

# LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

## 14a The Sanctification of Space and Time

### God and the Space-Time Continuum

It was, of course, Einstein<sup>1</sup> who accustomed us to think of time as the fourth dimension to the three perceptible to us as “space.” If I walk diagonally from the nave and ascend into the altar I am in Einstein’s terms following a path through space-time. There is a grid of three spatial dimensions to traverse and a timeline measuring how long it took. We like to think that there is a fixed reference point for all of this ... a place and time that we could call “ground zero” ... against which all movement could be measured yet we now know that there is no such point. Space-time is in the eye of the observer and is profoundly affected by both his relative motion and the force of gravity.

So, space-time is a mass-deformable grid, something not fixed and ultimately dependable at all. As a relative *measurement*, it truly has no significance for humanity other than that which helps us to negotiate and even manipulate this world. As a *context* for our mortality, it has, of course, a tragic aspect. The iron law of our temporal march towards death seems to be the only absolute. There is nothing life-giving about space-time thus conceived. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann reflects that this debased reduction of time to chronology is reduced to a profound sadness, a sadness that can have no place in the life of the Church. In one evocative image he describes this conception of time as “nothing but a line of telegraph poles strung out into the distance and at some point along the way is our death.”<sup>2</sup> In this account of life our allotted span is merely a deferred execution, the remembrance of which many anaesthetise with self-induced pleasure. By contrast, a Christian understanding of time sees eternity in God as a redemptive and transformative dimension both beyond the created order and breaking through into this fallen world refashioning it.

If the Christian calendar, and we might add, liturgical space, is simply “plugged” into this naturalistic conception of time, then there can be no life or joy at all. The feasts of the Christian year and the daily cycles of prayer then become mere adornments, more or less irrelevant, as we move towards our inevitable end. At best they become audio-visual aids to the remembrance of the Christian story. Once one knows why something is done or how it is to be accomplished in an exclusively naturalistic sense, transcendent purpose and transformation is rendered meaningless by such naturalism. This is unacceptable from the vantage point of Christian hope in God. The denial of teleology is in fact necessary to the atheistic project.

A Christian conception of space-time, however, whilst not denying the more limited insights of natural science, moves beyond this account to space-time *consecrated*, that is set aside

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<sup>1</sup> For a simple introduction to Einstein’s theories of space, time and gravity consult this web page: [http://www.guidetothecosmos.com/present\\_einstein.htm](http://www.guidetothecosmos.com/present_einstein.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1973), p. 47.

and offered to God as a place and a time of the “eighth day,” the New Creation of the joyful Pascha, Sunday. This awareness of space-time as consecrated first appeared in Jewish apocalyptic writing in the inter-testamental period<sup>3</sup> providing a rationale for the Christian reference to the post resurrection world.<sup>4</sup> The seventh day remains for the Orthodox the ancient Sabbath, a restful celebration of God’s good Creation and His goodness in Creation. The eighth day, however, is dominant as the New Creation actualised by Christ’s “trampling down death by death” in his resurrection from the dead.

Therefore, the marking of time in the Church is no mere linear measurement nor even a pedagogical framework for the teaching of Christian faith. All this is *chronos* – the inexorable arrow of time. What is central in the Christian understanding of space-time is rather the *kairos* of God ... His fitting intervention in the world which is especially manifest when the Christian community gathers in His name to make Eucharist—to give thanks. It is the same with space. Church architecture and design indeed has a functional and aesthetic aspect, but this is subordinate to the disclosure of God in such a space--the glory that fills the Temple. Space-time then is not a prison with us on the inside and God “somewhere” else. *This world* is the sacred arena where all things are made new in the Kingdom to come.

The consecration of space-time is not, therefore, the adding of something allegedly supernatural to mundane time. It is not an irrational magical incantation rendering the natural aspect superfluous. Consecrated space-time is where the transformative intersection of God’s Kingdom, His Son and His Spirit, with a good Creation takes place so that space-time itself is made whole and better still by Christ’s undoing of corruption and death. When the faithful participate in this divine life, they are not taken out of space-time, but rather they are joyfully immersed in its true nature and destiny, indeed its original and naturally created purpose, disclosing the Life-Giving God who loves humankind. Against such a standard, both time as measurement and space as a grid are small beans indeed!

