of “diversity” that impacted professional identity just as much, if not more than other diversity factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, culture, social economic status, or sexuality.\(^5\) However, at the time I began this research, I was not aware of how relegating spirituality to the list of diversity factors was also relegating it to our given-ness (nature, culture, language) as another category of difference to be compared and contrasted and used as an autonomous building block of identity, rather than our only source and expression of personal ontological freedom. I was also unexposed to the concept of personal being and did not question the dominance of the authoritative western modern and postmodern view of identity as rooted in the discourses of the mind; prioritizing autonomy and epistemology over ontology and communion. This is one example of the kinds of changes in understanding and world view that have occurred during and as a result of doing this research.

\(^4\) Although spirituality is a difficult term to define outside of specific religious contexts and even within religious contexts like Protestantism that are denominationally fragmented, most writers use the term in relation to a search for a higher or more transcendent way of being in the world and in relation to others. Along with this sense of an orientation towards the transcendent is the movement or growth of the person through intentional practice of their spirituality. Taylor (1989) identifies three intersecting axis that humans use to live their lives in a way that is spiritually examined – an axis of respect for others, an axis of an understanding of what makes life meaningful, and an axis that determines what it means to live that life with dignity. This dissertation is largely concerned with an exploration of Christian spirituality; however, it leaves the door open to possible connections with other expressions of spirituality through their common social ethic and orientation to the transcendent.

\(^5\) Kujawa-Holbrook (2006) defines diversity as, “Differences among people or peoples reflected in a variety of cultural forms, included but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, class, etc”. Zizioulas (2004) notes that differences arising from our given nature or culture are not sources of uniqueness because they can be compared, contrasted, sorted, categorized. However, they are also not unimportant. They are embodied in our way of being in this world and become the way we offer our uniqueness as we participate lovingly in the lives of others – a web of interrelationship that is also unique to each person.
The inclination to pursue this study also arose in response to many conversations with beginning preservice teachers at my institution, Trinity Western University, about the difficulties they experienced in situations where they believed their spiritual identity was unwelcome and even unlawful. It was evident that the choices they were making were very contextually nuanced and influenced by experience (professional, relational and spiritual), power relationships, personal ideals and interpretations of professional norms and legislation. Some initial research with a colleague interviewing more experienced teachers and their choices with regard to revealing or concealing spirituality also highlighted variable interpretations with regard to what were appropriate or inappropriate expressions of spirituality in relation to contextual factors (Franklin & Van Brummelen, 2006). These variable interpretations led to a metaphor of veiling being included in the study because of its multi-layered and paradoxical meanings which seemed to parallel the temporal, political, contextual and interpretive flow between public and private or professional and personal identity reconciliation.

As the design for the study initially developed, the following key research question and related sub-questions arose.

- What choices do beginning Christian teachers make with regard to revealing or cloaking their spirituality in a public education setting?
  - What perceptions influence those choices?
  - What role do beginning teachers believe that institutional culture, policy, documents, and/or leadership play in including or excluding spirituality?
  - What needs, events, conversations, or interactions provoke or restrict an awareness of spiritual identity in public education settings?
How does narrative, dialogical inquiry, in relation to the metaphor of veiling, influence the reconciliation of spiritual and professional identity in a public education setting?

What spiritual values/practices do beginning teachers identify as grounding them professionally?

Because these questions arose from a variety of catalysts, including my own life experiences, it became clear that the dissertation was emerging in three distinct pathways: first, my own personal story in relation to the question of veiling; second, a philosophical exploration of concepts arising from my story and the stories of my participants; and third, an empirical study of choices and predicaments faced by beginning teachers.

Chapter One is the recording of my own experiences of professional and spiritual identity fragmentation as way of preparing myself to read the experiences of my participants “testimoniaily”, or in a way that isn’t passively empathetic (Boler, 1997). I became quickly aware that their stories were my stories, that their suffering was my suffering. I could not separate myself in an objective manner from their experiences, and to try to do so would be to remove myself from the possibility of transformation through their stories. Writing my own story was also my limited attempt to articulate my deepest intuitions about the moral nature of the choices I was making with regard to revealing and concealing my spirituality. As Taylor (1989) affirms, even though an articulation of moral space by a human agent is always limited by “gaps, erasures, and blurrings”, the attempt is in itself a quest for further meaning (p. 8). The means becomes the end, or at least a series of transitions as the articulation supports a re-articulation of a “best account” that can be used to author our lives. The ongoing process of narrative articulation makes it possible for us to challenge “imperial” or totalizing frameworks and may help prevent us from living lives that are “spiritually senseless” or without outer
limits that give us direction (p. 18) Taylor identifies our need to live meaningful lives that are oriented towards an implicit or explicit conception of the good as a fundamental drive or craving. However, it was through writing this story and doing this research that my own experience has been one of transition from being driven by or craving meaning, to longing for communion. To be driven by meaning was too closely linked to a habituated autonomous search for certainty and the creation of textual aestheticisms, and too quickly diminished into a set of obligatory behaviours or utilitarian procedures. My glimpses of communion with the other continue to draw me in response rather than drive me from within. Longing for the “other” goes beyond knowing about the other, or simply having an awareness of our need for the other. Although it can be experienced as a painful dis-ease or dissatisfaction with life, it can also be experienced as a “deep energy, as something beautiful, as an inexorable pull, more important than anything else inside us, toward love, beauty, creativity, and a future beyond our limited present” (Rolheiser, 1999). It is a qualification of the mind’s natural impulse to dominate the other and separate from the other, with a heart that seeks unity with the other and whatever “things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report…the things which you learned and received and heard and saw in Me” (Phil 4:8,9). However, I am open to the possibility that whether you are driven towards the outer limits of your conception of the good, or are responsive to the call of the wholly other, both narratives can be trajectories of moral and loving movement and imply some level of uncertainty about what one is to become. The story in Chapter One is itself a fragment of a longer story and ends nearly two years prior to my personal conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy in 2008. However, I end the story there in

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6 Throughout this dissertation the use of the word “other” includes “Other.” Depending on the context and one’s openness and sensitivity, the other can be other human beings, God, or any and all of creation for that matter.
this dissertation because it reveals the beginning of my thinking about the appropriate
expression of spirituality within a public context and the longing for a spirituality that
doesn’t divide the world into categories of difference or leave me or my students locked
in our minds trying to match our behaviours to certain roles or ideas.

Writing my own story was also a way of identifying the broader academic
conversations that were important to explore further because of their intersection with a
desire to teach meaningfully within the context of a conception of the good that makes
room for or becomes the other. These philosophical conversations, discussed in
Chapter Two, engage traditions of thinking about personhood and identity, identity
formation related to teacher development and the nature of the teaching profession, the
relationship between spirituality and politics, relevant contours of Evangelical Protestant
Christian spirituality, and the metaphors of masking, the veil and veiling. The
engagement with these texts provided an opportunity for “strong evaluations” to emerge
with regard to my own orientation to these topics (Taylor, 1989). In particular, the
concept of “personal being” rises to the fore as a basis for identity formation that is
wholly open to the other, equating freedom with love and creativity. The engagement
with these discourses, which included many sources within the tradition of eastern
Christianity also impacted the way in which the stories of my participants were
interpreted.

Chapter Three extends the philosophical conversation in an exploration of the
use of personal experience narrative dialogues in relation to a metaphor as a research
methodology that carries with it ontological, epistemological and axiological roots. This
chapter also highlights my commitment to a research process that views the narratives

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7 Although it may appear in this dissertation as though these strong evaluations emerged as a
result of my own thinking or rational processes, I cannot begin to quantify the impact of nearly
three years of immersion in specific spiritual disciplines and sacraments providing me with light to
see light. In other words, I do not see myself as making these judgments and determinations on
my own. As mentioned earlier, these thoughts are gifts received in gratitude.
shared by my participants about their choices to reveal or conceal their spirituality within a public context as gifts to be treasured and cared for rather than data to be used. The connection between the use of personal narratives and dialogue as paths of identity formation provide a strong link to the discourses begun in Chapter Two and form a coherent basis for the design of the study.

Chapter Four brings us into the third part of the dissertation, the empirical study, with a description of the design of the empirical study, as well as, an initial telling of the research story. The study asks nine pre-service Christian teachers to write, reflect on and dialogue about their choices to reveal or conceal their spirituality in a public practicum setting over a period of five months. They were also asked to think about these choices in relation to the metaphor of veiling. The data was gathered through a combination of summarized email reflections to partners and recorded focus group conversations. As the study progressed, the participants were asked to provide input with regard to ongoing themes and insights based on the researcher’s initial processing of the data. These insights and themes were included in Chapter Four and reinterpreted in Chapter Five. The participants were also given the opportunity to read drafts of Chapters Four and Five. Although, only three of the participants were able to respond to these drafts within the time frame provided, all three readers responded favourably and appreciatively. Their insights were part of the ongoing refinement of Chapters Five, Six and Seven. All three appreciated the manner in which the story was told and the inspiration of the final interpretation of the veil. The other participants who responded to the invitation, expressed their continued support and trust in the research even though they didn’t have the time to read and respond. Telling the story as a whole in Chapter Four was a strategy that helped to prevent a temptation to jump too quickly into deep

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8 The length of time between the research and the interpretation of the data resulted in changes of life for my participants as well. I completely understood the decisions they made to disengage at this point and accept responsibility for the untimely nature of my request.
interpretation and it also brought to light the impact of the research process on all of the participants. It became apparent through the data collection process that there was a common research story or trajectory of growth in our work together. The means was also an end for the participants. Chapter Four honours that shared story, and provides the narrative data used for the Chapter Five interpretations of the veil.

Chapter Five examines four different interpretations of the veiling metaphor as it was experienced by the participants through their choices of revealing and concealing spirituality in a public setting. These interpretations included, “the veil as trauma”, “the veil as giving an account of oneself “, “the veil as sanctuary”, and “the veil as an ascetic of love”. These interpretations are not necessarily comprehensive, but they do capture common themes present in the narrative dialogues and a progression of experiences that occurred for the participants. However, the interpretations were not necessarily experienced in a linear progression and not all of the interpretations were experienced by all of the participants to the same degree. Chapter Five was written some time after Chapter Four and after significant revision of Chapter Two based on my continued philosophical and theological explorations in relation to the concepts of identity, personhood, and integrity, and repeated study of and reflection on the data. As a result, there is a significant contrast between the narrative story told in Chapter Four and the “thicker” interpretations of their veiling experiences in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six returns to many of the broader philosophical discourses in Chapter Two, as illuminated by the four identified interpretations of the veiling experiences. This chapter also considers how these interpretations revealed new intersections with the work of Britzman (2003), Campbell (2003) and Palmer (1998) in relation to three current issues in education: conformity in teaching, morality or ethics in teaching and integrity in teaching. Chapter Six also returns to further discussion of the contours of Evangelical
Protestant Christianity that became most potent with regard to issues of revealing or concealing spirituality, as well as, a consideration of an eastern Christian response to these contours. The contours discussed include the gradual reduction of Christianity, since the reformation, to privatized themes or ideas expressed in words and divorced from tradition, liturgy and symbol, as well as, the difficulty of living a life that is a response to a gift and call when belief is equated to the assent to certain ideas about God. These contours are addressed by an exploration of the role of silent incarnation as an integral way of expressing Christian spirituality, the soteriological nature of love, and the unlimited freedom inherent in an ontology that is based on personal being. A response of personal being as an integral expression of spirituality changes the location of the struggle for identity and integrity from the mind to the heart and changes the content of the struggle from the achievement of specific obligatory behaviours to the ongoing study of our freedom in relation to the loving preservation of the freedom of others. The chapter concludes with the researcher’s consideration of her return to her work as an administrator and teacher educator in an Evangelical Protestant Christian university in light of the insights revealed through the research.

Chapter Seven seeks to consolidate the heart of this research, capturing the gifts of thought briefly and concisely. It also brings us back to the beginning of the research through an exploration of the expressive possibilities of personal being in response to Taylor’s (2009) two descriptions of the term secular. How might a stance of personal being, which is particularly Christian in its source and practice, be interpreted and supported in a secular context, and in what ways does this stance speak and listen respectfully and freely within a secular dialogue? The chapter and the dissertation conclude with a reconsideration of the research questions, identifying how they were
answered by the research and exploring how the questions themselves may be transformed by the research as a way of furthering future dialogue and exploration.
I begin by sharing with you part of my own struggle to become a teacher who lives her spirituality with freedom, humility and compassion. I do this recognizing that I cannot support beginning teachers in the process of emerging as spiritual persons who teach if I do not reflect on my own ongoing process. Not doing so denies the reality of "projecting the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together" (Palmer, 2003, p 66). It also puts me in danger of what Megan Boler (1997) calls "passive empathy". Passive empathy feeds habituated numbness to the suffering of my students, allows me to read the stories of my students in ways that are distancing and dehumanizing, and leads to judging them and what is best for them. In telling my story, I am not only orienting myself in a moral framework (Taylor 1989), I am also taking up the first task of what Boler calls "testimonial reading"—increasing the awareness of myself as a future reader of their stories.\(^9\)

I am the child of a professor/preacher and the granddaughter of a teacher. Although I didn’t make a decision to enter the teaching profession until three years after high school graduation, it was a profession highly valued in my family. Being a teacher was considered to be more than a job—it was a worthy calling, a spiritual gift. My experience as a teacher began at the age of thirteen as I became involved in teaching

\(^9\) See Chapter 3 for a more in depth discussion of testimonial reading and passive empathy.
Sunday School in a Pentecostal Christian church pastored by my father.\(^\text{10}\) I loved the “teaching” and my students, and I began to experience the gifts of teaching, “…an offering worth the sense of gratitude it engenders because it makes possible a life of influencing others and oneself for the good” (Hansen, 2004, p 139).

After graduating from high school, I worked for three years doing secretarial work. My love for learning had not been nurtured in high school and I was anxious to become independent. It was a combination of mentors in my life who named the gifts they saw in me and the learned experience of being in a profession that had few gifts to offer (junior secretarial positions) that prompted me to consider becoming a teacher once again. I applied and was accepted to a teacher education program in British Columbia and began a new conversation.

Choosing a secular institution was an act of resistance to a parental expectation that I would attend a Christian university and an implied belief that I would lose my faith if I did not. This attitude of resistance sent me into classes with a disposition of openness. However, I also knew that I was coming with a worldview and an agenda, even if that agenda was somewhat schizophrenic. I wanted to both protect my worldview and have it exposed. This disposition and struggle made me both strong and vulnerable. I had the strength of an “anchor” or “solid rock” on which to stand. I had a way of deliberating from my perspective of difference that allowed me to make judgments rather than be completely accepting of the worldview being presented to me as the only way to think. However, I was also susceptible to having my faith rocked or shaken as I willingly exposed myself to different perspectives, which, as was clear from

\(^\text{10}\) A comprehensive definition of this denomination is beyond the scope of this paper, however, relevant contours of this faith culture include an emphasis on the up close, present, involved in daily life Jesus, an emphasis on being “Spirit-filled” defined as speaking in tongues and equated to a ‘higher class’ of Christian or an in-group/out-group way of being with other Christians and non-Christians. Brian McLaren (2004), in his book, “Generous orthodoxy”, describes it as a denomination focused on the “sweet here and now” and the “sweet by and by”.
the beginning, were unwilling to dialogue with me. I was wounded by the assumptions/accusations made about western Christianity, religion, missionaries, and the Bible, but I was also wounded by the truth in some of those assumptions/accusations.

I quickly discovered that my professors were not interested in my faith perspective, one they viewed as irrelevant to their superior theories and facts. I was voiceless and powerless in class discussions both by imposition and choice. The imposition came through outside authorities judging my difference as unacceptable, and the choice was one I made in response. There were so many verbal repudiations of a western Christian way of being in the world from professors, authors and peers that I almost always concealed my faith tradition. I was not a courageous Christian taking on, in a reasoned way, any contradiction to my faith. My faith background had not taught me to reason, despite its epistemological approach to belief. However, I was also still convinced about the truth of this faith and determined not to move, thus my need for an anchor. Being at university confronted me with a world I didn’t know, and as a result, I was intimidated into believing I had no “right” to confront it. Although, my understanding of knowledge at this time was still one of “knowledge as power”, I somehow knew that this was my time to listen. I didn’t turn away, but I did withdraw. I waited. I was protecting an aspect of my identity that was precious and highly vulnerable to the environment, by opting out of any class discussion that would put me on the defense.11

11 I recently read the novel, Gilead, by Marilynne Robinson (2004). This novel is a beautiful work about a minister writing his “begats” for his son. He describes his struggle with finding language to communicate capital “T” Truth to those who don’t believe. Although he doesn’t resolve his struggle he does resolve the kind of dialogue that he rejects, saying, “…nothing true can be said about God from a posture of defense” (p 177). Although I hadn’t articulated this position as the self described above, I have now come to believe that I had an intuitive understanding of this principle. As my current self, it is a principle I agree with. God does not need my limited ability to defend his Truth. Defense puts me in a position of adversary rather than compassionate other.
However, I realize now, that the dialogue was happening at a more subtle level through the papers I wrote and the courses I selected.

I was living at home again during the first two years of university. This was a great blessing because I could bring the voicelessness and questions home to my father and dialogue with him. Being somewhat of a “resister” himself, he had emerged from a narrow fundamentalist understanding of Christianity and had explored many of these same questions. He also loved me and willed the best for me, preserving my freedom and creating a space for my questions. I look back on this time as a mutual search for truth and I/we became open to new ways of thinking, new horizons of thinking, thinking that was more integrative than discursive, polemical or analytical. I sought to embrace new understandings and grow, recognizing that in the embrace there was some negation or loss because a new layer was being formed, but also recognizing the role that aspect of my life had in making my growth possible. Having a dialogical partner that could exemplify this way of thinking/being was crucial. I don’t think I would have had the same trajectory if there was not someone caring and gentle at whose feet I could sit. His voice became authoritative rather than authoritarian and these dialogues became my inheritance. They authored me and prepared me for a life trajectory of growth rather than ongoing fragmentation, isolation and individualism.

I entered my professional year in my third year of university. While most of my peers were taking part in a more traditional practicum experience with time spent on campus for methods courses and time spent in schools for practice, I applied and was accepted as one of 20 students who spent the entire year (September – March) off campus in an East Vancouver school. The program was led by a faculty associate and an education professor. It was known to be rigorous and known to fail those who weren’t up to the challenge. We were presented with one way of being a teacher—an
idealized portrait for me to mirror. This portrait, I now realize, was very technical and behaviouristic. We learned that the teacher was a technician and children were objects to control and improve. We were taught to believe that we could achieve our behavioural objectives if we were skilful in our technique. Our faculty associate practised what she preached. She modelled all techniques she expected us to use and also modelled significant dedication to her students and profession. In essence, we were taught that the science of learning had discovered the best way of teaching and our job was to become highly skilled in those ways. Those ways were listed on a double sided checklist of behaviours that were used to evaluate us twice a week. I worked very hard to assimilate this particular tradition of teaching, but because I viewed it as an ideal, it did not always translate into skilful teaching of children.

Despite a very technical, behavioural teaching tradition, we were also encouraged to embrace multiculturalism, indicating our openness to the idea that children brought their identity into the learning situation and that identity needed to be recognized and appreciated. In other words, children were not completely empty vessels to be filled or absolutely blank slates. We were encouraged to celebrate all of the cultural festivals represented in our school population (65% Sikh, 30% Chinese, 5% Filipino, Vietnamese, and aboriginal, 5% white Anglo—Saxon). We were also expected to teach the real meaning of these cultural celebrations that invariably came from religions within the culture.\(^\text{12}\) Although initially challenged by this expectation since I felt that I would be affirming beliefs that were in conflict with mine, I resolved my conflict by feeling free to teach the religious meaning behind the Christian holidays. I believed that it was only fair to counter this expectation with my own competing agenda and voice what would not normally be voiced in public schools at that time. Christmas becoming

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\(^{12}\) An emphasis on multicultural food, festivals and dress is now widely and justifiably critiqued as a superficial approach to integrating cultural differences in education, but this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.
more than Santa Claus in my class and Easter becoming more than the Easter bunny was an expression of my agency.

Although I have emerged from a technical way of teaching, I can appreciate the strength of technique that I can still sometimes rely on until the "real teacher shows up". However, I believe my habit of dualism made me blind to the inconsistencies between my spiritual beliefs and the beliefs implicit in a behavioural way of teaching. I experienced little conflict with a portrait that asked me to dehumanize (or control) my students. I also responded to the imposition of teaching other cultures with the imposition of teaching mine. My only possible response to, "I am I," was an echo, "I am I." The focus on technique gave me an ideal picture to imitate and, when I experienced success, I experienced a sense of belonging. I was once again content to be part of a perceived professional in-group. My responsibility and therefore, my response-ability ended with achieving group status as a professional teacher who had the right knowledge and skills to teach well.

I ended my teacher education at a time when teaching jobs were in very scarce supply. I had always envisioned teaching in the public system and had viewed Christian schools as inferior places of learning and practice, based on a very limited experience with such schools. However, my graduation also coincided with the growth of Evangelical Protestant Christian schools in BC and I was offered a job teaching Grade One at a new Christian school. When presented with the options of substituting for years, moving out of Vancouver (something very difficult for me as a now married

13 Submitting to a discipline as a beginner in any form of art or craft (and teaching can be viewed as both) does not have to negate personal creativity. It can be a "...passage (that) requires the subjugation of individual resistances—of the sentiments, aesthetic emotions and intellectual elevation of the individual—so as to liberate the potential for personal relationship and participation (Yannaris, 1984, p. 259).
14 There is a wonderful children’s book by the same title, “I am I”, written by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick. It visually tracks two children’s journeys from separate, dominating and aggressive selves to persons, face-to-face, in dialogue.
15 For a history of Christian Schools in BC see Van Brummelen (1996).
person), or having my own class, it seemed my choice was easy. What I didn’t realize is that the idealized portrait of “teacher as technician”, a metaphor empty of moral content, was about to be dramatically challenged.

The challenge came in the summer after my first year of teaching. Being a first year teacher in the first year of a new school did not allow for a great deal of reflection. We worked incredibly hard with limited resources. Our students were the first students, and their parents were the first parents. Our focus on the urgent made it difficult for us to focus on meaning and the most we could do was congratulate ourselves on a survival job well done. Our pragmatism and procedural structures had seen us through. However, during the summer, I chose to take a class being offered at Trinity Western University. It was a course in Philosophy of Christian Education. My previous teacher education had included classes in psychology and sociology, but not philosophy. I took the class out of interest—the conversation intrigued me. I wasn’t sure if or how it would change my practice, but I had my own commitment to excellence and desire to keep growing as a professional.

It was in this class that the integrative thinking I began to learn from my father emerged more fully. I was introduced to a completely different way of viewing my faith, my life, the world and education. I came to a deeper more intellectual understanding of my faith through a spiritual/moral understanding of education.¹⁶ I discovered a rich

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¹⁶ This course was taught by Dr. Harro Van Brummelen, Dean of the School of Education at Trinity western University (2001-2007) and a leader in the field of Christian Education, Curriculum Studies, Educational Leadership and Teacher Education. His work and his mentorship have been significant in my emergence. His most well-known works are *Walking with God in the Classroom (1988)* and *Steppingstones to Curriculum (2002)*. Both books were instrumental in helping me pursue a spiritual understanding of practice.
history that I wanted to be part of and a practice I thought I could “indwell faithfully”\textsuperscript{17}. It was here that I found a way of thinking that supported a more holistic way of believing and acting. It is hard to describe how inspirational and pivotal this class was. It was here that I began to think of myself as a “response-able” human being who could actively participate in creating or designing a teacher identity that was infused with my spiritual identity. I began to explore more fully what it meant to receive life as a gift and a call, a call to glorify God through faithfully and actively bearing His image in His creation. My world became pregnant with meaning and metaphor became my language. I began to recognize the way certain portraits had been imposed on me and my passive acceptance of these impositions.\textsuperscript{18} My way out of passive acceptance was to recognize the connection of metaphors with beliefs about the world, my purpose in this world, the nature of human beings, the nature of teaching and learning, and the purpose of education and to act on my new understandings.\textsuperscript{19} Understanding these connections made it possible for me to begin to choose metaphors that spoke a language calling me towards a more spiritual way of being, and continual reflection/praxis in response to this metaphor would draw me closer to realizing it and deepen in my understanding of it.

\textsuperscript{17}The notion of “indwelling faithfully” was unfamiliar to me at the time I am describing above, but I believe that it best describes my passion for the new understanding of Christian Education I had entered. Although introduced to this notion through Palmer (1998) and Hansen (2004), according to Hansen it originates in the work of Heidegger. To indwell faithfully is to recognize your historicity and your responsibility to both read the story already written and to faithfully be part of writing the moral story that is to come. This concept is similar to Taylor’s (1989) notion of inescapable moral frameworks that require articulation in order to develop self understanding and a moral love for the Good. It is also consistent with MacIntyre’s (1997) discussion of “intelligible actions”, a virtuous quest for the good and a commitment to education as a practice.

\textsuperscript{18} Portraits are always idealized/idolized, while metaphors have the possibility of being iconic, to arrest our attention and invite us into mystery, and ongoing understanding leading to growth. Like L’Engle I believe there is always the possibility of metaphors becoming idols, I have lived this possibility. I think the possibility depends on the disposition of the person creating/living the metaphor. See Madeleine L’Engle’s \textit{Penguins and golden calves: icons and idols}, for an in-depth discussion on the difference between icons an idols.

\textsuperscript{19} I was embarking on what Hansen (2004) calls “world making”, “...combining the fusion of poesis (making, creating) and praxis (acting, faring)” p. 139. I could not move from the place I currently inhabited without acting. I was also powerless to indwell without a notion of my role in creating.
now had more of a disposition to look in the mirror of these portraits and not forget my reflection. My new task was to constantly seek integration/integrity. Unfortunately I only had a very limited set of intellectual, psychological, ethical and spiritual tools. Although there was a desire in me for a better way of being that would not leave me in peace, my journey from being to well-being would take many twists and turns.

The first analogy I chose to indwell was “teaching as a religious craft”. This simile, in my mind, went beyond the analogies of “teaching as an art” and “teaching as a science”, recognizing their truth while also recognizing the moral nature of the task and its incumbent seriousness and responsibility. This metaphor provided me a basis for reflection by which other metaphors could be questioned. I returned to my school with new eyes and began to de/construct my practice and our shared practice. I wanted to make everything connect and I believed I could do this. Truth was still an ideal that could be imagined. I also believed that my task was righteous and that my new understanding required the conversion of my colleagues. I was conditioned to search for certainty and believed I could achieve it. Despite my moral orientation, I believe I was still somewhat habituated to “debased perfectionism” because being certain and right was more important than being open and learning. Although I am grateful for this portrait because it moved me beyond the “teacher as technician” portrait and actually helped me begin to understand how important it was to have a holistic view of my teaching that included a conception of the good, my conviction that I had found the best portrait was still inhibiting my emergence (and probably the emergence of others). I was

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20 I believe that this course allowed me to begin thinking reflectively rather than reactively as a teacher. Reflection as a way of developing teacher identity and effectiveness has a long tradition in education. A more in-depth conversation about teacher identity formation and reflection occurs later in this chapter and Chapter 2.

21 Religious was defined in a broad sense as a “…system of ardently-held beliefs that guides practice” (Van Brummelen, 1988, p 22).
not engaged in the project of reflecting on the use of my freedom, or the reality that the game of life is played on the ground of being not ideas.

In 1987 my husband was transferred to Toronto and I was given the opportunity to continue my education. I applied to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I had originally planned on doing my masters degree in curriculum since I was very interested in creating curriculum that was a “perfect” reflection of a spiritual understanding of curriculum, but since that program was full I applied to the educational administration program.

I was by far the youngest member of my cohort. The program I took was designed for practicing administrators in the public school system. My age and my limited administration experience (2 years of being a head teacher in a Christian School) made me a curious anomaly. However, I was now ready to dialogue from my position of “rightness” and I like to think that my being there was a counterpoint to their assumptions and beliefs just as theirs were to mine. I entered this educational experience very differently from my last one. I was open about my faith perspective and I found that my openness was tolerated, if not welcomed. I didn’t feel the need to conceal, and instead was determined to reveal. I believed I had a voice that was valid and worth hearing. My success in the program confirmed that voice. I was mainly in the business of asserting that independent Christian schools had a valid place in educating the public and that a teacher’s identity was one of heroic agency despite circumstances.

Before writing this section I read through some of the papers I had written while completing my M.Ed., re/membering myself as that young, idealistic, audacious and assertive (and probably annoying) professional. My first papers are littered with the

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22 The public school system in Ontario includes the Catholic school system. However, evangelical Christian schools were truly independent at the time—not receiving any government funding and somewhat isolated from the public education community.
language of community, effectiveness, common mission, climate, and functionality. I focused my energies on developing a research base that shored up my understandings of Christian education. I looked to the effective schools research to show why Christian schools could be more effective than public schools. I wanted to prove why Christian teachers could be more heroic than those without a strong belief system. After all, we had “value added” spirituality. I wrote with my community in mind, particularly the wrongs I perceived. Although I recognized that I was getting a larger understanding of education, going beyond the classroom, initially my understanding didn’t get beyond the school and it was highly focused on systems rather than people. I could rest on the laurels of practising in a relatively closed school system, where I believed real change was possible. In fact, despite my limited administrative experience, I had been part of significant change in my previous school community. The complexity of a public school system was not my worry. I could feel sympathy but not empathy and definitely not complicity. One of my final classes, a curriculum elective, began to move me from my stance of rightness and certainty, and I began to confront a personal crisis of truth, the truth of what it means to live in this world together. This is a truth that still makes me a mass of contradiction and struggle, requiring my willingness to continually study the use of my freedom. It was my beginning interactions with critical theorists that helped me take the interpretive turn, complicating my certainty and inviting me into a critical conversation.23

I took my beginning awareness of the shadows back to my original school community when my husband and I decided to return to BC. An integration of this

23 Although introduced to critical theorists in my Philosophy of Christian Education course, it was a conversation that I was reluctant to enter. I don’t think I really wanted to know how complicit I was in inequity. I was also frustrated by the focus on deconstruction at a time when I was focused on integration. I am still sometimes frustrated by deconstructivism in education. It is very easy to be in the shadows and critique. It is harder to find a way forward from that position. It is also a quick path to cynicism (a path I still find myself on at times).
perspective resulted in the following actions. I was hired to develop a learning assistance program in that school, one that eventually became known for its strength. For the first time, children with special needs were welcomed into the community and I continued on a path of making this exclusive school as inclusive as possible. Two metaphors became important to me during this time—“teacher as nurturer” and “teacher as hope-bearer”. These were metaphors, chosen by me rather than imposed on me, that focused my attention on my students rather than craft. I learned that I taught children rather than curriculum, or methods, and that teaching children was much less certain. My conversations continued through my opportunities to attend professional development, especially professional development oriented around inclusion and social justice. While attending these professional development events, I gained a great deal of respect for the public system and their commitment to educating all. While still determined to be a strong supporter of Christian independent schools, I could stand in the shadows and critique their systemic inadequacy and hypocrisy.\(^{24}\) I suppressed my dis-ease with the exclusivity of some independent schools while I worked to push out the boundaries of my own school community.\(^{25}\)

In the early 1990’s I stumbled across Parker Palmer’s (1983) first book while browsing in a bookstore, *To know as we are known: a spirituality of education*. Although I’ve read much of Palmer’s later work, including his very well known, *The courage to teach* (1998), it was my conversation with him through this early work that transformed my understanding of what it meant to know and made me aware of how divided my own heart and mind were. My heart is still convicted when I read the story of Abba Felix and

\(^{24}\) At this time, I believe I was still in a state of debased perfectionism. I was trying to bring about systemic change that would realize my ideals of Christian education, using knowledge as power.

\(^{25}\) It is important to note that there are many Christian independent schools in BC that are not exclusive and are known for their hospitality to all, including all faiths, academic abilities and special needs. The BC Ministry of Education’s decision to give full funding to independent schools for students with special needs is in recognition of the important work done on behalf of all learners in many independent schools.
am reminded that, “there are no more words nowadays” for those, like me, who are unwilling to obey or allow words to become tyrannizing ideals.

A few brothers who had lay persons with them, approached Abba Felix and begged him to say a word to them. But the man kept silent. After they had asked for a long time he said to them, “You wish to hear a word”, they said, “Yes abba.” Then the old man said to them, “There are no words nowadays. When the brothers used to consult their elders, and when they did what was asked of them, God would show them how to speak. However now, because they ask without doing what which they hear, God has withdrawn the grace of His Word from the elders, and they do not find anything to say, because there are no longer any who carry their words out.” Hearing this, the brothers groaned, saying, “Pray for us, abba”. (Palmer, 1983, p. 41)

This desert father/teacher was unwilling to feed the textual aestheticism of his students. He met their request for an idol with silence, knowing that their motivations would prevent them seeking and acting in truth. How often have I acted similarly, both imposing and creating idols. I am still so much like the students of Abba Felix, a habit of the heart that is incredibly hard to break.

They wanted words instead of life, reports instead of reality, words that would create the illusion of life while relieving them of responsibility for living it, words of authority on which they could rely and retire. (p 42)

How does Abba Felix respond to this insatiable consumerism of knowledge?

…Abba Felix leads his students into a wordless world. He wants to humble their language, to break down the illusion that we can create reality with our words. He knows where our words and our world come from—that true words and the true world are not mental constructs but a gift of grace, a gift we can receive only as we abandon the illusion that our knowledge manufactures the world. Abba Felix takes his students deep into desert silence, a desolate space where none of their mind—made structures can survive. (p 42)

A new metaphor became available to me even though I now recognize my limited understanding of the early Christian spirituality captured by this Abba Felix story. “To teach is to create a space where obedience to truth is practised”. I embraced this metaphor and its emphasis on praxis and transcendent truth, and I tried to experience this metaphor as icon rather than idol. I carried this metaphor into my work as a teacher,
curriculum coordinator and principal, engraving it on a school house that sat in the center of my office coffee table, calling me into relationship with rather than power over others during every office encounter. This metaphor was impossible to transform into a portrait because it provided a continued space for not knowing, hospitality for each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas, and fidelity rather than conformity. The portrait could not be finished.²⁶

This metaphor remains a place of in-dwelling for me. It has been a persistent call that I respond to when I consider my work as an educator.²⁷ Palmer’s mentorship awakened a sense of humility in me and a desire to live and radiate compassion in my life and work. I became very conscious of how my actions were affecting others and prioritized relationship as a basis for teaching and leading. His work also calls me to listen particularly to silence and the silenced. I am still in awe of the mystery, complexity, and challenge of “face to face” knowing.

In January of 2002, I accepted a short term contract at Trinity western University and then applied and was offered a tenure track position beginning in September 2002. My employment at TWU coincided with the beginning of their Professional Year Program. I was privileged to be part of this new journey and new conversation, but knew

²⁶ Although I am now cautious about finished idealized portraits, I do believe that images can be iconic (after all, metaphors are images).
²⁷ Palmer, when writing The courage to teach (1998), changed his metaphor to, “To teach is to create a space where the community of truth is practised.” The change may have been in response to negative reactions to the word obedience which carries, for many, authoritarian connotations. I am reluctant to let the phrase, “obedience to truth”, be replaced by “community of truth” even though I know Palmer’s understanding of truth is “a rich and complex network of relationships in which we must both speak and listen, and make claims on others, and make ourselves accountable” (1993, p xii). I still needed the overt reminder to listen, to make myself accountable to an idealized portrait. However, it could also be that my reluctance to move to community represented an individualistic, bounded, understanding of self that makes it impossible for me to really know in community. Palmer’s work can encourage an emphasis on the individual and a strong demarcation between inner and outer selves.
I would be challenged by the context of this program’s birth.\textsuperscript{28} For the first time in my professional career I would come face-to-face with the public system. This aspect of my position was especially significant when I became the Director of the Professional Year Program at the end of my second year at TWU.

However, I also found the transition to higher education more difficult than expected. I was again presented with a portrait of a teacher/professor that overwhelmed me with its perfection and I found myself responding in habitual, fear based ways. I was also shocked at the isolation of academic work. My response to this alienating and sometimes hostile environment is one that eventually brought me to despair. I would return from home each day unable to provide any nurturing to my family. Although my work with beginning teachers was rewarding and worthwhile, and I found ways to creatively resist the dehumanizing tendencies of academic life in the classroom, I was overwhelmed with the burden of being what was expected once again, and I was concerned that I was conditioning new teachers to carry the same burden.

The words that called me back to life were Bakhtin’s words, “To be is to commune” (1984, p 287). I became fascinated with this statement. At some intuitive level I realized how individualism, or the priority of self, led to fragmentation, separation, pretense or hypocrisy, division and ultimately despair. I began to include this concept in my teaching, connecting it to Parker Palmer’s work, and introducing this phrase as another great idea. However I soon realized that these were words I taught, but didn’t live. These words judged me. I was confronted by everything I did that prevented my communion with others. I became convicted about the status of these words as a

\textsuperscript{28} Although TWU had been granting a B.Ed. for several years, their education students attended another institution for their professional year. TWU’s right to have a professional year program was contested in a well-known court case, \textit{Trinity western University v. British Columbia College of Teachers}, (2001) \textit{1 S.C.R. 772}. The BC College of Teachers challenged TWU’s ability to educate teachers for the public system because they had beliefs about homosexuality that the College believed would make them intolerant in their actions towards homosexual students. The story of this case is also told in Sawatsky & Van Brummelen (2001).
textual aestheticism in my life. However, I still had no tools to live these words. I
couldn’t think my way there and I couldn’t escape the self that I was. However, these
were beautiful and challenging words that kept calling me, kept holding a mirror to my
face, kept resonating in my heart, an echo of God’s voice and the voices of others. I
was completely impoverished, but my awareness of this impoverishment renewed my
commitment to living/discovering what it meant to live with and for others.

In May 2002, I embarked on my doctoral studies at Simon Fraser University,
another conversation I entered with hesitation. I wasn’t sure how I would be received,
knowing that many in the academic community consider TWU an aberration of liberal
education. In fact one academic from another public university, made a point of
negating a presentation I made at a conference by telling me that the term “Christian
university” was an oxymoron. However, that wasn’t my experience at SFU. In fact, I
have never before experienced such an open learning community. My concerns about
concealing my spirituality were unfounded within a cohort that included a Muslim Imam,
a Lutheran lay minister, avowed agnostics and atheists, Catholics, Buddhists and me.29
Our professors, on the whole, also seemed willing to connect their teaching with their
beliefs and willing to encourage a broad conversation of differing perspectives. I can’t
be sure that the experience I had is true for all students at SFU, but learning within this
cohort gave me a vision of community with those that are radically different and I greatly
value this experience.

It wasn’t always comfortable. I particularly remember the time that our cohort
went to hear a speech given by the lawyer who represented the BC College of Teacher’s
case against TWU. Although I was veiled in that larger setting from all but those who

29 Concealment is usually impossible when you are a TWU faculty member. All academic
conversations require the identification of your institution. I have become accustomed to having
my veil ripped off as soon as I say where I am from. However, I think that I was also concerned
about suppressing a way of thinking which was and still is very integrative with my spirituality.
knew me, I was very troubled by the tone and the language used to describe a community I represented, and thereby me. I had to rejoin my cohort for class shortly afterwards and I remember how difficult it was to return. I wasn’t sure how they would respond to me now that they had seen me through these powerful and popular eyes. However, again I was welcomed and reassured. Knowing me (face-to-face) made it impossible for them to accept the totalizing judgment of the lawyer’s words. However, in retelling this experience I am conscious that there were aspects of my spiritual beliefs that I was concealing, knowing they would be unacceptable and offensive to many in my cohort. This experience also brought me back to the familiar voicelessness and powerlessness of being placed in a position where I was expected to defend my perspective. It also revealed contradictions in me with regard to some of those beliefs – in particular the “saved vs. unsaved” way of dividing up the world.

I became conscious of the limits of openness even in an institution that celebrated and truly sought a community of learning. My interactions with other academics in other institutions and with public school teachers and administrators over the past years have also been characterized by a limited openness. Although there is a willingness to recognize Trinity Western University as a legitimate program and institution, and often generous hospitality, there is also a felt wariness, and an unwillingness to “name the Elephant” in our midst. I recognized how I changed my language when working with people in other institutions and I was conscious of downplaying my experience in independent Christian schools. I have experienced many highly uncomfortable academic lectures that negated valued aspects of my life and even assumed that someone like me would not be present or desire to be part of the “open dialogue” that was occurring. These experiences are always fraught with strong emotion. I have an internal dialogue that is continually assessing whether or not I can/should enter the conversation. At times I have done so, but with mixed results. It is
true that difference both calls us and confronts us. For me there is a desire to communicate myself to the other, with the awareness that communicating my difference seems to negate the other in the same way their communication seems to negate me. I recognize the familiar taste of fear, uncertainty and impoverishment in my choices. It seems that even the most clever and poetic words do little to bring us into unity of being. My words are simply competing with their words. I could tolerate their words, but never fully accept their words. I recognize that I am simply tolerated for my words as well. I am still longing for a life that can fully embrace the other regardless of difference.

I end my story here, having told it as truly as I can and this telling has revealed to me my understanding, up this point, of how I “have the world”.

It’s all we have. You see? It’s the way we have the world. Without the telling, we don’t have anything at all. The moment goes by like the water of the river. We’d tumble and spin and be helpless if we tried to live in the moment…Our minds need to tell, need the telling to hold…If we don’t” say the words, what is there in our world? If we don’t tell the world, we don’t know the world. But we have to tell it right, tell it truly. Eh? Take care and tell it truly.
(Maz Uming in The telling by Le Guin, 2000, p 124-126)

Telling my story prepared me for reading the stories of my students and brought to my awareness interactions that were important for me and possibly my students due to the “crises of truth” and “mass of contradictions” my story reveals. It is the story of a self that is still fragmented, but actively seeking a better way of being under the impression that life is a journey imbued with hope and grace. It is the story about a self who longs to know as she is known, a self who wants to become a person. It is a story of a self whose plotline continues to be marked with crisis and tragedy, growth and emergence—emergence from debased perfectionism, petrified ideologies and theologies; emergence from a dualistic way of being, towards purity of heart; emergence from isolation, certainty and voice into mystery and silence and communion. It is also a story of grace, mentorship, conversation and the indwelling of poetic language as a process of
redemption or emergence. It is a personal story that references other discourses and when combined with the stories of my students, has the potential of speaking into these discourses. It is to these broader philosophical discourses I now turn.
CHAPTER 2: BROADER DISCOURSES

Personhood and Identity Formation

The previous story is one about seeking a more communal way of being, a mode of being that is a movement of freedom and love towards the other and refuses to remain in a self-created world that is increasingly fragmented, isolated and alienated. I believe that the stories of my participants share the same longings. These stories raise questions about the implications of our understandings of who we are as human persons and who we become as we journey throughout our lives. What is the same about us? What is distinctive? How do we overcome the tragedy of our biological existence? How do we preserve our uniqueness or survive without causing violence to the uniqueness or survival of another? These questions are spiritual questions, but they have moral/ethical and social implications. It is not enough for us to ask ourselves what it means to live, without asking ourselves what it means to live together. Being a teacher is a living together that is uniquely and especially framed by questions of relationality, power and freedom.

