Leaders Way Podcast
The Holy Spirit and the Heart with Simeon Zahl

Simeon Zahl: With experience and with the Holy Spirit, one thing I've found, and this is true historically, this is true in all sorts of ways: we tend towards a dichotomy. Either we're all in or we're all out. We're either reacting positively or entirely negatively. And I'm trying, at least in my book, in my work, to create a space, you know, by showing what's in common between what's happening in the prayer book and in a Pentecostal service is the sense of attention to emotion shaping. It's helpful to say these aren't just on other planets; that there is a shared theological-anthropological wisdom somewhere in there. That's where I want to go.

B: Hi, I'm Brandon Nappi.

H: Hi, I'm Hannah Black.

B: And we're your hosts on “The Leader's Way,” an audio pilgrimage from Berkeley Divinity School, the Episcopal Seminary at Yale University.

H: On this journey, we reflect on what matters most in life as we talk about all things spirituality, innovation, leadership, and transformation.

H: Hey, hey.

B: Hey, Hannah. How are you today?

H: I am well. How are you?

B: I am great, actually. Yeah.

H: Lovely. Excellent.

B: Yeah, you know, I'm like non-specifically great today. Well, thank you. My family makes fun of me sometimes because sometimes I'm just happy for no reason.

H: i.e. Golden Retriever.

B: Thank you for taking the words out of my mouth. And so, yeah, sometimes I'm just my Golden Retriever self. It's one of those days.

H: Well, I'm excited today because this episode is one where I get to reminisce about my Cambridge days. Our guest is my PhD supervisor, Simeon Zahl. So I'm just like mentally wandering the streets of Cambridge, daydreaming about punting down the River Cam, thinking about Clare College Chapel.

B: Okay, unpopular opinion: Cambridge doesn't exist. This is like a conspiracy theory that our listeners might be aware of.

H: They might.

B: Cambridge is just like a Harry Potter set somewhere. They take pictures and they put it online and they pay you for reasons I don't understand.

H: It's a conspiracy.

B: On a whole backstory. We have friends, professors, they print degrees, they print and they produce those really cool bonnets that are the envy of every academic everywhere.

H: Yeah, you know, when I wear my doctoral bonnet, mostly what people say to me is, "Wow, you look so cool. I'm really jealous."

B: So I am dismantling the Cambridge myth once and for all.

H: So if Cambridge and the University of Cambridge, I guess, as part of Cambridge, were a conspiracy, who is behind it?

B: Well it would be anyone from any other university who feels a little less fancy. We're all just so jealous.

H: Yeah, sure. Makes a lot of sense.

B: Just speaking my truth, Hannah.

H: I'm also now thinking like, is Sir Isaac Newton a hoax? He never graduated from Cambridge. Because Cambridge doesn't exist. What about Stephen Hawking? Also pretend?

B: Even Hawking. This is really, this is the heart of the theory, right? We want to take down Stephen Hawking. He's just too smart. No one should be that smart. Oh my goodness. As you can see, my conspiracy theory, it's not even half baked. It's like a quarter baked.

H: Oh my goodness. Well, let me tell you a little bit more about Simeon. Simeon Zall is professor of Christian theology in the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University. Or so they'd like you to believe. He's a historical and constructive theologian working in systematic theology whose research interests span from 1500 to the present. His most recent book, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*, is about the doctrine of the Holy

Spirit. And it proposes a new way of thinking about the work of the Spirit in salvation through the lens of affect and embodiment. So if you want to think about, like, emotions and the Christian life, Simeon's your guy.

I am personally really excited about this because as I've been teaching systematic theology this last semester, one question that we keep returning to time and time again is like, who is the Holy Spirit? What is the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit work in our lives? It's one of those really big mysteries of Christian living. So it's something that's really exciting to take a deep dive into.

B: I'm excited for this conversation because I found myself in my work in spiritual direction, my work with students, and maybe like you had in my teaching life, finding myself talking about the Holy Spirit more than I ever had, noticing curiosity in people. And so I think we just have an urgent need to understand this dimension of God that's present, empowering, nourishing us moment by moment, step by step. So who better than Simeon Zahl to help us ask these questions?

H: Yeah, let's go. Well, hi, Simeon. Welcome to the Leaders Way podcast. So excited to have you on.

Simeon: It's great to be here with you. Woohoo.

H: Gosh, there's so many things I feel like we're going to want to talk about together. You have this great book, T*he Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*. You recently talked about the BCP and the heart. I'm going to want to hear all about all of that. The thing that's top of mind for me, because I've been teaching some systematics this term and my students are really curious about the Holy Spirit and ... they kind of feel like they have no idea what the Holy Spirit is, which I think is an appropriate thing to feel. Could we start there? Could you tell us a little bit about the Holy Spirit?

S: Well, I'd love to. Part of the fun of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that there's a little more room to kind of maneuver. There's more debate about how you talk about the Holy Spirit and especially if you want to start talking about the sorts of things the Holy Spirit is associated with in Christian life and practice in the Bible. The Spirit's sort of the more unusual of persons of the Trinity, so, associated with sanctification and adoption as children, but also the gift of administration or tongues of fire descending on people's heads. So the Holy Spirit's kind of fun.

H: Normal stuff.

