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The (He)art of Personal Narrative: An Essay on Where We Find Ourselves

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The (He)art of Personal Narrative: An Essay on Where We Find Ourselves

You Are Invited to Attend a Department of English Faculty Lecture

With Professor Nick Olson

Friday, February 3, 10:30—11:30 am, DH 4075

Abstract: Judging by the collective insight of creative nonfiction craft books and the proliferation of self-absorbed memoirs, it would be reasonable to assume that the underlying assumption of many contemporary memoirists and essayists is that things are reducible to the way I see it. It may be that something about the art of personal narrative has gotten lost in translation, and it may be that it’s us. To understand our situation well requires an ethic of authenticity enlightened by revelation. Yet, even we evangelicals have often failed to offer a subjectively rich, alternative vision for making sense of our daily experience in the world. Our theological language and practice too often thins worldly experience down to an individualistic practical reason faced simply with revealed data ensuring salvation. However, if the art of personal narrative is the art of seeking understanding, then even Christians would do well to reflect on the Emersonian question: Where do we find ourselves? I propose that an aesthetic which takes seriously the relationship between logos (John 1) and wisdom (1 Cor. 1) in Christology and which draws upon the poetics of revelation envisioned by Gerard Manley Hopkins (“world as word”) is a great place to start for the art of personal narrative.

Bio: A graduate of Liberty University, Professor Nicholas Olson has taught English at Liberty since 2013. Before coming back to Liberty, Professor Olson wrote for several publications including Christianity Today, Books and Culture, Christ and Pop Culture, and Curator. For more info see http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=32126.