### **From Glory to Glory**

In the lecture on the Eucharist we saw how the principle of *anamnesis* works in Orthodox worship. Through anamnesis in the Holy Spirit the past AND the future become present. This is no symbol or psychological device. Salvation time stretching across all eternity into and out of the life of God collapses into the “now” or “today” of the celebration. This eternal “now” for which we give thanks “today” is the transformative intersection of the Kingdom of God breaking through into this world, healing the sick, raising the dead, imparting beauty, holiness, divine glory; restoring Creation to its original nature and purpose. Every liturgical celebration in the Orthodox Church is permeated liturgically by the sense that it is *now*, *today*, that the Kingdom is breaking into and refashioning this world. The New Creation is not merely being remembered (*chronos*), it is being encountered (*kairos*). George Mantzarides writes:

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Enoch 33:1

<sup>4</sup> Epistle of Barnabas 15:8-9

The body of Christ surpasses time and space and joins all its members in the triadic communion where all things are present and live in the Lord. Within the body of Christ, namely in the Church, there is neither lost time nor lost people. Whatever God did in the past for the salvation of the world exists always as present and can be made accessible to each person. .... Distance of time and place are annihilated and all things become present in Christ. Just as Christ as the Lord of glory is beyond time and place, so too whatever belongs to his body or relates to it also surpasses time and place and is preserved eternally present ... <sup>5</sup>

This is no less true with the fasts of the Church than the feasts. Every voluntary sacrifice in love both in worship and in our personal asceticism or spiritual labour, by the means of repentance, can be a personal Pentecost, the “now” of the coming of the Holy Spirit. As Mantzarides says, nothing is lost in God.

Space-time is consecrated liturgically directly as well as with reference to salvation history, both present and future. This is principally achieved by the celebration of Sunday as the Lord’s Day of Resurrection, a little Pascha and the arrangement of feasts and fasts across the year referencing both the falling asleep of the saints, their true birthdays, together with other days artificially designated as reference points for the gospel narrative (e.g. Christmas).

Many heterodox Christians, who have lost the awareness of liturgical time, complain that we cannot know for sure when Christ was born; but this misses the point entirely. *When* Christ was actually born, (the day, the month, the year) is of little concern to Orthodox Christians. What matters is how the celebration assists the mission of the Church. In the Roman Empire this usually and quite legitimately involved the replacement of pagan festivities with Christian ones. We do not need to be apologetic about this. The Church redirects that which is common and in some senses “good” to Christ.

In terms of time, therefore, *kairos* time, the Church offers its prayer as woven into the very fabric of each hour, day, week and year. In this way God-in-*kairos* redeems the world-in-*chronos* and nothing is lost. The feasts and fasts of the Church fulfil this function across the whole year and in each part; and there are yet more layers of consecration in each day across the hours and throughout the week across each day.

Each day begins of course at the conclusion of the former, but in the Orthodox Church this is not midnight (a rather arbitrary division) but sunset or 6 pm. The hours of prayer begin a proper 12 hours later at 6am or sunrise. The first liturgical offering at the First Hour or 7am is followed by the Third Hour (9am), the Sixth Hour (12noon), the Ninth Hour (3pm) and the Twelfth Hour—at which Vespers is set to mark the beginning of the day, (6pm) and upon which the lamps are lit. There may then be Compline before retiring to sleep and the Midnight Office to prepare us for Christ’s coming again. The full liturgical cycle may only be

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<sup>5</sup> Fr. George Mantzarides, *The Divine Liturgy and the World* in “The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, Vol. XXVI, Number 1 and 2, Spring-Summer, 1981 (Brookline, MA).

offered in the monasteries, but pious Orthodox Christian families will try at least to keep some of these times.

In the cycle of the week, each day is given a special theme. On Sunday of course, being the “little Pascha,” it is always the resurrection; on Monday, the archangels, angels and angelic powers; on Tuesday, St. John the Baptist; on Wednesday, the betrayal and passion of Christ, thus this is a fast day; on Thursday, the Apostles and Church Fathers; on Friday, the Crucifixion of Christ—another fast day; and Saturday, the holy martyrs and the departed together with the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Prayers for the dead are offered on special Memorial Days before Lent and Pentecost.

What applies to sacred time in liturgy also applies to sacred space. Sacred space in the Orthodox Church is neither magical nor supernatural nor disconnected from space as described in the natural sciences. It is a focussed disclosure of how the fullness of God is, and shall be, as St. Paul wrote: “all and in all.”<sup>6</sup> Even the furniture and architecture of the temple are designed to be conducive to an encounter with God and the journey we all take from the fallen world to the New Creation of the Kingdom of God.