Individual or Person. Questions about the nature and being of humans have been asked since ancient times and our answers have often borne the fruit of our failure to live well in communion with one another. At the crux of communion or unity has always been a perceived loss of uniqueness or personal being. The totalizing or authoritarian nature of ontology that is ultimately unified in an “ideal” or the “biology of all” has tormented us (Zizioulas, 2006). Since Augustine and his introduction of the self as a centre of consciousness, the West has prioritized an individualized and rational
understanding of humanity, proclaiming that human beings were individuals rather than persons (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 46). An individual is self determining, self affirming and self preserving. The “other” is a threat because the other faces us and calls us out of our biological existence. To be constituted by something outside of us leads us into a land of fearful unknowing and uncertainty. Even though we sense within us an ontological thrust beyond ourselves towards others, or an other par-excellence, our history of self affirmation at the expense of the other has taught us to mistrust, attack/defend, and withdraw (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 2). Unfortunately, it has always been nature that enslaves us and divides us, and being our only transcendence. This is true even in the post modern era of anti-authoritarianism, human rights and social justice.

“...we stand on a floor whose construction was never completed according to plan. Indeed, it is a floor with shattered walls, broken windows and the roof torn off by the postmodern winds of these icy heights. And as we look around us we see crowds of cowering people huddling in the corners, shivering in desperation, as a freezing wind chills their bones.” (Middleton and Walsh, 1995, p. 25)

To be an individual is to be alone, locked in a world of our own creation. To be an individual is to close ourselves off from the wonders of the universe, to become earthbound, to be trapped in horizontal rationality and cease being enriched by “...a "vertical" contemplation of the mystery and meaning of creatures and things” (Clement, 1993, p. 80). When we are self determined, we use our rationality and our morality to develop ideas and systems that themselves become totalizing – imposing just as much violence on the other as the injustice meant to be overcome. We are forced into categories that compare and contrast, a process that itself is fragmenting and isolating. We forget that while ideas may be useful as guides or principles, the game of life is played out between people and ideas are merely figments of our imagination. While our ability to imagine the good has kept us seeking a better way of being, we have failed to transform ourselves into the good we imagine. The most we can hope for as individuals
is tolerant co-existence, or a “cloak of rationalism” upheld by social convention or law \(^{30}\) (Yannaras, 1984). However, this cloak of rationalism has become extremely tattered and is often revealed to be just as totalitarian as authoritarian systems of government. Politics, it seems, has become the opiate of metaphysics (Yannaras, 1984).

In contrast to an understanding of human beings as individuals, is the acceptance that we are persons, face to face with other persons. Buber (1958) and Levinas (1992, 1983), led the way in western philosophy towards an understanding of humanity that rejects an individualistic and ultimately annihilating view of the other. They both were deeply conscious of the moral/ethical consequences that occur when the individual is determined by the natural. Levinas (1983) argues that an awareness of the “other” is the awakening of the ethical I.

Thus ethics is no longer a simple moralism or rules which decree what is virtuous. It is the original awakening of an I responsible for the other; the accession of my person to the uniqueness of the I called and elected to responsibility for the other. The human I is not a unity closed upon itself, like the uniqueness of the atom, but rather an opening, that of responsibility, which is the true beginning of the human and of spirituality. In the call which the face of the other man addresses to me, I grasp in an immediate fashion the graces of love: spirituality, the lived experience of authentic humanity (p. 182).

He also affirms the holiness of this relationship because it is with the “wholly other” and essentially asymmetrical. The ethical call of the other requires a loving response on my part whether or not the other is equally ethically inclined towards me (Levinas, 1992, 1983). This view is strongly related to the early Christian response to ancient Greek thought. Separating nature and being, and prioritizing being as the uniqueness or hypostasis of the person were the tools used by the Cappadocian Fathers to develop a

\(^{30}\) A complete description of the moral implications of human beings as individuals vs. human beings as persons is beyond the scope of this dissertation and my limited abilities as a theologian or philosopher. However, both John D. Zizioulas (Being as Communion, 1985; Communion and otherness, 2004) and Christos Yannaras (1984; 2007) have written extensively on the topic. Their work is directly linked to early Patristic sources.
theology of the person as made in the image of God (Zizioulas, 2004). Our mode of being (as person) is one that answers to a call or movement of freedom and love towards us. When we extend the same love in freedom towards God and others, we participate in the divine mode of being and escape the determination resulting from a merely biological existence. We are loved, therefore we are. It is our ability to extend beyond our selves (ecstasy) and be transformed by the encounter with the other (entasy) which preserves our uniqueness, freedom and love, “…making an enclave of non-death in which to leap and dance” (Clement, 1993, p. 245). Our lives then become an “adventure in freedom,” either affirming the truth of our person or denying it, to live in fear or to live in love, to co-exist or commune (Yannaras, 1984). To commune is love that empties itself in a movement of freedom towards the other, completely accepting and affirming its otherness, refusing to judge, refusing simply to tolerate. St. John Climacus uses the following story to illustrate this kind of love.

One day I saw three monks insulted and humiliated in the same way at the same moment. The first felt he had been cruelly hurt; he was distressed but managed not to say anything. The second was happy for himself, but grieved for the one who had insulted him. The third thought only of the harm suffered by his neighbour, and wept with the most ardent compassion. The first was prompted by fear; the second was lured on by the hope of reward; the third was moved by love (quoted in Clement, 1993, p. 271).

Since love for the other is a movement of complete freedom and self-emptying, there is a refusal to control as well as a release from control. There are no natural conditions or circumstances that can impinge on personal freedom and distinctiveness separate from nature. Thus you find freedom within prisons, love in the midst of hatred, the courage of one in the face of many. “Acquire the peace of the Holy Spirit and thousands around

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31 Basil the Great (+379), Gregory of Nyssa (+395), and Gregory Nazianzus (+389) together are referred to as the Cappadocian Fathers and are largely responsible for articulating the Christian understanding of Trinity.
you will be saved.” 32 To be a person is to achieve (or begin to achieve) an ontological rest that is beyond nature, beyond death. Individuals, through their deliberate isolation, can only achieve temporal psychological or moral rest, resulting in a restlessness only satisfied through becoming persons. “In love, relation generates otherness; it does not threaten it” (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 55). Our morality is the way we relate to the freedom we’ve been given to become persons.

**Becoming a Person.** Implicit in the above description of personhood is the necessity of revelation and a realization, or a process of becoming or maturation. If our life is an adventure in free response to that which is wholly other, our salvation (becoming persons generated or engendered by love) is a never ending journey rather than an event. Consider the following prose poem written by Solzhenitsyn (1970).

*Reflections*

On the surface of a swift-flowing stream the reflections of things near or far are always indistinct; even if the water is clear and has no foam, reflections in the constant stream of ripples, the restless kaleidoscope of water, are still uncertain, vague, incomprehensible.

Only when the water has flowed down river after river and reaches a broad, calm estuary or comes to rest in some backwater or a small, still lake – only then can we see in its mirror-like smoothness every leaf of a tree on the bank, every wisp of a cloud and the deep blue expanse of the sky.

It is the same with our lives. If so far we have been unable to see clearly or to reflect the eternal lineaments of truth, is it not because we too are still moving towards some end – because we are still alive?

We start from our biologically determined being and begin a journey that leads towards or away from well being. The dynamic or non-static nature of our identity has long been

32 This quote is attributed to St. Seraphim, a Russian Orthodox elder and canonized saint, but it also brings to mind the writing of Solzhenitsyn, who discovered freedom in prison and often comes back to this theme. His short story, “Matryona’s House” (1970), is a classic example. Matryona was found to be the “one righteous person without whom, as the saying goes, no city can stand. Nor the world”.

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noted by monastics, theologians, and philosophers, particularly those who view our being as constituted by language—call and response. Although characterized as “meaning making” rather than becoming, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Bakhtin, Bruner and Taylor all highlight the hermeneutic and dialogical nature of the process, seeing tradition as a source of critique and freedom from prejudices in current thinking. The old is a reason for the new. They also see narrative or dialogue as the medium of interpretation. This view of identity formation stands in opposition to what Ricoeur (1974) calls “the idealist fallacy of self-transparency,” and occurs within “inescapable moral frameworks.” It also requires the conscious or free act of an individual self—one who is willing to “tread the path” (Taylor, 1989).

**Narrative and Becoming a Person.** The process of reinterpreting ourselves through narrative serves the purpose of locating us geographically, thereby orienting us (Taylor, 1989; Bruner, 1987). Ricoeur describes it as collecting ourselves and articulating a horizon of possibilities based on the meaning we have left behind (Kearney, 1984; Ricoeur, 1992). In every gathering, there is the possibility of opening. Palmer (1998) uses the term *homecoming* and the bodily term, *re/membering*. Bakhtin (1981) emphasizes the notion of dialogue rather than narrative, heightening the role of the other as an enabling condition of being. Such a process of becoming is necessarily complex and circuitous (Taylor, 1989; Jenkins, 1996). Although it is impossible to disengage oneself from the narrative framework, it is also impossible to feel completely at home in this narrative unless one maps the space carefully so that it includes a “crucial set of qualitative distinctions” (Taylor, 1989, p. 19). Coherence is required, as well as, a *telos*.

A hermeneutic or interpretative way of being in the world rejects the “natural attitude” or dream of positivistic science—that knowledge is valid when separated from
time and space or separated from experience (Sarbin, 1993). Instead, it is a stance based on the belief that we are born into a world constituted by language requiring answerability on our part, and that our knowing is particularized by interaction and temporality (Gadamer, 1994; Bakhtin, 1981 & 1993, Ricoeur, 1992; MacIntyre, 1984; Taylor, 1989). Taylor calls our particularity a framework that allows us to take a moral position in the world and a “web of interlocution” reminding us that we only know ourselves through conversation with others, and we are thereby ethically implicated (p. 36). MacIntyre says that we live our lives as enacted narratives in order to make our lives intelligible, and Ricoeur emphasizes that life only becomes meaningful when articulated in a narrative way. Implicit in all hermeneutic understanding is the notion of interpretation and dialogue—that is, our narrative texts are in response to other narrative texts, and that this dialogical or hermeneutic circle is ongoing and closely related to how we understand ourselves as well as the world.

The above understanding of identity, while recognizing the flaws of a fixed, rational view of identity, remains rooted in an individualistic process and immanence. In other words it is more horizontal than vertical or transcendent. The other is there as an instrument for our knowing ourselves. We can do this through a psychological process of self-consciousness, becoming more aware of our own story in relation to the stories of others, or through an ethical/moral process of differentiating. The other is in danger of becoming de-personified into ideas or ethics if the other is “simply language” rather than a person who moves towards us in freedom and love, to call us out of ourselves into communion. The dialogue can become functional and/or totalizing rather than communal, if its telos is self-consciousness or actualization rather than self-emptying love for the other.
All of the above theorists support a view of identity as an ongoing moral journey or quest in which the *self* is actively searching, making choices, uncovering historical strata to understand the limits of those choices, and tentatively locating itself, staying open to future possibilities and seeking future growth or change. There is a sense that being human is a profound mystery needing a lifetime to explore (Ware, 2000). This is a very dynamic view of the person as opposed to a more determinative view that the person is a “fixed” entity, or a victim of time and space or nature. It is also, potentially, a very communal view. There is a sense that it is our interactions with others that invite us into dialogue and invite us beyond our own individualistic limitations. Although there is an awareness of limitation in terms of the tragedy of our biological nature, the person is also gifted with a mode of being (*tropos*, person) that is transcendent, an ontological thrust to move outside of ourselves towards the other—from being, to well-being, towards eternal being or *perichoresis*, a continual movement of love.

**Becoming a Person: A Risky Endeavour.** There are many risks implicit in the view of identity formation described above. Understanding one’s identity as a journey involves one’s active cooperation and reflection. As well, it implies a vision of the good that is personal and implies a giving up of certainty in order to embrace partiality, temporality and ambiguity. One cannot begin such a journey of *ekstasis*, going out of one’s self, without expecting *entasy*, transformation. One would not begin the journey without some measure of faith, a faith that is not a matter of mere trust or rationality.

Faith is thus an attitude of gratitude to every other...This kind of faith offers no security of rational conviction. The only certainty it offers lies in the love of the other. (Zizioulas, 2004, p. 98)

The journey is a struggle as one is confronted with the competing drive of self-determination and affirmation, with the inability to open or enlarge one’s heart, with the entrenched patterns of making oneself feel better or better than. Although the struggle
may begin as a matter of rational conviction, that the way of love and freedom is a better way, it quickly becomes an ontological truth as we experience the enlargement of our hearts and the illness of our life of non-being. We are loved, therefore we are (Zizioulas, 2006). We love, therefore we are (Sakharov, S., 1977, 2006; Sakharov, N., 2002; Zacharias, 2006).

Also implicit in this view of identity formation are consequences for those unwilling to take the journey. Foreclosure of identity happens when an individual assumes an identity unconsciously in order to preserve a sense of continuity or direction (Kroger, 1993). To not be a person, is to become an alienated individual, to become “enclosed in the absence of the transcendent” (Evdokimov, 2001, p. 180). This enclosure, or foreclosure, according to Kroger, has also been connected to individuals from an authoritarian background, a background that is characterized by high connectivity and low individuality. To be enclosed in a petrified ideology or theology is just as much an enclosure as self-determination since it is a loss of personal uniqueness, freedom and love. This view of community is similar to any ideology that shifts morality from the individual to the social. In such ideologies, the individual is lost and the community becomes everything. However, everything cannot be the sum of many zeroes.

Another consequence or natural outcome of those refusing a personal identity of free and loving response to the other is ongoing fragmentation. If we understand the individual as someone who relates to others in a closed and fearful, self-determining manner, it is automatic for the individual to adopt the ancient understandings of prosopon (person as mask). In other words to be a person is to assume roles or to wear masks (Zizioulas, 2004). Our natural ability to separate thought from action makes it

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33 See a further discussion of prosopon, hiddenness, masks and veiling below.
possible for us to do this. Fragmentation is hypocrisy. However, fragmentation may also be a temporary safe sanctuary as the need for establishing coherence or integration arises. Our ability to exist in joy and gratitude for all others is always imperfectly realized. Therefore, some hiddeness may be a gathering that leads to an opening. Palmer’s (1998) notion of an undivided life, if it does not account for a journey of struggle or if it is not oriented towards an ethos of joy and gratitude for all others, could be an idealist fallacy that leads back to a frozen portrait or certainty about what that life should look like. It then has the potential of becoming a violent imposition. There is, however, a danger in prolonged fragmentation. The danger for the person is the loss of access to a unique, free and loving mode of being that is uninhibited and spontaneous. The danger for the public is the absence of a tropos rooted in perichoresis, and all of the individualistic illnesses that result.

Identity Formation Related to Teacher Development and the Nature of the Teaching Profession

The concept of identity formation as a moral journey and the role of narrative/dialogue as a tool for interpretation and coherence is not new to the field of teacher development. Dewey highlighted the hermeneutic nature of reflective thinking in relation to education, connecting it to a morally oriented act of the soul requiring an understanding of experiences as interactive and continuous, a commitment to rigorous thought through ongoing iterative processes, and an understanding of its communal or dialogical nature (1933, 1944). However, narrative inquiry did not become a prominent feature of teacher education programs and teacher development research until the mid 1980’s after the impact of Schon’s (1983) work and in reaction to research that placed teachers in passive or silenced roles (Schulz, 1997). Research that uses narrative inquiry in relation to teacher development is committed to the belief that, “…teaching is a
complex, personal endeavour shaped by influences beyond those which can be identified through rating scales, surveys, and narrowly focused observations” (Muchmore, 2002, p. 13; see also Grimmett & Erickson, 1988; Hansen, 1998, 2001; Valli, 1990, 1997; Tom, 1984; Mayes, 2001; Webb, 2001; Korthagen, 2001; Stengel & Tom, 1995). The teacher as ethical or moral life-long learner has become a standard of the profession in many jurisdictions. In British Columbia, the requirements for an ethical stance and ongoing growth from beginner to contributing professional are very explicit in BCCT Standards 2 and 7.

**Educators are role models who act ethically and honestly.** Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession. They understand that their individual conduct contributes to the perception of the profession as a whole. Educators are accountable for their conduct both on the job and away from the educational setting. Educators have a general understanding of the education system in BC and the law as it relates to their duties.

**Educators engage in career-long learning.** Educators engage in professional development and reflective practice, understanding that a hallmark of professionalism is the concept of professional growth over time. Educators develop and refine personal philosophies of education, teaching and learning that are informed by theory and practice. Educators identity their professional needs and work to meet those needs individually and collaboratively.

**Vision and Reality.** However, despite the existence of these professional standards, there is also some evidence that the path of a life-long learner is difficult and often not fully realized (Lortie, 1975; Little, 1990). Even though many teachers enter the profession with a vision of the good that has moral and ontological implications, they often experience disillusionment or a loss of faith rooted in the disunity of personal and institutional narratives and a view of teaching that is not firmly embedded in the notion of
a practice as articulated by MacIntyre (1984). In my seventeen years of experience in the K-12 system as an elementary teacher, learning support teacher, and administrator, I saw teachers lose heart, I saw them become cynical and stagnant in their practice, and I found myself in the same place (as noted in the previous chapter) when overwhelmed by the pathological nature of most institutions and the disunity between my original idealism and the reality I encountered.

My current work with pre-service and beginning teachers has also highlighted both the desire for the good and a pattern of either socialization into identity foreclosure or disillusionment. My undergraduate classes are filled with hope and clear vocation, a strong desire to become simply the best possible teacher. On the other hand, my students who are in their professional year or have completed it, although still hopeful, are tinged with a new awareness of the fragility of their vision, uncertainty and the felt pressure of utilitarianism. Their experiences have already taught them to acquire a “bag of tricks” that will get them through a day. Their attempts at being the kind of teacher they want to be have sometimes failed and they have been quickly socialized by their environment into doing what works in the short term, rather than what fits with their original intentions as educators or what fits with rigorous research and theory in education. The challenge of connecting theory to practice in their undergraduate classes did not prepare them for the ambiguity of daily life as an educator. Their path of

MacIntyre (1984) defines practice as “...any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and good involved are systematically extended” (p.187). Teaching qualifies as a practice because of its social and cooperative nature and because of the internal goods that are essential components and outcomes of excellent practice. These internal goods include, but are not limited to, learning knowledge, skill, virtue, wisdom, relationship, transformation, and imagination. These goods have an abounding nature and are of benefit to the entire community. There is also the good of living as a teacher, recognizing your practice as part of your identity and contributing to the community of practice through the co-pursuit of internal goods. Entering into a practice is, in essence, entering into a narrative that has its own coherent logic involving “...standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods” (p. 109).
disunity and disillusionment is already evident, despite the effort in their undergraduate program to provide them with a personal vision for education that is clearly articulated, coherent and justified.

The Malaises of Modernity. What causes this loss of heart, this loss of vision? Many argue that this loss is caused by individualism, the primacy of instrumental reason, and the loss of freedom due to instrumentalism limiting choice and control all of which is well documented, pervading our culture and are in all educational institutions. These malaises of modernity result in the stifling of the spirit (Taylor, 2004; 1989). Taylor suggests that the modern conditions of our culture and our institutions force us to “…scale down our hopes and circumscribe our vision” (p. 520). Parker Palmer (1998) echoes his thoughts in the following critique of institutions.

We inhabit institutional settings, including school and work and civic society because they harbour opportunities that we value. But the claims those institutions make on us are sometimes at odds with our hearts...That tension can be creative up to a point. It becomes pathological when the heart becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of the organization, when we internalize organizational logic and allow it to overwhelm the logic of our own lives. (p. 167)

Maclntyre’s response to the totalizing nature of the organization is to communally and continually rearticulate the “internal goods” of teaching as a practice, so that the path each teacher treads is widened to a thoroughfare for all involved in the practice, so that practitioners are reoriented to the good individually and collectively, and so that lost internal goods are recovered, new goods are imagined, and increased clarity and forward action is realized. Unfortunately, the external goods, such as grades, awards,

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35 Note that freedom is equated to choice and control in this critique of our modern culture. The malaise of modernity may be rooted in this more individualistic understanding of freedom in contrast to a view of the person who exists because of and for the other, a view that defines freedom as love. We are always free to move towards the other in self-emptying love.
36 I would submit that we allow our hearts to become wholly owned through an understanding of freedom that is limited to our choices and control.
tenure, salary, and professional recognition, often have a corrupting influence because of their scarcity, and their susceptibility to the malaises of modernity (Taylor, 1991). These are things we can control or choose. They become the certainties in our teaching lives and enslave rather than free us. They often become the telos, burying the internal goods and ultimately forcing disunity and conflict within individual members of the practice. It is for this reason that MacIntyre adds the following key virtues—truthfulness, justice and courage—to Taylor’s moral love for the good, as necessary for the living of a practice that is undistracted by external goods and clearly oriented toward internal goods.

Palmer (1998) describes what happens when teachers are overwhelmed by the tyranny of external goods or lose heart.

To reduce our vulnerability, we disconnect from students, from subjects, and even from ourselves. We build a wall between inner truth and outer performance and we playact the teacher’s part. (p. 17)

Under these self-imposed conditions, teaching becomes a “fearful, divided enterprise” focused on grading systems, departments, competition, fragmented knowledge and bureaucracy. Stagnation and cynicism are easily bred under such conditions and the results are disunity, or a heart divided, and disillusionment.

The Absence of Genuine Collegiality. In Lortie’s new preface to his famous 1975 sociological study of teachers, he affirms that very little has changed in the basic structure of teachers’ development and work, and it is still very individualistic, conservative and present oriented. Little (1990), in her research on teacher collegiality, reinforces Lortie’s findings, making note of the ongoing norms of privacy, non-interference and autonomy in the organization of teaching. Without this collegiality, encounters with the other leading to transcendence and transformation are limited. Little
also found that current forms of collegiality actually work to protect teacher autonomy or individuality since they are largely based in the social and interpersonal aspects of teacher’s lives or the provision of mutual aid or assistance and do little to actually impact the classroom. The reality that most teachers are trained in relative isolation, that their affirmation comes from reference groups largely outside of the school, that is, professional organizations, and that “strong collegiality or collegiality that is “joint work” often comes at the risk of high transactions costs such as time away from the classroom and challenges to personal beliefs about education, and contributes to the inherent conflict in both social and professional interactions (Little, 1990). Therefore, it seems that teachers have a tendency to avoid conflict or difference due to the high risks and allow themselves to be socialized or fragmented or “foreclosed” by the teaching profession in malaise. This tendency is not limited to teachers. It is important to remember that teachers are products of an education system that has trained them to be conditioned by the malaises of modernity.

A Spiritual Crisis in Education. Often what results is a spiritual crisis, a loss of faith in the telos or the good, a loss of vision of the good, a loss of love for the good. Such disillusionment is documented as one of the main reasons that teachers leave the profession within their first five years. When they can no longer believe in their ability to author their story, they spiral into a pattern of disillusionment resulting in depression and burn out (Weissbourd, 2003). That pattern is usually exhibited by the following behaviour and lack of moral fortitude.

Depressed adults often become unilateral and commanding in their interactions with other people. Their behavior tends to be governed by their own moods and needs rather than by an awareness of others. They tend to take the path of least

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37 The spiritual crisis can also be described as an ontological crisis. To have strongly held beliefs that cannot be realized is a kind of death. To have a vision for the good is important because it represents our ontological thrust, our desire for a better way of being; however, the vision is always a figment of the imagination. There is no being outside of being.
resistance and do what requires the least effort. Often they become withdrawn, irritable, critical, or sometimes outright hostile. What’s hard for them are exactly the qualities—empathy, patience, persistence, consistency, idealism—that are crucial for teachers…(p. 4)

It is not surprising that so little has changed in education in the last century or that very few educators are influenced by new theories after the age of twenty-five or thirty years of age or that educational practice is shaped by “taken for granted folk wisdom” (Egan, 1997, p. 35). Although institutions are necessary for practice, most educators seem to be unable to find the path that allows them to negotiate the treacherous pitfalls of institutionalized practices, maintaining and interpreting with a creative tension rather than being subsumed or overwhelmed. Institutions themselves have in a sense become perfect teachers, training all to be just like them.

This spiritual crisis is also linked to a loss of spiritual identity, particularly due to the current trend to link professionalism with status, bureaucracy or a scientific view, thus separating public and private selves/roles. If a teacher’s work is seen as expertise or technique to be mastered and transmitted or that there is an already defined “best way” of achieving an end, diversity and growth are minimized. Such a professional view of teaching is rooted in a scientific worldview and reinforces the cultural notion of religion’s irrelevance. It is only when professionalism is viewed as a moral practice or way of life that the particularities of persons and their values/virtues or orientations are brought back into the picture (Hansen, 1998; MacIntyre, 1984). These values/virtues not only sustain practices and protect practices, they can also redeem practices—especially, if they are a natural ethos of an orientation of joy and gratitude for all others.

The Absence of Spiritual Resources to Combat a Spiritual Problem. However, in most contexts of public education such spiritual resources needed to combat this spiritual crisis are rejected, looked down upon or simply not available. The teacher’s access to spiritual resources to combat the prevalence of identity foreclosure or loss of
an orientation to the good are absent because (and this is only one factor) spirituality or religion is absent from the institutional culture and curriculum of both the K-12 system, from all discussion about diversity unless connected to culture, and from many educational leadership and teacher education programs (Franklin and Van Brummelen, 2006). The call to operate public schools on strictly secular or non-sectarian principles conditions a perspective that views religion or spirituality in public education as unwanted and/or unimportant. Even within a context of multiculturalism, where there is an effort to create a hospitable space for all issues of diversity and recognition of how much more difficult identity achievement is for those from backgrounds or cultures that are not privileged, the role of religion is minimized (Starratt & Guare, 1995; Kroger, 1993; Liston & Zeichner, 1996). Most often diversity or difference is discussed solely in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and learning differences.

Space for a Moral or Spiritual Homecoming. Both Palmer (1998) and Taylor (1989) would suggest that the necessary response to the “identity formation crisis” in the education profession is a geographical location of self that articulates or rearticulates the inescapable moral frameworks we use to orient ourselves in time and space. This “compass reading” gathers us, reminds us, confronts us, challenges us, opens us. Although Palmer emphasizes the value of the inward turn, both recognize the importance of a moral horizon that is only useful when it is used as an orienting point distinct from other orienting points. In other words, self identity, and therefore professional identity, is a process of inward and outward turning that is done in the

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38 BC School Act, 2002, par. 76 (1) Further discussion on the separation of the spiritual from the political follows in the next conversation about the political nature of spirituality.
39 A more in depth understanding of religious diversity in western Canadian Education can be found in Franklin & Van Brummelen (2004).
40 I have a growing comfort with the absence of spirituality from categories of difference. The understanding of person presented earlier in this chapter celebrates the uniqueness of a person that cannot be categorized, compared or sorted - their tropos rather than their nature, since nature is shared by all.
context of establishing itself in narrative—personal, historical and *meta* or overarching.

Our stories become our uniqueness. Palmer describes this process as a “homecoming.”

This home is not a place that we can own but by the same token, we cannot be banned from it, and it cannot be stolen from us...the home we find is not a closed and parochial place in which we can hide, from which we can neither see nor be seen. Instead, this home is as open and vast as the sky itself. Here we are at home with more than our own familiar thoughts and those people who think like us. We are at home in a universe that embraces both the smallness of “I” and the vastness of all that is “not I”, and does so with consummate ease. In this home, we know ourselves not as isolated atoms threatened by otherness but as integral parts of the great web of life. In that knowing, we are taken beyond fear toward wholeness. (p 58)

Taylor (1989), however, recognizes that the homecoming is a very complex process and a circuitous route. Although it is impossible to disengage oneself from the narrative framework, it is also impossible to feel completely at home in this narrative unless one maps the space carefully so that it includes a crucial set of qualitative distinctions. “To think, feel, judge with such a framework is to function with the sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to use” (p 19). It is only then that one can take a stand, have a clear sense of the good and develop a love that mobilizes toward the good. The result of a path that begins with self-identification and widens through the virtuous living of a practice is a love for the good that will not allow a practice to sink to its lowest form and a unity of life that can overcome social and philosophical obstacles (MacIntyre, 1984). It is the systematic asking of two questions: “What is good for me?” and “What is good for all?” The answer to these questions achieves narrative unity and the moral desire for excellence. These questions must be answered with both word and deed, or in

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41 Although I somewhat struggle with Palmer’s emphasis on transparent self-consciousness and Taylor’s emphasis on language, I am comfortable with our stories being similar to the notion of *tropos*. This understanding of uniqueness is trying to get beyond categories of difference towards personal uniqueness.

42 Rather than taking a stand, which assumes certain and solid ground, it might be more like swimming.
MacIntyre’s words “intelligible actions”—actions that flow “…intelligibly from a human agent’s intentions, motives, passions and purposes” (p. 209). When one is oriented in a place of clarity with a sense of both the beginning and the end, actions become part of a coherent story. In contrast, “intelligible actions” are often the first casualty in the pattern of disillusionment in education.43

Once actions are part of a story, they become accountable to the internal logic of that story. This accountability is especially potent when co-authorship of all stories is recognized.

Thus personal identity is just that identity presupposed by the unity of the character which the unity of the narrative requires…The other aspect of narrative selfhood is correlative: I am not only accountable, I am one who can always ask others for account, who can put others to the question. I am part of their story as they are part of mine. (MacIntyre, 1984, p 218)

The practice of accountability or obedience has long been known in the monastic tradition to open up a space of freedom. Rather than being distracted by fearful or anxious thoughts of choice and control, the monastic is free to focus entirely on love for the other par-excellence. The result is a style of life rather than a rule of life. A style of life is an interior attitude that can, when oriented towards the other, “…make everything around him beautiful and light” (Evdokimov, 2001, p. 58). Such a life is adaptable, creative and supple because it is detached from fear of external rewards or punishments. However, such a life takes a life time to become—a struggle or adventure in freedom that is best learned through a process of studying our freedom in relation to others and with others.

43 An ontological personal causative view of the person (personal being) would suggest that asking what is good for the ‘other” is what is good for me.
The Political Nature of Spirituality

The above discourse brings us to an assertion that spirituality, however it is defined—an inescapable moral framework, a virtuous stance, an ethical love for the good, an interiorization of the other par-excellence in order to become the other to the other—has a political responsibility, intelligible actions, despite the advance of secularism in our western culture. Many authors have traced the history of this process and its consequences—Bellah & Associates (1970, 1985), Neuhaus (1984, 1992), Maclntyre (1984), Borgman (1992, 2003), Carter (1993), Carson (1996), Pannenberg (1989), Berger (1973) and Fromm (1968)—to name but a few. Although there is disagreement about the origins of separation, a rejection of God or a changed view of the world rooted in western Christian belief (Pannenberg, 1989), few dispute the consequences: natural law, renewed appeal to antiquity; democracy; the rise of industrialization and capitalism; autonomy of the economic dynamic; increased bureaucratization; removal of religion from the content and organization of education; increasing individualism, pluralism, commercialization and consumerism; and increasing feelings of meaninglessness, hopelessness and feelings of alienation.

The Secularization of Western Culture: An Unresolved Matter. The consequence that is of particular relevance to this conversation is the sociological alienation of the Christian Church, and therefore, Christians. Rather than judging the world by its incarnation of the good (I Cor. 6:2), the church is judged by the world. The Church is no longer an explosive message of hope, its history within the history of the world has made it, at best, self serving and self preserving (Evdokimov, 2001). The separation or alienation of the church is deeply lodged in the psyche of every western person, and especially within every western Christian. The enlightenment and reformation in the western world reinstated the platonic division between body and spirit, as opposed to the
division between created and uncreated (creature and Creator). Putting the body and spirit on opposite sides of an imaginary division has forced the spiritual to remain immaterial and the bodily material, and thus divorcing the spiritual and material. Consequently the “naked” public square can be conceived, and dualism has become the prevalent way of being in the world for most western people, Christian or otherwise (Neuhaus, 1992). Every politician who asserts that his religious beliefs are private and unconnected to his public office is representative of this dualism.

Although secularization has been realized differently across western civilization, and although very few would critique the underlying motivations of tolerance and democratic freedom characteristic of the now post-modern world or express a desire to return to a pre-secular world, ongoing issues of the public/private or body/spirit divide are strongly felt by Canadians. For example the Liberal gain of BC electoral districts after the June 2004 election was attributed by some media to comments made by a Christian MP whose beliefs were viewed as impacting his political stance on abortion and gay marriage. In Canada, it is also interesting to note how often political candidates feel compelled to assert a disconnection between their private beliefs and public action even though separation of church and state is embedded in the US Constitution, not the Canadian. For TWU students, in particular, the 2000 court case with regard to the right of a Christian university with a particular set of community standards to have a degree program that prepared students to be teachers in the public setting is frequently a subtext of social interactions with public educators even though the Supreme Court of Canada decided in TWU’s favour on the basis of lack of proof with regard to intolerance in TWU graduates.

Questions surrounding the interrelationship between faith and politics are visible throughout the western world. Consider France’s decision to ban the wearing of
religious symbols in public schools. Observe the varied decisions made by school districts to lower the flag in honour of the Pope Paul II (The Ministry of Education gave schools the option to lower the flag. Some did and some didn’t. (Some of those who chose to lower the flag provided communal reasons.) Read court decisions that have tried to mitigate conflicting interests between faith and human rights. Turn on any US newscast or talk show related to the 2008 election campaign and find the interaction of faith and politics as a key issue due to the expressed beliefs of several of its candidates.44

This renewed awareness and interest in the political role of spirituality or faith seems to be closely tied to the rise of human rights, the rise of fundamentalism throughout the world, and in particular, the threat of religiously based terrorism. There seems to be a growing awareness that spirituality and politics are interacting in a powerful way. Some Christians may even say that to be Christian is to be Conservative or Liberal. However, Christians are also responding strongly to the cry for social justice, often at the expense of rejecting all politics and recreating the church as the arm of social justice rather than salvation. Global warming and concerns about the misuse and mistreatment of the environment also provoke questions about the role of spirituality and stewardship. Led by the secular world, churches are also recognizing their need to reconnect body and spirit, material and immaterial. Many western Christian authors, echoing the ancient Christian voice, have begun to write about the sacredness of place,

44 CNN’s programming is particularly illustrative of this renewed interest. Recent reports include “Faith and Politics” and “Which party is God’s party.” Candidates are consistently being questioned about the interaction between faith and politics. At the time this paragraph was written, the CNN website lists abortion and same-sex marriage, issues connected to strong religious views, as two of the top five top issues in the 2008 election. www.cnn.com
our rootedness to place in the development of our identities, and the temporal/historical biblical meta-narrative.45

Uniting Sacred and Secular: Radical Hesitancy. Tinder (1997) clearly outlines the error of a view of spirituality, and in particularly Christian spirituality, that is disconnected from the world.46

We are so used to thinking of spirituality as withdrawal from the world and human affairs that it is hard to think of it as political. Spirituality is personal and private, we assume, while politics is public. But such a dichotomy drastically diminishes spirituality, construing it as a relationship to God without implications for one’s relationship to the surrounding world. The God of Christian faith (I shall focus on Christianity, although the God of the New Testament is also the God of the Old Testament) created the world and is deeply engaged in the affairs of the world. The notion that we can be related to God and not the world—that we can practice a spirituality that is not political—is in conflict with the Christian understanding of God. (p. 150)

He goes on to assert that the converse is true. If spirituality is political then politics is spiritual, an assertion connected to the origins of political thought found in antiquity and medieval times. When politics is removed from spirituality it is divorced from moral purpose and becomes focused on group and self interest, or as Tinder puts it, “...for the sake of power and privilege”. He then describes his understanding of “hesitant radicalism” as the proper political/spiritual stance of the Christian. It is the belief both in the dignity of individuals and an awareness of their fallen nature, leading to the necessary critical stance towards all human institutions or systems. However, there is also a strong commitment to hope in God’s will for the re-creation of this Kingdom on earth. Therefore, while Christians will have many of the same aims that secular, radical reformers may have such as care for the disinheritied and oppressed, they approach those aims with a different attitude. They must act in a way that builds community based

45 For excellent examples, see Sheldrake (2001) or Berry (1993).
46 Hannah Arendt (1958) also said it is “impossible to perceive any serious gulf between the two realms; and this is not a matter of a theory or an ideology. In the modern world, the two realms indeed constantly flow into each other like waves in the never-resting stream of the life process itself” (p. 33). Ricoeur, in his dialogue with Kearney (1984) called the suprression of the private a “pryptic victory” in that it would inevitably lead to the destruction of the public.
on equality and universality, but also be reserved in the belief that sin can be overcome by social skill. Their optimism is guarded and less oversimplified than political reformers that assume social change is easy.\footnote{Tinder’s view also differs from an Eastern Christian view with its understanding of an external Kingdom of God. In Eastern Christianity, the Kingdom of God is acquired within.}

Although radical hesitancy is missing an eschatological perspective and an understanding of the unrestrained and loving doxological role of the Christian in realizing the beauty and truth in all as it is offered to Christ and in Christ, the paradox of radical hesitancy is a useful metaphor to indwell because it reflects the need for human beings to study their freedom in relation to others and to God. It also captures the history of the past and is a reminder of the dangers of social engineering and/or nation building, while focusing on the complexities of the contextualized present. This radical hesitancy as a political stance for Christian spirituality is related to the choices a western Christian might make with regard to revealing or concealing her spirituality in a public setting. History and our understanding of the human being teach us that there are good reasons for continual interpretation, guardedness or watchfulness as key features of a life that is seeking to live undivided.

Tinder’s view also cautions those Christians who would seek a more oversimplified black and white view of what it means to be a Christian in this world. For a Christian, oversimplification celebrates the “man-God,” someone who believes he is the author of his own destiny, rather than the “God-man,” someone who believes God, through the incarnation of His Son and through the ministering of the Holy Spirit is continually taking initiative to act on behalf of His creatures and inviting them to share in His life of love and wisdom. Belief in the man-God rather than the God-man leads to pride and the belief that we can imitate God—which usually means imitating our anthropomorphic understanding of God. God’s word then becomes totalizing and often
leads to the abuse of power. Glass (2004) also emphasizes the importance of moral and political clarity as a way of refusing a stance of certainty which often becomes violent, and as a way of remaining powerfully engaged, or liberatory, with those who represent dominant or totalizing ideologies. When making choices about revealing or concealing spirituality, a belief in the man-God, may lead to practices motivated by self-interest and simplified notions of God’s will rather than a free movement of love for God and others, which is a complete affirmation of the others’ freedom to be other.

For example, in previous research on the choices a variety of educators made in relation to revealing or concealing their spirituality in the public setting, there were examples of individuals who saw themselves as "secret agents" whose purpose was to find any way possible to proselytize or secure power for the Christian point of view within the system (Franklin and Van Brummelen, 2006). Radical hesitancy was much more present in educators who were not in positions of power, mainly beginning or student teachers or in educators who had the best interests of each of their students in mind. They stood in contrast to those who were less hesitant in their desire to make a point or gain political power, and in some cases, violate the law of a secular and non-sectarian educational setting.

Both Tinder and Glass in their affirmation of hesitancy and uncertainty seem to affirm the need for a reflective space that surrounds action and the willingness to let go or to be detached from ideas or strongly held beliefs in order to engage the world more authentically or more meaningfully. Their approaches seek a healing of the sociological alienation of the Christian Church, a way to find a Christian voice in the world that goes beyond individualistic morality or ethics, as well as totalizing ideologies of terror. They recognize that individualistic morality breeds a response of indifference and that totalizing ideologies can only be met by totalizing ideologies. In essence they recognize
that the connection between humans is a spiritual connection, a way of being that seeks unity within multiplicity.

**Silence as Engagement.** Evdokimov (2001), an Eastern Orthodox theologian, goes even further in describing the silent, yet powerful voice available to the Church and to all Christians, especially in this day when words simply become part of the plethora of ideas available for the individual consumer met with indifference or totalizing terror. He says that silence, unlike words, can never be separated from inward truth. To be put outside the law (in the case of Soviet Russia), or the public square (in the case of the West), is liberating because the only powerful message available to Christians is the one that makes Christ present. St. Isaac the Syrian, a voice from the 7th century, also links truth with silence.

Someone who has actually tasted truth is not contentious for truth. Someone who is considered by people to be zealous for truth has not yet learned what truth is really like; once he has really learned it he will cease from zealousness on its behalf. (1997, p. 15)

In other words, it is an inner transformation that changes an alienated individual who can, at best, develop tolerance for others, into a person whose inner attitude of self-emptying love for God and others becomes an “…invisible yet perceptible seal on everything” (2001, p. 58). The essential ingredient necessary in presenting this message is the stilling of the individual voice and the releasing of the personal way of being. In this way Christians transcend the “sociological or political cemeteries” and free their creative love, passing from having into being.

**Unique Contours of Evangelical Protestant Christian Spirituality as They Relate to Revealing or Concealing Spirituality**

The above discussion brings us to an important conversation in this research—Christian spirituality itself—and, in particular, the spiritual context of the research
participants. Because this study is qualitative, the particularity of the research participants is vitally important to a reading of their stories that is testimonial and integral.