S: Yeah, totally typical stuff. But I think part of why it's hard, there are two reasons, I think, to why we don't have an immediate sense of what we mean when we say “the Holy Spirit” sometimes. And one is that there's a lot more discussion in the Bible, especially, about Jesus' relation to the Father, especially in John's Gospel. There's a lot of kind of material to work with, but (here) there's less of that. There's some, but there's less of that

with the Holy Spirit. But the other is the Holy Spirit is invisible. The number one metaphor for the Holy Spirit along with dove is wind. Comes like a rushing wind. You don't know where it goes. John 3.8, but also the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost is like the sound of a rushing wind. How do you talk about wind?

H: Yeah, I sort of camped out there with my students for a while, because it seems like the metaphors we use for the Holy Spirit are actually ones that point to the fact that the Holy Spirit is hard to talk about. And especially a lot of these students are people who are planning on doing a lot of preaching. And so when you have to put language to something, you have metaphors to work with, and you want to say something, but you know you can't say everything.

S: Yeah. Well, I have a working definition that might be helpful.

H: Oh, please. Sure.

S: So first of all, another aspect is that the metaphors for the Holy Spirit that are used, there are quite a lot of them. A lot of them are personal. The Spirit is the comforter, paraclete, teacher, especially the more in the Johannine Corpus, the Spirit is sort of a personal agent. But actually a lot of the metaphors are of a natural force. So fire, water, wind are really classic metaphors. And so already we have an entity that is both a personal agent and something like a force. And so already there's a lot of mixed stuff.

But I think one of the best ways to think about the Holy Spirit theologically and practically is basically the Spirit is the presence of God in the world. When the Trinity does stuff in the world, the proper language for describing the agency of God, where the rubber hits the road in human lives and in the world is the Holy Spirit. That's the language we're given for talking about God doing stuff. That's why we talk about the Holy Spirit when we want to talk about special sort of sites of divine presence or mediation. So we talk about scripture being inspired by the Holy Spirit. Church councils traditionally attribute their authority to ... "It seemed to the Holy Spirit and to us," it says in the beginning of each section of the Council of Trent, for example. But also a lot of sacramental language, especially around baptism, is about the work of the Holy Spirit specifically. And then when people want to talk about powerful experiences of God, especially in more charismatic and Pentecostal traditions, they'll often reach naturally for Holy Spirit language.

But what all those things have in common is a sense of the presence, the mediation of God in the world in a kind of concrete way.

B: I was just wondering if you could reflect a little bit historically. Has the Holy Spirit throughout history always been the primary way Christians have self-consciously experienced God? I'm thinking back to some of my historical theology classes and thinking especially about the Middle Ages and the way in which Mary was such a prominent force through so much of the Middle Ages. One thesis I remember reading is that because ordinary Christians weren't encouraged to have a really active relationship with the Holy Spirit, Mary was sort of the way in which functionally the Holy Spirit was experienced in so

much of the Medieval Church. And I wonder if in this modern and postmodern era with such an emphasis on experience, if this is sort of a natural time for the flourishing of the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit. I'm not sure that I have it right there, but I want you to take us a little bit through history, maybe name points where the Holy Spirit is really celebrated and other moments in history where the Holy Spirit may seem to be absent in terms of Christian imagination.

S: That's a great question. So a scholar named Jörg Frey makes an argument that I find pretty persuasive: that the development of the idea of the personhood of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit as a person of the divine Trinity, not just sort of a way of talking about “god-ness,” you know, “god-stuff,” is emerging in the very early church as a way of talking about the presence of Christ in Christ's ascended absence. So that there's the sense of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, there's a kind of sense ... how do we talk about God's presence when we're talking about, really, *Christ's* presence, but he's not physically here anymore. He thinks you can kind of trace that in the Pauline and Johannine corpuses in particular. And so he's sort of arguing that against the idea that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is something that only emerges very late just to kind of fill out the Trinity rather than something that was sort of more natural or inherent earlier on. And I think he's pretty persuasive. It is certainly the case that the idea of the personhood of the Spirit doesn't develop ... I mean, Gregory Nazianzus is sort of the famous person who kind of goes for it and says the Spirit is God, and he has to make an argument for why we didn't figure this out yet.

So that's obviously, it's both a natural progression potentially, but also something new. So that would imply less direct interest sort of in, maybe in that intermediate period. It's fascinating, the idea ... I would think really any form of mediation of God through Mary, through saints, through special sites, through any form of mediation; a way of talking about that theologically would be as ways in which the Holy Spirit is being mediated by means, by instruments, by persons.

And so on. I'm especially familiar with ... So, Protestants have this sort of love-hate relationship with the Holy Spirit. I shouldn't --hate is probably not the right word. This conflicted relationship with especially experience.

H: Maybe a love-hate relationship with the idea of the Holy Spirit.

S: Yes, that's it. Only love for the Holy Spirit. Yes, that’s it. Well, certainly with the idea of appealing directly to personal experience of the Spirit in the way that contemporary Charismatics and Pentecostals do, the way that a lot of Pietists and Evangelicals have since, I don't know, the 17th century or so.