The first theologian to offer a considered and extensive reflection on the use of sacred space was St. Maximos the Confessor. In “The Church’s Mystagogy”<sup>7</sup> he explains how the altar and nave constitute a salvific movement backwards and forwards in the lives of believers, oriented towards the Kingdom and union with God.

Orthodox Christians cannot, therefore, afford to be careless (that is, without care) in relation to consecrated space and time as they prayerfully approach the Divine Presence. Those who cannot recognise the holy in the particular (for example, in the icon corner, in the Holy Mysteries, etc.), will never be able to recognise God universally. The particular presences of Christ are indicative of God’s condescension toward us in the Incarnation and also by extension in the Holy Spirit, both within the Church and in the Sacraments, albeit in many different ways.

The Church’s sanctification of space-time, therefore, is both comprehensive and highly realistic. This sanctification envelopes the whole world in the Kingdom of God by presenting a synaxis or gathering of all the saints in and by the sanctifying Spirit. It is both a personal and communal Pentecost, painted both large and small on the canvas of space-time bringing salvation both to humans and to the Cosmos.

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:28

<sup>7</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, ‘The Church’s Mystagogy’, Ch. 2, in trans. G.C. Berthold, *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York, 1985), pp. 188-9.

## Homiletics

### 14b: Modes of Learning

A mode has been succinctly defined as “a way of doing something, or of living, acting, happening, operating, etc.” So, the basic issue we are considering tonight is: What and how should we learn? Or more challengingly: How can we improve our ability to learn? Good teachers do learn themselves and consistently improve their ability to learn; however, preachers and many others are often not as committed to improving their ability to learn. It has rightly been said that, “At the start of our professional life, we are all learner drivers.”<sup>8</sup> That means as teachers and preachers, we can be dangerous to others; and unlike learner drivers in the United Kingdom we are not marked with a red “P” to indicate that we are learners or a green “P” to indicate that we have just passed our driving tests.

#### The Overwhelming Breadth of Learning: What Do We Seek to Learn?

Howard Gardner, Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, initially proposed a theory of multiple intelligences with seven types of intelligence:

**Linguistic intelligence** involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. This intelligence includes the ability to effectively use language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically; and language as a means to remember information. Writers, poets, lawyers and speakers are among those that Howard Gardner sees as having high linguistic intelligence.

**Logical-mathematical intelligence** consists of the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically. In Howard Gardner’s words, it entails the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically. This intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.

**Musical intelligence** involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms. According to Howard Gardner musical intelligence runs in an almost structural parallel to linguistic intelligence.

**Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence** entails the potential of using one’s whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements. Howard Gardner sees mental and physical activity as related.

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Smith, *The Churchill Secret KBO* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), p. 49.

**Spatial intelligence** involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas.

**Interpersonal intelligence** is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others. Educators, salespeople, religious and political leaders and counsellors all need a well-developed interpersonal intelligence.

**Intrapersonal intelligence** entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations. In Howard Gardner's view it involves having an effective working model of ourselves, and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives.<sup>9</sup>

However, as Gardner himself recognised there were various problems with this approach, especially difficulties in testing such a comprehensive approach to the breadth of learning.<sup>10</sup> It is true that "fear, not ignorance, is the enemy of learning, and that fear is what gives ignorance its power."<sup>11</sup> However, the sheer scale of how much learning is possible makes the achievement of specific learning objectives challenging.

Offering a more experience-based perspective on learning, Professor Gardner suggested later that we need to learn five different skills—to be disciplined, to synthesize, to create, to be respectful and to be ethical. In order to determine whether we have integrated these skills and learned how to achieve "good work," Gardner proposed that we should specify precisely what we are trying to achieve and then apply the mirror test in which we consider our own mothers and the editor of the local newspaper as consultants: "If my mother knew everything that I was doing, what would she think?" and if the editor of the local newspaper "knew all and printed it, would I be ashamed or proud?"<sup>12</sup> This perspective clearly stressed the overarching ethical dimension of learning in the awareness that throughout our lives, we will engage in many types of work and learn many topics. Gardner's work has been subject to extensive critiques and is only one among many different learning theories and models.<sup>13</sup> However, it is helpful to us as teachers and preachers who seek to clarify our goals and improve our ability to learn.