**Defining Spirituality.** Most definitions of spirituality removed from a belief-laden wider framework are not particularly useful in a discussion of the lived experience of a particular group of people. Smith (2000) argues that an inability to adequately define spirituality does not mean that nothing can be said:

…but rather that the language of spirituality can point and evoke but not ultimately lay bare that which lies behind or beyond our efforts at conceptualization. To rely on defining the term as a way of mastering the complex patterns of experience, belief and commitment with which it is associated may therefore be to place a greater load on the single word than it can bear. (p. 45)

Therefore, more helpful for the purposes of this paper than a definition of Christian spirituality, is the identification of certain themes within Christian spirituality, and particularly Evangelical Protestant Christianity, which may have an impact on the way the participants in this research, including myself at the time of the research, made choices about revealing or concealing their spirituality. It is important to note here that these themes are not necessarily exhaustive and the ones identified here may prove not to be as influential as I had thought at the beginning of this research. It is also important to note that it is almost impossible to generalize Protestant theological contours because of the large number of branches and individual churches – each with their own contours or traditions. Therefore, the choice of themes and the explanations offered will arise mainly from my own experiences and understandings within the broader Protestant community rather than a specific tradition. However, I have provided some references to more complete theological discussions about the themes raised. The influence of the themes will also vary from person to person based on their particular spiritual journey.

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48 Although one of the participants was Catholic, and is therefore not necessarily a representative of a Evangelical Protestant background, the contours described here (other than those related to the ongoing fragmentation of the Protestant churches) are applicable since they represent trends in western religion in general and the culture of TWU in particular.
The themes that I have chosen largely relate to Christianity and personhood, and the relationship between Christians and those who are not Christians, since I am assuming that being and otherness are closely tied to the decisions to reveal or conceal spiritual identity.

Protestant Discomfort with Both the Term *Spirituality* and Identification with the History of Christianity. The first theme is related to the previous discussion on the political nature of spirituality. Although the term *spirituality* is experiencing renewed respect and interest, spirituality in relation to religion is often defined negatively or as partisan and rigid (Hicks, 2002). Hence, Tinder attempted to soften and enhance that view through his works, *The Political Meaning of Christianity* (1989) and *The Fabric of Hope* (1999). Beginning teachers at TWU, and therefore my participants, are aware of the history of secularization, understand its roots in the history of western Christianity as a response to the inappropriate use of religious power, and are highly sensitive to the view of Christians and Christianity expressed by the mainstream media. Since the Reformation and the Enlightenment, religion has been increasingly tied to the colonization of people groups in ways that have often been violent and dehumanizing. To say one is a Christian becomes an admission of participation in this violence, both past and present.49 The word, *Christian*, has been so misused and fragmented and petrified, that it carries with it the heavy baggage of shame. Many thoughtful Christians are grateful for the “salt” of atheism and post-modernism because it forces a rethinking and new expression of the Christian message. Christians are quite willing to judge the church as the world judges the church and to seek to distance themselves from the

49 Although this contour did not emerge explicitly in the data of this empirical study, I believe that the research questions and design of the study did not create a space where this topic may have been more fully explored. My experience at TWU with both students and colleagues would suggest that there is a strong sense of responsibility and sensitivity to the often violent and colonizing history of Christianity. TWU’s Education program includes many opportunities for students to engage with critical theorists and critical conversations about social justice.
faults of the church for fear of being associated with them. While not wanting to proclaim that God is dead, they are quite willing to proclaim that the God of a certain theology is dead. The continuously multiplying North American branches of the Protestant Church are a manifestation of the need to distance, to protest and then profess something new.

Religion as Theme Rather than Foundation. Additionally, beginning teachers from a Protestant Christian background are the product of a culture that is now conditioned to religion as a theme rather than a foundation (Pannenberg, 1989).

Pluralism, individualism and consumerism have also had a significant impact on Christian institutions. As a result, the task of integrating public and private worlds falls to the individual or private sphere of family rather than a foundational tradition (Berger, 1973). Western Christianity has become privatized, or in Pannenberg’s (1983) terms, “self-deceptively privatized,” because “…it disregards the inevitably political implications of any position taken in the context of social life” (p 50). This privatization is simply a natural outcome of the ongoing fragmentation of the Protestant churches. Christianity has been reduced to a set of ideas that can be determined to be right or wrong by the individual for the individual. It has become doctrine rather than life. Doctrines are easy to compartmentalize and exclude from public interactions. The security of economic well-being that most students at TWU experience, the exclusion of religion from their K-12 education, and their socialization into what Marcuse (1964) calls a one-dimensional society may add a sub-conscious impulse to the conscious pressure to conceal, and even make it normal and habitual for them to conceal. Their Christianity has become irrelevant in its compartmentalization and is met with the bored disinterest of the public. Because Christianity has been reduced to ideas, Christians can no longer be envoys of life (Evdokimov, 2001, p.50).
A possible Protestant answer to the lack of integration between faith and life is to Christianize the world by creating *Christian Science*, *Christian* politics, *Christian* education, etc.\(^{50}\) However, this academic response is again making faith a search for certain proof rather than what Kierkegaard described as “finding oneself above thousands of fathoms of water.” People react to what Christians do rather than what they believe, and Christianity, if framed as a theme rather than a source, becomes functionally adaptive and easily dismissed rather than an explosive way of life that transcends all dogmas and even history itself (Evdokimov, 2001, p. 53). An unwillingness to reveal spirituality could be a recognition of the poverty of that spirituality.

**Either Assimilate or Withdraw.** MacIntyre (1984) and Pannenberg (1989) have noted that a common response of Christians to the secularized world has been either to assimilate or withdraw, and that each has negative consequences. For example, they argue that Hegel and Tillich assimilate and therefore empty the content of Christianity by translating it into generalized intellectual terms, liberation theologians empty the content of Christianity by translating it into political/social justice terms, and Bonhoeffer can be seen as an example of someone whose focus on an orthopractic version of Christianity—right or upright practice, justified in relation to others—also has the danger of emptying Christianity of its content. On the other hand, those who withdraw are interested in preserving or securing the existence of the content resulting in an opposition to the world rather than a witness to the world. The practice of concealing or revealing Christian spirituality could represent an individual’s vacillation between the two,

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\(^{50}\) The person who confronted me about the impossibility of a Christian Liberal Arts University is correct after all, although not just because such an institution would enclose liberal arts, but because it would fail to creatively transcend liberal arts. Evdokimov even suggests that in all seminaries or theological schools there should be an atheism chair to ensure that doctrine and dogma does not become too certain.
indicating a continuum of assimilation and withdrawal that exists and is reinterpreted by social contexts.  

Neither Assimilate nor Withdraw: Engage. However, I have experienced something different from the either assimilate or withdraw model presented by MacIntyre and Pannenberg, particularly among my students. Students at TWU are strongly influenced by a practical, social justice expression of their faith. Although they have tremendous respect for Christians and theologians who have borne witness explicitly (i.e. in words), they seem to be convinced that the best way to bear witness in their social context is to serve and help—to live rather than speak their beliefs. They are uninterested in a spirituality that has nothing to share with others. This desire is clearly illustrated by a conversation I recently had with five TWU nursing students. All five indicated their interest in either paediatric nursing or nursing in the developing world. Their spoken motivations lacked explicit spiritual content and were clearly oriented towards helping or serving those in need. An additional interpretation of this preference for serving and helping rather than merely verbally bearing witness could be that a world viewed as “working,” that is at peace and largely economically secure, does not respond to overt expressions of religion and that overt expressions may even damage or serve to minimize religion further (Pannenberg, 1983; Evdokimov, 2001). Therefore, motivations for concealing spirituality may also be based on a belief that Christianity is best served

51 Unfortunately, while accurate in their observations of western Christianity, MacIntyre and Pannenberg’s focus on the content of Christianity is itself disconnected from the Christian spiritual tradition and sets up a false dichotomy between knowledge and love. A closer look at those who have lived Christianity as a source rather than theme, the many saints, witnesses and martyrs of the faith, have discovered that all knowledge of God is revealed in love and leads to a love that is a creative and transforming power.
when its content is removed from public discourse. This is a belief that may be closely tied to the separation of church and state or the persecution of church by state, which, in essence, is often birthed by that separation. However it also has roots in a monastic Christian spiritual tradition that has sought to make Christ present to the world more through life and action than through words, and a view of holiness as the radiance of the transcendent rather than as the virtue of personal piety (Evdokimov, 2001). This approach to Christianity seeks to counter the “evolution of consciousness which has become complex and yet scattered” with “original and normative simplicity” (p. 142). Although lacking the depth and interiorization of the monastic tradition, as well as, the sacraments of the Catholic or Orthodox Churches, many Evangelical Protestants sincerely seek to become the hands and feet of God on earth, believing that their actions speak louder of salvation than their words. It is their desire to love in order to save.

Becoming Human as Both Gift and Call. Another spiritual contour that may be pertinent to this research is the Christian understanding of becoming human as both gift and call. Evangelical Protestant Christians generally view life as a given gift requiring a response to the giver. That response, for most Christians, is an active process of growth or formation to become more Christ-like or to image God and care justly for His creation. This view of life stands in opposition to a view of the person as a self-constructed or autonomous individual or to a view of life that is purely deterministic. Instead, it is a view of life imbued with grace and dependent on the Holy Spirit, yet requiring personal,

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52 Since 9/11, there has been a rise of New Atheism that is insistent in its critique of anything but a privatized spirituality. The time of peace may be over and this vociferous critique of all religion by atheists may change the decisions of those who are now inclined to believe that Christianity is best served by silence. This push back by Christians is most evident in the US (Schaeffer, 2009; Hart, 2009).

53 The Eastern Christian monastic tradition would reverse this sentence to say that, “You are saved because I love you.” Loving then ceases to become an agenda or a means to an end – it becomes the goal, the way Christ is birthed within ourselves so that He is present to others. With Christ’s presence comes healing, peace, and joy – a transfiguration.

54 See Olthius (1993) for a complete discussion of the Christian view of life as gift and call.
ongoing, free and loving cooperation. This contour is developed more fully in the initial discussion about identity earlier in this chapter. Its re-emergence here is to consider how such a view of life may impact a choice to reveal or conceal spirituality. If spiritual growth is a personal dynamic manifestation of the life of Christ in us, choices to share spirituality explicitly will also be uniquely personal, contextualized, and based on the charisms given by the Holy Spirit. Not all are called to preach and there is more than one path to holiness, making Christ present, including the path of service with a pure heart.\footnote{See 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 for an understanding of charisms. Abba Poeman, one of the Desert Fathers, describes the person who prays without ceasing, the person to bears illness without complaint and the person who serves with a pure heart as all doing the same work.}

**Gift and Call: The Journey.** Related to the Christian understanding of life as gift and call is the understanding that one’s response is a journey of sanctification, rather than an event. Often the journey is punctuated with spiritual crises or loss of heart (Palmer, 1998; Sakharov, 1991, 1997, 2006).\footnote{A long list of western and Eastern saints could be added here as witnesses to the ‘dark night of the soul’} Therefore, the choice to reveal or conceal spirituality may be related to a dark night of the soul or other circumstances in life that take precedence (e.g. illness or loss). The connection between the human and divine has often been compared to a ladder, the story of Jacob’s ladder in Genesis 28:10-20, St. John Climacus’ *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, the *Ladder of the Beatitudes* (Forest, 2002, a meditation on Matthew 5:3-12). However, in all of these comparisons there is the understanding of ascent and descent. Although a single movement of an integral life of love and freedom is sought, the search is always accompanied by struggle.

St. Seraphim, a 19th century Russian Orthodox Saint, spent thirty-seven years as a hermit in order to acquire the Holy Spirit through unceasing prayer. Only toward the
end of his life did he make himself available to people as a healer, confessor and elder. St. Basil the Great encouraged his spiritual children to take the time to learn as much as possible about all aspects of the world first, and then to go to a monastery. The time within the monastery was devoted to transcending all static forms of life through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Only when one is liberated from the need to acquire things, people, ideas, or the enslavement of the flesh, or the tyranny of the ego can one responsibly and with audacious creativity offer her life and all she knows or can do (Evdokimov, 2001). Concealing one’s Christianity can be an opportunity for maturity, a space to reflect on the use of freedom, a proactive response ensuring that an eventual presentation of Christ is transforming creative love, peace and joy, rather than violence.

**Gift and Call: The Community.** Also connected with the understanding of life as gift and call is the view that human life or identity is relational and that spiritual development occurs through relationship with God and with others and when relationships with God and others are reconciled. One person is no person, and one Christian is no Christian. The gift of life is love, not a feeling of love, but a love that affirms the other’s right to be wholly other. This kind of love is the perfect love that casts out all fear because it does not threaten or impose or control (1 Jn 4.18). This view of life also assumes a relational reference outside of the self that is used to orient and pattern life (Smith, 2000). Because Christians believe they are created in the image of the Triune God, a perfect communion of three distinct persons, we become our true selves only through loving relationship with others. We cannot be fully human without co-inherence, a natural and indispensable relation or part of another (Zizioulas, 2006; Ware, 2005). Rather than “I think, therefore I am,” the Christian must say, “I love, therefore I am” or, more accurately, “I am loved, therefore I am.”
Because of this significant orientation towards others, or becoming a unity in multiplicity, there is heightened sensitivity or attention to the needs of the other, the suffering of the other, the affirmation of the other. This attention or sensitivity is again highly personal and dynamic, and requires an interpretive and loving stance to social interactions. A loving stance is one that gets self out of the way so that the heart is an open or enlarged space for engagement and spiritual understanding or response. Concealing or revealing one’s spirituality, in this context, is a choice that prioritizes the other in an attempt to will the best for the other, rather than violently impose or control.

It is important to note, however, that for many Christians, a stance that is communal is often subsumed by an individualistic, autonomous rational way of being since western Christianity developed hand-in-hand with the enlightenment and modernity. The western theological path to salvation has long been rooted in a self-consciousness processing and individual piety. There is the understanding that each person works out their own salvation alone before God rather than in community with others. This individualistic and transcendent focus undermines a horizontal desire to make Christ manifest and “walk towards the other in wisdom” (Col. 4:5). To work out one’s salvation alone also supports a division between those who are saved and those who are not. Some Protestant churches approach salvation from a very legalist and juridical perspective that is reinforced by their willingness to judge those who do not appear to be saved based on their interpretation. Those who are not saved become the lost or the other. Relationships with the lost become lost in an effort either to save or differentiate. These fearful efforts build insurmountable walls that promote co-existence or tolerance, but inhibit free and loving communion.

Gift and Call: Passivity, Assertion, and Love. Another aspect of this contour of life as gift and call in relationship to community is that it can be misinterpreted as
passive—both by some who critique the usefulness of prayer and love and by others who view the relational call as one that requires a passive stance towards evil. Passivity has been noted in Christian young women in particular and in Christian teachers, to the degree that they become less assertive and correspondingly more passive than their contemporaries in their desire to not cause offence or to be sensitive to others. Although this kind of passivity can be rooted in a self-conscious focus on pleasing people and become self-enclosing, it can also simply appear to be passive to those who believe that assertiveness is always accompanied by words. To love with a pure heart is assertively to still one’s own voice so that the voice of the other is heard and a creative and loving response can authentically develop. In fact, the assertive stilling of one’s own voice has been called the violent acquisition of the kingdom of God or the Holy Spirit. An example of this can be found in the common critique of the monastic’s choice to abandon the world. However, a deeper understanding of monasticism leads one to the awareness that the monastic only seeks to transcend all that is static in the world in order to enlarge her heart so that she becomes prayer/love for the world (Markides, 2002; Evdokimov, 2001; Sakharov, 1991, 2006).

Extreme passivity is actually antithetical to Christian spirituality since it leads to enclosure rather than engagement and refuses the eucharistic task of offering all creation to God. Extreme passivity ignores our need to be actively involved in the process of saving each other through affirming each other’s freedom to be wholly other: the sacrament of the brother/sister. A balanced approach to the relational call on our lives as Christians can be found in a prayer attributed to St. Philaret of Moscow: “Teach

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57 This statement is based on unpublished research presented at the Coalition of Christian Teacher Educators Symposium in June 2004 by a group of professors from Wheaton College. The research also noted that teachers in general were more passive than members of other professions, therefore passivity or repression may also be tied to the socialization of teachers. The comment is also made in the light of conversations with SFU professors, public school administrators and teachers who have noticed a passive tendency or unwillingness to engage spiritually in beginning teachers from TWU.
me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others”. The choice to be meek often reflects the Christian’s desire to become prayer. To be meek is to become like God, to safeguard the freedom of the other and protect against our own omnipotence (Evdokimov, 2001). To assertively voice Christian spirituality is sometimes a sign of one’s inability to make Christ present in any other way, and thus possibly reflective of spiritual immaturity.

**Gift and Call: Courageous Action.** For some Christians, the only response to the call of God’s gift of life is a call to courageous action, to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth, to make all people and things Christian rather than for they themselves to become Christ (outwardly focused—as proclamation—rather than inwardly focused—as repentance). This understanding of Christianity may question, for example, the utility of thirty-seven years of prayer, and prioritize the active and explicit (verbal) proclamation of Christianity as the only way to serve Christ or to be Christian. This kind of Christianity wants to force God back into schools and into politics, making the assumption that God is only present in explicit words and ideas rather than incarnated or veiled in humanity. This kind of Christianity is one that is closed and static, relying on theologies of proof and often leading to the nightmare of imposed good (Evdokitov, 2001). It has been described as a Christian atheism because it takes the stance that God is dependent on humans to do His work on earth. God finds himself exiled to heaven.  

It is this kind of Christianity that St. Francis of Assisi critiqued when he said, “Preach the gospel at all times, only use words when necessary”. St. Francis presents a very different view of Christian calling. Instead of imposing a particular Christian frame or ideology on others, each Christian himself must incarnate Christ. His very beautiful

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58 Christians, by the way, are not the only religious people guilty of such atheistic religious zeal. It is a common human problem, and atheists have been as violently forceful in imposing their vision as religionists, especially in the twentieth century (c.f. Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong and Pol Pot).
and poetic prayer presents this alternative vision of courageous action: courageous action in the world through transformation of oneself.

Divine Master, grant that I may not seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love, for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Although the above contour descriptions are very brief and additional themes of Protestant Christianity may be pertinent, these themes serve to highlight the complexity involved in revealing or concealing Christian spirituality which beginning teachers face in a public setting. These layers also highlight the need to guard against generalization in any research about spirituality since an individual’s expression of the above themes will be affected by other aspects of their lives. As Neibuhr (1963) put it, historical qualification of each person’s relation to God is necessary. Christianity and its expressions are just as encumbered as the self (Lovin, 1990).

Metaphors of Masking, the Veil and Veiling

Closely connected to historical understandings of identity, politics and religion are the metaphors and actual practices of masking and veiling. Although a metaphor can never perfectly represent the phenomenon and can even sometimes limit an understanding of the phenomenon, it can also be helpful as a way of more deeply exploring an experience or reality. It can become iconic in that it is a window to understanding in a new way or more fully, a window of difference that invites us to commune.59 All of language is metaphorical and is thus somewhat separated from the actual reality it tries to represent. Unity of word and image/reality is elusive, but it is also this ambiguity that draws us into the conversation and keeps us open to new insights.

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59 See later discussion in Chapter Three of “metaphor as method.”
Veiling and the Judeo-Christian Tradition  One of the reasons I was drawn to the metaphor of the veil as a way of understanding choices to reveal or conceal spirituality was its connection with the Judeo Christian tradition. References to veiling in the Bible are often connected with the presence of God or the revelation of God. The first veiling occurred in the familiar story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve walked in the garden in communion with God. This communion was so complete that there was no awareness of self or separation from God or each other. The first human beings were spiritual persons, able to go beyond themselves and participate in the infinity of Trinitarian love. Because Trinitarian love is also infinitely free, the first humans were also free. Their freedom however, was unconscious and therefore very fragile. Their choice to become self-determining, became a separation—communion was lost in self awareness or self consciousness. Humanity discovered the infinity of freedom.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. (Genesis 3:7 NIV Version)

The loss of communion brought with it a loss of spirituality—the ability to participate in the infinite love of God with openness and so to become enclosed or separated, individuals rather than persons. The putting on of fig leaves represented their turn towards a natural/biological way of being rather than a spiritual way of being. Their autonomy destroyed their ontology. Their awareness of their separation from God and a focus on biological survival brought with it an awareness of their separation from each other. The other became enemy. God’s act of making tunics for them (Genesis 3:21) seems to affirm the need for clothing as a prevailing way of being human in a world that
is not spiritual. It represents a barrier, a lack of unity or disharmony, and therefore a need for protection.

Veiling continues to be referred to throughout scripture as an earthly barrier or separation between humans and God. At times it represents a lack of preparation for or understanding of the revelation of God. Moses was only allowed to see the “shoulders” of God. God revealed himself in darkness to Elijah. The veil in the temple separated the holy of holies from all but the high priest (Exodus 26:31-35, 2 Chr. 3:14). And although the veil was rent the moment Christ triumphed over death, representing everyone’s access to the living and transformational presence of God in their lives, the gospel was and is always veiled. Christ veiled His divinity in human flesh, was born, lived in a particular community in particular place at a particular time, and then died and ascended into heaven so that the Holy Spirit, always veiled in the scripture as a dove or fire, could come to reveal the Kingdom of Heaven within and among Christ’s faithful followers. Christ’s healing of the blind man represented the healing needed in order to see God, a conversion from the natural individual to the spiritual person, a turning or a metanoia (St. John 9). God provides healing through the gift of the Holy Spirit found by those who seek, ask, and knock. The Holy Spirit comes to those who respond to God’s open invitation to become conscious spiritual persons.

The hiddeness of God has always been an invitational mystery. Infinite love protects infinite freedom. This freedom and ability to transcend ourselves is the image of God in humans and is manifest as a longing that transcends all limits. The saints are those with an unquenchable longing for God (Evdokimov, 1985). To see God face-to-face, or unveiled is the parousia or second coming that all Christians long for and remember in every act of worship. To see God face-to-face is to become a person, to allow the fragile seed of freedom within to blossom into a movement of freedom and love.
towards God. This blossoming is creative in that the person can never remain a strong personality that “…one can classify according to psychological types or distinctive patterns” (Evdokimov, 1985, p. 55). Instead, the person becomes a saint, someone unique, never seen before (Evdokimov, 1985; Yannaras, 1984; Zizioulas, 2006).

A representation of the mutual yearning for union between God and humanity is found in the biblical imagery of the church as bride. In the traditional wedding ceremony this union is represented when the groom removes the veil of the bride denoting their face-to-face knowledge of one another or perfect unity—“the two shall become one.” The sacraments of the church are healing in that they remove the veil from our eyes and allow the light of Christ to enter, penetrate, to reveal the hidden person of our hearts: the image of God (1 Peter 3:4).

Veil in Monasticism. Veils used by monastics are signifiers rather than concealers. They represent a life consecrated to God, a veil of holiness, and can even represent stages in the monastic journey. In the Eastern Orthodox Church both male and female monastics wear veils. The veil is symbolic of the sacred ability to reject the roles and the selfish ways of being prepared for them by a society focused on mere biological survival, to still the voice of enclosed individualism in order to hear the voice of the other. The monastic vows of humility, obedience and purity of heart are vows that all Christians make in their passage from individualism to personhood. Monastics merely make these vows in a context free from the responsibilities of marriage and family. The Eastern Orthodox tradition calls these vows the “white habit” that all Christians wear in order to become “clothed with Christ,” once more to participate in the divine life. That is, these are the vows implicit in Baptism. This stilling or veiling of the individual or egocentric voice makes it possible to be in dialogue with the other, to be in relationship, to offer the sacrament of the brother, sister, friend.
However, to be unveiled or even imagine that we can be unveiled is to disincarnate ourselves from the true mystery of being (Evdokimov, 1985). It is to allow our egocentrism to dominate—both ourselves and others. Rather than revealing the hidden depths of the world, becoming a theophany, becoming ontologically brilliant, we become masked alien transplants hostile to the world and to others. In other words, as noted by Evdikomov (1985), “Man’s face possesses an orientation that determines him” (p. 57, 58). The veil provides a safe place to take off the mask, to develop as a true person in relation to others.

**Defining Mask.** In ancient times, the term, *mask*, was equated to the term *prosopon* or person/face, and eventually closely tied to the theatrical stage or a role in society. Philosophically, the concepts *prosopon* (person/mask), *ousia* (essence) and *hypostasis* (person/instance of being) were separated in the early Christian era. A *prosopon* was someone who acted a role in society or on stage (Zizioulas, 2004). This was closely tied to the totalizing ontology of Greek and Roman thought. Humans were made for the world, it was thought, and therefore each person’s unique individuality or *ousia* was disconnected from the role he or she played in society. It is interesting to note that the public/private divide is so deeply rooted in western philosophy. Roman culture, in particular, created roles for society and expectations for those roles. Individuals were expected to become their roles in society and to mask their individuality. Traces of this view of the person can be found in all professional bodies with standards for ethical behaviour. The professional role becomes a mask to be worn and an automatic loss of individuality. The “naked public square” is also an inheritor of this view. It was Christianity, through the Cappadocian Fathers, that introduced the revolutionary idea that *tropos* (mode of being) was not secondary to ousia (being) and that being itself was relational, and therefore automatically moral. However, this relational aspect of being
was subsumed during the Middle Ages in the West by more introspective or self-conscious views of the individual—individual as ethical agent, individual as ego, or individual as a substance with special qualities (Zizioulas, 2004).

Because our ability to be self-conscious makes it possible for us to be hypocrites or to wear masks, to think before we act, the western autonomous individual remains at ease with a multiplicity of roles and the agency that comes from that multiplicity. Integrity is a matter of acting consistently with the values of the roles played. However, conflicting values are inevitable and can result in a fragmentation or compartmentalization of roles – the life divided. There is also a struggle inherent in any mask that is imposed. Even if the imposed mask is ethical, it leads to the nightmare of good by imposition, limiting freedom and the audacious creativity of love.

At the heart of every beginning teacher’s question regarding their ability to be a teacher is their ability to play the role of teacher and what that role might cost in terms of their individuality. This insight comes from ten years of interactions with beginning teachers about their ability to be teachers, reading the personal stories of teachers, listening to colleagues and my own wonderings as a beginning teacher. We all wonder if who we really are fits with the role of teacher. Providing static portraits of teaching reinforces this notion of teacher as prescribed role and makes teacher education the acquisition of a mask. The powerful socialization of teachers and the inability for the profession to change, as has been mentioned previously in this chapter, could be related to this understanding of teacher as mask or role.

Comparing Veiling to Masking. If an understanding of person as mask leads to hypocrisy and fragmentation, how might the metaphor of veil differ? The Encarta dictionary definition of veil as a noun includes the following:
Face covering worn by women as a concealment or for protection, netting attached to woman’s hat covering the eyes, nun’s headdress, nun’s vows or life, something that acts like a curtain in hiding, disguising, or obscuring something else, or separating one thing from another, a thin membrane that covers the stalk and cap of an immature mushroom, (humeral veil), part of ecclesiastical vestments while holding sacred vessels.

The use of veil as a verb is defined as follows:

To cover something such as a person’s face with a veil; to hide or disguise something or separate something from something else; or to ignore something deliberately or refrain from mentioning it, in order to be discreet.

These definitions are intriguing in that they are both figurative and literal and point to the significant religious use of the term. They also hint at motivations for veiling such as discretion, concealment, separation and sacredness. The definition also recognizes varying degrees of concealment and even the possibility of veiling as a way of life (“nun’s vows or life”). The definition of a membrane to protect an immature mushroom is also useful in exploring this concept because it both highlights the protection possibility and the temporal nature of veiling.

Webster’s English Thesaurus provides the following as synonyms for the verb, “to veil: cloak, conceal, cover, curtain, envelop, hide, invest, mask, screen, shroud.” Although mask is used as a synonym and there is an overlapping of meanings between the two words, what is notably missing from the concept of veil that is vividly present in the Encarta meaning of mask is “pretence, ruse, subterfuge and trick.” This difference is a key to understanding veiling in connection to identity formation as explored in this dissertation. It is also important to note that the Encarta definition of masking includes a focus on the face rather than the head and “the hiding of true motives or feelings.” Although veiling may make it possible to hide unpleasantness or true intentions/feelings, its English language use and its cultural use, unlike the use of mask, have focused more

Motivations with regard to veiling are vital to the understanding the impact of veiling on identity. See later discussion.
on protection and relationality. So, although through the act of veiling something is being concealed, the concealment is actually a signifier that there is something important present. In other words, the physical act of “veiling” has historically been a value laden and often a religious identity practice.

Concealment as Affirmation. This exploration of the veiling concept, both lived experiences of physical veiling and its spiritual significance, highlights the difference between the act of veiling and the act of masking, and the qualities of this metaphor in relation to identity formation. If we can conceive of concealment as a way of affirming spiritual identity and developing integrity, then we can make use of this habit/veil to explore the life undivided, Parker Palmer’s ultimate cry for educators. However, if we conceive of concealment as a mask, an act of trickery or fear, we are in danger of fragmentation or identity foreclosure, demonic hostility and despair. The veil can become a place of gathering, an interpretive space, a way to practice hospitality and receive hospitality, a process that fosters true encounter, the sacrament of the brother/sister.

The Paradoxes of Veiling. In the interest of being illustrative of the many interpretations and possible choices implicit in metaphoric veiling, it is helpful to consider some of the paradoxical binary options present in the notion of veiling and masking as a continuum: voice or silence, identity or anonymity, other as enemy or other in dialogue, and integrity or fragmentation. All four categories, in both physical and metaphorical

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61 See Nafisi (2004, 2008) and Hoodfar (1997) for an exploration of veiling practices by Muslim women that go beyond a simplistic western notion of the veil as a violent imposition. Nafisi describes the veil as ‘an act of contextualized and interpretive agency’. Hoodfar describes veiling as a “…lived experience full of contradictions and multiple meanings. While it has clearly been a mechanism in the service of patriarchy a means of regulating and controlling women’s lives, women have used the same social institution to free themselves from the bonds of patriarchy. Muslim women, like all other women, are social actors, employing, reforming, and changing existing social institutions, often creatively to their own ends. The static colonial image of the oppressed veiled Muslim woman thus often contrasts sharply with the lived experience of veiling. To deny this is also to deny Muslim women their agency (p. 421)”
veiling or masking, revolve around the issue of personal freedom or power in a social
world. Where do my rights as an person begin or end? How do I define myself in
relation to others? How is my voice heard? How are other voices heard? How am I
saved or preserved? These questions can lead to and away from a victimized and
individualized perception of our way of being in the world and towards a more
social/political/communal/spiritual understanding. The following are some examples of
how these paradoxes may be expressed in choices about revealing or concealing
spirituality.

Veiling Allows Voice. When one chooses to veil their spirituality in a public
setting, that choice may ironically give that person a voice within that setting. It allows
the others within that setting to imagine the person as an “unencumbered self,” resulting
in the tendency for the other to listen to the person’s voice with minimal preconceived
opinions. Specifically, the categorization that often limits our ability to hear the other
(because we have already mentally categorized the other) is delayed when we are at
least partially veiled. It has been my experience and the experience of many religious
people that once religious convictions or identity are known, one’s voice is muted, less
authoritative or even irrelevant—though usually tolerated—in secular contexts.
Revealing spirituality may actually silence voice depending on the context.62 It is
important, therefore, to understand/interpret the context in order to make a choice that
will give agency or a voice.63 The veiling is partial because the person is not prevented
from accessing spiritual resources or acting in a way that is consistent with her

62 See earlier discussion of the political nature of spirituality and the encumbrances of spiritual
identity.
63 To understand veiling as a practice leading to agency or power is a notion that is still rooted in
an individualistic understanding of identity since the focus remains on being self-affirming or self-
preserving rather than self-emptying. This research reveals that persons who veil in relation to
the other are willing to lose power or agency in order to preserve the absolute freedom of the
other to be other. However, stilling one’s own voice is also the path to the development of an
agapeic presence or ontological brilliance – powerless yet charismatic.
spirituality. Instead, she is giving preference to a spiritually informed voice in the conversation over a spiritually explicit voice. The veiling is tentative because it may be a choice made as contextual factors are being revealed. There is a constant interpretation and re-evaluation as more information becomes available. The veiling is temporal because it is based on the unique time and place of that particular situation. Changes may occur in the contextual features that require a different choice in the same place. Secularism has provided the freedom to keep that aspect of identity private as a way of securing voice within the public setting and protecting a spiritual mystery from a context that is inhospitable, although it is an imposed “freedom” because identity is considered encumbered by spirituality.  

Veiling Allows Identity. Another example of a veiling paradox is connected to how group identity is established. Throughout history this has been done through language, clothing, lifestyle etc. Choosing to conceal spirituality as a public educator makes it possible to establish an identity within this group since it is one that doesn’t value/require spirituality as a symbol of identity. The public profession of teaching, while very closely connected to values and ethics, has moved away from a spiritual foundation as a reaction to the misuse of spirituality and in the interest of ensuring multiple voices are welcomed. Therefore, identity in this group requires the anonymity of spirituality and a secularized language is used when trying to express spiritual concepts. Veiling is a way of participating both professionally and spiritually. Although spirituality is veiled it can still be a vital aspect of work and the foundation for an ethic of compassion and service.

Veiling Because of Fear or Threat. The last two paradoxes represent some of the more thought provoking choices inherent in the acts of veiling or masking. The act of

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64 It’s important to note here that this example is more self-oriented than other oriented. However, it remains a reality of our social/political world and is often a blessing.
concealing can be a very emotionally charged choice and can arise out of seeing the other as enemy (Sartre, 1966). The fear may come from past violent experiences, or a current perceived threat. The emotions that arise are understandable because in many real situations danger has been experienced and is accurately perceived. The emotions arising from fear may limit the ability to make a contextualized choice and also limit the ability to be in dialogue with the other. An emotional voice is difficult to still and becomes a cacophony. The result is an inauthentic silence and many missed opportunities to access spirituality as a resource. In such an instance the concealment becomes a mask because the intent is to divert attention completely or to pretend as if the spirituality were not there. It is a focus on the natural individual and survival rather than the spiritual person and communion. A mask can also be worn out of a sense of radical autonomy, a desire to separate oneself. The motivation here is a prideful disinterest in willing the best for the other. It is my experience and understanding that concealment done because we see the other-as-enemy, can lead to identity fragmentation or foreclosure or increased separation. There may even be the possibility that what is originally perceived as a veil becomes a mask when the primary motivation is based on fear of the other.

Veiling for Hospitality's Sake. However, the choice to conceal can also signify hospitality to the other, viewing the other as friend (Bakhtin, 1984). For Christians this choice may be fuelled by a relational call on our lives that requires an orientation and sensitivity to the other, and an understanding of the world as needing healing and therefore, an expected disunity among people.65 Viewing the other as friend represents a more conscious, peaceful, and hopeful interpretation of the social context, and even when danger is perceived, the willingness to walk in wisdom towards the other rather

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65 See earlier discussion about specific contours of Evangelical Protestant Christianity impacting 'professional identity formation' choices.
than become enclosed is a movement that is characterized by an unwillingness to control others, a lack of an individual agenda and a freedom from being controlled by others (Colossians 4:5; Sakharov, 2002).

**Forced Unveiling.** The binary opposites, integrity vs. fragmentation, again bring to mind a continuum of veiling and masking. This continuum seems closely connected to a conscious choice to be a person in relationship rather than an individual with imposed or unconscious habits of self-protection and determination. Interpreting the need to conceal an aspect of your personality as an imposition beyond your control or input can result in a fragmentation of personal identity. When concealment is imposed, the veil can become a mask; and a safe-sanctuary becomes a place where you can be unveiled (unmasked). However, both an inability to veil and an unwanted or unprepared for unveiling can be an imposed violence. When someone else removes a veil or mask, the motivations are often to harm.

A poignant example of this harmful intent can be found in the Deuterocanonical story of Susanna. Susanna was falsely accused of being unfaithful to her husband by two very powerful men in her community because of her refusal to be unfaithful with them. As she was brought before them they were offended by her veiled appearance.

Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement, and beautiful in appearance. As she was veiled, the wicked men ordered her to be unveiled, that they might feast upon her beauty. (Susanna 13:31-32)

Although the intent in this story was clearly to harm and most would find the unveiling in this context and under these circumstances repugnant, there are those who believe that imposed unveilings are necessary when it is believed that an unveiling or unmasking is in the person’s best interests. Such a view towards veiling generally fails to understand its complexity and is very often a totalizing and violent response to what is perceived to

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66 The participants in this empirical study described the focus group experience as a safe place to be unveiled.
be totalizing and violent. The thinking behind such demands for forced unveiling is usually related to freedom, that one cannot be free unless one is radically individualized. For the person being unveiled or unmasked, however, the emotions of fear and mistrust and resulting consequences may undermine the person's ability to react with integrity and reinforce the need to become more completely masked and ultimately fragmented or foreclosed. Any good imposed becomes a nightmare. Some may even view the imposed good as education.

A lack of consciousness with regard to the choices one is making to reveal or conceal spirituality can also result in foreclosure, fragmentation and masking. Our culture conditions us to separate public and private, to wear masks that suit our many roles, and therefore, dualism/fragmentation seems unavoidable. If integrity is to be oriented towards the good without hesitation or option, rather than a mere conscious matching of action to thought, a masking is the epitome of hypocrisy. However, veiling may allow the passage from hypocrisy to chastity, the very power of unifying (Evdokimov, 2001). Community and dialogue are essential to raise awareness without violently unmasking or unveiling. The act of concealment is a temporal protection, a sanctuary of gathering, a place to study “the adventure of our freedom” (Yannaras, 1984). To study our freedom in isolation is to limit freedom to the ability to choose self-consciously between alternatives, to make decisions. Rather than being ontologically moral, in isolation we limit ourselves to moral piety. To study our freedom in dialogue with the other and the other par-excellence is to become pure of heart, to transcend ourselves and be in communion, our finest existential achievement, the most excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31-13:13). When choice ceases to condition freedom we become holy or wholly other.

By your love, bind my soul; free it from all psychic imprisonment, make unity spring up within me (Orthodox prayer to the Theotokos)
The Who of Teaching. The choice to veil or unveil, reveal or conceal spirituality, depends a great deal on the place, the context and particularly the people. In teaching, who the teacher is, who the students are and who the institution expects them to be have pivotal influence on decisions to veil or unveil. Palmer (1990) suggested that the question of who is teaching is the key question to be asked in education contexts. He asks this question because of his experience and the experience of many other educators of increased alienation and fragmentation within an academic setting, existential crises that lead to a loss of faith in the practice, abandonment of the practice or a foreclosed compartmentalization of the practice. I believe his question also arises from a concern for learners who need to be supported in their own adventure of freedom by teachers who are ontologically brilliant, who can live the life undivided. Unfortunately, our current practices in teacher education can lead to a focus on the role of teacher and ultimately to masking when we focus on the ideological ethics of teaching, the idolized metaphors of teaching, and reflective practice in relation to ideas, theories, methods or morals that lead to enclosed judgement and decision making rather than personal freedom. Our students often ask, “Can I be a teacher? If I am a teacher will I have to give up something that is unique about me? Can I make myself fit into the teacher mold I am being presented with without losing who I am? Can I match the teacher portraits that are presented to me? Can I perfectly achieve this particular method or ideal?” What would happen if beginning teachers asked questions about their freedom to be spiritual persons who teach? How would these explorations transform their teaching practice into personal expressions that are ontologically brilliant and therefore intrinsically moral? Additional research is called for that examines the lived experience of teachers attempting to interpret their practice holistically and determine appropriate expressions of the personal/spiritual in a public space. This study seeks to further that research.
CHAPTER 3: USING PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE DIALOGUES AS METHODOLOGY

This chapter seeks to provide a rationale for the use of written and oral “personal experience narrative dialogues” as a form of inquiry into the choices beginning Christian teachers make with regard to revealing or concealing their personal identity in their professional lives – particularly their spiritual identity. Although a common starting point for choosing a particular research methodology is the research question and the method most suited to answering that question, I hope to go beyond making a pragmatic case to a more compelling conscious recognition of the ontological, epistemological and axiological nature of my choice (Rodriquez, 2002; Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Methods are not neutral; they cannot be divorced from the voice of philosophy. They each represent a view of the world — a view of being in this world, a view of knowing in this world and a view of acting in this world. Each method has a different origin and telos, and cannot simply be considered a tool in a kit of other equal tools. It is with some trepidation that I attempt to meet the following challenge for all researchers best articulated by Bentz and Shapiro:

…being aware of the fundamental issues and making conscious epistemological choices is essential to today’s social scientist. In our view, methodology is parasitic on epistemology and ontology, and we believe that an individual who uses a particular research method without being able to articulate its epistemological and ontological assumptions and preconditions is not a fully human, fully responsible researcher. (p. 34)
By “writing-for-myself”\textsuperscript{67}, I can be fully human in this narrative inquiry into narrative, although my newness to the field will probably entail a text of thin signature greatly shadowed by the signatures of other texts and writers (Geertz, 1988). Although this study ultimately favours a hermeneutic stance, veiling is also a phenomenon arising from the real experiences of both the researcher and the participants. Therefore, there is also an attitude of attentiveness, seeking, and withholding facile interpretation.

**Creating of a Narrative Dialogical Space**

*Interpretation comes not by forceful analysis, an act of aggression, But by allowing an opening or clearing to occur.*
Bentz and Shapiro on Heidegger (1998, p. 113)

Seeking an Open Interpretive Space. I have done my research and gathered a multitude of notes. I am surrounded by books and journal articles. A multiplicity of voices echo in my mind and it is time to write, time for the hermeneutic task of interpretation. I have a tentative outline, but I am learning to trust the act of writing, to recognize that as I write emergent themes and understandings arise. These themes and understandings are paths I follow, sometimes leading into clearings where new “beings” arise and sometimes leading away. Tentativeness is a quality of all hermeneutic or narrative inquiry and absolutely necessary if a deeper or richer understanding is to be achieved (Eisner, 1991; Bentz and Shapiro, 1998; Clandinin and Connelly, 1994 & 2000; Geertz, 1998; Richardson, 2000). Therefore, although I have already “chosen” narrative inquiry, I can’t write a paper that merely summarizes the thoughts of others, or forces narrative inquiry into a particular mode, if I am truly writing to know. I must allow the

\textsuperscript{67} This terminology is in reference to Bakhtin’s understanding of “I-for-myself “ (1993). “I-for-myself” is an awareness that all interpretation comes through the unique temporality and interactiveness of the person. It does not imply a selfish or egotistical motivation, but a conscious awareness of the self as a unique and answerable being, filled with gratitude to the others who have been for me and desire to be for others. Richardson (2000) also advocates writing as a form of inquiry that begins with the awareness of self.
space to clear, dialogical space, reaching out to the “stranger” for a fusing of horizons that allow me to go beyond where I once was (Gadamer, 1994).