This actually emerged right in the beginning of the Reformation. Luther sort of let the genie out of the bottle and said, you know, these things are not necessarily mediated by the church. And then the radical reformers, the people he called the enthusiasts, said, "Yeah, and God spoke to me in a dream last night and told me that I'm correct about my interpretation of this text on the Eucharist," or something like that. And Luther was like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's not what I meant." And so he has his own kind of

ambivalence. On the one hand, he's drawing on his own experience of God in a kind of direct way. And yet he's also very critical of other people doing it in ways he disagrees with.

So I've argued that kind of there's this ambivalence and Protestantism between these sort of more confessional forms of Protestantism that say, you know, Father, Son, and Holy Scripture; "you want the Holy Spirit just go to the Bible," and kind of are very nervous about subjective experience. And then on the other hand, forms that have been arguably, you know, overly uncritical, to say "Whatever I experienced today must be the Holy Spirit." So that's a very interesting kind of ambivalence or kind of debate dichotomy that reproduces itself in Protestantism. You can find it generation after generation. There's a kind of instability there. Either the Holy Spirit is everything or is very small, very restricted.

So in some ways, Catholic traditions have had a slightly easier time than on that because it's more possible traditionally to say the Holy Spirit can do a lot of cool stuff, but also isn't the only thing. There's more structure in place for that, I think, traditionally.

H: Well, back to my students, I recently had the literal joy of having Methodists and Episcopalians. And I think there were probably ... five other denominations represented in the same classroom when we were talking about this. So one of the Methodists started talking about the way in which theology is built. And I was like, "No, no, no, I need you to say it out loud. Like give me the four, you know, Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience because I need somebody to react." And just like that, one of the Episcopalians was like, "Experience? That's what we're missing. Why don't we get that one?" I was like, "I know. I know.

Church history belongs to us all, A. And B, it does feel like within Anglican or Episcopalian theology there's room in some way for experience being a valid theological category that we can like use to make sense of the world around us. How does that work? Can you tell us a little bit? Like reclaim experience for us.

S: For Anglicans? Yeah. The first mainline denomination that the Charismatic movement kind of entered into was the Episcopal Church. I think in the 60s in California, I have to look up the details again. So there is a bit of a tradition actually. And over here in the UK, a lot of the Church of England actually is super into experience these days, the birthplace of the Alpha course and things like that. But in terms of historically, we have to start getting into what we mean by experience.

H: That's true.

S: Often when we say that what we think is sort of big, dramatic, highly emotional, the sorts of piety you associate with Charismatic Christianity or something like that, or John Wesley, the heartstrings, the warmth, that kind of thing. Or we have no experience at all. It's just doctrine and liturgical practice, right? But of course, any thick account of experience includes the subtle stuff, the dispositional stuff. I mean, to participate in a liturgy is an experience. We can talk about this in a little bit, but this is one of the things I think the prayer book is doing very wisely in a very sophisticated way, is seeing liturgy as an experience-shaping, an affect and emotion-shaping thing, but subtle and over long periods

of time and through seasons, and not just sort of trying to bring about that one big moment. So once you start including subtle forms of experience, then you start to see it's everywhere. Every tradition that gets any traction on human lives that people become interested in, there's something that is experientially compelling in some form or other. So the question becomes, what is it? What is the thing? And it's a certain kind of sense of calm or peace or connectedness to the past or to Mary. These are all forms of experience potentially, but that doesn't mean they're the same as a mountaintop experience or John Wesley's heart being strangely warmed or someone falling over at an altar call.

B: I was really moved by your writing and a talk that I saw online on Theory of Change. So I'm using the nonprofit sort of model from your wife's fundraising experience. I thought that was really helpful. Let's make sure we include that in the show notes. And you describe your kind of affinity for the Augustinian theory of change. And I don't know if you could say a little bit about that because it touches on experience, it touches on the heart. And one of the things that I found really, really compelling that I might have really resisted like 30 years ago, you know, fresh out of studying theology, is Augustine's sense that the heart is hard to change. I've experienced that in myself and others over the years. I was much more optimistic a few decades ago, but I don't know if you could talk about the heart and maybe what you mean a little bit about my theory of change and Augustine's theory of change.

S: Yes. I'd be delighted. So I think I got very interested in emotion and desire, partly through being interested in the Holy Spirit. And I soon discovered, as one does with those topics, that these are things Augustine had a lot to say about. That arguably the category of desire is at the heart of Augustine's theological anthropology, his view of human nature. And there are different Augustines and there are different parts you can cite and so on, but especially in the sort of the second half of his kind of career. But the thing that's interesting about this is he basically says that we always are doing the thing that we want to do and that it's very hard to change what we want to do.

I remember hearing a colleague of mine named Donovan Schaefer who works on this stuff from a religious studies perspective at the University of Pennsylvania. He talks about the intransigence of affect. So the sense of intransigence of human desires that is very hard. And he gives examples of having a political debate where giving people better information, data, arguments is just so poorly suited to moving the needle on someone's political opinions. We all know this, but the same is true of falling in love with somebody, right? If you fall in love with somebody and then someone says, "Oh, you shouldn't, that's that destructive pattern again," you don't care. Love is not something that is intransigent to attempt to change it through ideas, through reasoning, through concepts, right? And this is really true of, you know, what Augustine thinks, I think. But the fundamental issue really in Christian ministry is if you're trying to help people in some way in their lives, that usually involves some kind of change in the sense of just making life better, easier, in some minimal sense, then that involves the changing of desires.