The type of knowing I describe above cannot happen through a collection of fragmented notes. It can only happen on a blank page that invites meaningfulness through a coherent and organized weaving and reweaving of ideas. The space created in this chapter will allow me to listen to why I am compelled to use a narrative form of inquiry for my research, how in a sense it chooses me because of its ontological, epistemological and axiological roots, and how it can represent the most excellent way of inquiry for a study that seeks understanding of the experiences of humans and their relation to the world. This conversation will also discuss the unique features of a narrative inquiry, the implications of using narrative inquiry for the both researcher and the participants, and the strengths and limitations of the resulting constructed knowledge.

**The Connection between Methodology and Research Purposes**

*If we understand the world narratively, It makes sense to study the world narratively.*  
Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.17)

The means is the end. Chapter One of this paper illustrates one of the reasons the researcher is always at the center of inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). I cannot view writing as an act of interpretive way of knowing if I do not already believe that we understand the world narratively or hermeneutically. The ontological and epistemological roots of hermeneutics are my stance in the world, therefore, narrative inquiry is a natural and compelling fit. I freely admit my hermeneutic “bent” to revel in

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68 There is an assumption here that hermeneutics and narrative can be viewed as synonymous when spoken of generally. This is due to their shared reliance on intertextuality and construction of new meaningful text. However, narrative inquiry is also a specific method of qualitative research whose unique features will be discussed later in the paper.
metaphor and spiral into the interpretive circle. “In the beginning was the Word” (St.
John 1:1).

However, despite the validity of choosing a form of inquiry that is closely suited to
my personal beliefs and strengths, as noted by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Etter-
Lewis (1996), I also have the academic responsibility to articulate those beliefs in the
language of my field and the ethical responsibility to trace the “conversation” that
surrounds these beliefs, and as much as possible, represent the “variegated speech of
the field” (Bakhtin & Medvedev, 1991).

A hermeneutic or interpretative way of being in the world rejects the “natural
attitude” or dream of positivistic science — that knowledge is valid when separated from
time and space or separated from experience (Sarbin, 1993). Instead, it is a stance
based on the belief that we are born into a world constituted by language requiring
answerability on our part, and that our knowing is particularized by interaction and
temporality (Gadamer, 1994; Bakhtin, 1981 & 1993, Ricoeur, 1992, MacIntyre, 1984;
Louth, 1983; Taylor, 1989). Taylor calls our particularity a “framework” that allows us to
take a moral position in the world and a “web of interlocution” reminding us that we only
know ourselves through “conversation” with Others and we are thereby ethically
implicated (p. 36). MacIntyre says that we live our lives as enacted narratives in order to
make our lives intelligible, and Ricoeur emphasizes that life only becomes meaningful
when articulated in a narrative way. Implicit in all hermeneutic understanding is the
notion of interpretation and dialogue – that is, our narrative texts are in response to other
narratives texts, and that this dialogical or hermeneutic circle is ongoing and closely
related to how we understand ourselves as well as the world.69

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69 In addition to authors already indicated in this paragraph, see also Miller (1996) for a
discussion on the dialogical nature of narrative understanding.
Three kinds of Hermeneutic Meaning-making. Hermeneutics assumes that there is a confusion needing clarity (Taylor, 1987). Gadamer (1994) calls this the priority of the question. Ochberg (1996) calls it a puzzle and recognizes the importance of creating a worthwhile puzzle to interpret. Widdershoven (1993) describes three distinct forms of hermeneutic meaning-making – one based on re-enactment, one based on dialogical interpretation resulting in fused horizons, and one based on creating completely new meanings or difference. When relying on re-enactment, narrative is used architecturally to recreate an experience in the same way that an ancient piece of music is performed in the present. It is a highly empathetic process in that the re-enactor attempts to place themselves in the thoughts of the narrative’s characters. The new context provides a temporal distance that allows a form of objectivity with regard to what is important to be retold and what isn’t. This form of meaning-making is based on the work of Collingwood (1946) and closely tied to more formal historical hermeneutics and early psychoanalysis (Spence, 1982).

A second form of hermeneutic meaning-making is based on the work of Gadamer (1994) who views narrative as a way of both “reading the ground you stand on” and moving further in a dialogical relationship. What results is a deeper understanding that may produce new meanings, but does not divorce itself from prior meanings – instead the meanings are fused. Applied to experience and narrative in an individual’s life, there is emphasis on the role of the hermeneutic process and personal transformation:

In telling stories about past experiences, we try to make clear what these experiences mean….this requires that we try to see what the experience has to say to us, that we try to apply it to our present situation. In this process of application, the meaning of the experience is changed, as the worldview that is constitutive for the experience is fused with the perspective that is presented in the story….By telling a story about our life, we change our life. In doing so, the story itself becomes richer, as it is filled with life experience (Widdershoven, p. 13).
This form of hermeneutic meaning-making leads us to the terminology of “narrative inquiry”, the means and the ends are reliant on one another and ultimately transformational. It is highly indicative of qualitative research in the social sciences since the time of Barthes (1977), standing in opposition to methods of research that deny the voice of the participant and is closely tied to critical theory and feminist modes of inquiry (Reissman, 2002; Florio-Ruane, 1997; Aoki; 1991; Etter-Lewis, 1996; Chase, 1995).

The third form of hermeneutic meaning-making, originates in the work of Derrida. In this more radical, post-interpretive, post-foundational understanding of hermeneutics, the meaning of the text is neither a re-enactment nor an enriched understanding. Instead, because the narrative response or interpretation is done within a completely new context, a completely new text or new meaning is constructed. Derrida emphasizes a discontinuity of interpretation that results in redefinition or “diffusion of meaning”, because of “a new web of relations” (Widdershoven, 1993, p 15). Applied to life experience, this hermeneutic process is a task of redefinition where our understanding of experience is continually changed rather than enlarged. When used in social science qualitative research, the “fresh reading” or an interesting, compelling recontextualization is valued more than consensual corroboration of textual accuracy (Czarniawska, 2002). In fact, consensus is viewed as impossible since the narrative is always located in a new context based on the interpreter’s particularity. The “performativemeasure” in social science research is closely related to this view of hermeneutics which, like dialogical hermeneutics, is committed to not just speaking powerfully to the world, but changing it (Denzin, 2002).

Although, my own hermeneutic position in relation to being and knowing in the world is more in line with the dialogical understanding of Gadamer, MacIntyre and Taylor, and I am loathe to contemplate a world of discontinuity, I recognize this as a bias
and will attempt to hold both of the latter two definitions tentatively in my own research. Since I believe that veiling and masking are closely related to identity formation, I can see possible applications of both – identity formation as a continuous unfolding, enriched by new experiences and interpretations, and identity formation as discontinuous or a continuous reinvention, more contextually driven. I can also see how a particular hermeneutic stance may have the potential of impacting identity formation, a conversation I return to in Chapter Six.

The Axiological Nature of Hermeneutics

They painted: I love this; instead of painting: here it is. Rainer Maria Rilke, (in Mitchell, 1995, p. 226)

A hermeneutics of love. One cannot have a hermeneutic worldview without recognizing its moral direction. If our conscious knowing of the world and of self is dependent on dialogue with others and that dialogue or interpretation is powerful enough to transform lives or transform the world, it requires a highly principled approach based on willing the best for the other. It is inquiry that is done “face to face” and seeks refinement, repose, restoration and regeneration of the other since it recognizes its reliance on and/or answerability to the other. St. Paul called action rooted in love for the other, “the most excellent way”.70 Palmer (1983) called this compassionate stance, “knowing as we are known”, highlighting the search for truth as “troth”, a covenental, mutually accountable relationship. St. Augustine also emphasized the connection between relationship and truth:

Whoever…thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures or any part of them so that it (i.e. his interpretation) does not build the double love of God and of our

70 1 Cor. 12:31 In I Corinthians, St. Paul outlines various principles that can be applied to right action, but concludes by prioritizing the principle of love as the most excellent way of being in relationship with others, and as a defining source for these virtuous principles.
neighbor does not understand (the Scriptures) at all. Whoever finds a lesson there useful to the building of charity, even though he has not said what the author may be shown to have intended in that place, has not been deceived, nor is he lying in any way. (On Christian Doctrine, p. 30)

A “hermeneutics of love” or a “hermeneutics of care” compels me in my own research and has a long tradition in social science research informed by narrative inquiry (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998; Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, 2000; Josselson, 1995, 1996; Bakan, 1996; Aoki et al, 1991; Casssell, 1982; Chase, 1996; Greene, 1993; Florio-Ruane, 1997; George and Narayan, 2002; Miller, 1996; Muchmore, 2002; Noddings, 1987; Rosenwald, 1996; Sampson, 1993; Schulz, 1997; Zay, 1999). Although issues of “care” related specifically to narrative inquiry as a research method will be addressed below, it is important to establish here that hermeneutics itself is oriented in a tradition of charity best characterized by the attentiveness described by Bakhtin (1993) and the embracing of his notion of “manifoldness”, “the irreducibly complex wholeness of a person or event”.

The valued manifoldness of Being as human…can present itself only to a loving contemplation….Lovelessness, indifference, will never be able to generate sufficient power to slow down and linger intently over an object, to hold and sculpt every detail and particular in it, however minute. (p. 64)

Such an ethic requires that inquiry is done without rigid boundaries but with the effort to sculpt or paint meaning, a task requiring great integrity on the part of the researcher (Eisner, 1991; Ochberg, 1996). It is also a task done in continual dialogue with the “subject or participant” for:

The truth about a man in the mouths of others, not directed to him dialogically and therefore a secondhand truth, becomes a lie degrading and deadening him, if it touches upon his “holy of holies,” that is, “the man in man” (Bakhtin, p. 59)

Any interpretation that required the passivity of participants would be a “failure to enrich the word” resulting in an inability to “penetrate” (p. 249).

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Narratives, Practices and Virtues. The use of narrative in this study is particularly representative of a shared quest for virtue in relation to practices, institutions, and traditions that have historically supported such a quest. MacIntyre (1984) describes such a shared quest as one that is an education “to the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge” (p. 219). The intertwining of the auto-biographical story of the researcher, the veiling stories of the participants, and the narrative traditions related to spiritual and education practices are not only about personal “salvation”. Their purpose is to address a predicament of how best to unite spiritual practices with education practices in a public school setting, a setting which is highly modern in its attempt to remain “free-floating” with regard to teleological positions (see footnote on p. 43 related to MacIntyre’s understanding of a practice). The researcher and participants were committed to weaving together personal stories in a dialectical manner with the living narrative traditions of spiritual and education practices, understanding both as having a strong commitment to the notion of the good and the potential to benefit the wider community – to co-create a more virtuous future for a shared practice. Their willingness to engage with narrative traditions beyond their own stories was also an indication of their understanding of the storied nature of humanity, the importance of life-long learning and the need for a continual rearticulation of the internal goods of practices in order for traditions to remain dynamic and healthy.

Reading Narrative Testimomially. A “hermeneutics of care” in relation to narrative inquiry also prioritizes a stance of active empathy or the researcher’s responsibility to view themselves as inherent to the study and therefore responsible for “self-reflective participation” in response to the study (Boler, 1999, p 166). Boler goes on to describe this stance of active empathy as a “testimonial reading” or a “…committed interrogation of the reader’s response as she faces the other’s experience. To turn away, to refuse to engage, to deny complicity—each of these responses correlates with a passive empathy
and risks annihilating the other” (p 16). Chapter One of this study is a “testimony” to this researcher’s complicity and an attempt to accept my responsibility as a “co-producer of truth” and a willingness to confront my own “crises of truth”, to challenge my own world view (p 166). It also represents an awareness of the power implicit in being the one to mediate the texts of my participants. Power is especially relevant in this study since the participants are or have been my students.

Boler’s use of the word “testimony” is based on the definition offered by Shoshana Felman (1992). A testimony is only required when the legal or historical claims of truth are not clear and therefore in crisis. Therefore, a testimony is more than just “the facts.” Someone engaged in the task of “testimonial reading” recognizes the other’s testimony as a speech act that demands a response that also goes beyond identification with the other to understanding the oppressive forces that gave rise to this crisis of truth and to confront those forces with one’s own testimony. If we don’t do this our emotional response to the testimony is superficial and passive.

…there is every temptation to turn our backs, to maintain the habit of denial, and to keep secrets from ourselves through the numb consumption of another’s suffering, grateful for distances that seem to confirm our safety. Yet, at best, this illusion of safety and distance in which most live is precarious. Audre Lorde reminds us that our silence shall not protect us, nor does passive empathy protect the other from the forces of cataclysmic history that are made of each of our actions and choices. Aristotle also claimed that virtue is a matter of habit: We choose our ignorances, just as we choose our challenges. (p 172)

This understanding of “testimonial reading” focuses attention on the act of listening and the virtue or attitude necessary to listening care/fully in that all listening requires a willingness to engage in transformational inner dialogue. Boler even argues that true education only occurs when reading becomes testimonial in that a more passive emotional response to the text or other’s testimony is essentially self-reinforcing rather than self-revelatory. In other words the response becomes, “I am glad I am not part of that story".
A “testimonial reading” also implies attentiveness to silence as well as voice, an understanding that silence also speaks. Garrison (2004) describes the difficulty of interpreting silence due to its ambiguity. He notes that it can sometimes signal ignorance, a need for a pause to think, or an imposition by others within the group due to a “totalizing discourse”. This ambiguity and the difficulty of sorting out what silence is representing challenges the notion of “democratic dialogue” and again encourages the narrative inquirer to make and hold interpretations tentatively and to involve participants as much as possible in the interpretation (Boler, 2004). This study is significantly connected to the way silence “speaks” since veiling can also be perceived as a vocal way of being silent. In fact, many of the same paradoxes considered with regard to veiling can be found in the continuum of speaking vs. silence.

…silence can be voluntary and self-imposed, or it can be the result of external pressures and constraints; silence can be expressive, or it can be empty, unreadable; silence can be temporary, situational, or it can represent a consistent, even pathological pattern; silence can signify withdrawal from a conversation or it can be an indicator of attentive, thoughtful listening. (Boler, 2004, p xxiv).

The latter quotation highlights the complexity of all interaction in a multi-layered, diverse web of interlocution and foreshadows the potential impact of this study on educational leaders and their need for heightened awareness with regard to the speech and silence of those they teach and/or lead.

Although many, for example Taylor (1987), would argue that all research is hermeneutic in nature, since a text or interpretation is always created in relation to experienced reality, narrative inquiry as a specific research method is especially implicated by the epistemological, ontological and axiological roots described above. However, the narrative inquiry researcher is also implicated by the traditions found within the social sciences and qualitative research methods, and it is to that discussion we now turn.
Narrative Dialogical Research Methods within the Tradition of the Social Sciences

*We explain nature, but we understand human beings.*
Wilhelm Dilthey (in Bentz and Shapiro, 1998, p. 110)

Narrative Dialogical Research and Understanding Human Experience. Narrative inquiry as a specific research method is located in a tradition of qualitative social science research that is interested in the particularities or qualities of humans and their relation to the world (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). Because of its hermeneutic tradition, such inquiry also recognizes the value of highly contextualized narratives that make experience meaningful (Chase, 1995, 1996; Ochberg; 1996; Widdershoven, 1993; Bentz and Shapiro, 1998). It assumes that life is both informed and formed by stories, and its goal is understanding rather than prediction or control. As a result, Sarbin (1993) notes, it “renounces universalizing ambitions” common to many forms of quantitative research:

…the narratologist, is concerned with individuals and groups groping for clarity about themselves within their world rather than with a domain to be brought under theoretical control, makes no claims to eternal verities but gestures toward a few fugitive but luminous exemplars, as though to say, This, too, is what being human can be like. (p. 272)

Although the tone of the above quote seems to trivializes the type of knowledge constructed by narrative, if narrativity is our way of being and knowing in the world, then stories that increase our understanding invite us into dialogical space and present possibilities can be viewed as highly valuable contributions to knowledge. Although most narrative researchers appreciate the role of quantitative research as actually being a form of narrative and complementary to their work, they agree with Goethe who said, “The particular is always more than a match for the universal; the universal always has to accommodate itself to the particular” (as quoted in Eisner, 1998).

The narratives generated through narrative research are viewed as having a dialogical nature that increases their life-shaping potency. Because of their nature, narratives are written in an established communicative relationship, an internal dialogue
exists as well as awareness of the reader. Narrative texts are also multi-vocal and open to many conflicting interpretations (Bakhtin, 1981; Ricoeur, 1974). Gadamer (1994) calls the process of interpreting life, an “edifying dialogue”. Due to the three dimensional inquiry space created by narrative texts—pointing back and forwards, pointing inwards and outwards, and connecting to place, patterns and themes emerge that both enable understanding and future action (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

**Narrative Dialogical Inquiry and Identity formation.** The life-shaping potency of narratives brings us to narrative inquiry’s role in social science research about identity formation – particularly when connected to social interactive theories of identity formation (Jenkins, 1996; Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989; Bakhtin, 1981; Bruner, 1986, 1987). Because of its dialogical nature and continuity of meaning, narratives provide the best heuristic way and holistic way to understand the construction of self. (Rodriquez, 2002; Rosenwald, 1996). Since language is a medium through which differences can be explored, any coherent narrative makes experience significant and potentially transformational (Widdershoven, 1993; Ochberg, 1996; Gale 2000). Taylor suggests that identity is enhanced through dialogue, and Rosenwald (1996) also discusses narrative as a hygienic discipline because it has an inherent tendency to improve the person who practices it, although he does allow that improvement or enhancement shouldn’t be taken for granted.

**Narrative Dialogical Inquiry and Teacher Identity Formation.** Since narrative inquiry is so closely connected to identity formation or development, narrative inquiry has also had a very strong place in research related to teacher development. Dewey was prominent in highlighting the hermeneutic nature of reflective thinking in relation to education, connecting it to a morally oriented act of the soul requiring an understanding.

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71 Clandinin and Connelly base their directional understanding of narrative in the work of Dewey (1938). According to Dewey, experience has an interactive and continuous nature.
of experiences as interactive and continuous, a commitment to rigorous thought through ongoing iterative processes, and an understanding of its communal or dialogical nature (1933, 1944). However, narrative inquiry did not become a prominent feature of teacher education programs and teacher development research until the mid 1980’s after the impact of Schon’s (1983) work and in reaction to research that placed teachers in passive or silenced roles (Grimmett & Galen, 1988; Schulz, 1997). Research that uses narrative inquiry in relation to teacher development is also grounded in the work of critical theory, and is strongly connected to issues of diversity, freedom and voice (Valli 1990, 1997; Greene, 1988, 1993). It also assumes a belief that schooling can only be known through “thick description” that goes beneath the surface, and is committed to an emphasis on improving teaching and redefining the relationship between researcher and researched (Geertz, 1988; Eisner, 1998; Cook-Sather, 2001; Zay, 1999; Cavozos & West, 1982).

Due to narrative inquiry’s close relationship with social science research focused on human experience and identity formation, it seems particularly suited to any research that is exploratory in nature and seeks a thoroughly contextualized understanding of whole persons and their dialogical lived experience (Sampson, 1993; Greene 1993). It also seems highly suited to research that is emancipatory and transformational in nature; research that has an empathetic stance rather than a predict and control stance (Labuschagne, 2003; Josselson, 1995); or, as Connelly and Clandinin (2000) put it, research that is interested in fostering reflection and re-storying of the participants. It is, therefore, highly suited to this research focused on issues of personal being, voice and silence, as well as, the highly contextualized development of beginning teachers and their choices with regard to spiritual identity in professional practice.
Narrative Dialogical Inquiry Research and Uncertainty or Veiling. Narrative inquiry is a unique form of qualitative research requiring iterative rigor, flexibility and tentativeness. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) speak of it as messy, but naturally so because experience is also messy. Its messiness is related to the fact that, like a veil, it reveals and conceals. The whole story is never told, but new revelations arise. Although it is similar to other qualitative methods in that it seeks a wealth of data on a relatively small number of cases, it is distinct from qualitative research that emphasizes theoretical development through the use of text excerpts or identified themes (Labuschagne, 2003). Narrative researchers also look for emerging patterns and themes, but their passion is understanding through the use of “whole text” and the process of text construction. It is also field focused, requiring informed access or, as Eisner (1998) puts it, “connoisseurship.”

Most commonly collected as field texts in narrative inquiry, are written forms such as life experience narratives, journals, letters, family stories, and interview texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000). Although spoken texts are also collected and have validity as text for research, Josselson (1996) contends that written narrative provides a “weight” or “authority” that enhances the knowing of participants by giving events substantiality beyond memory or speech (Josselson, 1996). For example, face-to-face conversation carries additional barriers of highly complex social situations, competing selves – self as narrator and self as character — and tendencies to say before knowing which all serve to undermine the weight or the penetrability of the narrative (Swidler, 2001; Palmer, 1983; Aoki, 1991). However, more conversational forms of written narrative are of interest to narrative researchers because conversations do have the benefit of highlighting the dialogical nature of interpretation, and, when authentic, even
the playing field of dialogue where all voices can be heard and explored (Miller, 1996; Clark, 2001). Conversations are also a very natural way of seeking understanding, representing the tendency to turn to our friends as a way of trying out our ideas or clarifying our ideas (Schulz, 1997).

Once field texts have been collected, the researcher’s task is to weave and reweave a new “compelling” narrative that allows the reader to “…experience the qualities of place, to conceptualize relationships, to experience the shifting pervasive qualities that permeate those relationships, and, not least, to imagine them” (Eisner, 1998, p. 20). With its focus on contextualization and whole pieces of writing, rather than excerpts or themes, narrative inquiry allows attention to be turned in surprising directions, beyond the taken for granted, disclosing the “existential texture of the beings we have come to be” (Aoki et al, 1991, p. xi). The context doesn’t explain the meaning, but specifies it.

**Analyzing Narrative Text and Dialogue.** In order to construct research text, a variety of forms of analysis are used, from very formal often focused on the structure of the text, to very open-ended or emergent focused more on the patterns or themes arising from interpretations of the text. How formal or predetermined analysis should be is debatable. Silverman (2000) argues that narrative researchers should define their analytic method and stick to that analysis, whereas Reissman (2002) suggests that being too rigid with regard to analysis does not allow an openness or space for emergent understandings. There is also some concern about researchers embarking on formal narrative analysis as social scientists without the requisite linguistic training. Choice of analysis, like choice of text is largely determined by the researcher and his/her personal interests and/or skills (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994).

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E.g. Discursive Frame Analysis (Chenail,1995) or Membership Categorizations (Sacks, 1984).
Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 2000), echoing the work of Geertz (1988), discuss the researcher’s struggle for voice amidst the participant voices and the audience’s voices. Geertz calls it “sorting out how to be in the text”. This “sorting out” results in a “signature” which recognizes the existential conditions of the researcher. These conditions are expected to be identified in the research project along with a discussion of their impact on the text. In this study, the Introduction and Chapter One describe the existential conditions of the researcher and “testimonial reading” becomes a “signature”.

One of the most difficult aspects of narrative research is its open-endedness or tentativeness, resulting in researchers “losing track of the forest for the trees”. The exploratory nature of narrative inquiry also results in difficulty with knowing when to draw the study to a close and the inevitable redefinition of the research purpose as the study proceeds (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). Complicating the research further is its collaborative nature, a mutual process of interpretation (Widdershoven, 1993).

**Validating Narrative Dialogical Inquiry.** Narrative dialogue inquiry is also uniquely validated. Although guided by “canons” rather than rules or formula, its strength is judged through the evident consensus of interpretation (participant and researcher), by the quality of the narrative structure itself and its ability to make sense of the web of relations, or by referential adequacy – locating itself carefully in the web of relations (Eisner, 1998; Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

**Metaphor as a Method for Locating Narrative Dialogical Inquiry.** One of the ways that this study seeks to locate itself in a web of relations is through the use of a shared metaphor. Because the metaphor of veiling was introduced to the participants at the beginning of the study and because it was this metaphor that actually opened the “space” of this study, it has become an intrinsic part of its methodology. The use of a metaphor as method is appropriate because of the hermeneutic nature of this study, its focus on spirituality as mystery, and the relatedness to the use of metaphors in identity
formation, particularly in a teacher education context. The latter have strong connections to the use of metaphor as a way of grasping or imagining meaning or beckoning us forward in our ways of being. Teaching has often been described in metaphoric terms, and in fact, cannot be described in any other way. The phrases, “to teach is…” or “the teacher as…” have often been used in teacher education because they are considered to be invaluable ways to explore and make sense of the work of teaching.

Hansen (2004) describes the following ways metaphors are useful: they represent a holistic view of the work because they have the potential of capturing the aesthetic, intellectual, and moral dimensions; they clarify our understanding of what the work offers (goods internal) and can enrich the life of the teacher; they help teachers articulate their sense of the meaningfulness of teaching; they can counteract narrow views if the teacher is receptive or has the right disposition; they can draw on aspects of art and inquiry; they provide a kind of “dwelling place” that requires response; and, they help a teacher deal with the complexity of the practice in a way that draws them into the practice rather than staying on the outside. In essence metaphors are a form of world-making that allow us to inhabit the world more fully, ethically and appreciatively.

He also says that, “…the interpretive turn has fuelled attention to the place of metaphor in holding and expressing meaning in human life” (p 125). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also emphasize the connection between metaphors and the exploration of meaning saying that metaphors actually unite reason and imagination and sometimes are the only way we can perceive a phenomenon.

Metaphors are not merely things to be seen beyond. In fact, one can see beyond them only by using other metaphors. It is as though the ability to comprehend experience through metaphor were a sense, like seeing or touching or hearing, with metaphors providing the only ways to perceive and experience much of the world. Metaphor is as much a part of our functioning as our sense of touch, and as precious. (p 239)
Although Hansen (2004), like Britzman (2003), acknowledges concerns about the use of metaphor in general and particularly in relation to the practice of teaching and/or becoming a teacher, in that they can “mislead, deceive, and fog up the scene of understanding” as well as represent a “precritical, natal impulse, eliding the grip of the past and generating meaning without having to seek approval of propositional knowledge”, he also suggests an appropriate response to the raised concerns.

The response to worries about metaphor need not be, on the one hand, a turn to logical positivism or some other language or pure propositions; nor, on the other hand, must the response be to reject the idea of truth and all of its analogues, synonyms, or alternatives…metaphor can serve the search for truth, whether the latter is understood as our best grasp of something at a given time, or conceived as a regulative ideal in formal inquiry and in ordinary life (p 128).

He also suggests that, “Thoughtful, artful conversation based on concrete practice and inquiry, rather than a de-metaphorized lexicon, can best help the field conceive…” (p 129). Explicit in this understanding of metaphor as a method is its moral orientation or the hope that the metaphor will become a “force for good” in the lives of those who derive meaning from it (p 129). This study seeks to use the metaphor of veiling in the moral way described above, remaining thoughtful about the potential pitfalls, and hopeful about its potential as a force for good in the lives of the participants and future readers.

**The Potential Abuses of Narrative Dialogical Inquiry Data**

*Much of what we understand as personhood, identity, intimacy, secrecy, experience, belief, history, and common sense turns on the exchange of stories between people.*

*In receiving stories, we are often receiving gifts of self; it is incumbent on us as researchers to handle these gifts with respect as we pass them onward in our scholarly productions.*

Narayan and George (2002, p. 829)

Narrative Dialogue Inquiry Texts as Gifts of Self. As indicated previously, issues of ethics or care are inherently associated with hermeneutic approaches to knowing and to narrative inquiry in particular. As the quote above indicates, participants give of themselves when they give their stories. Therefore, any representation of their stories
must be done with an awareness of how writing cannot help but do them violence (Reismann, 2000). When we write, we make decisions about whose voices are heard and how much of their voices are heard. As researchers, we are making real lives public and can inadvertently violate privacy or cause mental, legal, social and financial hurt or harm (Bakan, 1996; Muchmore, 2002). This harm is accentuated by the use of whole texts rather than excerpts (Chase, 1996). Because stories or narratives have life-shaping potency, our research narratives can have unexpected and even life-long impact on participants. Josselson (1996) talks about the anguish of renarrating a life unasked for our own publishing purposes, and our tendencies as researchers to forget the additional authority written text can carry, as well as, the additional weight of the relationship we have with the participants. Testimonials of participants in narrative research speak of the intrusiveness of seeing a “false-self” fixed in print or of the unexpected emotional impact of the new text (Josselson, 1996; Shulz, 1997). Additional ethical concerns include the inevitable control of the researcher, even when highly collaborative, competing interests between researchers and participants, and the resulting power differential.

In order to minimize the potential for hurt and harm, recognizing that completely ethical research is an “ideal” rather than an attainable goal, narrative researchers are urged to come back to research purposes and motivations (Eisner, 1998; Shulz, 1997; Josselson, 1995, 1996; Muchmore, 2002; Greene, 1993; Chase, 1995, Cassell 1982; Bakan, 1996; Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, 2000; Florio-Ruane, 1997). Narrative researchers should continually ask themselves, “What are we doing here? What stories are being told? Who benefits? Are the narratives in any sense transformative? Does the research embrace others?” Narrative researchers also have to recognize the tentativeness of informed consent and anonymity. Both should be continually negotiated as the research progresses and new implications are revealed.
The methodology described in this chapter, is one that places rigorous demands on the researcher. However, these rigourous dimensions of narrative dialogical inquiry are also reassuring and affirming because they speak to the worthiness of narrative inquiry as a transformational and ethical task. They also remind the researcher that the work cannot be done in isolation, in fact, to do so would be antithetical to the values inherent in narrative inquiry. Above all, a commitment to a deep and full exploration of meaning is required by all who participate. Knowing the work has the possibility of being a force for good sparks the enthusiasm and passion necessary for persevering.
CHAPTER 4: STORIES OF VEILING: REVEALING OR CONCEALING SPIRITUALITY IN A PUBLIC SETTING – CHOICES, CONTEXT AND CONSEQUENCES

Description of the Research Method

For this study, participants were selected from Trinity western University’s 2004-2005 Professional Year education students. The pre-service teachers in their professional year had completed a B.A. or a B.Sc. comprised of a minimum of two minors in a teachable subject area and a minor in Education. The minor in Education involved 24 semester hours (8 courses) of course work and a minimum of two initial classroom experiences. In all eight courses, an emphasis is placed on examining/questioning beliefs about education and establishing personal and spiritual commitments that will provide a foundation for future practice. Students graduating with a minor in education apply to enter the Professional Year. At the time of the study, the Professional Year Program was for Elementary Education only. Acceptance into the Professional Year Program is based on GPA, personal admission statements, character references, professional references, academic references and a willingness to sign the

TWU Responsibilities of Membership Statement.

At the time of the study the Professional Year Program at TWU was a fairly distinctive British Columbia College of Teachers approved program because it granted a B.Ed. rather than leading to BCCT certification only, and because of the high amount of required teaching practice, the placement of students with one school associate from September to March and involvement in all aspects of the profession, including setting up the classroom in late August, observing the class placement process during the first
week of school, participating in meet the teacher nights and parent conferences, active participation in two reporting periods, and extra—curricular involvement in the school community. The 2004-2005 class was comprised of 28 students, 25 women and 3 men. Three of the students were post-degree students, having completed their B.A. or B.Sc. at another institution, and one year of education coursework at TWU. Two of the students would be considered “mature” students. The remainder were in their mid-twenties. The Professional Year Program’s faculty included three Faculty Associates and a Director. Practicum placements were equally divided between two BC Public School Districts.

At the time of the study, the researcher was the Director of Professional Education Programs at TWU and had the opportunity to teach all of the participants in at least one undergraduate course, placing the researcher in a position of authority over the current students, and highlighting the need for an ethical approach to the selection of participants that would minimize any sense of obligation or negative consequences. Although not directly involved in evaluating these students during the Professional Year, the Director would be involved in any situation that required a student’s withdrawal from the program. The participants informed consent was viewed as a process rather than a single action, requiring an ongoing dialogue to ensure that any misunderstandings were respectfully negotiated in an atmosphere of trust (Zeni, 2000). There were no issues of misunderstanding that arose during the research. The preservice teachers were viewed as “participants” and given an option of anonymity or personal credit. All of the participants chose to be anonymous. As much as possible within the limits of this small sample, diversity of age, culture, race and gender were welcomed.

The participants were self-selected through the following process:

- **Instrument #1 Invitation:** Basic information about the study, participant criteria (profession of Christian spirituality). Possible participant involvement was
presented to the whole group during Term One of the Professional Year Program.

- **Instrument #2 Meeting Agenda:** Interested candidates were invited to a meeting that invited dialogue about the research questions, conceptual framework and methodology, and provided opportunities for candidates to ask questions. This meeting also provided an opportunity for prospective candidates to begin to develop as a research community. At this time possible risks and benefits were also fully discussed. At the end of the meeting, those who remained interested in the study were asked to complete a form that indicated their consent to the study and their preferences with regard to a dialogue journal partner. Candidates were informed that final selection for the research would be based on the need to maximize diversity and form compatible dialogue journal partnerships.

- **Instrument #3 Email Confirmation of Selection:** Their selection as participants was confirmed by email and they were provided with their dialogue partner’s name and email address. This email also set a date for the first focus group meeting. The participants were asked to bring a written reflection on their experiences so far with regard to their choices to conceal or reveal their Christian spirituality identity, or experiences that have made them aware of the influence of their Christian spirituality on their professional practice or identity. Participants were requested to ensure the anonymity of people and places mentioned in their reflections.

Once participant dyads were established, the following research process was used:

- **Instrument #4 Focus Group Meeting Agenda:** In the first meeting, participants were asked to read their reflections and respond to the reflections of others. An
effort was made to establish a safe environment for an “authentic conversation” (Florio-Ruane and Clark, 1993). At the end of the conversation, participants were given time to write a personal response to the meeting. The prompt for this response was very open-ended, focusing on a personal narrative about the experience as a whole. Each participant was asked to provide both of their written narratives to the researcher, however, participants were given the option to edit any content. The researcher took notes throughout the meeting and audio taped the meeting. Before the end of the meeting, the Personal Dialogue Process was handed out and explained.

- **Instrument #5 Personal Dialogue Process:** During Term Two, January 10—March 18, each participant was asked to email their partner at least once a week. Their weekly email was to be a narrative reflection in relation to any of the research questions, as well as, a response to their partner’s narrative reflection.

- **Instrument #6 Focus Group Meeting #2 and #3:** The participants met with the researcher at the end of January and the end of February. Prior to the meeting they were given the opportunity to edit their email dialogues for any content they did not want included in the research study. They then brought a hard copy of the edited dialogues to the focus group meeting. At the beginning of the meeting the participants were asked to write a narrative to summarize the content of the email conversations and their experiences as participants so far. The researcher then “retold” some of the themes that arose from the narratives shared during the first meeting seeking the feedback of the participants. Participants then read their new narratives and responded in conversation to the narratives of others. The meeting also provide participants with an opportunity to raise issues or concerns about the research process. The edited dialogues and the focus group
narratives were collected at the end of the meeting. Partner dialogues continued for the remainder of Term Two.

- **Instrument #7 Final Focus Group Meeting:** Participants again brought an edited hard copy of their email dialogues to the final focus group meeting. They wrote individual reflections about the content of their email conversations and their experiences as participants. This reflection was more structured based on previous focus group meetings. They responded to the researcher’s “retelling” of overall themes. They shared their reflections with the whole group and respond to the reflections of others. They were also invited to share any concerns or thoughts with regard to the research results and their use. Their role in the writing and publishing of the results was discussed.

**Our Research Story: An Initial Weaving of Multiple Narratives**

**Focus Group Meeting #1 – January 30, 2005:**

It was 4 pm, and I was busy in the conference room opening trays of sushi. I heard the first participants arrive and their enthusiastic reconnection in the hallway after the first two weeks of full immersion. They had so many experiences to share, words were overflowing. I was reminded of my own experiences as a beginning teacher and my need to “debrief” at the end of a long day of making minute to minute decisions on my own. Their need to reconnect with each other and with me established a pattern for our meetings. We didn’t rush into our agenda. Instead, we savoured each other’s company – “breaking bread” together. Once the hunger for food and companionship was addressed there came a natural break in the conversation and a mutual desire to focus on the task that brought us all together.
Seated at the table are two young men and seven young women. All participants are in their mid-twenties. Eight are from a Evangelical Protestant background and one is Catholic. Three are married. They are somewhat diverse culturally, seven coming from a European North American background, one Chinese American and one second generation Philippine Canadian. All of the participants are concurrent B.Ed. students who have done most of their post-secondary education at TWU. Two are transfer students, who came to TWU’s program in their third year. The rest did their entire B.A. and B.Ed. at TWU. Most of the participants attended public schools at some point during their K-12 education. One participant attended an Independent Christian School only.

The participants had been introduced to the metaphor of veiling when they were informed about the purpose of the research and the nature of the study. We began our conversation and our research journey with the following prompt, “Think of a time during your practicum experience when you have been conscious of revealing or concealing your Christian spirituality. Write about that time”. Once the prompt was given, pens began flying across paper. They wrote for over twenty minutes, lost in the silence of their stories. As they finished their initial writing, there was a sense of heavy emotion in the room and recognition that these stories were ones that had a deep impact. We went around the room and listened to each participant either read or tell their story. The tellings were mixed with tears and laughter as each person risked acknowledging that their choices were tentative, uncertain and conflictual. The story shared last is one I begin with below. It represents the quintessential struggle within each of the participants as they began the journey of “meshing” identities. It is told by one of the young women in the group.
My SA (school associate) has her Grade Seven students write in a dialogue book. She gives them a topic each week, they write on it and then she responds. The topic was influential people, and I was to respond to their writing. One student was very blunt. He wrote that he was a Christian and that his hero was Jesus. He listed reasons why. I wanted to cheer when I read it. He was so confident and articulate in what he wrote. We should treat all students equally, but when you learn that someone shares your faith, there is a bond, a kinship, that is created. It is like meeting a friend from home in a strange place. He also said that Jesus was his hero for saving the world but also his best friend. I replied that I was also a Christian and that it was wonderful to have someone like Jesus who was his hero and his best friend at the same time.

My SA read all my comments before she handed the books back and told me she had thought a lot over the weekend about what I had written. She said that it was my choice, but that she would not say, “I was a Christian” and use “Christianese.” My SA is a Christian, but she talked about how the student’s book was public property and could be used in court, how it might offend parents or other students who read it by creating a special group of students who shared my beliefs. I was given the suggestion not to use the name of Jesus. She mentioned derailing my career before it started. She left it up to me.

So I sat there, with the book open on my desk and the whiteout in my hand, and tried to think. And pray.

The talk about courts and derailing my career frightened me. I felt so torn between two identities I am somehow trying to reconcile within myself. One, I have existed in all my life: a Christian, a follower of Jesus who loves Him and would do anything for him and who is not ashamed of him. The other, one which
I am only beginning: a teacher of all kinds of students, a professional responsible to the public.

I wrote, “Me too.” Instead of “I’m a Christian too,” and I took out the name of Jesus from the page. I made the rest of the comments more general. At home that night I told God I was not ashamed of him, that I loved him. This balancing of identities is more difficult than I thought. What I have learned: I have to block much of what I feel and wish to say. (Mariah)

Although shared with great emotion at the end of our meeting, this story echoed common themes found in many of the participants’ stories – themes of self-censorship, fear or insecurity, guilt, recognition of the other, and relationships of power. In every story there was a strong awareness of difference between them and students and/or staff, a strong sense of responsibility with regard to their role as a teacher, and a strong desire to be a faithful representative of Christ while being careful not to offend or “cross an undetermined line”. The prevailing policy adopted by the pre-service teachers at this point in their practice seemed to be one of erring on the side of caution. Below are quotes that provide a sense of their conscious and watchful decision-making.

I don’t tell people or kids that I’m Christian, because I worry about the strange clique—y attitudes and favouritism that knowledge might foster...Language trips me up sometimes. I can’t use biblical language to explain respect or compassion for others, and I’m left mumbling platitudes that feel like they have no meat or depth behind them. (Julie)

I was very aware of saying the word “pray”. I remember that I carefully worded my talk to not mention God or prayer, not knowing what was appropriate, to try to comfort the students. Afterwards I felt that my talk didn’t help like it could have because I didn’t include my faith. I was veiling my true comforting nature to
be safe. I tried my best to help and be careful at the same time. I said a silent prayer before…but I sort of “censored” my words as they came out. (Janine)

When reading C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, which deals with Christianity indirectly and has underlying spiritual themes I encountered instances of veiling…I stifled the conversation, rather than treading on a controversial issue about Adam and Eve and how they were the first created beings on Earth. I am a servant of God and I have to not worry about what others think. John 4 says, “If you love me you will obey my commands” (Ben)

I have never turned the radio on to 106.5 (Christian radio station) when my SA is in the room. Just recently we were listening to some classical and she said, “Uh! Too churchy for me!” I was surprised and slightly hurt by that comment. Now I definitely won’t turn on the radio to 106.5. I have never mentioned my church, my attending a Christian school growing up, or my faith to my SA. I often feel guilty that I have verbally shared my faith so rarely, but I fear offending people and being a less than gracious ambassador for Christ. (Christie)

In the staff room a teacher asked me about my fiancé. She was curious about how we met. I told her that we met in Austria and found myself catching my tongue—hesitating—before saying, “at a Bible school.” I fumbled through the Bible School part which was followed by, “It’s a really neat outdoors school in the Alps where we go to do mountaineering, climbing and caving…” And so I continued into my story. The explanation almost served as a justification for the Bible School, or a way to divert attention from the reality that I had participated in something that was, (heaven forbid) Christian. I find that I do this frequently—
tiptoe through matters that are overtly religious...And I wonder why that is.

(Sherri)

A general feeling of worry, fear or insecurity was very evident in the stories they shared. The preservice teachers, at this early point in their practicum, were still developing relationships with their school associates and other staff members. Those relationships seemed to have a significant impact on the preservice teachers sense of safety with regard to being open about their faith. The insecurity seemed to be amplified by ambiguity with regard to the parameters of an appropriate discussion to have with students when the curriculum prompted a consideration of spirituality or religion or when students themselves prompt a discussion about faith.

However, there were three students whose stories were less framed in fear or insecurity that day. Although they were wrestling with the same issue of wanting to be excellent representatives of Christ without causing offense, the choices revealed in their stories were less hesitant and emotionally wrenching. Instead the student teachers spoke of their confidence in sharing their faith appropriately and even confidence in the need to veil. The following story, written and shared by Greg, illustrates a choice framed by confidence arising from a teacher’s natural willingness to share expertise.

As I was checking agendas in the afternoon, my students were silent reading. I had one student who had his arm across the desk and had his forehead resting in the pit of his elbow which made him look like he was sleeping. I knew he had a book in his lap, and that he was awake and reading. As a joke I went down to his level and looked up at him to get his attention. I asked, “I was wondering whether you were sleeping or reading?” He showed me his book and stated that he was in fact reading. He was reading the Bible (the Street Version). I asked how it was and how he was enjoying it. He told me what he liked and
showed me that he was half way through Exodus. I then said, “Can I give you some universal advice?” He consented, so I continued to say, “A lot of people stop reading the Bible from cover to cover when they hit Leviticus. My advice to you is to keep reading. There are a lot of great things in there. If you have any questions about anything, come and ask me.” He had a smile on his face as I left him to read the rest of Exodus.

I understand that my position as a student teacher (especially from TWU) is a very difficult one in regards to knowing the boundaries of sharing personal convictions of faith. Am I supposed to turn my back and just pray for him? Am I to say something quick like, “I read that too?” I believe that my faith does not have to be impeded by “rules.” I do believe that there should be tact used. I was fully aware of all the words that I said. I also did not convince him to believe anything that I believed. I simply gave guidance in an area where I had expertise, and as a teacher I do not feel like I crossed the border. If my expertise were in something else, I would not withhold my advice. Similarly, I would continue to give guidance to students in areas they are interested in. Just because this situation had a Christian theme to it, I don’t see it as “wrong” or more wrong than speaking about other subjects.

Cassandra also expressed confidence in revealing her Christian identity. She wore a cross necklace, she responded positively to any of her students written comments about church and started conversations with them and their parents about their church experiences. She consciously prayed before she ate in the staff room, although she admitted to feeling self-conscious about doing so. She also sought out other staff members who were Christian and discovered early in her practicum that the
janitor was a Christian. She expresses her choice to “unveil” deliberately in the following way.

I’m very proud of being a Christian. Christ changed my life! In fact, I know I wouldn’t have the privilege of teaching or be where I am today if it weren’t for Christ! So, I wear my cross necklace every day.

As Cassandra and Greg shared more about their confidence in response to questions within the group, we discovered that they both became Christians as young adults. Their relatively new faith accepted with adult eyes, seemed to give them a confidence or boldness not evident in some of the other student teachers who had grown up in Christian homes.

A final story from our first meeting was written and shared by Lori. From the beginning of her participation in this research she chose a unique perspective on veiling, embracing its necessity in a positive and thoughtful matter.

I have made many choices to veil my faith during my time in practicum. That said, I don’t think of it as veiling like “hiding”, I have been able to make the choice by thinking of it as waiting…I know that my faith is more than words and that I am not the one who should determine when another person examines her faith, especially when she has agreed to meet with me on professional terms only (and hasn’t identified her own faith). I have moved forward “waiting” and being ready to respond should the Holy Spirit create a space for sharing. I also moved forward knowing that it is only the Holy Spirit who can touch/change a person’s soul/conscience. It’s as though I think of my SA/colleagues as having somewhat fragile souls that I don’t want to trample on…Part of my approach has also been to introduce myself as a “whole” person, usually beginning with the professional side—the blatantly “spiritual” aspect comes out in context.
This unique way of viewing *veiling* as “waiting” was a different way of being that encouraged the participants as they left that first meeting. There was recognition that reactions and choices could be different and in Mariah’s words “determine future actions” as remembering and reflection occur. Although deeply aware of the reality of each participant’s struggle, there was general anticipation of growth and change, and great appreciation for the opportunity to listen and share with each other. We spent the last few minutes of our meeting clarifying email partners and processes, and then united in prayer for the journey ahead.

I remember sitting at my desk following the meeting, incredibly moved by the sanctity of our time together. I don’t think I realized how potent the sharing of these stories would be, how resonant the metaphor of veiling would be. I was inspired to know that this research was going to be of value to my participants, but I also trembled at the thought of my responsibility as a trusted person in their lives and as a researcher who would have the task of representing and interpreting each of their stories. Their stories were being given to me as fragile and precious objects that needed to be held carefully in both hands and returned to them undamaged, whole. I also noted my struggle to stay in my role as researcher rather than teacher. I wondered how much I should be participating in the conversation. Would my participation influence the direction of the conversation unduly, limit space for wondering, answer questions too certainly? At times there were explicit and implicit appeals to me for answers – what would I do if I were them? I couldn’t always resist my other role as their professor.

**Focus Group Meeting #2 – February 24, 2005:**

One month later, I was again setting the stage for our second conversation with sushi. Since the participants were immersed in their final practicum, I had not seen them since the last meeting and was looking forward to reconnecting with them and very
interested in their new stories. We began by talking about the email aspect of the research process. Unfortunately, although intentions were good, the responsibilities and demands of full immersion greatly inhibited their ability to email their partners regularly. The email excerpts below bring the story of their teaching lives in full immersion into focus.

Dear Lori,

I am in the middle of the busiest week yet. Last week was crazy because of field trips, bad behaviour, lectures, two students being suspended for self—mutilation, etc. SO, needless to say I have much to write about when I find a spare moment. I am saving it all up to tell you in a very long email, hopefully tomorrow. Thank you for yours. Blessings on you tomorrow.

Mariah

Dear Cassandra and Julie,

Hope you are still alive and well! Veiling. Difficult thing to think about in the face of all of this busy-ness. In fact, in the face of the storm, it is easy to forget – have our faith lose its importance and be tossed aside with the waves…

Sherri

Fourteen emails were brought to the meeting, some recording one incidence of a choice made with regard to revealing or concealing their spirituality and some recording up to four incidents. The emails were submitted with the shared recognition that they were more reflective than conversational because of the gaps between the incidents and their email responses to their partners. However, they were willing to continue emailing as long as there wasn’t undue pressure to follow a particular timeline. They saw the value
of reflecting soon after the incident, and appreciated being able to seek their partner’s opinion about their choices.

When asked about the impact of the research so far on their awareness with regard to veiling their spirituality, the general consensus was that their awareness was greatly increased. Lori shared that after the first meeting, everything seemed to have a spiritual connotation and that she had more courage and the ability to make choices. Ben talked about his conscious choice to spend time in prayer each day so that he was equipped to make good and right choices. He also became more aware of the importance of being like Francis of Assisi, to preach the gospel at all times, using words only when necessary. Both Lori and Cassandra said that their School Associates were intrigued by the research group. Lori’s School Associate, after hearing about the meeting, said, “I didn’t realize that this was so hard for you. I never thought of it from your perspective.”

Mariah and Ben reported a greater awareness of when other school personnel veiled or unveiled. Mariah’s School Associate told a parent at the end of a parent teacher interview, that she would be remembered in their prayers. When Mariah asked about this comment later on, the School Associate said she felt it was the right thing to do in the circumstances and that every mother is in every mother’s prayers. Ben described a sex education class he observed taught by another teacher in his school. When a student asked about why men and women were physically different, the teacher said, “That’s how God made you. God is a creative God.” Ben was amazed at this response in a public school and questioned its appropriateness. The ambiguity of boundaries with regard to the integration of religion or spirituality in the public system seemed confirmed by these examples.
As more personal stories were shared, a common phrase was used—I found myself. Through the process of reflecting on a conscious choice to either reveal or conceal their spiritual identity, participants seemed to be discovering who they were as teachers and who they were as Christians. In other words, their stories were personal revelations.

Greg found himself surprised by joy, excited and energized after making a conscious choice to unveil. Below is the story shared by email.

*Early in my full immersion, I was introducing speeches. My way of introducing speeches was to reproduce one of the greatest speeches of all time. I read Martin Luther King Jr’s “I have a dream” speech…. The speech contained many references to God. I did skim over and say His name fast at times. But at other times, I made sure I was clear in saying His name. As I peered into the audience, in the midst of my speech, they were hanging on my every word. It was just fantastic. They were all smiling. The ending was the greatest, I had my arms stretched out in victory and yelled with enthusiasm – “FREE AT LAST, FREE AT LAST, THANK GOD ALMIGHTY, WE ARE FREE AT LAST.” WOW!! I feel shivers just saying that, even now.*

However, underlying this feeling of great joy was an awareness of struggle. This struggle represented a change in Greg since the first focus group meeting.

*However, now there is a struggle inside me. Are the times I feel confident in unveiling myself the times I can justify the actions? I certainly hope not. I know that there have been times where I had to make sure that I would cover my tracks (mainly for the parents). However, having said that, I’m sure one of these days I will get in trouble for leaving my veil at home hehehe. I do believe that*
unveiling ourselves is a conscious decision we make. The extent to which we unveil ourselves, I guess, depends on how confident we feel in the classroom (coupled with the fact how freely we express our faith outside the classroom).

Greg’s earlier confidence in making the right choices was tempered by the awareness that his decisions may not be supported by parents, and that he may be called on to justify his actions. However, he also seemed worried that his choices would be controlled by the latter and not by his courage to do what he determined was the right thing to do as a follower of Christ.

Christie also found herself surprised by joy when making a very conscious choice about revealing an aspect of her personal identity to her students. She shared this story with her email partner, Greg.

Last Friday was a special day. We got to dress up as our favourite character in a book and carry a quote from the book with us. So I randomly chose “Heidi” because I had a Swiss costume. I took out the book and read it – skimmed it – and was surprised at how much it talked about God. I chose a quote that related to the stars and to God and how he is in control of all things. I had all the students share their quotes and I shared mine as well. I didn't dwell on God, but on how Heidi loved nature. I unveiled myself only enough to say God’s name in the quote, but that was it. There was such joy in being able to acknowledge God’s name in this way, even though it was in an off-handed manner. But it also led to a serious note as I again realized that I lack courage and am ruled by a spirit of fear. I’m not saying that I should have said more about God, but the situation made me realize how scared I am to connect myself to God publicly.
In this moment, her hidden captive self was set free, yet this freedom presented new problems – a deeper awareness of how hidden she was and a realization that some of her choices were imposed by her own feelings of insecurity in a public setting.

Her second email to Greg, presented another story of unveiling. This choice was unplanned and seemed to result in less turmoil. It was as if a “propitious moment” had occurred, and although there was a sense of strangeness, there was minimal concern or conflict.

Well today, I was teaching about why people choose to immigrate to Canada and we got on the topic of religious freedom. It was so neat how all the students were astonished that in some countries people are put in jail for what they believe. Some students didn’t know what religion was, so I gave some examples like Christianity and Islam and described them briefly. Now I realize that I had a moment when all of the students were attentive, but I didn’t really use it as well as I might have, yet I did unveil myself a little. I told them that I knew a family from the Sudan in Africa because my church helped them to escape from there. They were persecuted because of their Christianity. That was the first time that I ever mentioned that I went to church. It was in passing that I said it, but it felt strange to say it in front of the whole class. (Faculty Associate) was there observing me. I wonder what he thought. I forgot to ask him. I hope that the students are more aware of what a great land we live in and hopefully they will think a little more about what religion is too.

A sense of comfort is evident in the tone of this email that was lacking in her previous email. The fact that she forgot to ask her faculty associate about the appropriateness of her choice reveals this sense of comfort. This unplanned revelation was done in
response to her students’ need for information and thus it intersected with her view of herself as a teacher. There was no conflict of roles.

In her email reflection to Cassandra and Julie, Sherri described the way she had found herself anchored by her faith rather than conflicted.

I have been thinking about veiling. Mostly I have been thinking about what it means to act out my faith in a real and practical way. More and more I am discovering that Jesus Christ is not a religion, but a Person. A person who lives and interacts with and through me each day. Yes, there are times when I act on my own – but that is my choice. His Presence is a gift and a reality that comes just with acknowledging Him in our hearts.

I feel Him working when I see a student who is hurt. Or when there is a class conflict. I see His truth when students begin asking the hard questions, or when the frustration crease lines show up on their foreheads. I find His Presence when a burden is lifted off a student’s shoulders, when a child feels encouraged, when a class shares the best of their lunch with a child without food. He is in the simple and mundane.

Sherri’s thoughts about veiling are less about balancing competing forces and more about seeing freedom in being veiled. She was recognizing that being veiled did not change the reality of her faith and broadened her understanding of that faith. Being a Christian was more than being explicit about her faith in words. Being a Christian gave her a particular view of the world, a great mystery revealed to her and a source of strength from moment to moment. The fact that it was hidden did not lessen its power.

I find that veiling is not necessarily a bad thing – you can preach the gospel without using words. One major caution I have – an area where I am struggling –
is HINDERING the gospel with my actions. I ask myself – “Am I sharing Christ with these students in the way that I teach?” “Am I viewing these students as God’s kids?”

Sherri was challenged to view the imposed veil of “secular and non-sectarian” as a way of being very thoughtful about her actions.

Sherri also referred in her email to a story shared by Cassandra. Sherri’s remembrance of this story happened in a moment when she was aware of a choice she was making with regard to veiling.

The secretary showed up at my classroom door on Thursday afternoon. She needed to speak to a girl in my class. The child left the room and returned with tears in her eyes – “I have to go, Miss __________!”, she said as she grabbed her knapsack and blindly headed out the door. She was visibly shaken. I was in the middle of teaching a lesson about clouds. I stopped.

In that moment I thought about what you said Cassandra, about wanting to pray for your class. “Class, sometimes when another person seems upset or as though something is bothering them it is a good idea to remember them in a special way and take special care of the way you treat them. __________ has just left the class and she seems very upset. Now we don’t know what happened – but let’s be extra sensitive to her.” A class discussion started from there on ways that we can treat others. Students came up with great ideas.

Hearing Cassandra’s story, affirmed Sherri’s inclination to pray, but also seemed to give her language that would be appropriate to share with her students. Because she had empathized with Cassandra’s frustration over not being able to respond prayerfully to a
difficult classroom situation, it was almost as if she had rehearsed the situation and that rehearsal had come to her "in the moment."

Julie also responded to Cassandra’s story in a similar way.

_Cassandra, I appreciated your comment on how difficult it is to veil your desire to pray with your students. It is a difficult question that your student asked, and you’ve offered me a chance to think about what I will do if a similar situation ever occurs."

Although Julie did not have any specific veiling incidents to share, she had been thinking about the metaphor of veiling and shared her thoughts on this metaphor with her email partners and with the focus group. Like Sherri and Ben, she had recognized the need to be anchored in her faith through time spent with God and the recognition of His presence with her. She found herself being less effective as a teacher, recognizing the strong relationship between the role of Christian and teacher. She also found herself becoming more aware of the sacrifice and conflict inherent in the constant suppression of this aspect her identity.

*Veiling shows itself in little obscure ways. I wear my cross/fish necklace and two of my students comment on it. I like that they notice it, and I know that one of them is a Christian. Without thinking I make up the following sentence for a spelling test: “Spell thankful. I am thankful for the beautiful sunrise. Thankful.” And I wonder if that is a religious thing to say or if other people would be thankful. My students present their problems with family and friends in their writing. I only offer inane words of comfort, like “It’s often difficult to live with people.” I can’t write, “Even though it is difficult, remember that you show your love for God by how you love and live with others.” Or “I will pray for you. Ask God for strength to*
heal your wounds.” I am unused to offering people words of encouragement and comfort outside of the Christian lingo.”

This suppression of her identity seemed strongly linked to language, she found herself increasingly speechless, and she began to see her speechlessness in connection to how much voice she had in designing a curriculum for her students.

*My students seem so concerned with material goods, like money, toys, food, very extrinsic things. I would love to talk to my students about big spiritual and moral ideas, moving beyond extrinsic motivations and happiness, but I think my SA will see it as a waste of time when I have so much content to cover before report cards are due. So I try to fit in little questions that will bring them to bigger truths. It seems like very little. I would love to know how to address topics in more meaningful ways for students, but there is little time allotted for it in my classroom...I want more of the “Good, True, and the Beautiful.” I would like to try surrounding them with beautiful things this Valentine’s Day and see if anything happens. I think that I will bring flowers and some beautiful music and write them each a Valentine’s Day card that might, with God’s grace, give them a glimpse of their true beauty.*

Julie’s words represent a longing for congruency between two views of teaching – one she recognizes as mostly hidden and one imposed on her. Her view of teaching goes beyond the covering of content. This view is in conflict with the view of her SA and, by extension, her perceived view of the public school system. She strongly feels the restrictive separateness of the two views and is looking for ways to bring the two together. However, she also recognizes that the veil can never fully be removed.

Cassandra also finds herself speechless in this incident she shares with Julie and Sherri.
So I was in class, and music listening came on as usual. However, that day, they played a song to remember those who were killed during the Holocaust. Then afterwards, they asked all the teachers to lead the students in a moment of silence. My second grade students weren’t sure what having a moment of silence meant, so we started to have a discussion about why people have moments of silences. Some students thought that moments of silences were for when they got in trouble (which I thought was so cute). Anyways, one student raised up a question, that made me have to think twice. A boy asked, “Can we pray during the moment of silence? Isn’t that what it’s for?” I didn’t know how to respond. In my heart I wanted to say, yes!!!! That’s exactly what it’s for!!! But, I found myself turning to my SA and letting her respond. How I wish I could’ve led the class in prayer, to remember those people who were treated unfairly, and to pray for the families who lost loved ones. How I wish I could’ve led them in prayer that God would protect us, and that people will not ever repeat the cruelties of past history! Anyhow, I found myself speechless…

In a later email Cassandra revealed that her SA had affirmed the child’s desire to pray and that this affirmation gave her more confidence in knowing what was appropriate and not appropriate. She also shared opportunities she had had to talk about her faith with other teachers in the staff room. Because her unveiling was received positively by the staff members she was becoming more comfortable with her feeling of being a stranger in a strange land.

I think I’m beginning to feel growing confidence in being a Christian serving in a secular realm. I am becoming more and more proud of being a Christian, and am honoured that I have the privilege of sharing my faith with my co—workers, whom I really respect….Perhaps, my job is just to plant seeds….In fact,
something that really encouraged me was that my SA made it a point to tell me that she actually went to church last Sunday!!! I was so excited for her!!! In my heart I was jumping up and down and saying “praise the Lord!” but I still found myself veiling my response by just saying, “That’s nice.” Man, I don’t know, sometimes it’s hard to know where the fine line is eh? Anyhow, I really appreciate how my SA is so open to my faith…anytime she finds “Christiany” things, she will always make it a point to pass it on to me.

Although she is still somewhat hesitant and “testing the waters”, her relationship with her SA has given her a positive level of comfort, reinforcing the contextual aspect of veiling and its relational nature.

Lori’s email to Mariah was described by her as the longest email she had ever written. Rather than emailing as the incidents occurred, Lori sent one email describing five veiling incidents. In these incidents she finds herself disappointed with her inability to find appropriate secular words of comfort for a student or professional ways of sharing her spiritual identity with colleagues. However, she also finds herself encouraged to value her spiritual identity and integrate it into her decision-making processes as a teacher.

When he communicated, with tears in his eyes, his feelings of desperation and hopelessness, I had no words of comfort for him that wouldn’t sound trite. My soul swelled inside of me and I wanted to offer him my support by telling him I would pray for him. It came again and again to the surface and I stuffed it looking for something else I could say. I reflected and felt it wouldn’t be appropriate to share that part of myself with this eight year old presenting distress. Could it later be misconstrued as some kind of spiritual coercion? I turned from my spiritual identity and went to my counselling identity for a
response. “I’m sorry”, “Too bad”, didn’t cut it. Match emotion to emotion –
“That’s crappy,” I said in the voice and approach of honesty that is our greatest
connection. But as soon as the words left my mouth I thought, I can’t be his
counsellor to this depth and still maintain my role as his teacher. I also felt like
the word “crappy” is not one I want in my vocabulary, as a teacher. I hadn’t been
his teacher and his counsellor, I had laid down teacher for counsellor – and that’s
not what I want as I move forward in my professional identity. Next I thought, “In
locus parenti.” What would his parents want? I reminded him that he is loved, by
his mom, dad and sister (I’ve met mom and sister). He shook his head. I
continued, “And you’re loved here. Your classmates love you and your teachers
love you. (My SA’s name) and I love you very much. This is a safe place for
you.”

Lori’s struggle with the conflict between her identities (she is a psychology minor and
originally wanted to go into counselling), is poignantly expressed—my soul
swelled…again and again I stuffed it. Her first inclination was a spiritual response,
moving to a counselling response and then, finally, a teacher response. There is clear
dialogue between these identities and a response that was later judged to be
inappropriate because it ignored the teacher role. As she negotiated possible
responses, she never lost sight of her compassion for the child – that initial swelling in
her soul. The process of examining her role as a Christian, a counsellor, and a teacher
resulted in a decision and then an informed judgment about that decision. Once the
child had gone for recess, she sought professional help from the school counsellor and
found the courage to share the entire decision—making process.

I related to the counsellor all the details from the above situation – and I decided
to leave in the part about my wanting to pray for him, because I felt that was so
integral to the final outcome….I just wanted to share this experience because I think it is one of the first times I’ve ever told anybody that I’m Christian.

Everybody has just kind of known through high school, Trinity, when I worked at (Evangelical Christian Organization), and even now, most teachers at the school know I’m a Christian because I’m a student at Trinity. But this counsellor is only at the school a couple days a week, so I chose not to assume that she knew, and I chose to share that part of my process with her. And I think one thing that gave me the courage to do it is the conversations we had the other night about veiling our spiritual identity. I realized that examining my spiritual self and my teaching self is a legitimate part of birthing my professional identity. I think I had almost been trying to hide my spiritual self from myself at times (!) and I feel I’m in a much better position to make choices about which voice I use now that I’m looking at everything.

After this experience of unveiling herself to the school counsellor and becoming more accepting of her spirituality as a legitimate aspect of her professional identity, she finds herself more comfortable and less anxious about future decisions she’ll have to make.

I don’t feel a rush of anxiety and adrenaline or feeling of being threatened by “the other side.”…In the past, I think I saw my spiritual duty as something to be carried out full—throttle in every incident – the only difference being whether it would be vocal or not.

Her acceptance of her own inability to enact an ideal model in every situation seems to increase her acceptance of others and a growing trust that she can relate to them as a whole or authentic/honest person, rather than a fragmented self.
Mariah received Lori’s stories as a gift and she affirmed conclusions about her growth as a teacher. She also connects Lori’s experiences with her own thoughts about veiling, seeing the necessity of merged or integrated identities.

Thank you for sharing so honestly with me. That’s the first thing I want to say, because I feel honoured by your confidence….I can see so much growth even in your email. I think that as the professional identity becomes so much more natural to “wear” and to be, the way it interacts with your spiritual identity becomes more natural as well. Until they merge? They must, or I can’t be a teacher. To be a good teacher, to be real for my students, I have to teach from who I am. That doesn’t mean I have to state everything I believe, but I must be alive as I teach.

Mariah equates fragmentation of identities with ineffective teaching and even death. When an identity is completely hidden, it is essentially buried. Mariah described an incident when she found herself teaching poorly in reaction to her suppression of her spiritual identity.

I loved your comment about “almost been trying to hide my spiritual identity from myself at times.” So true! I have felt this. Doing well in this practicum becomes so important. It feels like your spiritual self is simply a hindrance, a problem, a negative thing, (not to mention there are a million new things to think about) so you try to shut it off. This happened to me after the situation I shared about the writing in the student’s book. It was communicated to me that my spiritual self and my professional self were in direct conflict. I became over cautious to the point where I once noticed myself teaching less effectively rather than mention anything about it. For example, we were talking about Egypt, and the foundation of a civilization. The text said that the family was the primary unit of the society.
I was asking the students what the family provided, and skipped right over communicating values and passing on spiritual beliefs. A student mentioned it, and I said "yes, that’s true" and moved on to my next point as if someone had caught me doing something wrong. I remember thinking, "Wow, I have really overreacted because of that situation."

I did mention the biblical story of Joseph’s dreams predicting years of famine and years of good crops in class, though. We were studying Egypt’s cycle of flood and drought. I felt I could talk about it because it mentioned the story and the source right in the National Geographic article we were reading. Funny that I have to have a non-Christian publication’s "permission" to talk about the Bible! It was a good opportunity to verify the Bible as a document of historical validity, not just "stories." After all, it is and has been a hugely influential book for our society.

Mariah went on to describe a feeling of fighting a battle with her hands tied because she could not respond to the dysfunction observed in her grade seven classroom with the weapons she is allowed to use.

My classroom, being a microcosm of our dysfunctional society, has many dysfunctions. Students are in pain from abusive situations, dads that have left the family, growing up too soon, experiencing negative peer pressure, etc. The night after the cutting incident occurred, I was quite upset about not being able to protect them from this. It is sin. There is so much sin in my classroom, because people are sinful. Every time someone is disrespectful to someone, every time they are defiant, every time they make a bad choice for themselves, every time they hurt someone that is sin. I fight it all day, trying to protect them from each other and themselves….God is the only one who can win that battle, and I know him, but I cannot give him to them. I can teach them self-control, kindness, and
discipline, but I can’t teach them to know the power that will enable them to practice these things even when their sinful nature wants to do something else. This is hard for me, and something that makes me sad. It is like knowing where the solution is, but not being able/allowed to offer it. Yet I pay this price (of having this struggle) because I think these students need someone to love them, and someone to believe in them, and I hope I can do that.

Mariah is very conscious of her struggle, but also resigned and willing to sacrifice the natural inclination to respond with Christian words in order to preserve the opportunity to work with these children she cares about. She believes the “sparse comfort” she can give is still important. However, she is also confused by the mixed messages being sent by her SA.

We met with the mother of one of our students yesterday. We told her some things about her daughter that concern us, and asked her if she had any information that could help us. She said it had been a very difficult time for them. Her daughter is changing, becoming rebellious, making bad choices. She cried as she talked to us. My SA, at the end of the conversation, said, “Well, you are in our prayers.” I was surprised that she would have said that, though the words were in my mind (there are often entire conversations, unsaid, in my mind about God—related things!). The mother said, “I think every mother is in every other mother’s prayers.” She didn’t seem to take offense, but generalized the comment right away. I was glad my SA had said that. Without those words, I feel I have such sparse comfort to offer. What are we supposed to say? I’ll be thinking about you”? “Well, I hope it goes well”? It is in those times of pain/confusion that I want to talk about God the most, and it is the most difficult for me not to. I feel someone else’s pain, and want to speak about the comfort I
have found. In that situation, I got to see my SA partially “unveil” her Christian identity.

While confused about the mixed messages from her SA (this SA told her that her career was on the line if she wrote in response to a student journal that Jesus was a friend of hers too), she is grateful for the unveiling because it gave comfort to a hurting parent. There is again a sense of swelling compassion in Mariah’s story and the desire to reach out with words of spiritual support. Her inability to speak into situations of pain and suffering did not exclude loving actions, but these loving actions were not viewed as wholly satisfying the needs presented. Explicit words of spiritual understanding or comfort or support or admonishment were viewed as the most powerful support or tools needed in times of crisis.

Our second meeting came to a very reflective end. The stories were sobering and there was again a sense of burden in the room. There was a general realization that finding the right words or way of being was difficult and that hearing the stories of others was a way to imagine different ways of being. There was also a sense of discovery – that through the act of reflection and the sharing of stories, individuals were finding out who they were, or as Julie put it, “teaching is discovering who we are.” There was also recognition that the barriers perceived may not be real barriers. Instead, the barriers may be created by fear and deep—seated discomfort with their spiritual identity. Before leaving and with compassion, some of the participants shared scripture as encouragement (Colossians 3:11, 1 John 4:18). Their scriptures were reminders that since Christ was all and in all, there was no place where they were separated from Him, and that perfect love casts out all fear.
Focus Group Meeting #3: March 21, 2005

Our third and final focus group meeting came at the end of full immersion, approximately one month after the previous meeting. The email partnerships had basically evaporated with the onslaught of the responsibilities of full immersion and the busy reporting period leading up to spring break. Four edited conversations were brought to our meeting. However, I had expected this and given them freedom as participants to prioritize their practicum responsibilities, understanding the pressure they were under. We also lost Janine as a participant, due to the difficulties of full immersion.

This meeting took on a different quality than the previous meetings. There were a few new stories to share, but the participants seemed more interested in talking about the themes and concepts already introduced in light of their continued growth as professionals. Although I had a made a list of themes I had drawn from our previous meeting, I did not begin with an itemization of them. Instead, we began talking about the new understandings of veiling and as the themes I had identified were introduced, I wove them into the conversation.

The first topic of conversation revolved around the importance of relationship and the awareness of the “other” when making decisions about veiling or unveiling. There was a strong consensus that they had moved from a “hidden agenda” perspective of deliberately finding ways to “unveil” in order to affirm their freedom, to a child-oriented or colleague-centred perspective. They were waiting for the propitious moment to act explicitly from their spiritual perspective. That propitious moment was defined as doing what was educationally and emotionally best for the child, within the context of what the child’s parent would want and do. The teacher role was very strong in this definition and there was some clarity with regard to the pre-eminence of this role. Because of the
compassionate and ethical focus on what was best for the child, the conflict between the two roles was resolved.

When Lori shared about the freedom she had experienced in expressing her faith with her colleagues as a result of her unveiling, we considered the possibility that it was the quality of her unveiling that led to this intimacy. The importance of humility, open language rather than closed statements of certainty, and trust were mentioned as qualitative characteristics of unveilings that were invitational rather than intimidating. Lori had also become very aware of the difference in her choices when interacting with a colleague versus interacting with her students.

_I feel very comfortable with my decisions to reveal my Christian identity with my School Associate. I do what is natural and take more risks. Just telling her about the research we were doing and her willingness to see things from my perspective was helpful. It also opened the door to her telling me about her spiritual journey._

There was also a growing realization that concealing her spirituality caused barriers in her professional relationships with colleagues. As she took more risks to share who she was as a spiritual being, her colleagues also took risks and shared more hidden or private aspects of their lives. Mutual trust developed and closer relationships formed. She believed that these different relationships would result in “a different and valued plotline.” Ben also shared how this research had opened a conversation about spirituality with his School Associate. For Lori, the email reflections and the focus meetings had helped her make better professional decisions, decisions she wouldn’t have made without the opportunity to explore these issues. She said that when she feels as if she is “pushing through” rather than feeling natural about her decisions, that a hidden agenda was present because to be so self-conscious was a focus on self rather
than others. Unfortunately, I did not ask her for an example of a time she had “pushed through” and there were no email examples. Lori did go on to say that it was important to explore all choices and their consequences, and that exploration provided growing awareness as well as comfort. She was also aware that there would be “mistakes along the way”, but believed she would learn from those mistakes.

Cassandra also talked about her growing confidence and the more natural “openings” that were occurring as she became comfortable in her role and with her colleagues. She talked about her lack of knowledge with regard to boundaries initially, comparing her common anxious response of “what do I do?” with her SA’s seemingly natural response of assurance or “of course”. She saw herself growing towards a more natural response. She also expressed her deepening appreciation for the telling of stories as ways of encouraging others, describing a conversation with a colleague who had expressed concern about her teenage daughter. It was enough for her “unveiling” to be a story about her own life rather than a statement of belief. She knew that story would be an interpreted text that she trusted would be beneficial because she told it with compassion rather than an agenda.

For Greg, the idea of exploring personal motives was an opportunity to look back on decisions he had made to conceal his spirituality. From the perspective of being a passionate evangelical Christian who boldly shares the gospel, his initial assessment of himself was negative. Choices to conceal were always choices that lacked courage and fell short of who he wanted to be as a Christian. However, when he looked at the situation from the perspective of the other, he now realized that it was good in many situations that he didn’t become explicit because he would have been pursuing his agenda (or his point) rather than what was in the best interests of the other. However, he also shared two incidents with his email partner about revealing something connected
to his Christianity. In the first incident there was some hesitation on his part in the moment and a lack of clarity with regard to whether or not it was right.

*I am not sure if you have the DARE program running at your school, but it is at our school. The DARE program is a program that teaches kids to be drug free and violence free. Well, I had to teach the class how to write an essay about what they enjoyed, learned and found interesting about DARE. So we brainstormed and came up with some issues. One topic that the students were intrigued in was why it is important to stay drug free. The hands just kept going up to add to the brainstorm. Things were added, such as costs too much, might go to jail, you lose your friends, you go brain dead, you get bad marks etc. I stopped and unveiled myself in a way. I usually go on sidetracks and talk about my personal life with my class. This time I mentioned the times when I would cross paths with drug abusing teenagers. I mentioned to the class that I ran into them often because I used to be a youth pastor for a church. I am not sure how the class took it. I know that I didn’t have to say it, and frankly I don’t know if I’m allowed to say that. But I did anyways. I hesitated at first (I don’t know why), but I said it. We continued to talk about the issues, and they were hanging off my every word as if I was some sort of expert.*

In this “unveiling”, Greg can’t justify his choice educationally, but he isn’t concerned about any negative impact on the students. The second incident he shared was one that he describes as unplanned and yet a perfect capture of a teachable moment.

*I want to share to you my most unveiled moment. Fully exposed! Hehe. This occurred on the Monday after our last meeting. Our speech context ended and I wanted to wrap it up. The school finals were just around the corner for our class finalists. I wanted to congratulate those students that didn’t make it as well as*
those that had a struggle performing in front of people. I got up and did my thing. I asked the class out of the blue, if anyone had seen Prince of Egypt. Half of the class put their hands up. I asked the class if someone could explain it to those who haven’t seen it. So we went through the plot and the characters. I gave extra information (from the Bible of course), but I used the words “historical evidence” instead of Bible. Then I proceeded to ask the class why I brought the story up. There were some pretty wild guesses. It was pretty cool. In the end I told them that I brought up that story because out of any character in history, I compared myself to Moses. I said Moses was known to be afraid to speak in and to positions of authority. He stumbled with his words and just wasn’t confident overall to deliver a speech in front of people. But by having hope and faith, he did might things. He stood up to the Pharaoh, he led a million slaves out of Egypt, and he became the leader of the Hebrews. All of this from someone who didn’t think he could speak in front of crowds.

I linked the story to myself because I truly compare myself to Moses. My kids were all inspired. I found it really neat that I could talk openly about biblical events and characters. Who would have thought that Dreamworks Productions would open the way to me sharing about the Bible in a public school. I really unveiled myself to the entire class that time. I wasn’t planning on doing it, but I’m glad I did. I knew not to do it for the sake of talking about the Bible. However, it was the only way I could think of to encourage my students about the importance of being able to speak in public…Handling it with tact and care is the key.

This second incident revealed that Greg was beginning to recognize a qualitative difference in the choices he was making. During the group discussion he talked about how he had been challenged to think about whether his choices were for him or for the
students and that he was much more confident in approaching the decisions through a lens of thinking about his students. He said that there was a “check in his spirit” when he did this.

The conversation then moved to the reality that there was still some frustration with regard to the felt fragmentation of identities. Both Mariah and Greg said they wanted to get beyond this feeling of inner conflict and changing identities, or as Greg put it, “constantly changing hats”. Mariah stated that her personal goal was to become comfortable with the integration of her spiritual and professional identity, recognizing that she couldn’t go back to a state of constant vigilance and fear. Greg talked about an “agitated dance back and forth between identities” and hoped that as he understood the relationship between the two roles better, that the dance would become “slower, more natural and fluid”. He was reminded of his first experiences as a new Christian and the difficulty of integrating his Christianity into his educational, professional and home life under varying degrees of acceptance. He had learned to act from the core of who he was, which included his faith and couldn’t be separated from his faith. He wanted to act in the same way as a teacher. Mariah expressed her understanding of this desire, but also gave him a new way of thinking about identity. She compared it to a husband and wife who have a single relationship that is expressed differently in different contexts. She said that was also true about our identity. We are a unified whole expressed differently in different contexts and we need to be OK with that. Although Greg was still somewhat resistant to this idea, he agreed that different situations required different expressions of who we are.

Another frustration was the lack of clarity with regard to the imposed veil of secular and non-sectarian. Mariah described it as “…always a scary line to cross because it was “always in a different place” and because of her position as student
She then considered what it would be like with her own class—less stress, more freedom, fewer high stakes. “If you do (cross the line), who’s going to know?”

I remember this conversation so clearly because it was a time when my teacher role dominated my researcher role. This comment concerned me because the lack of anyone in power watching made it even more important, in my mind, that there was clarity about what would be appropriate or inappropriate. So I asked Mariah the following question. “Is there a line that does matter, no matter who is watching?” Mariah quickly understood what I was saying, and agreed that the line was still there and should be there, but longed for a less stressful, more comfortable opportunity to determine that line. She further qualified that comment with the belief that it was important to come into “any situation with humility and without an agenda. The point is not whether or not I’m free, but what is best for my students.” Julie agreed that when she was no longer being observed all of the time it would then become more of a personal line—not imposed—one she had worked out on her own. She described working it out on her own as a form of “agency”. What would be different would be the lower level of threat. They would need to be aware of the impact on students and perceptions of parents, but their career wouldn’t be “on the line” the way it seems to be now. I then asked if their line would change or would they “draw a line in cement”. After joking about “no mention of the word, God, on Fridays”, Mariah and Julie both agreed that they would still be learning and that their choices would change as they grew. Mariah then shared that her story about the boy and the journal had a new ending.

As a way of saying good-bye to me, my SA had each student write on “The Best thing about having Miss ______ here was…” I responded with a personal note in each student’s book. When I got to the book that I had written the comment in
that created such an issue earlier in the year, I allowed myself to write, “My hopes and prayers go with you for this year and for the future.” It was a very small thing, but it brought some healing, I think. It does not take many words to make meaning between us in that situation. He knows what I believe and who I will be praying to. I wanted to write that in every students’ book, but I didn’t. I wrote, “Best wishes” or “hopes”, which sounds so weak to me. What can my wishes do for them? So best wishes and hopes is the code language this veiled teacher uses for prayers offered on behalf of students whom I love to the God who loves them. That will have to be enough.

Even though Mariah remains frustrated by the code language she feels she must use, she realizes that the code does not stop her from praying for her students and that these prayers are still an act of love on their behalf. She is also peaceful about the healing decision to change the language for the one child shared his spirituality with her earlier in the year.

As their mentor, I hoped they were coming to terms with a lack of certainty or black and white answers, understanding the value of gathering and interpretation. I also hoped they were recognizing that we are always called to account in relation to others or that an undivided life was not possible without reference to others. I wanted them to understand that even though most teachers are left on their own to work out their “personal line”, “personal lines” were not all equal and that ethical knowledge was closely tied to spiritual understanding. As a researcher, I recognized my own need to speak words that would convince – words I could not “stuff.”

The conversation then turned to a discussion about the movie, “The Incredibles”. I had seen the movie with my son recently and was struck by the connections to the topic of veiling. The movie begins by describing a time on earth when superheroes were
free to go about their business as superheroes. They were respected and valued members of the community. However, due to their imposition on others and unwelcome superhero acts and the many resulting lawsuits, they were forced to take on new identities and keep their superhero powers hidden—the Disney or Pixar version of “the naked public square”. It wasn’t until the superheroes lost the focus on their own powers and recognized their need for others that they were able to use their super powers in the best interests of others. There was much laughter in response to this connection—mainly at me and my inability to just watch and enjoy a movie. However, there was also strong resonance.

Ben, whose wife is a nurse, then related the nursing profession’s boundary for responding to patients in a spiritual way. Nurses have permission to respond spiritually to patients when they perceive a therapeutic reason to do so. He shared a story about his wife praying with a patient after asking the patient’s permission and being welcomed to do so. This story raised interesting parallels to education. The metaphor of a therapeutic reason was helpful because it again focused on what was in the best interests of the child. However as teachers, the participants agreed that the emphasis had to be on the best educational interests of the child and the awareness of the parent’s wishes for their child. Possible scenarios were then raised and discussed.

*What if a child asks me if I’m a Christian?* *What if a child tells me that they want to find out how to become a Christian?* *What if a child tells me they are struggling with their sexual orientation?* These questions were all raised by participants and discussed in detail. In the middle of the discussion, Sherri asked if our decisions were based on unwritten or written rules. The written rule of secular and non—sectarian public schools was then brought into the conversation and used to interpret how best to respond to the above scenarios. The need for ongoing interpretation based on context, relationship and
understanding of the teacher’s role was highlighted through their consensus that “You could tell a child you were a Christian if they asked you directly, you could answer questions about Christianity but you couldn’t “lead a person to Christ” in a public school setting, and you should affirm a child’s questions about their sexual orientation and beliefs and refer them to parental or expert counsel.”

A new theme was introduced through Sherri’s story—the “cost” of veiling. She began by stating that she was definitely learning from the shared experiences of her email partners and her peers in these meetings. She appreciated the “rehearsal” nature of imagining herself in the same circumstances and believed that her actions were different because of the opportunity to rehearse. She then shared an experience about an interaction with one of her students. She was alone with her students in the classroom and was handing back math quizzes. One child became tearful when he saw his grade. Sherri’s internal dialogue in response to his distress was, “I’m a bully teacher. Lord, I don’t know if I can do this job. Why am I a teacher? I need to remember what this is about, remember why.” She describes her conviction, after this internal dialogue, of knowing she couldn’t leave him to suffer and made a decision to pull him aside and talk. She asked him what was wrong and he said, “Miss ________, I don’t know who I am.” So she got out a paper and began writing positive things about him, wanting to erase the lies he was telling himself and ease his burden. After she asked him to read what she wrote, he responded negatively with more self-criticism. She goes on to describe the scene.

I made him look at me and he had tears running down his face. I said, “You’re God’s child and you are loved and he’s so proud of you.” I don’t know if I would have gotten in trouble for saying that if my SA was in the room or not, but I would lose my practicum for it. It was just made really clear to me that when it comes
down to a situation like this, if you can’t communicate God’s love for a child, then I don’t want to teach.

There was an initial silence in response to Sherri’s story, all of us considering the cost, considering the situation. We were all aware of Sherri’s strong impulse to reach out to this child, her conviction that this was the right thing to do, of our own echoes of empathy for the child and for her. I asked Sherri if she had noticed any impact of her words. She said she didn’t know for sure, but that it didn’t matter because they were God’s words and truth and they “won’t come back void”. Ben then asked if she would have done the same thing if her SA was in the room or a parent. She admitted she probably wouldn’t have and was glad the question was asked. She said, “I need to ask myself that, so that I’m always ready to say yes no matter what.” My mentor/teacher role was again called forth in concern for a conviction that the answer should always be yes. I shared that concern with the group, wanting to caution, wanting them to be cautious. Here I was imposing a veil, again—a veil I hoped would protect and provide opportunity for reflection and inner dialogue before action. Sherri’s earlier search for clarity and certainty was again expressed in this story. She was becoming more clear about who she was as a teacher, what was most important to her and what she wouldn’t compromise—even if it meant losing her identity as a teacher.