So the question is, how does ministry help someone to change? And I think what I can actually argue in that essay is that every form of ministry has an implicit theory of

change, an implicit theory of how human nature works. And so, I mean, partly what I'm maybe especially responding to there are forms of Christianity that are very focused on long exegetical sermons, that basically the way you change someone is by teaching them a whole lot about the Bible. And I'm all for teaching people lots of things about the Bible, but that is a theory of change that basically is about information rather than desire. And I don't think information is actually very good at changing our desires for the reasons I said. Whereas forms of ministry that appeal to the heart, that somehow speak to us where we feel are likely to be much more effective, compelling, that kind of thing. And I basically say this is Augustine's view of desires. He says basically, sin, self-destructiveness, all these things, these are desires. These are functions of desire, and goodness, holiness is a function of desire. Desire is good. Desires is what human beings were made to do and ultimately to desire God. And sin is when desires are stuck or just in some kind of self destructive way.

So transformation is the healing of our feelings and meeting us in the space of ... sort of emotionally. So thinking about ministry in terms of how is that happening? So that's why music is so important in ministry. Music speaks the language of the heart. Anyway, there's more to say, but that's what that piece is about. But part of what I'm trying to do in that piece is not just argue for a particular position about Augustine and desire and so on, but also just to say, "Hey, in ministry, you're always making an assumption about human nature and you're always making an assumption about how God's grace works. And it's good to surface those assumptions because they're not always explicit. Sometimes the things we're doing are actually at odds with our explicit ideas." And so just being self conscious about how do I think this is going to work? How I think this is actually going to help get through is something that's really helpful to do.

H: So let's talk about liturgy a little bit. We've talked a tiny bit about music, a tiny bit about decisions we make in church. So from outside of a liturgical context, it's easy to think that liturgy is emotionless. I think from inside a liturgical context, a lot of us have experienced emotions in liturgical worship, but can you kind of connect those dots for us? What does the Book of Common Prayer have to do with Christian feelings?

S: Well, I was sort of primed to think about this partly because I spent a lot of time studying the Reformation and basically a lot of arguments that the Reformers are not interested in emotion, not in experience--that aren't true when you start reading what they actually say. They talk about emotion all the time.

H: They're also very emotional dudes.

S: Indeed. I came to think, and probably I teach-- I have a class on the Holy Spirit and we go through, it's really ... I often have ordinands as well as undergrads and ordinands from all different sort of places within the Church of England in this class. And one of the sessions on Holy Spirit and Christian experience is we go through 1662 communion service looking for-- at this point, we're a few weeks in, we've learned a little bit about desire, we've read Augustine, we're doing some different things and sort of just looking for emotion

language, basically. And also just more subtly, what are the ways in which emotion or experience is being navigated? And I think what you very quickly find is that Cranmer and those, the others who were involved, were extremely subtle and sophisticated in their sense of how the prayer book would ... what kind of emotional experience it would create or elicit. So I use the term an affective technology, again, from my colleague Donovan Schaefer. If you read the prayer book services as affective technologies, and it's especially clear with communion, and there were theological reasons to do with Cranmer's view of how salvation works, but that he was interested in helping people not only say the words of contrition or repentance or confession, but to feel it, to feel repentance. And so the great example, the wonderful in the daily office, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts." And so on; that prayer, he's trying to get people to feel a sense of their sin basically so that they can ... then confession and forgiveness can mean something. But he also knows that people aren't necessarily feeling particularly sinful when they walk in. And if you just jump in and say, "Oh, you terrible sinner, you rebel against God," people are not going to be able to hear that. So he starts with sheep. He says, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep." The bar is pretty low to be able to say, "Okay, a little bit of erring, a little bit of straying."

And it's implicitly compassionate. Again, there's a psychology, there's a powerful sort of practical theological psychology here. It's not threatening to be called a sheep. It implies compassion actually. Sheep are not these terrible agents of evil, but they are very stupid. And so it's already sort of saying, "Yeah, whatever erring and straying there's happened, it's like a sheep. You just need some direction, need some help."

H: Not generally malicious.

S: Exactly. And then as you go through that prayer, there's more and more kind of agency and it ends up very strong claim and there is no health in us. But he sort of leads you from a sense of, "Yeah, I can relate to that. Oh, I guess I can maybe relate to that. Oh, devices and desires. Maybe they're devices." That implies a little bit of agency. And so it's kind of getting you into a space where you can sort of hear these things. That's why they used to say the Ten Commandments in 1552 and 62 that you say the Ten Commandments and he said, "Lord, have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law." Very effective, very Augustinian. The response to the Ten Commandments isn’t, "Oh, great. Awesome. I'll do that." It’s, "Oh, only God can help me. God is someone who traffics in hearts." But it leads you through ... the whole center of that service, I think, is in the word comfort. Draw near and take the sacrament to your comfort. “Hear the comfortable words that Christ said.” That doesn't mean lying on a mattress and feeling cozy. It means comfort, consolation. It comes from the German word for "toast" in the liturgy that Cranmer is drawing on in that particular section. Elsewhere talks about the sacrament as being something that is given for our great and endless comfort. You need to have a sense of something to be comforted from. That's the beginning, but the point is to lead you to a place of comfort. And that's what he ultimately thinks that the Eucharist itself, the communion service itself, the climax is actually receiving the Eucharist, and that's where

you feel most comforted. And then the result in the end of the service--and it's one of the bits that he added; he didn't add a lot. He sort of edited, but he adds the part about the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds and knowledge of the love of Christ. That Philippians 4 thing is a Cranmerian innovation.That's the denouement, that's where you're meant to get to emotionally. By the end of the service is a sense of peace. And so he's designed it, but it's also very subtle and sort of underdetermined. You can bring a lot to these words over days and weeks and years, but still there's this basic movement from kind of contrition to peace that I think is very clearly there once you start looking for it, and makes a lot of sense in terms of Cranmer's Augustinian and also Lutheran influences.