As the meeting progressed, more personal connections were shared through metaphors. Thinking about the veiling metaphor had opened them to new connections that were personally meaningful. Sherri made a connection in a creative writing professional development workshop she had attended with Ben. The presenter stressed the importance of “showing rather than telling” in children’s writing, illustrating how much more powerful it was to provide a visual word picture. After the workshop, Sherri shared her thoughts about veiling with Ben and then with us in the focus group meeting. She
now appreciated even more the imposition of veiling because it forced her to show rather than tell, and in her understanding, this meant she was more, “powerful and creative in her expression of her spirituality.”

Ben also shared a metaphor. He said he sometimes “felt like an iceberg in that what was revealed to his students and colleagues was 5% of who he was.” This statement emphasized how important his faith was to him and how submerged he feels when that part of him can’t be shown. He talked about hearing his students share their personal profiles. He said that many of them shared their belief in God and yet his inability to do so made him feel as if he were dying inside. He wanted to say, “I believe in God, too”. So we took that example and explored ways of responding in that situation that would go beyond simply ignoring the statement and beyond creating a division in class of those who believe and those who don’t. Again, the lack of language was revealed, the inability to translate. Although several good and educationally sound suggestions were made, Ben still filtered the suggestions of language through the lens of, “Would you say that with a principal or parent there?” In his mind there was still a lack of assurance that he could be on solid ground in any discussion about religion.

Mariah then raised another issue through a story of her TOCing experience. Her host School Associate left a book for her to read to the students about Easter. She read the entire book which included a mix of secular and Christian ways of celebrating Easter. Although she was somewhat surprised at the choice of book, she judged that her SA had chosen it because it represented both secular and religious views and was a common holiday celebrated in Canada.

As I was reading it, I felt like I was completely unveiled, even though I hadn’t said that this was what I personally believed. I almost felt like I should drop my voice. It was very freeing, though, to say those words in a classroom – Jesus Christ has
risen again. I said them again, just for the sheer pleasure of hearing them spoken out loud.

However, what surprised her most was the children’s response to the book. When asked to share what they had remembered about the book, none of them volunteered any of the information read about Christian Easter celebrations, even though this information was five pages long.73

After the story, I told the students that there were some different beliefs about Easter in the story. “What were some of the things that people in the story believed about Easter?” And all they mentioned was the Easter bunny. I had to ask again, turn to the pages about Jesus, and read them again. I wonder why? Was the Easter bunny all they actually got out of the book, or do they understand, even at grade one, that it is safer not to speak about Jesus? I wasn’t sure.

The participants found Mariah’s experience troubling and discussed the unintended message sent about religion in the public school due to general discomfort about its inclusion in classroom curriculum. This story seemed to affirm the imposed veil of secular and non-sectarian and its consequences, however, the SAs choice of book also raised questions about the shifting line of secular and non-sectarian.

This was our last focus meeting as participants. We met once again two months after the conclusion of their final practicum, but this meeting came after a very busy time in their lives, finishing course work and attending job interviews. The two months were also spent largely outside of the role of teacher, so they had limited veiling experiences to share and were limited by their busyness in their ability to reflect further on this.

73 This surprise may be related to her lack of experience with six year old children and their developmental abilities/interests.
metaphor. However, we did have a final conversation about the changes that had occurred in relation to the research. There was an understanding that the research itself had a story, a beginning, middle and end for us as a group and also for each person. For some the change was dramatic, for some it was subtle. Although we were unique characters with varying perspectives our plotlines intersected through our shared circumstances and focus in a way that brought about new identity trajectories, new possible ways of being. The research through its open-ended exploration of a metaphor was an invitation to transformation or transcendence. We began the journey with an anticipation of challenge, adventure and shared responsiveness. Now, at the end of our shared journey and the beginning of our separate journeys, it seemed important to affirm the value of what we had done together and then begin to think about how our work together could become part of a larger shared understanding. Each person wrote about the impact of the research and shared verbally what was comfortable for them. Below are representative quotations.

Cassandra: The focus groups really helped me to gain confidence in my own spirituality. It was good to know that there was a support group there and people I could unveil to. The focus groups were very meaningful and people were real, which allowed me to open up and be real with my faith. The research questions posed challenged me to think through my faith and my reactions to spirituality.

Janine: To be truly open and free with someone has been difficult for me, and I didn’t even realize until this year that I was veiling myself. Learning to be readable has become a blessing for me as it has allowed me to feel a sense of peace and security in who I am, who I am in community with and how I am worth it in the eyes of our Creator.
Greg:  *This research has impacted me in a great way. This research has allowed me to become more aware of spirituality in the classroom. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting with the group and sharing our experiences. It energized me and allowed me to know that my peers are going through the same veiling struggles as me.*

Ben:  *I am now more conscious of the choices I’m making.*

Mariah:  *I loved having time to connect with my classmates and discuss issues we were dealing with. I highly respect all the people who were involved in this study and valued their thoughts and opinions. I have gained new appreciation for the value and power of stories even in academic research. I feel that it is important for beginning teachers to really wrestle with how their faith fits into the classroom, and I think the results of this study will help them do that. I felt it was personally important for me to learn how to integrate my faith in the classroom in a way that was respectful of others, true to my own beliefs, and consistent with my obligations as a teacher, and this study helped me to do this. At the beginning of the year, I had a very negative experience with veiling being forced on me. Being part of this study connected me with people who could validate my feelings and provide support and healing for me.*

Sherri:  *This research project has impacted me in that it has given a voice or a vocabulary to matters I have wrestled with throughout my life as a Christian. It has been helpful to hear other stories from Christians and to know that there is an invisible boundary that hovers prevalently over my identity. I sometimes cross this boundary, open myself up to be seen, and other times I prefer to remain behind the veil. Sometimes neither are wrong.*
Christie: Hearing other’s stories made me first of all more aware of the struggle. The awareness helped me to recognize this source of stress and more of the factors that might influence my choices in veiling or unveiling in different contexts. It also helped to identify underlying motivation for daring to unveil. Did I do it to relieve my own sense of guilt, or out of love for the other?

Julie: This research has challenged me to be myself, to know myself.

Lori: I know that my faith is more than words. I feel I’m in a much better position to make choices about which voice I use now that I’m looking at everything.
CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATIONS OF THE VEIL: THE EXPERIENCE OF REVEALING AND CONCEALING SPIRITUALITY IN A PUBLIC SETTING

Since metaphor was the method we used to begin to understand our experiences of concealing or revealing spirituality, it seems important to examine more carefully how throwing two symbols together was interpreted and lived by the participants. The interpretations arise from repeated readings of their stories, our conversations together and the responses of some participants to a draft of this text. The four interpretations described below are not presented as either/or categories, in the sense that if the veil was being interpreted in one way, it couldn’t be interpreted in another way at the same time, in overlapping, mixed or parallel ways. Likewise, although there is a sense of progression in the interpretations, which mirrors the “story” of the research, there is also a sense of continuous movement between the interpretations. The four interpretations are not intended to be comprehensive. The same stories could be read and interpreted in different ways, but this reading is one that illuminates the overlap between identity, spirituality and morality. It is an interpretation that I think is both honest and helpful in discovering a language that encourages a move forward in understanding the process of becoming spiritual persons who teach. The interpretations below are generalizations represented by all of the participant voices. At times actual language from their stories is used, but not attributed to any one participant except in the representative quote at the beginning of each section. The interpretations, like our research journey, remain shared and not attributable to any single participant. These interpretations also arise from my own lived experiences with veiling as narrated in Chapter 1. When I say “they”, I am always saying “we”.

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The Veil as Trauma or Violent Imposition: I lose myself

\[ I \text{ must be alive as I teach or I can't be a teacher. (Mariah)} \]

For most of the participants in this study, the social and legislated norm of the spiritual role not being compatible with the teacher role, in the sense that spirituality could not be spoken aloud, was experienced as violent trauma accompanied by fear, anxiety, emotional turmoil, uncertainty, and for at least two participants, a sense of dying. To constitute themselves in the public school setting was an experience of losing their spiritual being or identity, and for all participants this aspect of their lives was one that was most valued. One participant described the imposition as a submersion similar to an iceberg. Their spiritual identity was so significant that to hide it was to only allow five percent of their being to show. For all, their affliction resulted in a loss of language and perceived loss of voice for “affliction is by its nature inarticulate” (Weil, 1986, p. 64). The language that naturally arose in response to their students and colleagues needed to be “edited,” “stifled,” “stuffed,” “blocked,” “submerged.” Many conversations went on in their heads that could not be expressed. The loss of language became a loss of agency; it rendered them helpless to do what they thought was most necessary – to comfort using Christian language, to point their students towards what is Good, True and Beautiful, to tell their students that there was more to life than what meets the eye, to pray aloud in response to crises, to affirm a student as a child of God. They could no longer be themselves as they would naturally be outside of the imposed role of public school teacher.

The source of their powerlessness went beyond their loss of language. They were powerless in the face of the regime of truth represented by the legal and social
norm. They had no choice about whether or not to accept the regime being presented to them, nor did they agree with it, nor did they have experience matching this regime to their lives. The sense that it was a regime they could not live with was very strong. As one participant said, “If being a teacher means losing my spiritual identity I cannot be a teacher.” They were powerless in the presence of the constant observation and evaluation of their School Associates, they were powerless in the face of their own inability to manage the pressures of time and overwhelming busyness of a beginning teacher’s life. Their concern about the invisible but always present secular and non-sectarian line and the consequences of stepping over that line were experienced as a threat to their future careers as teachers. The lack of clarity with regard to the social/legal norm was a growing source of great anxiety. One participant’s question about whether or not they were supposed to follow written or unwritten rules exemplifies this anxiety.

The violent imposition of this regime of truth was also experienced as fragmentation or divided loyalties resulting in the impossibility of wholeness. This fragmentation was described as an agitated dance that needed to be slowed down and become more natural. Although there was hope and longing for unity, most participants were often conflicted and concerned especially about their loyalty to their Christian way of being which was formed in response to a clearly expressed belief in God. To lose the ability to express this belief was experienced as an act of disloyalty to God and the found opportunities to say even the word God publicly were moments of joy mixed with apprehension.

As the participants experienced this trauma they were also often faced with their inability to live up to their understanding of what it meant to be Christian. Their stories revealed experiences of guilt with regard to not being courageous about speaking aloud
their faith and wondering why they were overwhelmed with fear and turmoil. In some of
their interpretations, to be Christian was to be a fearless, unashamed, courageous, and
certain self. Confidence in your faith was best expressed by verbalizing your loyalty to
your understanding of what it meant to be Christian, even under difficult circumstances.
Although some participants referred to hesitation with regard to acting like a Christian,
for example praying before eating in the staff room, most incidences of veiling were in
relation to being verbally silent. Some of the participants were experiencing, for the first
time, their spiritual identity as a hindrance or a problem or a barrier rather than a source
of life and strength. To choose between roles was to be presented with Sophie’s
Choice. How can both roles be good and valued, and at the same time, be in conflict
with one another? To perform one role seemed to always be at the expense of
performing the other. Their freedom, understood as the ability to choose, was limited
and impossibly framed: a “price to be paid.” For some of the participants the price was
too high and the choice too impossibly framed. Their eventual response to the imposed
regime of truth was to remove themselves silently from the role or from the public. Their
silence became an inarticulate resistance to the posed question: “Are you a teacher or
are you a Christian?” Their certainty became rooted in the reality that their affliction
would not or could not be heard in a public setting.74

The trauma experienced by an imposed regime of truth is one that can’t be
 ignored or trivialized. It is a trauma that needs to be received with empathy because it is
a trauma we all experience at many points in our lives as we respond to the conditions
that are before, around and beyond us. It is the cry of Gethsemane, “My God, My God
why have you forsaken me?” It is the quiet or mute cry described by Simone Weil, “Why
am I being hurt?” (1986, p. 52). Although each regime of truth or social norm or ideology

74 Currently, it is my understanding that only two of the participants are teaching in a public
school. Some are in different careers, some are in different life phases and several are in
Christian schools.
is temporal and open to critique, there is a realization that any new norm will also be
temporal and out of alignment with the temporality of our lives (Butler, 2005). These
regimes of truth force a mask on us because they are indifferent to our particularity and
our only respite is to enclose ourselves in the prison of language that seems best. Our
unique mode of being and our ability to be in communion with others and the world is
subsumed by the demand to match an expected role—whatever the role. To become
masked is to remain hidden from ourselves and from others, a tragic loss of life. To
wear a mask is to believe that the role, or the regime of truth, is life and to lose the role is
to lose one’s life. To wear a mask is to wear many masks because one is rarely called
to perform only one role. It is an understanding of identity that is self constructed and
self-affirming, eventually becoming foreclosed because it is limited to our consciousness
and our need for psychic rest— to be certain, to stand firmly. Sadly, though, all good
imposed becomes a nightmare and all autonomy destroys ontology (Evdokimov quoting
Berdyaev, 2001). To remain masked was to be “…condemned to hesitate between
obedience and rebellion” (Yannaras, 1993, p. 23). Muteness was accompanied by
paralysis.

To receive these stories of trauma with empathy is to break into the lonely heroic
project of self-construction or self-mastery and to offer the sacrament of the sister or
brother. The research created a space to receive these stories and to begin to
recognize, together, that we are constituted by other people and other circumstances
beyond our control. It was also a place to begin to recognize that to obliterate the
struggle through a retreat to certainty would be to become dehumanized or inhuman or
self-enclosed or an individual rather than a person. At this point the abyss between the
separated self and the self that is open becomes visible. Personhood, morality, and
being all begin where common ground can no longer be found (Zizioulas, 2006; Butler,
for it is this lack of certainty that eventually turns us toward the other as we question who the other is, the other who is forcing me to give an account of myself.

The Veil as Address: I give an account of myself

*I am becoming aware that my choices are controlled by others. (Greg)*

The violent imposition of the veil was a shaking that began to break down the walls of isolated individualism. The imposition of the veil became an address by the other. In order to respond to the address, there was a need to understand the imposition in terms of responsibility towards the other and a need to know more about the other. Paradoxically, in responding to the other there was also discovery of the self that would have been impossible without the other. Asking “Who are you?” often answered “Who am I?” The answers were often surprising and framed by this stem, “I found myself...fearful, uncertain, confused, frustrated, proud, confident, an ineffective teacher....” In this interpretation, multiple others were recognized: the school act, the written and unwritten norms of the school environment, the competing roles, the circumstances, the school associate, the faculty associate, the parents and the students. In each case there was a recognition that each other was addressing them and asking them to justify their choices to veil or unveil. There was also an awareness that to veil or unveil without considering the address of the other, particularly when the other was a person, was to violently impose their own regime of truth, to validate their own needs to feel safe, to feel secure, to feel recognized, to feel confident in their knowing what was right or wrong. A piety that focused on absolute principles, axioms or ideologies, or a piety that focused on keeping up appearances was found to be divorced from truth and faith. It was truth in service to virtue, rather than virtue in service to truth.
Although the struggle was still present in that there was spoken resistance to being controlled or having to justify actions, as well as a longing not to have to make seemingly impossible choices, the awareness of the struggle and underlying motivations for veiling brought the need for moral deliberation to the forefront, or piqued a renewed horror of evil (Weil, 1986; Campbell, 2003). For these participants morality or goodness was worth struggling for and consistent with their Christian beliefs. As one participant expressed it, “It is important to really wrestle, and the results of this study will help people do that. It is important for teachers to be respectful of others and true to their own beliefs in a way that is consistent with their obligations as a teacher.” To be true to their own beliefs became a matter of ethical praxis, living words.

Although identity in this interpretation is still viewed as the negotiation between potentially conflicting roles or ideals, the awareness of the other was a way of focusing the integration of those roles and provided a good reason for doing so. The higher good of caring for the other or being sensitive to the other provided a framework of discourse that made it possible to accept the notion of being veiled and to consider when it might be appropriate to be unveiled. It was also a recognition of power and its abuses, to seek harmony in realizing that “…it is better not to command wherever one has power to do so” (Weil, 1951, p. 91). To recognize the other was to be confronted by the other’s uniqueness and desire for life. To consider the other’s uniqueness was ontologically affirming because it opened the door for the other to consider their uniqueness: it opened the door of justice which cannot be separated from love (Weil, 1951). The uniqueness of their relations or the indispensability of their relations affirmed their particularity in the face of a totalizing regime of truth. Their door to freedom became a movement towards the other. “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside,
redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). Agency was no longer equated with, “I speak.” It became the awareness that, “I speak to.”

Initially, this interpretation led to a search for common ground rather than a moving beyond common ground — particularly in relation to the social norms or roles of teacher and Christian. However, the ontological being of the other(s) represented an opportunity for the interpretation of those roles, to translate totalizing ideals into life, and to recognize that ideals are never life in and of themselves. They are often not even a source of good, or heavenly good as Simone Weil describes below.

_These notions do not dwell in heaven; they hang in the middle air, and for this very reason they cannot root themselves in earth._

_It is the light falling continually from heaven which alone gives a tree the energy to send powerful roots deep into the earth. The tree is really rooted in the sky._

_It is only what comes from heaven that can make a real impress on the earth._

(1986, p. 66)

Or as Ferreira in Shusako Endo’s (1969) novel, _Silence_, says to Padre Rodrigues,

_No. That is not God. It is like a butterfly caught in a spider’s web. At first it is certainly a butterfly, but the next day only the externals, the wings and the trunk, are those of a butterfly; it has lost its true reality and has become a skeleton._

(p. 240)

Although the supernatural good remained unclear, their turning towards the other was the beginning of understanding or a renewed understanding that the “game of living” is always played “exclusively within the bounds of personal life,” that ideals subsume the particular and need contextual and interpersonal interpretation in order to have life or give life (Yannaras, 1984). To have agency became the ability to craft oneself in relation to the uncontrollable aspects of their lives, to consider the consequences of actions, rather than to be morally narcissistic, and to imagine that they are not at all constituted by others or by preconditions of being, but rather to take pleasure in “transcending their consideration of others” (Butler, 2005). The participants who experienced the joy of
“speaking the name of God” in public were able to intuitively understand that their joy was tempered by apprehension because at some level it was a lack of concern for the other. Although the words seemed like an affirmation of their love for God, the second great commandment, to love your neighbour as yourself, remained, perhaps, unfulfilled (Matt. 22: 37-39).

To justify one’s veiling choices in relation to others goes beyond situational ethics when articulations are supported by knowing, understanding and critiquing the “regimes of truth” that are imposing themselves, and when there is a willingness to be accountable to consequences. For one participant the choice to unveil was made with the full awareness that it may cost their future. Confronting the law, we confront ourselves: The law is our tutor and leads us to Christ who fulfilled the law in his self-emptying love (Gal. 3: 24). We meet Christ in recognizing our inability to fully know the other and even to fully know all the conditions that constitute ourselves. In our suffering we meet the One who suffered under the law and is suffering with and for us. This partiality, or knowledge that we are all veiled, becomes a bond between ourselves and others and a ground for moral reflection with the recognition that our reflection and decisions will always be tentative and hesitant and even requiring forgiveness. “To be human seems to mean being in a predicament that one cannot solve” (Butler, 2005, p. 103). The choice of the word one in the previous quotation is again a reminder of our relationality, our inability to be lonely heroes or superheroes figuring out things through the poverty of our limited consciousness. In recognizing our inability to be lonely heroes, we begin to understand Adorno’s definition of true injustice, “…the precise point where you put yourself in the right and everyone else in the wrong” (as quoted in Butler, 2005, p. 104). It is a recognition of a poverty of certainty that is linked to a poverty of spirit, that was and is never really available, and that leads to a welcoming of shared knowing.
in space and time. As one participant stated, it is a necessary slowing of the agitated dance between ourselves and others and our fragmented roles. The search for integrity had moved from the possibility of self-conscious transparency to the possibility, with help, time, space, and more living, of making loving choices in a multitude of moments.

The Veil as Sanctuary: I gather with Others

*I don’t think of veiling as hiding, I think of it as waiting.* (Lori)

To choose the veil was an unexpected discovery in the midst of this research. The complexity of each moment and an awareness of inadequacy lead to a reaching out for resources and the veil began to be viewed as an important resource in answering, “What do I do?” rather than a violent imposition deleting the question, “Who am I?” or a justified reason to wonder, “Who are you?” To remain hidden for a time was a welcomed gift used to sift through the multiplicity of their roles and uncontrollable conditions, and, most importantly, to consider the other in making those decisions. This hidden sanctuary was an escape from the pressure of the totalizing idealism of their roles; a recognition that perfection was a skeleton when divorced from living. It allowed them to examine a situation personally and communally: to prepare. They sought the counsel of others, they observed, they considered choices and consequences, they sought to further understand the context and discourses informing the context. The veil was a place of gathering or deliberating.

*I don’t feel a rush of anxiety or adrenaline. There’s no need to be full throttle in every moment."

*Reactions and choices can be different and determine future actions. I am more comfortable with ambiguity and not everything being black and white.”*

To know that there is a “disorientation at the heart of deliberation” is the beginning of becoming human, to realise “the fact that the ‘I’ who seeks to chart its course has not
made the map it reads, does not have all the language it needs to read the map, and
sometimes cannot find the map itself” (Butler on Adorno, 2005, p110).

The “I” emerges as a deliberating subject only once the world has appeared as a
countervailing picture, an externality to be known and negotiated at an
epistemological distance. (Butler, p. 111)

Lev Gillett (1976), a much beloved Eastern Orthodox monk, asks us to “beware lest the
ascent of man towards God obscures for us the descent of God towards man” (p. 19).
He also prays that God’s Word would never be a source of separation from the world,
seeing separation as the only sin (1977). Simone Weil affirms that God comes to us first
and fixes our attention on Him through friendship (Weil, 1951). God makes the
countervailing picture possible, the invisible visible. To see the other is to have faith.
“Where two or three are gathered, there I am in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20) To see
the veil as a sanctuary was the opportunity to be illuminated through an encounter with
God and to learn how to manifest the presence of God rather than speak about God.

This opportunity to deliberate opened them to the paradoxical experience of
having even more direct access to their spiritual role when it was veiled by their teacher
role. To choose the veil did not result in a mask. Their spirituality was still invisibly
visible as a source of strength and wisdom. As one participant said, “Examining my
spiritual self and my teaching self is a legitimate part of birthing my professional identity.”
Another said, that remaining partially limited or hidden from the public actually allowed
him to act from “the core of who he was.” The dance between competing roles could be
transcended. In essence, a personal professional identity was being formed or “birthed”
through access to multiple roles, rather than a totalizing idealized imposition that took
them back to trauma, anxiety, and fear. To be veiled was to “introduce myself as a
whole person” with care and compassion.
Several participants who were experiencing the veil as sanctuary talked about their growing knowledge with confidence. “It wouldn’t be appropriate to share that part of myself with an eight year old in distress.” One person found it necessary to turn from their “spiritual identity” to an identity that would give her the necessary resources to respond to the situation. Principles of judgment began to arise as questions that could be addressed in this time of sanctuary. “What would be educationally and emotionally best for the child within the context of what the child’s parent would want me to do? One participant introduced a conversation about the quality of “unveiling” that built relationship with colleagues and it was agreed that unveilings that used open language and compassionate sharing of stories, rather than closed statements of certainty formed positive and reciprocal relationships. Observations of more experienced teachers and mentors also helped to increase their knowledge resources. Other teachers’ experiences and the stories of the participants offered them a chance to rehearse what they would do in similar circumstances, and these rehearsals always brought them new language. Their choice to be silent became an occasion for a new way of articulating. These rehearsals and opportunities to examine also birthed creativity. “Love for our neighbour, being made of creative attention, is analogous to genius” (Weil, 1951). New solutions were found and their own uniqueness was affirmed in the discovery of language and solutions. They talked about becoming better teachers and were excited about their progress. They were no longer “complete strangers in a strange land.”

Several participants found the sanctuary of the veil to also be a place of holiness. They began to use the time and space provided by the veil to pray for themselves, for their students, for each situation. In other words, prayer was putting things back in God’s hands as opposed to being controlled by their words. Prayer enabled them to “walk in wisdom towards” the other. There was also peace in knowing that moments
could go by without their intervention because it was better to not intervene with spiritual words when there was a possibility that the intervention could cause harm, and also because they were letting go of the job of being God.

*Faith is more than words. I am not the one to decide when someone should examine their faith.*

*My students have fragile souls and I don’t want to trample on them.*

Prayer became the “one thing necessary” as the ultimate resource and expectation of hope. “*I NEED to spend time in prayer.*” This was a different reaction than a participant’s earlier words, “*Should I just pray and turn my back on them?*” Their awareness of poverty was more than an awareness of their inability to completely understand themselves in relation to all of the others that were surrounding them. It was more than an awareness of their lack of language, or lack of knowledge, or lack of professional skill and experience. Their awareness of poverty was also a spiritual awareness. They recognized a lack of self-emptying love in themselves and the motivations underlying their desire to unveil that made them deeply uncomfortable. The veil became a kind of “monastic cell” that they could return to in order to seek spiritual growth, humility, purity of heart, and attentiveness to the other. There was a direct connection between their own spiritual maturity and their ability or inability to respond to the complexity of their role in ways that were loving and creative. This interpretation of the veil began to answer the longing to live a life undivided as it moved them from a balancing or negotiation of roles into a pure love for Love.
The Veil as an Ascetic of Love: I Attend to the Other

Presence is a gift and reality. I can best communicate wonder and awe with the veil.

(Sherri)

Early in our conversations, St. Francis of Assisi’s famous words, “Preach the gospel at all times, use words when necessary”, were evoked. These words became a presence that invited our attention even though it seemed very difficult to accept that our actions could preach, or that the gospel did not need our words very often, that the only content we could communicate and the only content necessary was love. St. Francis, despite a long life of preaching, understood how quickly spiritual words could lose their life. Through his extreme asceticism, he recognized that to silence words was to silence ourselves, to move ourselves away from the centre of our world. This silencing of ourselves makes it possible to open ourselves to the other, to pay attention, to affirm the other’s freedom to be other, to love.

Divine master, grant that I might not seek to be consoled as to console to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love, for it is in giving that we receive and in dying that we have eternal life. (Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi)

Asceticism, in the Christian tradition as well as in most religious traditions, is a way to develop an ability to fully attend or to welcome someone or something into being through an awareness of the Divine.

Creative attention means really giving our attention to what does not exist. Humanity does not exist in the anonymous flesh lying inert by the roadside. The Samaritan who stops and looks gives his attention all the same to this absent humanity, and the actions which follow prove that it is a question of real attention….In this moment of attention is present as much as love…Love sees what is invisible…God alone has this power, the power really to think into being that which does not exist. Only God, present in us, can really think the human quality into the victims of affliction, can really look at them with a look differing from that we give to things, can listen to their voice as we listen to spoken words.
They become aware that they have a voice, otherwise they would not have occasion to notice it, (Weil, 1951, p. 93)

Asceticism, or self-limitation or self-transcendence is a stilling of self as individual. The method of stilling is not the end, nor is the method representative of an evil, but the limitation of self makes it possible to pay closer attention to the dominance and enclosure of self, and to seek the grace necessary to see more clearly or to find a better or more compassionate way of being, to become a person.

...asceticism is not an individual exercise of the will, nor a masochistic attitude towards human needs and desires, but an opportunity for communion and an act of communion. (Yannaras, 1984, p. 218)

Silence, or an active stilling of words, is an asceticism that is loving, because when I still my voice, even in a small way, I become aware how my voice dominates, of how my own cacophony makes it impossible for me really to listen, understand, console or love. When my voice is not stilled, the other easily becomes an object rather than a person to affirm, venerate, respect. To believe someone exists is to love them, to accept your distance or otherness from them, to detach any cords of controlling attachment, to refuse to make them a future figment of your imagination, to make them the source of our thoughts rather than the object. Only those we love are fully recognized, although never fully known (Weil, 1986, p. 271). To accept a veil of silence in regard to expressing spiritual identity in words can only enhance the possibility of spiritual growth and communion. The acceptance is an obedience that frees us from making choices and allows us to focus on the one who is most important. Because it is a silence accepted in recognition of a poverty of love, it becomes a silence in which truth/love can germinate and grow (Weil, 1986). This fertile ground of limitation also produces creativity. All of the creative arts are born in limitation, through learning a discipline.

This asceticism as obedience to the limitations that we are presented with becomes a radical moral, social, and political stance because it facilitates existential
change, it answers life with life (Yannaras, 1984). Both existential achievement and failure are communal events. One person’s righteousness is always shared in a way that can never be quantitatively measured. There is something mysterious about the impact of asceticism or self-transcendence.

…it suffuses economics, politics, professional life, the family, and the structures of public life in a mystical way – it acts with a dynamic indeterminancy beyond the reach of objective predeterminism. And it transfigures them – it changes their existential presuppositions, and does not simply “improve” them. (Yannaras, 1984, p. 217—218)

An inward transformation is always visible because it is embodied. We cannot help but project the conditions of our soul through our mode of being, on other people and the world. To become a person who loves in a way that does all it can to preserve the existence of the other as other, makes us continually seek a way of being that is more just. This existential stance goes much further than co-existence or tolerance. Through willingness and our struggle to limit ourselves, we become aware of how often our own actions are unjust. We discover that the line between good and evil really does run through our own hearts. Paying attention to our own struggles with freedom, opens us to the struggles of others. Our own need for forgiveness, makes us forgiving (Butler, 2005). Our own trauma, when accepted, helps us find creative responses to the trauma of others. Our freedom lies in accepting all of the conditions necessary to become a soul that loves and not to fight against the conditions around us that teach us that our being is dependent on others as much as it is dependent on the reality of the ground we stand on. Those conditions usually do not need to be sought; they are the inescapable relations of our lives.

Our freedom to love also lies in stillness more than in doing. The stillness is a precondition for doing. To do without that precondition is to do what is self-serving. “Love stillness more than filling the hungry in the world, or bringing many nations to the
worship of God” (St. Isaac the Syrian, as quoted in Yannaras, 1984, p. 271). Rather than focusing on how we perform a role, through our ascetic of stillness we can consider what spirit conditions that role. To find freedom and stillness within is to free ourselves from being totally subject to cultural externals—imposed portraits or behavioural masks or totalizing ideologies such as utilitarianism and efficiency, individual logic and individual ethics. To become a soul that is attentive to the truth of the other is to listen with a purity of heart, to unite ourselves to love, to be veiled with “the hand of the crucified Christ” (Evdokimov, 2001). This veiling heals our human hands and makes it possible for them to bring healing. This purity or unity provides an ontological brilliance that is real, an embodiment of love and holiness, a unique and creative presence born of humility and gratitude.

As I write about this interpretation of the veil, I am experiencing some hesitation because I believe that our research together only allowed us glimpses of what it was like to move beyond trauma, beyond a moral awareness of the other or obligation to the other, beyond the need for sanctuary of gathering and holiness, to an unself-conscious, loving and free response to the other that is characterized by unique or personal creativity and presence. Therefore, it is difficult to find words to express that which is only glimpsed as high mountain peaks from the foothills shrouded in fog. However, I dare to write about it because I believe that many of the participants seemed to capture moments of it and because there was a shared longing for a life that was not merely a set of limited choices. While the veil as sanctuary became viewed as a gift that you accept with gratitude and humility rather than choose, it also pointed to a transcendence beyond self-conscious deliberation about right and wrong. My inability to describe it fully is representative of my own lack of ontological brilliance and a limitation I accept so that these beautiful words do not become another butterfly skeleton captured in a regime of
truth. My inability to describe it experientially makes the remainder of this chapter more of a found poem.

The veil as an ascetic of kenotic love was glimpsed when the participants found themselves completely attuned to the needs of their students in the moment. This attention was not a matter of the will or self-conscious deliberation, it was an attention taught by love, by a complete and pure turning towards the other. It was the opposite of colliding desires or the need to hesitate and to choose based on authority and commands (Evdokimov, 2001). It was the kind of attention described by Weil as prayer, prayer with inescapable moral content:

Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love…The attention turned with love towards God (or in a lesser degree, towards anything which is truly beautiful) makes certain things impossible for us. Such is the non-acting action of prayer in the soul. There are ways of behaviour which would veil such attention should they be indulged in and which, reciprocally, this attention puts out of the question….The poet produces the beautiful by fixing his attention on something real. It is the same with the act of love. (1986, p. 212, 214)

The glimpses of these experiences were characterized by an absence of agenda, a looking rather than an attachment, a seeking for the propitious moment to do the best job of teaching their students. To love was not an occasion to do good, but to give oneself with compassionate attention. Along with this lack of agenda and focused attention came creative spontaneity and an absence of anxiety, or peace. “The moment love enters your heart all fear evaporates” (Fr. Maximos in Markides, 2002). One participant described it as not even questioning the appropriateness of a response she made to a student’s question about religious freedom. Others talked about how all things became spiritual, and that to be veiled gave them freedom to see and to find presence in the simple or mundane. “To see all places as a place of worship, not places to change” (Gillet, 1976). Another described creativity as “remembering a child in a
special way or to take special care in the way you treat them.” Creativity, freedom, prayer, justice and silence became synonyms for love. There was the growing understanding that the imposed veil of silence, when received as an asceticism, did nothing to change the reality of their faith, and instead had the potential of increasing it or broadening it, as well as sharing it in an ethical way. To speak was to do nothing, while to remain silent was everything, “to shatter the limits imposed by words” (Gillett, 1976). To remain silent was to experience an enlargement of their hearts, to begin to let the whole world walk into their hearts (1 Cor. 4:5). To remain silent was to cross the ford of separated self to “the self which opens itself and offers itself” (1976). To remain silent was to find a path lit with the other, open the way to a solution, to “save in his own person the universal possibilities of life, in the same way as a gifted poet saves in his own person the universal potentialities of poetry” (Yannaras, 1984). To remain silent was far from passive. It was to courageously acquire the Kingdom of Heaven within. To remain silent was to bathe every task with love and prayer. To remain silent was to let inner beauty, “the silent and deep expression of ourselves”, shine.

Thou from whom I received a smile or a look that was true and pure today, thou who has received from me a smile or a look that was true and pure…I bless thee in silence. And I ask of the Lord Love that, springing from the wordless meeting of our souls, a golden light may illumine this day. (Gillet, 1976, p. 56)

These interpretations of the veil have emerged as a desirable progression of growth, interpretations in response to a research methodology that allowed deepening questions and listened to longings. However, I believe it would be a mistake to consider them as functioning in any linear or systematic way. To do so would be to turn them into empty words or to divorce them from life. The trauma of imposition never ceases, a new other is encountered, a need for sanctuary is ever present and ontological brilliance
remains a distant yet possible joy. To move between and beyond the interpretations is a pilgrimage, not an event, a pilgrimage from “words” to “presence.”
CHAPTER 6: REVELATIONS OF THE VEIL

The end of a dissertation or a book is often one that is read first. As one friend of mine put it, “I read the conclusions first to see whether or not the rest of the book has any value.” Likewise, when people ask me about this research, their second question is always, “And what conclusions have you come to?” While one may critique the notion of “jumping to conclusions,” I empathize with wanting to know that this research journey has value beyond the stories and lives of the participants. Is there any way that the contemplation of a metaphor in relation to the lived experience of ten persons struggling to live a life undivided (including the researcher) can say anything at all to the wider public, the public of beginning Christian teachers, the public of beginning teachers, the public of teacher education at Trinity Western University, the public of teacher education in general, the public of the profession of teaching. I wonder this myself and would not have embarked on such a long and personal journey if I did not believe it could potentially have some wider value. As I begin to write about how this journey has been worthwhile and can continue to have impact, it seems important to return to the beginning and to re-establish the purpose and context of this study.

I was drawn to this study in response to several catalysts. Some of the catalysts were sites of personal struggle: my struggle to live a life undivided as a person and educator in a variety of educational contexts; my longing to discover what it meant to live and teach together or in communion; my continued research in the areas of teacher identity, the moral nature of teaching, problems of conformity to negative patterns of practice and loss of hope within education. Additional catalysts arose from my work as a teacher educator. My interactions with preservice teachers made me aware of their
struggle to negotiate their own identity, and particularly their spiritual identity, within the context of public education. Despite the respect within our program for the public context and the acknowledged complexity of understanding what it means to be a Christian teacher in a public setting, I was increasingly concerned that the repression of spirituality within public education was a loss to all involved; and I was also increasingly concerned that the support provided within our program (and perhaps other programs) for preservice teachers as they experienced this struggle was limited. This study was a search for life, a better way of learning to be persons who teach, a better way of being persons who teach. The differences between Chapters 1, 4, and 5 are representative of this journey. This study did not begin with answers and attempt to prove them. This study began with hope and a willingness to risk the loss of previously deeply held ideas. Therefore, this chapter is aptly called “Revelations of the Veil.” To veil implies a putting on and a taking off. Paradoxically, both the putting on of a veil and the taking off of a veil can be revelations. This chapter seeks to unveil or reveal both what may be lost or put aside as the result of the study and what may be gained.

The choice of a metaphor as a method for exploring lived experience was initially one that arose from the way that metaphors have impacted my own personal growth as a teacher and the way they are closely tied to teacher education and reflection. It has been my experience that rather than providing definitive answers, metaphors move us in two transcendent ways. They can beckon us forward with a powerful vision for our practice, helping us keep in mind the “internal goods of the practice,” and through the colliding of two symbols they can move us into a deepened understanding of a concept or experience that has become lost in definition and certainty or simply defies definition and certainty (MacIntyre, 1984). In other words, they can help us turn experience into lived experience (Britzman, 2003). However, they can also do the opposite, as noted in
Chapter One. They can become an idealized portrait that imposes a role/mask and without renewal through ongoing reflection they can become divorced from the life in the present moment. Brizman (2003) calls such metaphors, stereotypes and expresses concern about their persistence.

The persistency of such stereotypes, however, does more than caricature the opinions and hopes of a community. Such images tend to subvert a critical discourse about the lived contradictions of teaching the actual struggles of teachers and students. Stereotypes engender a static and hence repressed notion of identity as something already out there, a stability that can be assumed. Here, identity is expressed as a final destination rather than a place of departure. (p. 29)

Unexamined metaphors for educational practice can lead to identity foreclosure or they can move us from the given to the possible. They also seem to have a shelf life and varied potency depending on the person and situation. Another way to think about this shelf life is to consider that metaphors have a story, have a beginning, middle and end. A metaphor that reaches the end of its mystery ceases to be a metaphor.

Was the metaphor of veiling in relation to revealing or concealing spiritual identity a potent metaphor? Did it beckon us forward or deepen our understanding, in the wider public sense as described above? Did it and does it still contain mystery? It is to these questions that I now turn, recognizing that my answers are themselves exploratory and connected to wider discourses.

Revelations of Struggle

“I didn’t know this was so hard for you.”

This research is not the first to document the struggle of beginning teachers to assume the role of teacher, although it may be unique in its focus on the Christian spirituality of teachers. However, I believe that this research goes beyond simply reminding the profession that this struggle is real and one that should be met with
compassion, empathy and support, to revealing some unique understandings about how our dominant western views of identity impact the place and orientation of our struggle.

Two Views of Voice. One dominant concept for identity in postmodern western culture is voice. Britzman (2003) in the preface of her introduction to the revised edition of “Practice makes practice” describes the search for voice in the profession of teaching as taking place within two views of voice. The first view is rooted in identity politics and the creation of space within social policy for groups of people who had been or are voiceless. Voice, in this view, is connected with questions of power and empowerment and voice; therefore, voice becomes something you have or lose. If you have voice you have it without conflict. You are free if your voiced representation in all of its differences is accepted and respected. On the other hand, to experience conflict in relation to voice is to become powerless. The search for voice, in this first view, becomes a search for an absence of conflict, to find some place or time in the future where you can be who you are as a teacher without conflict. This view seeks voice through increasing dialogue, the ability to speak and be heard, and educational research that is focused on questions of silencing and being silenced. It seeks to recognize the value of difference and the positive potential of a plurality of perspectives. While accepting that differences have the tendency to fragment society, this view of voice struggles to find ways to bring voices together, to share power and empower in a movement towards the internal goods of the practice. To have power is literally connected with the ability to speak and be heard in the life of schools. It is assumed that categories of difference are a source of unique voices; however, differences are not as easily categorized as originally thought. It seems to me that to equate difference with voice, can turn difference into another imposed role to perform.
The second way voice has been viewed, according to Britzman, is more metaphorical. To have voice is to try to represent something about yourself while recognizing that in linking yourself to words you are “…bumping up against the language, or the prevailing discourses in education and the larger social” (p. 17). This view of voice is much more complex and rooted in the belief that the self can be highly fragmented as it tries to negotiate many conflicting realities and discourses. Consistent with Taylor (1989), this view also assumes that the self is not completely transparent, nor determined independently.

Britzman suggests that these two views of voice may be two sides of the same coin, since they are both rooted in the problem of language. The second view of voice recognizes the dominance of language for expressing and even conceptualizing ideas of the self; however, the individual still feels a need to be recognized as a unique person, the first view of voice. There is still this sense that something real or unique about the individual is repressed or waiting to be liberated. According to Britzman, the path from fragmentation to unity is our ability to narrate our experience of the conflicting events and voices, to turn them into lived experience that can be a source of growth or becoming: to recognize that we all live in myths and that myths both help us understand and impose themselves on us. Our freedom lies in opening ourselves up to the dialogic, to recognize that teaching must be “…situated in relationship to one’s biography, present circumstances, deep commitments, affective investments, social, context, and conflicting discourses about what it means to become a teacher” (p. 31). This process of becoming is an ongoing struggle or negotiation rather than a performance of a particular set of teaching behaviours. She critiques notions of learning to teach that are presented as an individual dilemma or individual experience rather than socially negotiated, finding that
these individual notions are rooted in very powerful myths or metaphors or stereotypes—the teacher as expert, self made, sole bearer of power, and product of experience.

**Authoritative and Internal Discourses.** Britzman, building on Baktin’s theory of authoritative and internal discourses, makes us very aware of the dominance of external ideas about teaching and their impact on our internal discourses. In fact, she believes that all internal discourses are infected by external discourses. According to her, there is no true or reliable inner teacher as Parker Palmer (1998) asserts. Instead, there is only the possibility of an “internally persuasive discourse”, one that continually questions all normative certainties and finds new ways to “mean” (p. 42). Not to develop this internally persuasive discourse is to remain entangled in an oppressive structure, maintaining the status quo and becoming powerless. Becoming an empowered teacher is a continual freeing of ourselves from oppression through our ability to critique the authoritative discourses in our lives and thereby opening ourselves and our practice to renewal, to take words and make them our own.75 It is no wonder, based on this more nuanced version of voice, that becoming a teacher is “so hard for us.”

However, I believe there is a distinction to be made between authoritative and authoritarian discourses, and that it is possible to discern between discourses that author life and discourses that are violently destructive. It may be true that all discourses have the potential of becoming authoritarian if experienced as an imposed ideal, or set up individually as an imposed ideal; however, all discourses can also be sources of wisdom. To view all discourses as something to be freed from may result in a

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75 Britzman qualifies this strongly critical stance by stating that a critical voice, “*does not mean to destroy or devalue the struggles of others. Instead, a critical voice attempts the delicate and discursive work of rearticulating the tensions between and within words and practices, or constraints and possibilities, as it questions the consequences of the taken-for-granted knowledge shaping responses to everyday life and meanings fashioned from them. A critical voice is concerned not just with representing the voices of oneself and others, but with narrating, considering, and evaluation them*” (p. 35)
loss of opportunity to move beyond that knowledge or to develop that knowledge in ways that are more life-giving. Although Britzman concurs with Taylor (1989) that a questioning stance is crucial, she seems to be denying the necessity or possibility of a coherent narrative from which to question (p. 47). Because the focus is on empowering or freeing the individual from authoritarian discourses and because such a critical stance is required, it may also be difficult to sustain a stance of compassion and wonder towards other voices.

A Third View of Voice. Echoes of both the first and second views of voice are found in Parker Palmer’s writing. In The courage to teach (1998), he describes his own journey to live the life undivided as an educator, a life that refuses to ignore the “inner teacher” or to lose touch with our deep inner self. Like Britzman (2003) and Taylor (1989), he documents the totalizing nature of normative discourses that focus on obligatory actions and the possible violence they do to the self.

When we listen primarily for what we “ought” to be doing with our lives, we may find ourselves hounded by external expectations that can distort our identity and integrity. There is much that I ought to be doing by some abstract moral calculus. But is it my vocation? Am I gifted and called to do it? Is this particular ought a place of intersection between my inner self and the outer world, or is it someone else’s image of how my life should look?

When I follow only the oughts, I may find myself doing work that is ethically laudable but not mine to do. A vocation that is not mine, no matter how externally valued, does violence to the self—in the precise sense that it violates my identity and integrity on behalf of some abstract norm. When I violate myself, I invariably end up violating the people I work with. How many teachers inflict their own pain on their students, the pain that comes from doing what never was, or no longer is, their true work? (p. 30)

This version of voice that combines the previous two understandings, is built on dialogue that discerns a true inner reality or identity, and to have integrity is to have the courage to live that identity in the face of external expectations.

While Palmer recognizes the difficulty of exploring what he calls the inner landscape of teaching, in contrast to Britzman and Taylor, he suggests the possibility of
self-transparency and seems to view self-authorship as a valued goal and source of integrity. The conflict or struggle is between the role and the individual’s inner voice. The process he highlights is one of stilling outside voices to hear the inner voice and to encourage an inner dialogue. Britzman and Taylor, on the other hand, encourage an engagement of outside discourses in order to locate oneself and either free oneself or transition forward.

Although Palmer highlights the moral or ethical nature of the struggle by connecting our lack of integrity as inevitably damaging to others, there also seems to be an assumption that being true to yourself will automatically make you a good and moral teacher. “...when my teaching is authorized by the teacher within me, I need neither weapons nor armor to teach” (p. 33). While he later returns to the need for our inner dialogue to become public and to accept critique, when he considers the use of the inner teacher to bring about educational change, the process seems to remain focused on the preservation of self in relation to others rather than on an opening of self to the risk of the other. However, his earlier writings about compassion as a source of knowing and the impossibility of individual certainty may make it possible to interpret his understanding of the inner teacher as a call from the other (1983).

Voice and Identity. What is striking about the three views of voice described above is the way that voice or the ability to negotiate/construct ourselves through our own words or the words of others is so strongly linked to our understanding of identity. It is as though we cannot think about identity in ways that are separate from language. Although, both Britzman and Palmer are pointing us to what they consider sources of freedom, and have highlighted very poignantly our longings for better ways of being as well as important truths about the power of language and discourse, this study and an understanding of personal being as described in Chapter Two cause me to wonder if
linking identity so strongly with language has the potential of keeping us locked in our minds, performing individual roles in relation to conflicting and totalizing ideals.\textsuperscript{76} I also wonder if linking identity so strongly with the ability to free ourselves from potentially violent and imposing discourses has the potential of keeping us paralyzed by our critical stance. I further wonder if linking identity so strongly with language inhibits the ability to move towards the other in love because the other becomes mere language in our minds that we judge and differentiate, rather than a person(s) we are offering ourselves to and receiving from in gratitude, openness and freedom. Does linking identity so strongly with language make self-authoring a form of self-preservation, thereby keeping us locked in a project of becoming self-contained individuals rather than persons in relationship?

\textbf{Veil: Voice and Identity?} You can see all three of these views of voice or identity present in this research. There is the longing for a future state with certainty and without conflict. There is an awareness of being silenced and strong feelings of disempowerment. There is the growing awareness of the dominance of external authoritative discourses and their conflict with internal discourses. There is the surprise that the “true inner teacher” so often expressed as a spiritual teacher, may also be rooted in an authoritative discourse that has become divorced from life. There is a movement towards negotiation of discourses. What is never questioned by the participants and the primary researcher (initially) is the assumption that our identity is found/created through our minds with words. From the beginning of this research this assumption was present. The metaphor of the veil was equated to a silencing of a

\textsuperscript{76} Personal being, as described in Chapter 2, is an understanding that we become persons through our ability to transcend our givenness or our nature which includes all contextual or created sources of self that are beyond our control. The only true freedom is a movement of self-emptying love towards the other. It is a loss of a given unnatural self-contained individuality in order to become a true self, one that was never intended to exist without reference to another. It is this sharing of the life of another that makes us truly human. Our yearning to become is really a yearning for union with the other (Russell, 2009; Zizioulas, 2006; Yannaras, 2007).
spiritual voice and the purpose of the research was rooted in helping beginning teachers find a way to use that voice. Almost all of the examples of veiling were rooted to language, the ability to use language, the loss of language, the discovery of language. To conceal was to be without voice. To be partially veiled was to find new words to express hidden truths.

The first three interpretations of the veil in Chapter 5, even while progressively moving towards an awareness of our relationality, still represent a struggle for individual voice. They represent the existential fragmentation of every individual, fragmentation that moves from the separation of individuals to the separation within individual personalities, the separation between mind and heart (Webber, 2007). All of the above three views of voice are seeking some kind of unity, even if only a momentary place of departure. The final interpretation of the veil, however, offers a different understanding of identity and would not have been possible if the research did not so significantly reveal the dominance of the authoritative western modern and postmodern view of identity as rooted in the discourses of the mind.

New Interpretation, New Questions. A new interpretation leads to new questions. How does the final interpretation of the veil differ in its view of identity from modern and postmodern western views of identity, and how might this new view move us forward in relation to the important concerns related to identity and voice raised by the three views outlined above? Can a view of identity that is based on an ontological notion of relationality, or personal being, rather than voice provide a real presence that responds to some ongoing concerns in education: concerns about the overwhelming conformity within the practice, concerns about the moral and ethical nature of teaching, concerns about personal integrity and hope considered so important to the longevity of a creative and affirming professional life? What happens when one experiences the unlimited
freedom of moving towards the other without judgment and a need to control, without a need to separate or differentiate, without fear, with the motivation of preserving the absolute right for the other to be other? What conditions are necessary for a person to cross the abyss from a separated self to a relational self? The results of this research cannot definitively answer these questions because the research only caught a few tantalizing glimpses of this final interpretation.

However, what this research reveals is that refusing to equate voice with identity, freedom and power changes the place and content of the human struggle to become unique persons. It moves the place of struggle from the mind to the heart. An ancient understanding of the word heart is used here. Heart here refers to the centre of our being that integrates all aspects of our being and seeks a deeper awareness of the other forged in silence (Webber, 2007; Palmer, 1998). Moving the place of struggle from the mind to the heart shifts the content of the struggle from a self-preserving battle with totalizing ideas/roles/masks to a study of my only source of true freedom, my ekstatic freedom to open myself to others, to participate in bringing all others into being by rejoicing in and authoring their otherness, and to have my own uniqueness preserved by the entstasy of others, to risk allowing the world to walk into my heart. To study this freedom is to allow my mind to descend to my heart and to learn to resist the dominance

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77 This understanding of the heart is in contrast to the common modern, romantic and psychological understanding of the heart as the seat of emotion and feeling, which in this context are considered also functions of the mind.

78 Ekstasy as noted in Chapter 2 is the philosophical term most often used to describe the self-transcendence that arises from eros, or a longing to love and be loved. It is also a term used theologically by Zizioulas (2006) to describe the process of becoming a person, going beyond our given nature and surpassing the ability to commune with another created being and to communion with the Persons of the Trinity. It is union to be achieved and uniqueness, not uniformity. In other words, the uniqueness of each person is both created and preserved. Entasy is the transformation that occurs when we achieve union with the other. The theological term, theosis, can be considered a synonym for entasy. Union with God allows us to participate in His divine energies, helping us become like God—which means to become our true selves: persons created in the image of God.
of my ego and the way that it seeks to preserve itself as separate from the other, thereby fragmenting me rather than opening me.

From the Mind to the Heart. This experience of personal being is not intended to be characterized as a mind/heart dichotomy, but when it is compared to a view of identity that remains locked in the mind through language, one quickly becomes aware of the vast abyss that can exist between the heart and mind and how reluctant we can be to bridge it. We would often rather cope with our fragmentation through conformity or compartmentalization or distraction than move into a space that requires us to let go of any of our entrenched psychological “hand-holds.” Changing the location of the struggle for being or identity to the heart prizes the mind for its ability to think when called upon, but remains suspicious of the mind’s tendency to operate on its own, to dwell in words or ideas rather than life, to become confused in a cacophony of voices, to create a stream of feelings along with streams of words, and to constantly seek self-preservation through the translation of all others into objects (Webber, 2007; Zizioulas 2006; Yannaris, 1984). To allow the descent of the mind to the heart is to appreciate the mind for its ability to provide insight, create systems, discover, name, categorize, discern, but to recognize its need for a spiritual qualification. The heart can continually quiet and orient the mind towards the other.

Apart from anything else, the mind uses noise constantly to reassure itself of its own existence. The language of the heart, on the other hand, is silence. Here I am not referring to an empty silence, one that is simply waiting for something to happen. Rather I refer to the overflowing silence, the silence that is the heart’s means of communication, a full and profound experience of being…. (Webber, 2007, p. 19)

The heart recognizes that the mind dwells in unrelenting fear and desire, and the heart refuses to allow us to consider these unrelenting fears and desires as representative of our true identity. The heart understands that “this division of our common human nature
into selves which assert themselves over and against other selves represents “the deprivation of love, the loss of genuine freedom, and the disintegration of personality” (Guorian, p. 19). The heart changes the story of our identity from the demands of our ego, “I want, I should, I fear,” to the ontological rest of “I am loved, therefore I am” and “I love, therefore I am” (Webber, 2007; Zizioulas 2006; Sakharov, N. 2002; Sakharov, S., 2006).

Another tendency of the mind is continually to reject the here and now, which you can test by trying to attempt to keep the mind in the present moment. The mind’s constant tendency is to go where it has control: the past or the future. It can control the past by interpreting it as it wants and it can control the future by imagining what it wants. The heart, when we learn to use it through disciplines that help us temporarily silence our thoughts, goes beyond the mind and returns us to the only reality, the present moment, and allows us continually to offer our lives, creatively and attentively, on behalf of others. It is only in the present that we can truly meet another person and be met by them. It is only others that can successfully call us back to the present. When we meet others with our minds guarded in our hearts, we have the potential of beginning a meeting with acceptance rather than rejection, love rather than fear, openness rather than defensiveness, patience rather than demands, and finding similarity rather than difference. The heart, when qualified spiritually with love for the other, becomes compassion, becomes peace. The ethical and moral demands of our lives and our work become a source of relational and meaningful life rather than a loss of identity or a set of virtues to know and behaviours to perform.

**Being Human.** The heart as an integrating centre of orientation towards and for the other may be the only possible existential transformational stance in a world that is dominated by competing voices shouting, “I am I” (Yannaras, 1984). When we come to
realize that I cannot be I if you are not you, and that my uniqueness is preserved in my freedom to live for you, it becomes possible to face you with complete acceptance and creative attention. The loss of false certainty that is offered by our self-preserving minds results in an inspiring movement of life, or participation in life and the full potentiality of being human or ontologically brilliant.79 “In love all virtue exists” (14th century theologian, Nicholas Cabasilas as quoted in Guroian, 2002, p. 13). The struggle to stay in the present oriented towards the other is no easier than the struggle to either match ourselves to a role or free ourselves from roles, but the gains in freedom and grace are immense. Freedom is no longer limited to intellectual choice and negotiation. Freedom is unlimited in our willingness to transcend our egos through a willingness to accept self-limitations, to self-empty, and be transformed in a free movement of love towards the other (Guroian, 2002).

What is particularly unique about personal being is its focus on a love that as an appreciative contemplation rather than a feeling that only exists after judgment, or an act of service or kindness that often is just as objectifying and can even be violent in its assumptions about the other person needing our good works: “… in which acts of seeming beneficence are in fact expressions of contempt or even hatred” (Taylor, 1989, p. 517). A love that flows from personal being rather than feeling or doing is similar to the kind of stance we take when contemplating a work of art or something beautiful in nature. To appreciate a work of art, I must be fully present, embodied, attentive and completely open. I must suspend judgment, approach the art with humility and allow it to enter me, allow it to exist and touch every aspect of my existence.

79 A term referenced in Chapter 5 as part of the fourth interpretation of veiling experiences. To be ontologically brilliant is to draw others into loving communion by our embodied presence and self-emptying willingness to attend to and preserve their otherness, to reveal ourselves as “countenances.” (Florovsky, 1996; Evdokimov, 2001)
Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1943) illustrates this kind of love in the relationship between the Little Prince and the Fox. The Fox requests that he be “tamed” by the Little Prince through a process of spending time together without language, drawing closer and closer together, making it impossible for either of them to be anything but life for each other. This taming required time and patience and a willingness to submit to conditions, or rites, as well as a kind of restraint. The Fox describes it as “something that’s been too often neglected” and a “creating of ties” (p. 57). The taming requested by the Fox and entered into by the Prince had nothing to do with control or an attempt to impose, change or manipulate. To create ties would preclude any notion of taming connected to humiliation or manipulation such as the notion of taming in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*. In fact, the taming was a deliberate preservation of the other’s freedom. There was nothing the Fox could do nor tried to do to keep the Little Prince with him, but his love for the Prince allowed him to gain an eternal, transfigured perception: a brightening of the world. Just before the Little Prince leaves, the fox shares his most important secrets with the Little Prince.

One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes…It’s the time you spent on your rose that makes your rose so important…People have forgotten this truth…but you mustn’t forget it. You become responsible for what you’ve tamed. (p. 63—64)

On our western “planet,” the fox’s secret may also be that anything essential is impossible to capture with words. Our words often attempt to minimize the time we spend with anything that is complex. They become certain and then confusing and then empty and discarded for new words. Words are not real, but they can point to the real, to the mystery, and they can lead us into a silence that is overflowing with meaning.

*To Be Present in the Present.* Another aspect of the kind of being explored by the fourth interpretation of the veil is its acknowledgement of potential in the present moment. As noted previously, we choose whether or not to live in the present moment,
even though our minds do everything possible to distract us from the present moment (Webber, 2007). The present moment has no shape or form or limits to control or measure. The mind wants us to forget how important the present moment is.

We can only make decisions in the present moment. We can only enjoy sights and sounds in the present moment. We can only love or hate in the present moment. The present moment is the interface between ourselves and the rest of the universe…. (p. 80)

Our western ways of being have taught us to prioritize the mind, to keep the mind busy, to train the mind, often at the expense of our ability to attend to the present moment, the only space we have to act, the only opportunity for an encounter that can stop our minds and help us develop a deeper awareness. The present moment is the only place where we can meet the other. An understanding of identity that is rooted in an ontological reliance on the other reconnects us with the present moment. Accepting the limitations of that present moment, rather than fighting against those limitations, opens us to a new perspective on the world, a perspective that wants continually to be for and with others, a perspective that values all learning for how it can help us be for and with others in each unique moment, a perspective that realizes that now is the time for salvation.80

Revelations Related to the Struggle for Personal Being in Relation to Current Educational Concerns

Personal being, as described above and in the fourth interpretation of the veil, changes the location and content of our struggle to become, a struggle that has been captured in the research as having an impact on morality in teaching, conformity in

80 My view of the present moment is not existential. That is, I do not believe that the past has nothing to teach us nor even that the future does not in some way influence the present. I would call my view of time eschatological, meaning the present moment is the only intersection of past and future, history and eternity. It is a concept of time that has more to do with what is real and true in the present moment than the place of the present moment in a sequence of moments. Eschatological time is influenced by the Greek concept of kairos: the appropriate time, the time God acts.
teaching and integrity in teaching. This section looks again at these concerns in education and considers how personal being differs from a view of identity locked to voice.

**Voice and Justice.** The first view of voice described above and its connection to identity politics prioritizes the need for social justice in education in its concern for those who are silenced and disempowered. It seeks to develop a deep awareness of the moral/ethical nature of our practice. In “The ethical teacher” by Elizabeth Campbell (2003), the teaching profession is challenged to return ethics and morals to the forefront of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development. While recognizing the need for ethical standards in teaching, Campbell concurs with Sommers in expressing concern about relying on a top down approach to morality, or as Sommers (1984) puts it, “…the shift away from personal morals to an almost exclusive pre-occupation with the morality of institutional policies.” To rely on a top down approach to morality or ethics makes it possible for a teacher to be ethical in an unethical school or be unethical in an institution based on a strong moral foundation. In her research with teachers about the ethical nature of their work, she also carefully describes the complexity of applying moral/ethical knowledge to situations that are contextually layered. This research also reveals the difficulty of applying a top down professional norm, or legislation, to daily classroom life.

Although the participants of this study were very committed to upholding the legislation of secular and non-sectarian, they found that the legislation in practice was not black and white. They were surrounded by the mixed messages of their mentors who interpreted this aspect of the School Act in a contextual manner. There were questions about educational validity and doing what was in the best interest of the child. They wondered whether they were supposed to follow unwritten or written rules and
what they should do when the written rules didn’t seem to fit the context. Simply knowing the law or profession norms, although an important first step, did little to support the day to day life of beginning teachers.

Aristotelian Ethics. Campbell (2003) identified an Aristotelian approach to abstract virtuous principles. She supports of a view of ethics as the essence of teaching and encourages an increase in knowledge about moral and ethical practice through the sharing of contextualized application. She emphasises sharing attempts to respond to the reality that there are many kinds of ethicists and different understandings of right and wrong. She believes that dialogue will both support the sharing of ethical knowledge, as well as develop an ethical awareness in individual teachers. Ultimately, dialogue will produce appreciation for and commitment to the ethical nature of the practice resulting in more ethical institutions. She believes that one acquires virtue through the ongoing practice of virtuous behaviour that can be supported by an association with ethical people. This habituated behaviour leads to the cultivation of an inner disposition that is ethical. She equates this inner disposition to Hansen’s use of “moral sensibility,” something that eventually simply flows from the person. Her approach encourages examples of practice that are to be held up to a moral principle within a community of practice and determined to be either right or wrong. She believes that while it may be difficult to determine clearly a right approach, wrong approaches will be easily identified and useful case studies will add to ethical knowledge.

Wrong approaches are especially easy to identify in relation to moral principles that are most agreed upon in education: “fairness, kindness, honesty and respect” (p. 26). She contends that ethical teachers and institutions develop through determining right and wrong in relation to core ethical principles or virtues, through applying concepts to new situations, and through sharing knowledge. Even though she recognizes the
potential for relativity, conflict and uncertainty in this approach, she remains committed to her core principles and their ability to help us judge; and she sees the uncertainty of applying ethical knowledge as an opportunity to develop a collegial professional practice that is supportive of this process.

I appreciate Campbell’s commitment to the ethical nature of our profession and her recognition of the complex realities of becoming ethical teachers in institutions that often don’t support such growth or keep the moral and ethical nature of our work in the forefront. Yet through this research I am beginning to see how a different understanding of identity reveals that the building of ethical knowledge and principles potentially keeps us locked in our minds and may actually inhibit morally sensibility. Hansen describes moral sensibility as a “…disposition of the mind and feeling centered around attentiveness to students and their learning” (2001, p. 21). When we rely entirely on principles to judge our behaviour, we lose the reason for morality: we do not allow the presence of the other to judge us when we rely on our own understanding to judge right and wrong (Taylor, 1989). Seeking certainty, we can find ourselves lost in definitions of certainty that never mesh with our temporal reality, or lost in the rationalizations of our self-protecting egos. I completely agree with Campbell that the ethical moral nature of our work should be kept in the forefront, and that sharing ethical knowledge is highly important and useful to improve teacher education; nevertheless, I wonder if the addition of a focused attention on the use of our freedom in relation to others would provide a less totalizing and less idealized source of morality that can become a moral sensibility.

Campbell herself, in describing a situation that she believed was unethical, laments her lack of moral foresight in preventing an injury to her students. She describes being asked to have students fill out a form that brought to light personal information in a humiliating manner. She believes that more ethical knowledge would
have given her foresight and the ability to respond proactively to this situation, and she may be right. The participants in this study also recognized their need for more knowledge and the value of rehearsal in preparing for future situations. However, a continual reorientation towards our students in the present moment along with the awareness that our practice always has the potential to lack attentiveness and sensitivity may also provide foresight along with a creative response to the many complex situations we encounter. Becoming more aware of the use of our freedom—either to distance ourselves from others and the present moment, or to move towards others through a deep awareness of and respect for their presence—raises new questions about our practice and presents a new way of being reflective. We become responsible for what we tame. The potential of this kind of personal and collaborative reflection will be returned to later in this chapter.

**Conformity in Education.** The concern about conformity in education is another possible conversation that this research and its exploration of personal being can enter. As noted previously, the conformity or lack of change in education and its relation to the struggle for individual teacher voice has been well documented. Britzman (2003) attributes this conformity to the dominance of authoritative discourses and either the inability or unwillingness to free ourselves from this dominance. She is particularly concerned about the lack of change with regard to social justice in education and critical of educational practices that assume there are common words with common meanings in education, denying a multiplicity of discourses. To expose the multiplicity is to begin to support the process of understanding what it means to come to know, to move from the given to the possible. To know becomes a place of departure rather than a destination. The best support that can be given to beginning teachers is an awareness
of the cacophony of their minds and the provision of dialogic tools to help them discern and negotiate this cacophony.

Student teachers are “summoned” by cultural myths—a language for describing who they might become and what they should desire—and through these myths, they recognize themselves as a teacher or feel as if they do not possess what it takes to become one. The real tension these myths attempt to dismiss is that there is nothing essential about who a teacher is or becomes. It is only through particular discourses that teachers can become viewed as possessing essential qualities. Other discourses offer different meanings. And there are always antagonistic discourses that urge particular dispositions at the cost of others. Consequently, no teaching identity is ever singular or without contradictions; the teacher’s identity expresses a cacophony of calls. (p. 223)

However, despite her denial of a transparent unitary self in relation to authoritative discourses, a denial that I accept and I believe this research affirms, Britzman still relies on the individual self to become or to author his or her way of being as a teacher. This reliance seems to call on a deeper self that is able to free itself long enough to objectively view the conditions of practice as a social construction rather than as an inevitable reality, and implies a moral/ethical necessity to do so. In other words the reason to free ourselves continually from oppression through an internally persuasive discourse that always questions, is to bring about change that is good for all. For her the questioning mind that is aware of social negotiation, social dependence and social interaction is a form of integrity or unity since it refuses to accept the cultural myth of rugged individualism. She is also cynical about the ability to view any other person in a non-judgmental manner since gender, race, and class are highly embodied.

Britzman’s work challenges any understanding of identity that seeks unity or integrity. Is personal being as it is described in this research a new form of rugged individualism that tries to deny difference and thereby suppress it? Is there a difference between a free movement of loving and creative attention in the present moment and “sheer individual ingenuity and individual effort”? (p. 235). Is there a difference between
viewing history, class, race, gender or physicality as given conditions of being that make our unique offering of ourselves possible, rather than as either a handicap to be overcome, or as the source of our identity? (p. 235). Can personal being fall into the category of myths that become ideological escapes or traps? Is a dialogic stance the only way to personalize the social process of teaching? Again, I find myself unable to answer these questions definitively, and I believe that these questions and other related questions are valid and important. However, I can’t help but wonder if there is more to a person’s freedom than a questioning stance. Can we learn to listen beyond the cacophony? This way of being or orienting oneself seems again to empty out the content of a good that one can love. The focus of attention and will is behaviour based—to question, differentiate ourselves from, to discriminate, to judge—and these new behaviours become an obligation, a new kind of piety (Taylor, 1989).

I also wonder about the ability beginning teachers have to adopt such a stance, recognizing the length of time required to fully explore the social construction of practice and the support that would be needed within the context of teacher preparation and during their initial practice as teachers. I have also experienced and witnessed the tendency towards an ongoing critical stance that results in paralysis or cynicism rather than transformation. Taylor (1989) also questions whether or not we have the ability to remove ourselves from reliance on any sense of coherent narrative, claiming that it is both illogical and impossible and can lead to despair.

The idea that we ought to prescind altogether from this background confidence of purchase is as unjustified as the corresponding demand in the moral field that we step outside moral intuitions. This would mean checking the trustworthiness of this confidence against something else. But this something else would have to be quite outside the perceivable, and thus gives us an impossible task. Classical epistemology was always threatening to drive into this cul-de-sac and therefore fall into the despair of scepticism. Of course, in one case as in the other, our confidence on a particular occasion may be misplaced. But we discover this only by shifting out of one purchase into another, more adequate one. My blithe, unthinking assurance that I know the path gives way to my careful and attentive
grip on my surroundings after I trip. My conceited confidence that there is only one moral issue at stake here gives way to an appreciation of the legitimacy of other demands as I mature. I read both these transitions as gains, and thus I embrace the later views over the earlier ones. But in neither case can I do anything with the suggestion that it all might be an illusion and that I ought to defend myself against this possibility by stepping altogether outside any reliance either on intuition or on sense of purchase. This demand is in its nature impossible. The most reliable moral view is not one that would be grounded quite outside our intuitions but one that is grounded on our strongest intuitions, where these have successfully met the challenge of proposed transitions away from them. (p. 75)

The despair of scepticism may also arise from a denial of our shared ontological reality for the sake of our autonomy. We try to preserve our individualism in our ability to be critical, to identify right and wrong, and to question. However, we also separate ourselves from others through the same process. I am also curious about transformation without the possibility of personal transcendence since this is something that Britzman denies even though she links changing ourselves with changing our practice.

I believe that Britzman’s work is highly valuable in that she highlights the importance of questioning normative discourses and refusing to allow discourses to enslave our practice, and in that she views all language as potentially ideological and conscriptive. *But does change happen only by differentiating my own practices from practices that are socially unjust and ineffective educationally, or does change also happen through a continual study of my own tendencies towards self-preservation at the expense of others?* How do I create barriers through my practice, how do I distance myself from others and objectify others, how do I judge, categorize and dismiss others, how do I cut myself off from the present moment of encounter and awareness?

Britzman offers us a new normative discourse for teacher education or a new role for beginning teachers to perform: “teacher-as-researcher.” She is interested in ensuring that teachers learn to research the global and local social constructions of practice and believes that teachers have the power to limit who can speak and what can be spoken.
This source of power is their individual freedom. Unquestioned is the moral/ethical nature of this freedom and how this freedom is qualified by compassion, humility, justice and mercy. It assumes that a normative discourse of disruption is a public good. What may be missing in this approach is research of the personal, the person teaching in relation to the person being taught, the personal offering of the practice of teaching for and with others. The pursuance of the personal being becomes automatically political for “…without the leavening presence of love in the world, freedom and justice, which are the appropriate ends of all political activity, would not be possible” (Guorian, p. 25).

The Integrity of the Teacher. The final concern most comprehensively raised by Palmer’s (1998) understanding of voice is the individual teacher’s struggle for integrity or a unified self. He asserts that it is only possible to teach well and to sustain a life-long commitment to the practice that does not inevitably lead to cynicism, conformity, disillusionment and/or despair if the individual teacher is undivided. Like Britzman he agrees that external discourses fragment us, and as mentioned above, he characterizes the struggle as one that is between institutional demands and the inner voice of a teacher found in the heart. He believes that the unitary self is possible and that practice matched to the inner voice found in the heart will become a practice qualified by effective teaching and moral/ethical behaviour. He recommends practices of silence in order to hear the inner voice. A teacher’s freedom and need for courage lie in choosing the inner voice over the external institutional voice. How does personal being differ in its understanding of integrity or the unified self?

Like Palmer, integrity in the context of personal being is understood as a purity of heart, a heart that is undivided. However, Palmer’s search for integrity seems to focus on the movement of the heart towards an internal ideal rather than the heart’s ability to move towards the other. Integrity is not a matching of behaviour to a chosen ideal;
integrity, like freedom, is not having to choose. To continually choose and think through possibilities is to be less free and to become divided. A heart that truly cares for the other and is always listening with deep awareness will continually move towards the other in wisdom. To move towards the other is to differentiate for the other rather than conform to an ideal. What is most loving for the other(s) in one situation may not be what is most loving for the other(s) in another situation. We go beyond a discursive practice of judging right and wrong in relation to our ideals, to allowing all of our possible gestures to move from a heart that is lovingly attentive and caring. While a transparent unified individual self is not possible, it is also not possible to transcend ourselves and move towards others in fragmented ways. When we offer ourselves to another in the present moment we are offering our whole selves and the other is responding to us as wholly present. A mystical unity of being in multiplicity arises. Multiplicity becomes the “sine qua non” of unity.

To make our integrity dependent on matching our practice to our ideals rather than offering ourselves to the other with purity of heart is to place the struggle back in our minds rather than within our hearts. It is a turning away from the other rather than a movement towards the other. It is a mind technique of self-preservation through certainty, rather than risking the uncertainty of remaining open to others in the present moment. We can become more passionate about our ideals than the students we teach, and justify our inattention by our need to find our own voice and stay true to our inner teacher. We prioritize being over doing, the opposite of a philosophy of moral action, but still in danger of being empty of an articulated conception of the good in

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81 To have to choose means that we are presented with a limited set of choices. There is no possibility of transcendence. To choose from a limited set of choices, locks us into our choices and leads to identity foreclosure and/or fragmentation.
relation to others, or at least a “thick description” of that conception since it is highly individualistic (Taylor, 1989).  

To view integrity in this manner also leaves us open to judging others whose inner voice is telling them something different about the practice, which would invariably happen since we each have an inner voice unique to us. Personal being would hold in suspicion any integrity based on passion for ideals, even if the ideals are laudable, because it would quickly recognize the dominance of the ego in that passion. Iris Murdoch (1970) describes this person as one “who confronted with Christ turns away to consider the judgement of his own conscience and to hear the voice of his own reason…this man is with us still, free, independent, lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, brave, the hero of so many novels and books of moral philosophy” (p. 80). Personal being values the uniqueness of a life offered for and with others, rather than the difference of a passionate individual who is only interested in the “we” that can support and promote his or her ideal. While Palmer’s work has inspired many teachers to begin the hard and courageous work of questioning the social construction of the practices that dominate them and encourages a longing for freedom from these oppressive discourses, reading his work through a lens of personal being reveals the priority of self preservation that may be inherent in the movement of a heart towards an ideal. I have come to understand that the lack of orientation to the other because of a drive to achieve an ideal limits integrity and has the potential to lead to further fragmentation, conformity, and despair.

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82 I recently had a conversation with a teacher about an understanding of identity that is a movement toward the other. She affirmed how totalizing personal ideals can become. She shared that she often feels discouraged at the end of the day because she hasn’t been able to achieve her “ideal” of the good teacher. Until our conversation she had never thought about how this ideal may be distracting her from being present to her students and responding with sensitivity and creativity to their needs.
This research reveals beginning teachers who were trying to listen to their inner spiritual voice, but discovered the spiritual voice to actually participate in their trauma because they were unable to match their practice to it. Initially they found themselves fearful: they were unable to respond with assurance when confronted with the possibility of unveiling their Christian spirituality with words despite their conviction that to be a Christian was to be courageous and speak the truth without fear of consequences. They were presented with either/or choices and neither of the choices gave them the freedom to move forward. The inner voice that was telling them what was right in terms of their understanding of Christianity was initially part of the cacophony of voices that sought to dominate and ultimately distracted them from their students, from being present in the moment. To have to choose between the voices was a loss of freedom because it became a matter of the natural or self-enclosed will. The natural will, when limited by choice, becomes discursive rather than intuitive, and keeps us self-contained, rugged individualists who believe that we can become anything we choose, and also despairing when we aren’t able to match our choices.

Sadly, we don’t realize that to have to choose is to be bound and that the ideals we choose can become delusional. Freedom, within an understanding of personal being, relies on renouncing or stilling the individual will in order to be released from all that binds us to our individual natures and, therefore, opened to relationship with God and others (Evdokimov, 1994). Without this understanding or support, beginning teachers may either compartmentalize their spirituality as an ideal inner voice so that their spirituality becomes inaccessible to them in their practice, or they may allow this spiritual voice to dominate without considering the moral/ethical nature of their actions as a result. The good represented by the voice then becomes the justification for action rather than the presence of the other. I believe that both these scenarios are a loss to
the profession and can be avoided if the true inner teacher was found in relationship with the other. *Where two or three are gathered, there I am in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20).

All understandings of identity are attached to beliefs about ontology and affect the way we come to know ourselves, others and the world. Even when identity is understood as highly opaque and dependent on the social construction of discourses, I argue that a personal longing for change, growth, union, and communion is still present. Educators concerned about the practice, and in particular about improvements in morality, innovation and integrity, rely on this longing as the impetus of our freedom and seek to activate a movement towards the good. Whether or not one chooses to move towards a more personal way of being as an educator, it is important at least to consider how an identity that is locked to voice and ideals may impact our ability to become present, attentive, creative, moral and integral educators. It is also crucial for teacher educators, leaders and mentors to keep the words, “I didn’t know it was so hard for you,” lodged in our hearts so that we don’t forget the struggle, so that we look for better ways to provide support to beginning teachers and practicing professionals, so that we qualify our expectations about their performance as teachers with compassion, empathy and patience, so that we find some way to assure them that their unique contribution to education, as they offer their lives for their students and the profession, is one that is named and loved.

**Revelations About the Potent Contours of Christian Spirituality in Relation to Identity and Integrity**

In Chapter Two, I identified some contours of Evangelical Protestant Christianity that I believed were pertinent to this research. These contours were tentative because the breadth of difference in Evangelical Protestant Christianity is almost impossible to
capture with specificity, and how these contours are actualized in the lives of each of the participants is also unique. The two main categories were related to the impact of the Reformation and Enlightenment on Evangelical Protestant Christianity and the way a western Christian may respond to an understanding of life (or being) as both a gift and a call. Because these contours were described quite comprehensively in Chapter Two, I won’t repeat their discussion here. Instead I would like to highlight what this research reveals in relation to these contours and their interaction. What is discussed below cannot be considered a definitive perspective on Evangelical Protestant Christianity, but can provide possible avenues for further reflection or attention. I am hopeful that these revelations may be helpful to Christian institutions interested in spiritual formation, Christian institutions involved in teacher education, and other teacher education programs that prepare students from an Evangelical Protestant background.

**The Participants.** As discussed in Chapter Two in light of my experience with TWU students and our teacher education program, the participants came into this study with a strong desire to do what was best for their students. All expressed deep care for their students and respect for the necessity of a School Act that protects students from being evangelized. They were not in any way stealth agents waiting for full control of the classroom in order to impose their faith on children. They even expressed great concern about a mentor who seemed to “cross the line” in a discussion about why boys and girls were different. They believed that in a public school setting it was inappropriate for a teacher to say that boys and girls were different because “that’s the way God made them”.

Although some of them expressed a longing for a future time when they would be “free,” the freedom they longed for was a freedom from the trauma of conflict, discursive
decisions, and suppression /absence of language, not a freedom to convert their students.

I think that as the professional identity becomes so much more natural to “wear” and to be, the way it interacts with your spiritual identity becomes more natural as well. Until they merge? They must, or I can’t be a teacher. To be a good teacher, to be real for my students, I have to teach from who I am. That doesn’t mean I have to state everything I believe, but I must be alive as I teach. (Mariah)

They were sensitive to past abuses of Christianity, but were sometimes very frustrated by being unable to share what was to them a message of hope and healing for students or colleagues in need. Their reliance on words as the only way or a less effective way to share their faith, however, was remarkable and this reliance can also be seen in my own story and research assumptions. From the beginning, veiling was understood as a silencing of words rather than actions. The contour of Evangelical Protestant Christianity that is most closely tied to this reliance is the gradual reduction of Christianity, since the Reformation, to privatized themes or ideas expressed in words and divorced from tradition, liturgy and symbol.

Language and Religion. Karen Armstrong (2009), in her most recent book, *The case for God*, documents the relationship between religion and the use of language. Her approach specifically focuses on the impact of the Reformation and Enlightenment on the way language is used in modern Christianity. She calls the impact a triumph of *logos*, which she defines as reason used to discover and name the world, over *mythos*, which are words used to help people live their lives in a meaningful way. Prior to the Reformation, and particularly in the early growth of Christianity, theologians understood that all words related to God could tell us something true about God, but what was true about God also pointed to what we could not know about God. To speak about God with
certainty rather than faith, was to make God a creature or an idol, to anthropomorphize God, to limit God to our understanding. While ancient Christians chose the word, *logos*, to characterize Christ rather than *mythos*, their understanding of *logos* transcended reason as described by Armstrong and embraced complementary ways of thinking and knowing. Knowledge about God was free from but not separate from our perception and senses. Theologians were those who were “taught by God” rather than those who knew a lot about God. Very few people were named theologians as a result. Throughout history, words related to God have often been compared to poetry and theologians to poets because poetic truth is clothed in symbol and aesthetic form inviting an indwelling of practice and exploration of mystery. The truth about God was expected to be arresting in its beauty. In fact, as Armstrong notes, throughout the modern history of Christianity, it has often been the poets and artists who have called us back to mystery, to the revelation of the hidden depths of this world.

Spirituality in the ancient world was also a matter of the mind with the heart and of knowing and being in a way that could only be learned through constant dedicated and disciplined practice. The practice of Christian spirituality, as in most other religions, also involved some form of *ascesis* of the ego in order to find *ekstasis* or new capacities of the mind and heart. This *ascesis* always included an ethical component because of the dethroning of the ego or self-love. Since the Reformation, and in concert with scientific rationality, the West developed a very different civilization that discarded the need for what Armstrong (2009) calls *mythoi*.

Logos achieved such spectacular results that myth was discredited and the scientific method was thought to be the only reliable means of attaining truth. This would make religion difficult, if not impossible. As theologians began to adopt the criteria of science, the mythoi of Christianity were interpreted as empirically, rationally, and historically verifiable and forced into a style of thinking that was alien to them. Philosophers and scientists could no longer see the point of ritual, and religious knowledge became theoretical rather than practical. We lost the art of interpreting the old tales of gods walking the earth, dead men
striding out of tombs, or seas parting miraculously We began to understand concepts such as faith, revelation, myth, mystery, and dogma in a way that would have been very surprising to our ancestors. In particular, the meaning of the word “belief” changed, so that a credulous acceptance of creedal doctrines became the prerequisite of faith, so much so that today we often speak of religious people as “believers,” as though accepting orthodox dogma “on faith” were their most important activity. (p. XV)

Words as Salvation. This reliance on the verifiable certainty of beliefs also translated into a view of salvation as an event rather than a journey. For most Evangelical Protestant Christians, one is saved by becoming a “believer” through a verbal acceptance of certain ideas about Christianity. It is also through words and ideas that Protestantism has continued the project of protesting older forms of tradition to create new forms in an ongoing fragmentation of Christianity. In a reliance on words that are no longer reticent in their expression of certainty and often not experienced through practices that focus on silence and deep awareness of the other, the Evangelical Protestant faith can become merely its words. Taylor (1989) may classify many of these articulations as inadequate because they have lost their power to bring the source close. Strong articulations rely on the whole speech act rather than just the formulation.

…the most powerful case is when the speaker, the formulation, and the act of delivering the message all line up together to reveal the good, as the immense and continuing force of the gospel illustrates. A formulation has power when it brings the source close, when it makes it plain and evident, in all its inherent force, its capacity to inspire our love, respect, or allegiance. (p. 96)

What Taylor is describing is an incarnational view of the gospel. Our moral conceptions of the good only have power when they are a source of life or become visible in our lives. This is the good news—that God became a person so that we might become like God.

Armstrong goes on to explain why “talking about God is dangerous”, and her analysis closely parallels my own understandings as revealed through this research and my own journey towards a more ancient, yet living, understanding of Christianity.
Although talking about God can be dangerous with regard to your career or your status in the public, it is even more dangerous to *you* as a spiritual person seeking growth. Talking about God, especially with any kind of certainty and divorced from any kind of communal liturgy or practice, puts God in a box, creating a barrier that inhibits a personal encounter with God. If God is an idea that I can manipulate in my mind and with words, God cannot be wholly Other and I cannot move towards this God personally and experientially. I also cannot be entered and transformed. If God is something I have to prove through my reasoning words, God becomes limited to the natural world rather than a transcendent presence in the natural world.