H: Yeah, well, it reminds me too of so much of how the Psalms are written, where you can come in this place of feeling devastated and then by the end of the Psalm you're like, "Oh, but God is God." It's kind of a pattern that you see.

S: Luther called them the school of the affections. But I think understanding that about the prayer book service is part of why it's so appealing, because it's not naive about it. You can bring a lot of experience.

H: Right. You can bring your whole life and it can hold it.

S: Yeah, exactly. And it worked unlike a lot of the, even including the ones he was building it out of, some of the continental liturgies-- they've passed away, but this one stood, partly because he was more restrained. He didn't have to hit you over the head with theology all the time the way that some people did.

H: Well, it's interesting too because I came to Anglican Liturgy by way of like mega church. And for me, something that was relieving is I didn't have to feel those feelings to be successfully worshiping, but it's interesting because this is the other side of the, like there are bumpers almost. You don't have to show up and feel the feelings in order to worship, in order to receive. And there's something significant about the rest of the body of Christ worshiping with you and being able to pray with you and for you, but it's also not an emotionless place.

S: And the heart of it is eating, not feeling, you know, at one level. Like there's…

H: Right, right. There's an objective thing happening to your body and you don't have to feel anything in order for it to happen. But it's not, yeah, it's not emotionless either. And if you do come to church feeling a lot of feelings, A) they don't have to be happy feelings, but B) there's a liturgy that holds those feelings and molds those feelings.

B: The word that is really resonant for me that you're mentioning Simeon is “subtlety” or maybe Hannah, as you just described it, this middle path. This might just be reflective of my own, you know, experience in Roman Catholic and Episcopal liturgy. It's where I'm the

most comfortable. But the subtlety is a space where I can really be most receptive. When I find myself in the midst of a worship that's trying to manufacture a sentiment or some kind of affective response in me, I get immediately cynical and resistant. You know, I'm thankful for those folks who really respond to that, but I'm resistant when I feel like the liturgy is trying to do too much to me at once. So I'm appreciative of this sort of subtlety. And I think especially at a moment in time where maybe popular culture has sort of gone all in on experience. It's only experience. And so, you know, this is partly to, I think, a product of my contemplative training. I'm thinking of Thomas Keating. In his instructions and centering prayer practice, he will actually say, "If you have some sort of experience, ignore it and surrender to God." Probably saying more about me than anything else. But I'm just sort of ... feel free to just respond to any of that or be horrified and move in a different direction.

S: No, I think that is, that really is the brilliance of it. If it were just one thing ... I mean, in a way, by talking about this sort of affect shaping, affective technology element, I mean, partly it's because that's not what people often associate with it. It does show that all this use of the word "desire" language actually appears a lot and in the collects, but it's done in this way that is subtle and it isn't hitting you over the head. There's a patience to the way that the language works.

But also, I love the term underdetermination for describing kind of the best of a lot of what's going on with the liturgical instincts of the Anglican tradition, which is that ... when in doubt, say less rather than more. When in doubt, manipulate a little bit less rather than a little bit more, you know, that kind of thing. The sense that that's, in the long run, that will be able to hold life more capaciously and more subtly. And also, there's a ... I would call it that itself though, an affective wisdom that Cranmer is anticipating those reactions in a person and is trusting God to be the One who's working sort of through all this. So I think that's absolutely, and that's why I find it such a relief to go to services that have this liturgy that I grew up with. And I'm often not in those services these days because ... for various reasons. I go to Evensong actually, here, I'm in Jesus College right now. Actually where Cranmer would have learned many of the rhythms of liturgy in the chapel 50 yards away. And at Evensong, you get that sense of a space that opens up that is not overdetermined. I think that's an important part of it.

But we don't want to, with experience and with the Holy Spirit, one thing I've found is that there's, and this is true historically, this is true in all sorts of ways, we tend towards a dichotomy. Either we're all in or we're all out. We're either reacting positively or entirely negatively. And I'm trying, at least in my book, in my work, to sort of create a space, you know, by showing that, you know, what's in common between what's happening in the prayer book and in a Pentecostal service is the sense of attention to emotion shaping. It's helpful to say these aren't just on other planets, that there is a shared theological, anthropological wisdom somewhere in there. That kind of thing, I think, is, that's where I want to go.

H: Yeah. Well, and you talking about being in Jesus College right next to the chapel and thinking through the underdetermination, but welcome that an Evensong space provides.

I saw more successful, I don't really want to call it evangelism, but like church welcome, I saw more successful church welcome in Evensong spaces in Cambridge than in a lot of places in America that we're trying to evangelize. And I think it has to do with that underdetermination. Like you can come, you can expect that not too much will be demanded of you, in the sense that you can actually just come feel the feelings you're feeling, but it's not going to be an affective technology, like a roller coaster. It's going to be an affective technology like a nice walk in the park or something like that, or like a visit to a museum. And I think maybe that's one downfall, if there's a downfall, is that people can view Evensong spaces like museums when actually there's a lot more going on.

S: Well, there's a beauty also, I think there's a beauty and that's really important. Beauty is also…

H: And this is where I was headed was Compline, like everybody loves complen. And I think we're not quick to associate that with an emotional experience or an affective technology, but that's exactly it. People are coming for beauty.

B: Yeah, I want to just totally cheer about this because I had, I don't think I'm betraying a terrible confidence to share that my daughter said to me recently, I really miss liturgy. I miss the ritual. I miss the beauty of it. And I'm really, really thankful for her more sort of reformed, maybe even slightly evangelical experience because it brought her back to church. And I think what she's realizing as she gets a little bit older is that experience of beauty. And the more subtle shaping of one's affective life is, as she gets older, what she's really craving.

S: That makes sense to me. Absolutely. Yeah. I've known people who, especially you go to Evensong or something here and people just don't know what's going on. So they can't even get to a space of sort of calm and peace because they're confused that they're going to stand at the wrong time or something like that, that kind of thing. But it doesn't take much and just a little bit of help, a little bit of sort of liturgical guidance can overcome that very quickly. And then there's just so much … yeah, the beauty is crucial.

H: Well, I also just to kind of circle back, love that you're describing it as an affective experience that takes place over a long period of time. It's not that every single church service in and of itself is going to be like palpably transformational. It's the experiencing that liturgy over and over and over and going through that emotional arc over and over and over is going to help you or mold your desires to turn toward God. And I'm thinking of some more Augustine, and I think it's especially in his sermons, he uses a metaphor of like turning your face from looking toward the ground, toward looking to the heavens. And that's not something-- that metaphor doesn't lend itself to thinking like, "Oh, at the end of every church service, I'm looking up and then by Saturday, I'm looking down. And then on Sunday, I'm looking up and then by Saturday, I'm looking down." It's like over the course of your life, you turn from being; this is the way he's thinking about it is like a beast looks at the earth. And that's kind of the disposition that we end up with, but we want to be looking

toward the heavenlies and kind of tap into the divine within ourselves and over the course of our life, be aiming our desires toward God and not just toward the earth. And that's...
S: It's counter-cultural to do something that actually takes years and decades, a lifetime of pilgrimage.

H: A pilgrimage.

S: I want it now. I want it... I don't know, feel everything right now or else I'm going to move on. We can barely...

H: Or like, is it not working?

S: Yeah, trusting. And again, that takes away the sense of just human agency being the only thing also. When you're dealing and only God can really deal well with scopes of... We can pretend that we're in charge for a little while, but not for weeks, but not for years and decades.

H: Yeah. Yeah.

B: I wonder how this idea that the spiritual life really is about training the heart and training the desires, how that shapes your idea of theological education, especially given that you're training ministers in the church or you're training clergy. And theological education sort of classically... Now I'm going to overstate this, but, so forgive me, but it's been about cramming as much information over three years into the brain as possible. Maybe there's some prayer, maybe there's some sort of worship live, maybe there's some spiritual direction. But the primary thrust has been sort of classic academic work. And I wonder, with your sort of interest and focus on the heart, how has that shaped your training people for ministry?

S: Oh, that's a lovely question. I'm in a funny environment where I'm generally teaching in the Cambridge University Faculty of Divinity, which is not a confessional space in any conventional sense. However, I'm teaching Christian theology. And especially as you go further along, many of the students, if not most of them, are interested in advanced Christian theology class for reasons to do with their own formation. And that's especially true of ordinands, who we do, I do have a third of a class or a quarter of a class at any given time will be from Westcott House or Ridley Hall.

So this third year paper on the Holy Spirit, I mean ... there's only so much you can do in the classroom, especially a classroom environment that is not really... Where you can't sort of... You're not meant to pray, for example. Or go worship... Say, "Hey, let's all go worship together and then reflect on it." I can't do that in this context in a way that maybe I could in a seminary context.

So I see, for example, that class as partly creating space for people to articulate their concerns. So there is a slightly therapeutic... When you're talking about where the rubber hits the road, experience and what really matters, how ministry works, where the

Holy Spirit is, people bring a lot to that. And so a seminar is a much better environment for that than a lecture, because people can actually talk and they can voice things. But then to give people categories that are useful, that are capacious, that are underdetermined, that they can take with them away just to think about just one way or another, wherever you're coming from exactly on the kind of candle or something. Just to say that in doing ministry, I'm trying to help create an experience that is helpful and consoling to people over time. Everyone can relate to that. So even just putting it that way, I think, is helpful to some degree. But I do sort of joke that the worst way to change a heart is through academic lecturing, getting people to read stuff. But that's also why we're very fortunate to still be doing almost everything residentially. A lot of grad programs in the UK, including Nottingham, where I used to teach, are non-residential. And there's all sorts of good that you can do that way. But when you have a community, we have a postgraduate community who comes to seminars. I mean, Hannah, you know this very well.

H: I do.