If my salvation depends on correct belief or my ability to match my life to a certain set of behaviours, then I prioritize being correct over deepening my practice and choosing between good and evil over becoming like Christ. If salvation for others is based on the acceptance of correct beliefs, then I must divide the world between saved and unsaved, I must judge before I can love and love only in order to save.\(^{83}\) With such a religious perspective, love is an instrument used to change others, to make them more like me, rather than bring others into being by preserving their absolute right to be other. The result, in essence, is that I eviscerate the life from my beliefs, as beautiful and true as they may be, and I limit my ability to manifest that life in a way that is ontologically brilliant. My beliefs become an oppressive imposition. Beliefs become “trite formulae...to weave a cocoon of moral assurance around us which actually insulates us from the energy of true moral sources” (Taylor, 1989, p. 97). When faith is captive to words, I come to believe that God relies on my words and actions in order to save others. I come to believe that my beliefs work automatically to change my life rather than in the union of my desire for God and God's desire for me. I fail to appreciate the

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\(^{83}\) What “save” actually means in any given Evangelical Protestant context varies, but often it reduces in practice to convincing someone to accept correct opinions or beliefs about God.
soteriological nature of love, to see my love for others as the place where God is. In my efforts to reach up towards the idea of God, I lose sight of God reaching towards me. I can no longer rest in my awareness of someone wholly Other and transcendent, someone who longs for me and creates a longing in me for increasing communion, someone who allows me to participate in creating more love. I fail to realize that to equate my spirituality with love is to find both humility and a path of hope, rather than a path from certain belief to despair. This is the danger that this research reveals and is so much more important to address with preservice Christian teachers than whether or not we cross the line of the secular and non-sectarian in our practice.

Religion as Role Performance. Related to the triumph of certain reason over the mystery of the logos, is an understanding of identity as self-conscious and self-constructing role performance. Even though most Evangelical Protestant Christians would say that they believe their life is a gift and a call, rooted in relationality with God and others, as noted above, it is very difficult to relate to a God who is an idea or force or power rather than a personal Other (Webber 2007; Gillet, 1998). The default way of being, therefore, often becomes the one presented in our culture. We become self-preserving role negotiators, trading our masks as we trade roles and coping as best we can with the conflict between the roles through compartmentalization, distraction, or deciding to choose one role as a unifying role. Our spirituality becomes another role to play and that role quickly becomes foreclosed by the need for the certainty our minds demand.

Pannenberg’s (1983) comparison between Christianity as a theme rather than a foundation highlights how a theme is easily put on or put off but doesn’t easily address or change a person’s life. However, I would suggest that a search for a foundation is also in the certainty business. Our minds like to find things to stand on. The many
efforts within Christian educational institutions to describe and communicate and teach a Christian worldview are also seeking this kind of foundation. A worldview is still a triumph of reason, although it has the potential of being complementary to mystery. It can prevent the development of a listening, receptive or kenotic attitude; it does not automatically become a qualification and transformation of the heart. To have a Christian worldview is often to have another role to play, a certain way of viewing the world and acting in the world. Spiritual roles or spirituality as piety demand our allegiance and define courage or integrity as our ability to match that role, but they provide few tools that really help us do that in our day to day living. Spiritual roles/ideas/principles move us away from being judged/invited/called by the loving presence of the other and from acquiring the courage to quiet our minds so that we can begin to explore our own hearts in relation to the other. Spirituality becomes reduced to morality “that consists only of principles and lacks images, lacks beings that are present” (Evdokimov, 1994). Spirituality that remains locked in “reason” weighs us down with heaviness and self-enclosure, even though it promises us the lightness and brightness of grace.

To identify that talking about God is dangerous, is not to say that God should never be talked about. I agree with Taylor that just because moral orientations and conceptions of the good are difficult to articulate and sometimes dangerous does not mean that silence is valid across the board (p. 97). I also believe that there are many sound educational reasons to share what all religious people have taught and learned about God, particularly emphasizing the common desire for the other, the desire to live the mystery of our lives with meaning and compassion, to have a grateful and sacramental view of our world (Huebner, 1999; Noddings, 2009; Van Brummelen, 2002; Van Brummelen, Koole & Franklin, 2004; Van Brummelen, Franklin & Hilder, 2006;
There are also many inspiring ways to learn about God through words that are germinated in practice, symbol and liturgy. However, I am equally aware that the last 400 years of Christianity have made it very difficult to talk about God without risking the inherent dangers mentioned above. Even within Christianity, words do not carry equivalent meanings. We have moved beyond the tower of Babel and its confusion of languages, to a confusion of minds. We often cannot communicate effectively even when we speak the same language to each other (Evdokimov, 1994). The only possibility of freely speaking with a clear voice is to practice our words, “to become visibly what we are in God’s thoughts” (Gillet, 1998, p.12). Baron von Hugel (1923), in The Mystical Element of Religion, Vol. 1, also describes how to speak with a clear voice.

Only a life sufficiently large and alive to take up and retain, within its own experimental range, at least some of the poignant question and conflict, as well as of the peace—bringing solution and calm: hence a life dramatic with a humble and homely heroism which, in rightful contact with and in rightful renunciation of the Particular and Fleeting, ever seeks and finds the Omnipresent and Eternal; and which again deepens and incarnates (for its own experience and apprehension and for the stimulation of other souls) this Transcendence in its own thus gradually purified Particular: only such a life can be largely persuasive, at least for us westerns and in our times. (p. 368)

Through the incarnation of the omnipresent and eternal, we become a prophetic voice. Prophets speak without wanting to control and without being controlled. Released from the certainty of words, and our need to impose our certainty on others, our minds can find their place in our hearts and our masks can be removed. To veil our egos, renouncing the particular and fleeting within our hearts, is to reveal ourselves as persons.

A Tangled Web. It is difficult to say specifically why spiritual identity was so locked to the notion of voice and role in this research. It seems impossible through this research to untangle the web of culture, biography, k-12 education, post secondary
education, teacher education, church affiliation and teaching, and personal spiritual maturity. These contours can also be found in almost any religious, social or political ideology. Some of the same dangers described above can also be present in Christian practice and liturgy that becomes mechanized and as empty as words divorced from mystery. An automatic qualification or transformation of the heart and mind is never possible. My experience has been that it is always a synergy between the person and Grace. The dominance of these themes may also be largely due to the influence of the researcher at the time of the study and the design of the study. As mentioned above, and easily identifiable in Chapters 1 and 4, there is a linkage between spiritual veiling and voice, and between spiritual identity and role. The choice of veiling as a metaphor arose from an intuitive awareness of the danger of masks, and a longing for integrity and communion, but it still initially encouraged an understanding of identity that was a self-conscious movement between roles and an understanding of spirituality that was an added theme or role. The veil as a metaphor, when it is locked too closely to the negotiation of roles, is questionable as regards its usefulness as a vision that beckons us forward. However, I believe that the fourth interpretation of the veil as an ascetic of love can become a vision that beckons us forward as well as deepens our understanding of how to listen and live and teach more gently in a word-driven world.

Revelations Related to How I Can Best Offer my Life as a Person who Teaches and Leads at Trinity Western University

For there are beginnings everywhere, and there are good beginnings, where you begin with God; and no day is the wrong one to begin upon—not even an unpromising one, if you begin with God. (Kierkegaard, 2008, p. 108)

But he that in truth becomes at one with himself, he is in the silence. And this is indeed like a changing of raiment: to strip oneself of all that is as full of noise as it is empty, in order to be hidden in the silence, to become open. (p. 15)
I am completing this dissertation at the end of a sabbatical. How I carry this research into my institution and my work has frequently been on my mind. This research was not intended to be an analysis of the teacher education program at TWU, and it cannot definitively make any claims or criticisms about that program. The research sample was very small and the students self-selected as participants in response to predetermined research questions that were related to the program but also to the researcher’s practice and experience. Because there is not enough information about the program provided in this research, any claims or criticism I make from my position as faculty member and dean cannot be judged adequately by the reader. However, the very traumatic real experiences of the participants and the revelations of the research in terms of identity, voice, the moral and ethical nature of our practice, integrity, the possibilities related to personal being, and the dangers inherent when talking about God, have raised new questions for me and I am very interested in exploring those questions in my future work with colleagues and students. This section is a beginning exploration of how this research has the potential to change my practice and could have the potential to change the practice and learning within our program. I have come to expect and welcome the reality that knowing leads to more questions than answers. Although I have framed these questions in relation to our specific program, I believe that these questions can also be asked in varying degrees in other teacher education programs, both Christian and secular.

The questions are oriented around specific topics, but the emphasis on these topics does not imply that our program is not already interested in these or has ignored them. It is as though the research is simply suggesting a different kind of attention, and the questions are intended to open rather than critique. People and institutions develop habituated practices that are often founded in good intentions and good reasons, but
they need ongoing reflection in order to remain sustainable and life-giving. Stories and metaphors, as noted above, have a way of helping us pay attention in new ways.

Questions about Relational Practice. The first questions I am interested in exploring are oriented around the relational (or moral and ethical) nature of our practice. Specifically, how do we remember that our teaching is lived out between persons rather than policies, standards, ideas and values? How do we keep this relational aspect of teaching in the forefront of our teacher education program, and when does the presence of our students and/or colleagues become subsumed by institutional practices that are assumed to include moral good, but actually cause harm? How do we attend carefully to the impact of our teaching on the freedom of our students to question, to think creatively, to become persons who teach rather than student teachers performing predetermined roles? How do we invite students into moral and ethical reflection and interactions in relation to the standards of practice, and other norms governing our work, and the day to day decisions that we make as educators? How do we ensure that the moral and ethical nature of our practice is prioritized in our students’ practice teaching and is not lost in performing teaching behaviours or methods assumed to be moral? How are our preservice teachers encouraged to attend to and listen to their students and to struggle with the complexity of the decisions they make? Are there ways, as Campbell (2003) recommends, that we can collect examples of moral/ethical decision making that would build a stronger knowledge base for our students as well as allow them to rehearse or anticipate moral dilemmas? When do we oversimplify or justify decisions that can be viewed as immoral or unethical? How often do we justify our practice based on personal preference or style rather than the learning needs of our students? How do we keep our current and future students in our awareness as we make decisions about our program, our curriculum, our classes, our policies? Sustainability of any institution or program
requires both the valuing of tradition and the questioning of tradition (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). I am interested in finding ways to question our traditions together using a moral/ethical lens so that ideals and systems are held loosely as we discover how they play out among us. Is it possible for faculty within a program to share an internally persuasive discourse that is careful to question in a way that keeps us in an open, coherent, compassionate and creative narrative space?84

**Questions about Identity.** I am also very interested in asking questions about how our program communicates teacher identity and spiritual identity? In particular, how do we use the language of role? Do we encourage our students to perform the teacher role or to become persons who teach? If we encourage students to personalize their teaching, how morally and ethically oriented is that personalization and how does it compare to the understanding of personal being described in this research? What do we mean when we tell our students that we want them to find their own voice or that we want them to connect with their passions? In what ways do we prioritize the notion of being a passionate teacher? How do we define creativity in teaching? Is it linked to moral and ethical considerations? When we introduce teaching metaphors to our students or ask students to create their own metaphors, are we careful to differentiate between a metaphor and a role? Do we encourage them to evaluate the usefulness of their metaphors in light of personal or relational being? Does our program implicitly or explicitly support an individualistic understanding of identity? If we do, how can we develop an internally persuasive discourse within our program that questions this dominance? How does our language implicitly or explicitly objectify people? How do we

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84 Britzman (2003) would answer this question with a definitive, “No.” However I believe that an authoritative discourse based on personal being can move us into a place where we can continue to expand and move beyond our understandings into mysteries revealed by our willingness to remain open to encounter with sensitivity and compassion. We can appreciate the need for our creaturely understandings of truth/Truth as a “…kind of rational force implanted in us like a seed, which by an inherent tendency, impels us toward love” (Guorian, 2002, quoting St. Basil, p. 21).
support students who wonder what aspects of themselves they will lose if they become a teacher or who wonder about the cost of accepting the teacher role as they define it or it is defined for them?

Reflecting on Reflection. Reflection is already a significant aspect of our program and I am very interested in exploring additional avenues of reflection related to the freedom we have to move towards others in attentive appreciation for their being, or away from others in our fearful need to control, self-preserve and judge. In our program, we have always emphasized the communal necessity of reflection, recognizing the potential of reflection to become self-serving and uninformed by other perspectives. We have also valued the history of reflection and have tried to give our students opportunities to develop a wide range of reflective methods such as, technical reflection, reflection in and on learning, critical reflection, biographical reflection, and spiritual reflection. However, I believe this research has revealed that the spiritual reflection we have encouraged could be enriched and moved from viewing spirituality as a theme or foundation, to viewing spirituality as the descent of the mind to a heart that is more and more oriented towards the other, a practical and ascetical rejection of individuality. Spiritual reflection and growth are found in an awareness of our inability to love, not our inability to think. I have been inspired by Yannaris (1984) and his emphasis on the importance of studying the “adventure of our freedom” and I have been generating questions that will support meditation on my own freedom and may also be useful to students and colleagues. These questions are intended to complement other forms of reflection and to encourage creative and open responses to the day to day complexities of teaching. They also prioritize the moral/ethical nature of our work because they are always asked in relation to the other. They may be a place to start when our critical awareness of the dominant discourses in our work becomes paralyzing. I hope they are
written in such a way that they encourage new beginnings and the continuous offering of our lives for and with others, to go beyond what is determined or given to what is possible or personal, to affirm that we are grateful for the other’s existence and their radiance in this world.

*In what spirit are you offering yourself as a teacher today?*

*In what practical ways have you veiled your ego so that the freedom of another to be other was preserved?*

*Who were you able to greet with joy, peace and openness today?*

*When was it difficult to respond openly and lovingly today and why?*

*What creative spaces were opened today through attentive awareness of the other?*

These are very personal questions and cannot be required or added or systematized or assessed. However, they can be encouraged, and I have found that the encounter with the other that is possible in this kind of reflection can be transformative. I am also interested in trying to model this reflection for my students and in creating spiritual spaces with them that help us become open and attentive listeners. I would also like to explore how more meaningful silences can be incorporated into a very full, busy and fairly scripted teacher education program.

**Questions about Certainty.** The last set of questions I am interested in exploring due to the revelations of this research are related to aspects of certainty within our program, or, in other words, the dominating authoritarian discourses that may need some re-examination and re-articulation in order to become places of growth rather than destinations. When do we stop learning and in what areas of our program have we arrived at something that can no longer be questioned? What methods do we prioritize
and use in a way that defeats other methods? Which philosophies or methodologies or pedagogies of education are taught as “straw men”? How does our program support humility, the beginning of wisdom and love? For our program in particular, how do our understandings of what it means to be a Christian teacher limit us in becoming effective teachers of teachers, limit our students’ understanding of what it means to infuse their spirituality with their practice, lock all of us in an idea oriented understanding of Christianity, limit us in our ability to explore fully the impact of Christian spirituality on education and its relation to education, limit our understanding of Christian spirituality and reinforce the triumph of reason over mythos? How have we responded to our students’ expressed frustration about some of the dominating discourses in our program? Do we invite critique in an open manner or are we protective and defensive? Is every student cohort viewed as a unique community requiring our ability to respond to their desires and needs as learners?

**Personal Reflections.** I have many questions, and I believe they are important questions and valuable questions, but they will need to be qualified with a spirit of love for my colleagues, students and our program to ensure they do not become accusations. They are questions that will require patience and time. They are all questions I must ask myself first.

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have found myself metaphorically on my “tiptoes.” I am like the woman on a pilgrimage who discovers that while she can talk about “heavy” things, the important thing to know is how to live in order to be saved (Alfeyeva, 1992). I am very much a beginner in my ability to cross the abyss from self-preservation and self-enclosure to a heart that is so enlarged the whole world can walk in. I understand how dangerous it is to equate my spirituality with love without the maturity and the struggle to become love. It is far better for me to equate my spirituality
with an awareness of my poverty, with humility and with a *metanoia* or turn towards that which gives life and brings life to those around me, that which moves me from heaviness, darkness, fear and separation, to grace, light, freedom and union. I have much to practice, many ingrained patterns to resist. “A dove can find no place to rest on muddy land” (Gillet, 1998).

What I have now that I did not have at the beginning of this journey is a path, one that is well worn by many spiritual teachers and leaders, and this knowledge gives me hope. This is not just any path, for me it is a path of radiant truth. I agree completely with Leon Bloy as quoted in Evdokimov (1994) that it is essential for truth to be radiant. Without beauty, without brilliance, without infinite shine, we would never stop in our path of non-being. We wouldn’t take off our shoes in the awareness that we are standing on holy ground, that we are capable of living our lives in loving presence. This path is also not a new creation and it is a sign more than a solution. We shouldn’t expect new revelations, according to Gillet. God speaks to us

…of things that have been told to us from the beginning. What may be new will be the particular attention given to certain aspects of the eternal truth. The time will come when the deepening of Love will make an irresistible call to the piety of many men…At every moment Love wants to create amongst you yet more love” (1998, p. 15)

I am arrested by this irresistible path of radiant truth and I rejoice in not yet knowing what I will become (1 John 3:2). My intent is to do all I can to remain on this path, to go towards every person and say with my countenance more than my words, “Thou art loved.” The attitude of my heart must quality all of my gestures, and especially my words, so that they arise from attentive listening, the seeing of God in every face, the affirmation of each person’s uniqueness and eternal necessity, and the unwillingness to impose, judge, control, or reject. Against these things there is no law.
CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS ABOUT PERSONAL BEING IN THE PUBLIC SECULAR CONTEXT

Study Summary

This study of the choices beginning Christian teachers make to reveal or conceal their spirituality in a public context arose from the participants’ shared longing to live a life undivided and the assumption that compartmentalizing our spirituality may result in its inaccessibility to our teaching practice, thereby divorcing teaching practice from a needed source of moral wisdom and strength. My key research question was, “What choices do beginning Christian teachers make with regard to revealing or concealing their spirituality in a public setting?” Related to this question were the following sub-questions that probed the context of their choices and the consequences of their choices as well as possible avenues for reflecting on those choices.

- What perceptions influence those choices?
- What role do beginning teachers believe that institutional culture, policy, documents, and/or leadership play in including or excluding spirituality?
- What needs, events, conversations, or interactions provoke or restrict an awareness of spiritual identity in public education settings?
- How does narrative and dialogical inquiry influence the reconciliation of spiritual and professional identity in a public setting?
- What spiritual values/practices do beginning teachers identify as grounding them professionally?
I asked my participants to consider all of these questions by indwelling the metaphor of veiling as a way of holding themselves in front of a mystery and exploring this complex issue in community. They then shared their experiential insights with each other and with me through personal narrative and face to face dialogues. Although the summaries below are brief compared to the elaborations in Chapters Four, Five and Six, they seek to capture the essence of what this research hopes to provide as gifts of thought for ongoing discovery, dialogue and revelation.

**What choices to beginning Christian teachers make to reveal or conceal their spirituality in a public setting and what perceptions influence those choices?**

As described in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, the beginning teachers in this study did make choices to both reveal and conceal their Christian spirituality in a public setting. (Because the details of these choices are already fully described in my earlier chapters, they won’t be repeated here.) However, more often than not, those choices were to conceal rather than reveal, and most revelations were highly conflicted by the context of those decisions, their perceptions about the consequences of those decisions for themselves and for their students, and the idealized roles they were trying to fulfil: the role of pre-service teacher in a secular and non-sectarian setting and the role of committed and courageous Christian. Their desire to do what was right in relation to one role sometimes conflicted with what was understood as right in another role. The idealized and totalizing portraits that they had adopted or created in relation to these roles did not necessarily prepare them for the day to day, moment to moment decision making required by the classroom context. This conflict led them to begin questioning the communal context and the implicit/explicit demands for accountability within that context. Their questioning led to the revelation of additional complexities and they began to seek a place of sanctuary that would provide time to process decisions and
As noted in Chapter Six, this research question holds within it modern assumptions about identity and spirituality. It assumes that identity is a negotiation of given and chosen roles and that identity formation is a process of matching behaviour to those roles, and it assumes that a spiritual identity is only expressed by choice through words. However, if our Christian spirituality is the embodied acquisition of holiness in order to become the presence of God for others, it isn’t possible to choose to reveal or conceal our spirituality. It is always revealed in our relationship with others, and our freedom to become holy for others is only limited by our unwillingness to suspend our own egos. It may be possible and very valid to make choices about the explicit use of religious language in a pedagogical dialogue intended to be educationally communicative or professionally deliberative, however, the use of religious language is not necessarily an expression of Christian spirituality and a stance of personal being would question its efficacy and be “radically hesitant” or highly thoughtful in its use.85

(Huebner, 1977/1999a; Tinder, 1997; Guroian, 2002; Evdokimov, 2001; Yannaras, 1984)

Questions related to spiritual identity that focus on choices engender a discursive mind-locked decision making process that distracts from the ethical, creative and transcendent

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85 See several of Huebner ‘s essays in Hillis (ed.) (1999); Noddings in Jones & Sheffield (2009); Van Brummelen (2002); Van Brummelen, Koole and Franklin (2004); Van Brummelen, Franklin and Hilder (2005); Wolterstorff (2002); Groome (1998) and Wright (2000) for pedagogical/curricular possibilities with regard to the inclusion of religion/the transcendent in public education.
stance of personal being. More fruitful research questions, in light of an understanding of personal being, may be similar to the questions outlined in Chapter Six that focus pre-service teachers on the use of their freedom in relation to others and their ability to create spaces that invite others in to well-being.

In what ways are you oriented towards the other in your practice?

In what ways does the context you are in support your ability to love your students with sensitivity and attention? What aspects of your practice make this love more difficult?

How do you encourage the well-being of your students, inviting them into relational being with you and others?

In what ways do you experience your classroom as a spiritual space, open to questions, wonder and awe?

These questions, although not all explicitly religious in language, are spiritual questions that may provide additional insights about teaching as a spiritual practice and may also create opportunities for spiritual growth as beginning teachers develop an awareness of the use of their freedom (to be self-enclosed or self-emptying). They also have the potential of heightening an awareness of the classroom as a spiritual place, opening them to possibilities with regard to creating space for the transcendent for both themselves and their students (Huebner, 1985/1999b). Schoonmaker (2009), in her recent research about the classroom as a spiritual space, noted that for adults (even those who have lived their lives as religious persons) it is not easy to develop an awareness of the classroom as a spiritual space. Instead, we often miss transcendent opportunities because we are too quick to provide our own answers to the wondering of children, or we forget to be in the moment due to our predilection of filling space with
language and answers or because we are overwhelmed with the pressing urgencies of institutional demands. Questions related to the enhancement of personal being within classrooms and schools may move us beyond a discussion of spirituality that focuses on the separation of church and state and towards shared commitments to making our classrooms and schools spaces that welcome embodied expressions of spirituality and invite dispositions of compassion and wonder in our students. As Schoonmaker notes, teachers who intentionally focus on creating spaces “for children to express their spiritual nature not only nurture its development but are, in turn, enormously enriched” (p. 2729).

**What needs, events, conversations, or interactions provoke or restrict an awareness of spiritual identity in public education settings?**

Although this study cannot be used to identify the needs, events, conversations or interactions that provoked or restricted an awareness of spiritual identity in public education settings comprehensively, throughout our research together there were some dominant themes. With regard to needs, the participants expressed a need to be true to their Christian commitment, a need to meet the needs of their students in a spiritual way and a need to teach their students more effectively. With regard to events, conversations and interactions, awareness of spiritual identity was triggered by interactions with colleagues, crises in the lives of their students, questions from students, and curriculum content. The participants, working with a key question that assumed a revelation of spirituality was the use of explicit religious language, were also very aware of the legislative context within which they worked and were concerned about the possibility of making an illegal decision and/or a decision that could impact their future as teachers. They were also frustrated by the lack of clarity with regard to the top down expectation of a secular and non-sectarian institution. They saw the “line being drawn anew” in ways that sometimes seemed to be an inappropriate use of power or ways that
were inexplicable to them in light of previous experience or context. They were also very quickly aware of their inability to pay close attention to their spirituality in the midst of the demands of their work, as noted above in Schoonmaker’s (2009) research about classrooms as spiritual spaces.

In reflecting back on this question in light of an understanding of personal being, I believe that this question was somewhat intuitively developed and is oriented towards personal being because it is a move away from understanding spirituality epistemologically and autonomously. It assumes that spiritual identity is not something you “check at the door” and that it is somehow embodied and awakened by various contexts. This question also seeks to heighten that awareness. However, I believe the questions offered in Chapter Six and in the previous section may have richer potential. I also believe that this question was somewhat side-tracked by the focus on revealing or concealing spirituality as a choice.

Of key importance, however, is the affirmation that legislation is not a comprehensive solution to the complexities of the spiritual/moral/ethical nature of teaching, and that there are a range of understandings about the concept of secular in schools (Taylor, 2009; Franklin and Van Brummelen, 2006). It is important to know legislation and understand it, but as Campbell (2003) notes, it is equally important to continue to build ethical/moral knowledge as the challenges of day to day implementation are faced. Life is played out on the ground of being and there is never a perfect match between ideals and life. Campbell also notes that this growing knowledge is best acquired and shared in professional community rather than in isolation, a notion supported by an understanding of personal being and the participants’ experience of the need for sanctuary in order to make decisions that reflected spiritual/moral wisdom. However, personal being also emphasizes the need for a maintained focus on the other
as the moral content of our deliberations, that self-emptying and loving attention towards
the other naturally evokes virtues of fairness, kindness, honesty and respect as well as
the democratic goals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

**How does narrative, dialogical inquiry influence the reconciliation of spiritual and professional identity in a public education setting and what spiritual values/practices do beginning teachers identify as grounding them professionally?**

The participants of this study all affirmed that the research process had been a key resource in providing sanctuary with regard to their uncertainty about the expression of spiritual identity in a public setting and moving them forward from a space of trauma or conflict to peace. As noted at length in Chapter Two and Three, identity formation has long been associated with a process of orienting oneself in moral space through narrative dialogue and has been closely tied to the search for integrity in teaching. However, I have grouped the two questions above together because an understanding of personal being would value the narrative and dialogical process within the context of spiritual practices (liturgy, sacramental worship, prayer, fasting, and charitable giving) or, in other words, as a natural outflow of the voluntary donning of the “white habit” (humility, obedience, purity of heart). These practices ground narrative dialogue in embodied communal/personal being and enhance the potential of our ability to dethrone our egos and learn to listen attentively in silence, to become who we were intended to be. To rely entirely on the use of narrative dialogue has the potential of again keeping us locked in an epistemological cycle, in the practice of creating idols rather than becoming icons, in the prioritization of a self-enclosed identity found in ideas and ideals, rather than an identity that is found a free and loving movement towards the wholly other. As discussed in Chapter Six, this research also questions the reliance on foundational understandings of Christianity such as a Christian worldview or Christian perspectives
on the role of teachers or the construction of curriculum. These foundational understandings, while useful and important in building rational abilities to reason about faith, are often difficult to apply to real life and also have the potential of distracting us from our attention on the other. They seem to promise the lightness and brightness of grace but are often experienced as heavy burdens. They quickly become a “butterfly skeleton caught in the web of a spider.”

As the research progressed, the participants also expressed their increased need for the spiritual practice of prayer. This need arose as they found themselves in a condition of poverty, a condition that most teachers find themselves in as they try to match their ideals and role expectations as well as pay attention to the spiritual. (Huebner, 1985/1999b) Their increased need for prayer was a recognition of their need for the wholly Other as well as a metanoia or turn towards the Other and away from a self-enclosed stance of certainty. Personal being understands that life is an ongoing path of repentance. Prayer was the way of making it possible for “the dove to land” providing them with wisdom and strength to walk towards the other, and the hope for a vision of the Other. Prayer of the heart was also the ultimate expression of their freedom to be spiritual in a secular context, to find the Other in their midst, to find themselves in the Other.

Let my long and weary story about You end with a moment’s vision of You. Let my self-deception die, that would have me think that I am something without You, that I am something else outside of You. My ears are stuffed with stories. My eyes no longer seek to see any display of clothing but You, my essence, overladen with stories and clothing. (St. Nikolai Velimirovich, 1999, p. 24)
Conclusions and Implications: Possibilities of Personal Being as a Dialogical Stance in the Public Secular Context

The dominant theme arising from this study and the above conclusions is the quest for “personal being,” an ontological and communal path of becoming a unique person, as an expression of Christian spiritual identity that I have come to accept as lovingly free and imaginatively communicative within all contexts. I have also considered the possibility that personal being is the only ethical stance to be taken in a secular context that seeks to balance the goals of “liberty, equality and fraternity” because of the inescapable moral content found in its preservation of the freedom of the other to be other. 86 I have made some distinctions between this stance and a passive response of withdrawal from a secular context and/or assimilation by that context and/or a dualistic compartmentalization of identity roles, a default position that many religious people may find themselves in when their religious voice is considered marginalized, false and superfluous (Taylor, 2009; Pannenberg, 1989; Guorian, 2002; Yannaris, 1984). I have also tried to demonstrate through my empirical study and engagement with theorists such as Palmer (1998), Campbell (2003), and Britzman (2003) that an ethical stance rooted in conceptions of the good that are epistemologically determined and/or autonomously chosen and realized, has the potential of contributing to the preservation of current concerns in education such as the strong socialization of the practice leading to a lack of change or growth, the difficulty of prioritizing the moral and ethical nature of educational practice within an increasingly utilitarian and procedural context and/or top down legal context, and the loss of personal integrity or “heart” as teachers try to negotiate the identity roles and ideals provided by epistemological sources.

86 This is only one characterization of democratic goals used by Taylor (2009) in his discussion of the polysemy of the secular. Different democratic contexts may choose different words, but most democratic goals would align with similar terms. Campbell (2003) chooses the moral virtues of fairness, kindness, honesty and respect.
In considering how an ethical stance of personal being may differ from an epistemological autonomous stance in relation to these education concerns, I have argued that personal being in no way minimizes the complexities of these issues, but it does change the place and the content of the struggle—the struggle to teach all learners in increasingly creative and life-giving ways, the struggle to be ethical in our practice, preserving the freedom, equality and dignity of all learners, and the struggle to live a life undivided. Within an epistemological and autonomous stance, the struggle remains to match a content of conflicting and totalizing ideals either imposed or created by us. This struggle, as explored through this research, has the potential to cause ongoing fragmentation of our identity or foreclosure of our identity, and limits our capacity to respond creatively and ethically in our practice because it keeps us locked in our self-enclosed minds rather than open to the transcendence of the other. Personal being allows the struggle to descend from our minds to our hearts, the source of our personal freedom, and moves our attention to the other (rather than ideals), so that we can offer in that moment all that we know and are in a priestly or Eucharistic expression of our uniqueness (Evdokimov, 2001; Yannaris, 1984). Personal being is a qualification of the mind by the heart and is a quest for ontological brilliance, a well-being that denies egocentrism and humbly seeks to become wholly other (holy) through a free and loving relationship with the wholly Other, well-being that is a “pure vessel of presence” and intrinsically soteriological in that it calls others into well-being, well-being that is fed the

87 All Christians are called to be priests, to bless as we have been blessed. (1 Peter 2:9; 3:8-12)
bread of angels rather than theological or philosophical stones, well-being that is an unlimited trajectory of growth (Evdokimov, 2001).

Although personal being has been characterized as realized in attentive, humble and prayerful silence over time, rather than in verbal expressions of certain beliefs or agendas of agency, I believe that it also speaks. To become ontologically brilliant is to become an icon, an invitational window of loving difference and mystery, a burning bush. Like a veil that both reveals and conceals, silent presence or ontological brilliance can also create a space for meaning to arise and be discovered. Personal being has the potential of becoming “agapeic”, the paradox of being “powerless yet charismatic” (Guroian, 2002, p. 181). Therefore, in this chapter I hope to briefly relate the expressive possibilities of an ethical stance of personal being to a secular context. How might this stance of personal being, which is particularly Christian in its source and practice, be interpreted and supported in a secular context? In what ways does this stance speak and listen respectfully and freely within a secular dialogue? How does this stance have the potential of creating space for the questions originally asked in this research and possibly transform the questions? To begin, I will look at two alternate conceptions of a secular state described by Taylor (2009), considering how personal being can be expressive in each of these conceptions.

An Eastern Christian understanding of personal being cannot be separated from an ecclesial context. One Christian is no Christian. However, a detailed description of how personal being is born through liturgy and sacramental worship is beyond the scope of this paper. This note is a reminder to my readers that personal being is not an individualist project. It is essentially communal. Although my views are somewhat complementary to Neibuhr (1963) and other Christian ethicists in their rootedness in love for the other, they differ in that they are not a search for a moral stance that excludes reciprocity or mutuality. Eros and agape are distinct but united. “Agape absent eros is itself replaced by a benevolent self-interestedness and finally a God and man denying egotism” (Guroian, 2002, p. 38) See also, Yannaras, 2007; Zizioulas, 2006 for the union of agape and eros. For further understanding of the ecclesial aspect of personal being see Incarnate love: essays in orthodox ethics by Guroian (2002) and For the life of the world by Schmemann (1973).
Personal Being and Dialogue in Relation to Two Conceptions of Secular

Secular as an Historical Inheritance. The first conception of secular that Taylor (2009) describes is based on a traditional western historical consciousness that saw secularism arise in three stages: the institutional separation of church and state, the separation of immanent and transcendent and ultimate denial of the transcendent, and the marginalization of the religious voice. In the West, Taylor suggests that this western understanding of secularism makes room for “good religion,” religion that “generates the right moral motivation” and “refrains from challenging the external order” (p. 1148).

However, he also says that the history of the term, secular, in the West also carries with it the baggage of religion as a menace and threat to the state. As a result there is often confusion between the separation of the “church and state from that of religion and state.” Religions have often responded to this formulation of the secular state by becoming the good religion using a Deist template. The Deist template provides a definition of the transcendent which provides rational reasons for an articulation of public piety that can be accepted by the state due to its usefulness to the state. The use of this template has resulted in Christian churches aligning themselves with immanent agendas of progress and prosperity, or becoming involved in projects of public theology (Guroian, 2002). However, these religious responses have also been critiqued by many western and eastern Christians, including Taylor, for their subservience to the state and/or the loss of the church’s salvific mission in the world (Hauerwas, 1981; Evdokimov 2001; Tinder, 1997, Guroian, 2002).

The trouble is that the separation doctrine perpetrates the secularist notion that the world really does not need the Church or God. It denies that there is a serious connection between religious practice and belief and the conduct or destiny of worldly affairs or even worldly justice. (Guroian, p. 181)

One possible and familiar religious response to the state’s denial of its need for God and the marginalization of the religious voice is to respond in kind—to become
fundamentalist and vociferous, seeking worldly power to impose a new order on earth. However, this response, from an eastern Christian perspective, reinforces a Christian atheism, a belief in the man-God rather than the God-man (Guroian, 2002). A quest for personal being, as understood in the eastern Christian tradition, is comfortable with the separation of church and state, but does not accept the assumption that the world does not need God. A Christian committed to a quest for personal being, seeks to become God’s presence in the world out of a conviction that the world is in need of God and through participation in worship and spiritual practices that enable the person to make God’s presence known. This person believes that God’s presence is itself salvific and prioritizes the one thing necessary, the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Personal being implies a commitment to love that does not control and is not controlled (Sakharov, S. 1977; 1988; Sakharov, N., 2002). Therefore it speaks to the world without menace and focuses on the acquisition of the Kingdom of God within, inviting the “mystical reception of transforming grace”, in order to offer the fruits of this acquisition to the world—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control” (Guroian, 2002, p. 17; Galatians 5:22, 23). Personal being, based on the “kenotic” example of Christ is always invitational rather than impositional, and as a result has the potential of speaking authentically and compassionately. If, as suggested previously, society pays attention to what Christians do rather than what they say, accepting the veil of silence and becoming like Christ is the most powerful voice we can acquire.

Christians on a path of personal being are also uninterested in the Deist template which arises from a juridical understanding of God and results in obligatory piety, reducing morality to rules that must be followed to avoid punishment or gain reward. Instead, a quest for personal being views morality as an act of worship, the only possible response to the experience of being loved by God. The ontological rest provided by the
experience of that love makes it possible for Christians to suspend their egos, be released from the tragedy of their biological existence and open their hearts to love others even when that love may not be reciprocated. The moment love enters your heart all fear evaporates (St. Nikolai, 1 Tim. 1:7). Christians are called to a new kind of love, a love for our enemies, a love equal to the love of Christ (St. John 15:12). Guroian (2002) suggests that what arises when fear is gone is a “mystical courage,” the courage to do the violence necessary to our dominating egos in order to acquire the Kingdom of Heaven within, the courage to be powerless, yet charismatic.

Despite the hostile environment created by the history of secularization in the West, Christian spirituality expressed through personal being accepts and expects the tension of difference between those who live their lives according to other conceptions of the good. However, it also frees itself from conceptions of religious spiritual expression that are either accommodating or menacing in its concentrated effort to provide the world with the soteriological presence of God in the way that God is always present: hidden or veiled yet revealed. While there is the possibility of judgment when there is an awareness of a presence that is wholly other, in the same way that I find myself judged by the beauty of art, or when in the presence of someone I admire or respect, or when I experience the whole hearted embrace of love, it is not a judgment that requires any kind of response or threatens any punishment or promises any reward. Instead it is an invitation to participate and become. As a result, I believe that this expression of Christian spirituality can be supported in a secular context and can speak beautifully, gracefully, freely and redemptively to that context.

Secular Re-Imagined in a Multicultural Public Context. The second understanding of secular that I am considering in this chapter is proposed by Taylor (2009) in his critical response to the understanding described above. Taylor decries the
ethnocentrism of western secularism which inherently excludes other understandings of secular or re-imagined understandings, and makes it impossible for states who do not share a western history to become secular. He suggests that despite our history, our current diversity of conceptions of the good and our broadening multicultural context require an understanding of secular that refuses to accept the delusion (often hidden behind the expressed goals of liberty, equality and fraternity) that there is only one institutional response to secularism—the separation of the church and state resulting in neutral public spaces. He calls this delusion a “fetishization” that prevents us from solving the problems we need to solve, or in other words, finding a way to live together. He believes that the term *secular* can and should change as it is applied to new conditions, and he provides examples of secular states that embrace some kind of distanced neutrality, but also open space for ongoing dialogue.

Such redefinitions start from the problems contemporary societies have to solve, defining secularity as an attempt to find fair and harmonious modes of coexistence between religious communities, and leaving the connotations of the “secular” as these have evolved through western history quietly to the side. (p. 1150)

In this re-imagined conception, secularism is concerned with the “correct response of the democratic state to diversity” rather than the separation of church and state (p. 1153). Such a conception of secular also recognizes the inherent conflict between the goals of democracy and the need for ongoing deliberation that builds the required common political identity, commitment and trust needed by democratic states in order to thrive. Taylor believes that this commitment and mutual trust is renewed through ongoing willingness to “draw the lines anew,” and a willingness to see religious groups as equal interlocutors rather than menaces. He suggests that while there is still need for a neutral language of secularism, like Habermas (2008) he agrees that there is room for religious language in political deliberation as a possible source of truth content, but concedes that this would only be possible if secular people can overcome their inclination to make a
distinction between secular reasoning and religious reasoning, viewing religious reasoning as automatically faulty. This kind of deliberation would also necessitate a willingness on the part of religious people to commit to a reciprocal process (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996).

The two conceptions of secular described above most likely represent a continuum of secular contexts and conceptions in Canada, and I believe that most religious Canadians (and non-religious Canadians with varied conceptions of the good) would certainly welcome the opportunity to help draw the lines anew. However, I also believe that a Christian who is interested in a quest for personal being becomes especially well prepared for reciprocal dialogue and is certainly not adverse to participating in political conversation when it is prudent and when there is the possibility for dialogue between persons in a respectful, equal context. Dialogue that deliberates together to draw lines anew begins in humility, as does a path of personal being. Christians should recognize that they and the church are far from perfect representations of the bride of Christ. They can accept that the world judges them, just as they, by their presence, judge the world (Guroian, 2002). The path of personal being is a path of healing that requires a lifetime. Humility is a turning towards the other with openness, an attentive listening and a willingness to be transformed by the other. It assumes that all of life is for our salvation. The path of personal being also creates space for dialogue because it is open to mystery and recognizes that the game of life is played on the ground of being rather than ideas. As Berdyaev (1960) said, “…every moral action should be unique and individual, i.e., that it should have in view a concrete living person and not the abstract good. Such is the ethics of love. (And) love can only be directed upon a person, a living being and not an abstract good.” Guorian, in his discussion of Berdyaev’s personalism emphasizes the distinctiveness of Christian ethics.
The kingdom of God is not merely eschatological; it is also sacramental and bodily, growing in holiness into eternity. Nevertheless, Berdyaev helps us to remember that what makes Christian ethics singular or distinctly Christian is not the temporal peace or justice it may or may not effect. Other ethics are capable of doing the same. Nor is it the power to arbitrate good and evil in the life of society that distinguishes Christian ethics. Again, other ethics have that capacity. What makes Christian ethics Christian is what Berdyaev calls the work of “healing and regenerating” human nature in each person. (p. 57)

When one person becomes healed, that healing automatically brings healing to others.

*Acquire the peace of the Holy Spirit and thousands around you will be saved* (St. Seraphim, Solzhenitsyn, 1970). The acquired ability to guard the dominance the ego and the growing ability to listen to others in their unique contexts with a creative and prayerful attentiveness become an unlimited source of wisdom that can be shared authoritatively (in the sense of authoring life and in opposition to an authoritarian stance) because of its grounding in experience (Weil, 1986; Evdokimov, 1986).

Personal being encourages an imaginative response that gratefully draws on wisdom acquired lovingly and offers that response on behalf of others. A path of personal being also refuses to categorize people as saved or unsaved, setting up an insurmountable wall of judgment and separation. Personal being, as understood within the eastern Christian tradition, rests in the understanding that we are all saved and that we are all being saved and that we are all called to be saved. It also sees human nature as intrinsically good. Every person is an icon of Christ to be greeted with joy and gratitude since the “honour paid to the icon passes to the prototype” (St. Basil the Great, “On the Holy Spirit”, as quoted in Yannaras, 1984, p. 257). Therefore any dialogue becomes inherently respectful and radically more than tolerant. However, despite their inherently reciprocal orientation to dialogue, Christians interested in a path of personal

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89 Intrinsic good, good by creation in the image of God, does not, however, deny the reality that the image of God in man has been marred by sin (our inability to live lives of well being towards the other). Nevertheless, a torn or stained painting of my son, is still a painting of my son; and an icon of God is still an icon of God and is intrinsically good, no matter how marred or stained by sin it is.
being will always be radically hesitant to participate, recognizing the difficulty caused by their own lack of holiness and the epistemic break that makes language so easily misunderstood.\textsuperscript{90} Instead, they will continually prioritize the path of becoming the presence of God rather than talking about God, affirming again that silent presence is the veil that best reveals.

\textsuperscript{90} This “radical hesitancy” would be particularly necessary when teaching in a public setting due to both the power relationship between teacher and learner, the responsibility to parents with regard to imposing a particular conception of the good that may conflict with parental conceptions, and the learner’s lack of experience and conceptual knowledge in understanding specifically religious language (the epistemic break).
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