S: You're living together. You're going to the pub together, not just to lectures together. You're able to model things for there to be a personal, affective, embodied dimension that just would be absent another. And so I take that very seriously. I think the collegiality side of things is vital for learning, including post-grad creativity. You know, if students aren't talking to each other and feeling happy and known and like there's something exciting going on intellectually that they can take part in, then the work is going to not be as good. So I'm conscious of those things, especially I think probably with post-grads. With the ordinands, I just want them to take away the point about the heart. Just think about hearts and don't assume that people will change easily. And then my work is done.

H: It's funny. I hadn't really realized how similar our contexts are because we are a seminary within a university where the classes that all of the seminarians are taking, (which is American for ordinand for our listeners who are lost in translation). But yeah, similarly, the classes are technically non-confessional, but then we have a rich life of prayer where students are going to morning prayer and celebrating the Eucharist together on Wednesday nights.

S: Does it work? Do you find that you're able to hold those things together or what are the challenges?

H: Well, I think our students feel that tension, and I think it's not a bad thing, but it does remind me of my own experience of Clare Chapel being the heartbeat of my spiritual life, and then kind of the divinity faculty at Cambridge being where I would like let the pieces explode. And the reason I could hold cognitive dissonance and tension is because of BCP liturgies being the heartbeat of my experience. And then the other thing is that we're always talking about how there are increasingly few residential Episcopal seminaries in the United States and we're sort of one of the ones holding out. So similarly, it's worth thinking about

the benefits of that, even though I personally totally get why one might need to be at a seminary remotely.

S: Of course.

B: And I think the goal that we pointed all of this at is that integration, right? In the mind, the light of the mind and the life of the heart. And I think the truth is that some folks will hide in the life of the mind and have a ridiculously underdeveloped affective heart space, right? And vice versa, right? Some folks want to hang out in group therapy and not do any theological reflection. Of course, the magic is when we can do both and bring both into conversation. I think when we're at our best, I do think we do that. But I think it's a constant balancing act and we're always needing to tweak and reconfigure depending on the year, depending on what courses are being offered in a specific semester, where we're at in the world. So I just think we always have to be recalibrating.

H: Well, it's hilarious to be having this conversation out loud on the podcast because this is how the Brandon/Hannah dynamic works. I have my theologian friends that I bring on the podcast and Brandon has his leader friends who are thinking about more of the heart space and interpersonal dynamics. But yes, balance, balance.

S: Hannah, I can't help but think, and I love the university where I work, but that in fact, what you were describing about on the one hand having the faculty of divinity, on the other hand, having Clare Chapel, those are both part of the university.

H: Yes, exactly.

S: The university was built ...

H: ... to be exactly like that.

S: For exactly that purpose. And also just the more generally, the collegiality of people living and eating together. I eat lunch every day with my fellow faculty members from across every discipline in the university, every single day. It's just part of the rhythm of life in a way that derives from monastic life in a direct line. It is good for the life of the mind to be connected to the life of the body and the spirit.

H: Turns out the body's involved. Oh, man. Well, Brandon and I think a lot about hope on this podcast. I kind of want to ask you a question about hope before I ask you about your own hope. Hope seems to be emotional. What's the deal with that?

S: Well, I've had one of the privileges of being ... supervising doctoral students, is that you get to learn things through your doctoral students work as I've learned so much from you.

H: I know where this is headed.

S: One of my doctoral students whose name is Hope is working on the theology of hope. And it's particularly in John Calvin. And what I've learned from her, I guess I'm not totally surprised, but is that hope is a little bit like love in that it is not less than an emotion. As in, if you had a concept of hope that was never felt, that didn't get any traction on life, that didn't make it easier to deal, to move forward, to have a horizon in your real subjective reality, then I'm not sure that that's really hope. And yet hope has a content. Hope isn't just generic. Sometimes in movies, they talk about faith in a very, very generic way. What is the content?

H: Yeah, what are we talking about?

S: What are we having faith in? And I think it's the same thing with hope. There needs to be hope *in* something, hope that has a rationale, that's at least emotionally plausible. And so I think hope is one of those things that really brings together the affect. You could say it's a highly sophisticated affect and that it has a lot of cognitive kind of stuff involved. That would be one way of putting it. But I also wouldn't want to reduce hope just to the feeling of hope. Because we hope without hope. Surely that's describing some sense of hope precisely where there's a lack of feeling of hope, however exactly we want to talk about that.

But I think hope is absolutely vital. I've been more interested in the kind of Christian metaphysics and these kinds of things that I used to be a little more... have less patience for in my theological career. But partly because structures of hope that make sense. A world that is created good by God. And salvation, the work of God to save, to repair a good creation that's gone wrong, is something that is future-oriented. And so to have a plausible hope in a world that often feels hopeless is, I find that I'm very much helped by thinking theologically about a world where human agency is not the end of the story.

H: Yeah, what are we hoping for?

S: Yeah, well what are you, what are we hoping for? I have an answer.

H: Yeah, give us your answer. Give us your answer.

S: Ultimately, I've been working on a book on the doctrine of sort of sin and the fall for the last three years. And so I would, the object of hope at the broadest sense is of a world that is healed of all of its brokenness. And at every dimension of human life with God, with each other, with creation. I mean, that's massive, that's maximal, but it's something that is rendered possible, I think, in a world that has God in it and was made by God. So that's the bigger picture. I'm interested in theology in the way that a lot of times people seem to not want to focus on the hope of eternal life. Yeah. It's become something that's ... people just don't want to talk about as much. And I think that's a very interesting fact.

H: Yeah, I have recently been thinking about how we could use a more robust picture of what we mean by that, if only to help people notice that, I mean, you know, we've been talking about how we imagine the world together for like four years now. And I think when people think of heaven, there are images that come to mind. Sorry, Brandon, I think some of them have come from Italy. And we're thinking about like bare-butted cherubim, and that's just not, it's not helping to capture the imagination in an emotional way. Whereas I once had a college professor be like, "Well, you can't hike Half Dome in this life, then you can hike half dome in the life to come." And I was like, "Well, I don't ... maybe."

But that's to say we could use a more robust picture of what it is that we're hoping for when we're talking about the end of all things, and creation being healed, and the new heavens and the new earth, and our relationship with God, because it's not actually a boring thing. But what is it?

S: The way I like to think about it, I don't know, and I try to teach it a little bit, is that whatever it might be, it has to be the maximal form of the things that you already think are good.

H: Yes. Yes.

S: If goodness is from God, which is good Christian metaphysics, you know, anything that's good, we only know it concretely through real things: through that relationship I have with my kid, through that place that I love from my past, through a part of my life that I reflect on with great gratitude, through something beautiful, you know, the goodness and all those things. Augustine has a bit on this in *De Trinitate*, trying to talk about the concept of truth or the concept of goodness. He almost gets flashes of it only by thinking about particular forms. And that means a lot to me, that whatever it is, it will be the .. nothing good is lost. I mean, everything that I like about this world will not be gone. Or at least the thing that is their real source.

And so that's why people say, "Do dogs go to heaven?" And I was like, "Well, if there's anything that's good about your relationship with your dog and your dog's existence, it will persist and be maximal." The details, you know ...???

H: Right, right, right.

We're back to your experience in the sense that we only understand the world around us through our own experience. And so those instances, it makes sense that we focus on them, because that's what we can take in of goodness, truth, beauty, love, God.

B: The dog in heaven may be the most important thing you've said to some people. I think this is often the question that comes up even in, right, Hannah? You were just saying a student asked you this last week. It comes up in class all the time.

H: They were wondering how the bees are saved. Yeah. I feel like we need to ask that final question, though. We've talked about hope, but now we need to talk hope. Simeon, what gives you hope?

S: What gives me hope? When I drill down into the details of my actual daily life, rather than the world as it sort of spews out through my phone, you know, the world of my actual kids and my actual career, my actual students, the rooms I go in, the conversations I have, the relationships that are real, I find it easy to be optimistic. So optimism and hope are not the same thing, but I find it, you know … the hopelessness comes when I'm thinking in a bigger picture. And that doesn't mean we shouldn't think in a bigger picture. A lot of things you need to, you know, you don't want to just hide your head in the sand. But watching a kid grow up and ask more interesting questions than you're asking and have, bring things to the table, you know, that you just, when kids are little, you don't realize that later, they're going to really bring stuff to the table. And you're like, Oh, wow, my kid just recommended a song to me, you know, by Radiohead that I'd never heard that's way better than … that I didn't know existed. Like just that sense of the possibilities that emerge when you when you look, I guess, especially with kids.

But I also want to say I gave a talk about this a few months ago about the power of a Christian view of creation as created from nothing and therefore as good, as all as from God and going to God and and therefore all badness as goodness that is a potential object of of repair, as opposed to a Manichaean worldview where you deal with bad things by annihilating them, because they're intrinsically evil rather than a broken good thing. I find the image that that sort of classic, I would say back from Athanasius, it's in Augustine, it's all over the place. But the image of the world as fundamentally repairable because it is good. I really do get a lot of … I think that's so much more interesting, an idea, a way of managing realism without hopelessness, and I get anywhere else. And so I don't want to be a Manichaean and I don't want to be a nihilist.

H: Well, it's interesting, too, because you're talking about the stories or maybe the story that we get from the news. And I think that's something weighing heavily on a lot of our minds. You know, there are facts about what's going on in the world, but the story isn't necessarily the story of Christianity, which is a story of hope and a story of good things gone wrong and corrupted, but that are in the process of being healed and restored to good, maybe *and then some*, depending on how we understand the Christian story. And so that's a good reminder that the things we're being mentally attacked by on the daily, we can actually reframe and understand as part of this story of hope, and it's not a naive thing to be feeling hope for the world, for humanity, for creation, for our dogs.

S: You have to kind of earth it a little bit. You have to not just jump there immediately, you know, and like say, you know, not notice the bad stuff.

H: No, it's true.

S: I think there are ways of doing it too quickly, but I…

H: Agreed. Agreed.

S: Nevertheless, I think it's a powerful answer.

B: What a rich conversation. I mean, I'm so thankful.

S: Well, thank you both. It's been wonderful to chat.

H: It has been. It has been. Thanks so much for taking the time.

B: Thank you for listening to The Leader's Way. We hope you were encouraged and inspired. To learn more about this episode, visit our website at berkeleydivinity.yale.edu\podcast.

H: Rate and review us and follow the podcast to make sure you never miss an episode. Follow Berkeley@Yale on Instagram for quotes from the podcast and more.

B: Until next time ...

H: The Lord be with you.