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<sup>9</sup> Howard Gardiner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). The quotation is taken from: <http://infed.org/mobi/howard-gardner-multiple-intelligences-and-education>.

<sup>10</sup> For an extensive critique, see the website in the above reference. For a recent summary of this work, see Howard J. Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Themes and Practices* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (New York: Harper One, 1993), p. xii.

<sup>12</sup> Howard Gardner, *Five Minds for the Future* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), p. 148.

<sup>13</sup> See especially [www.learning-theories.com](http://www.learning-theories.com) and Ben Kotzee, "Gardner *et al.* on 'Good Work' (The Jubilee Centre for Character and Value, University of Birmingham, 9 January 2013) at [www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/](http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/) then look under "Papers" and "Seminar Papers" by date.

## How Do We Learn . . . and Remember What We Have Learned?

When we are young, we often learn from hearing and composing stories. It has been argued that “it is through narratives that we begin to learn who we are and how we are called to behave. . . . To know who we are is in large part to understand of which story or stories we are a part.”<sup>14</sup> As we grow wiser, teachers and preachers can learn how to compose, find and tell stories that draw their listeners into greater curiosity and understanding.<sup>15</sup> However, if we want our listeners to understand and reflect on our stories, it is important to have a basic awareness of how people learn and how well they remember (or forget) what they have learned.

There is general agreement among educators that we can make use of three forms of learning—kinaesthetic or tactile, visual and auditory. We remember what we have learned best when the learning is tactile, but memory declines fastest with auditory learning.<sup>16</sup> Combining all three modes of learning is an ideal strategy; and what we seek tonight is to apply this theoretical understanding of the principles of learning to practical implementation of learning, so that we can grow in our ability to learn.

Learning and memory need to be considered as a unity. The research and practical experience set out by Peter C. Brown, Henry Rodiger III and Mark A McDaniel in *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* is immensely helpful to students, teachers and preachers:

All new learning requires a foundation of prior knowledge. . . . If learners spread out their study of a topic, returning to it periodically over time, they remember it better. Similarly, if they interleave the study of different topics, they learn each better than if they had studied them one at a time in sequence. . . . [Learning consists of] acquiring knowledge and skills and having them readily available from memory so you can make sense of future problems and opportunities. . . . Learning is stronger when it matters, when the abstract is made concrete and personal. . . . Reflection on personal experience [is] an essential kind of learning . . . .<sup>17</sup>

On balance, the work of Brown, Rodiger and McDaniel is respectful of Gardner’s perspective of multiple intelligences. However, *Make It Stick* seeks to move beyond learning styles, while recognising three types of intelligences—analytical, creative and practical:

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<sup>14</sup> “The Jewish People Are a Nation of Storytellers,” *The Algemeiner*, at: [www.algemeiner.com/2014/09/11/the-jewish-people-are-a-nation-of-storytellers/](http://www.algemeiner.com/2014/09/11/the-jewish-people-are-a-nation-of-storytellers/). The final sentence in the quotation is from the Christian philosopher, Alistair MacIntyre.

<sup>15</sup> See Jack Hart, *Storycraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011) and Jon Franklin, *Writing for Story: Craft Secrets of Dramatic Nonfiction by a Two-Time Pulitzer Prize Winner* (New York: Penguin/Plume, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> See the discussion in Lecture 12 and the article by James Bigelow and Amy Poremba, “Achilles’ Ear? Inferior Human Short-Term and Recognition Memory in the Auditory Modality,” *PLoS One* 9(2), 26 February 2014; free on line at: <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0089914>

<sup>17</sup> *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014,), pp. 5, x, 2, 11, 26.

*Analytical* intelligence is our ability to complete problem-solving tasks such as those typically contained in tests; *creative* intelligence is our ability to synthesize and apply existing knowledge and skills to deal with new and unusual situations; *practical* intelligence is our ability to adapt to everyday life—to understand what needs to be done in a specific setting and then do it. . . .<sup>18</sup>

To increase our ability to learn requires “self-discipline, grit, and persistence” within a framework of making an effort, because “our intellectual abilities are not fixed at birth but are, to a considerable degree, ours to shape.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Setting an Objective and Consulting Scientific Research**

In confronting specific tasks, both teachers and preachers need to ask: What is my precise objective? It is often helpful to share that objective openly with students in order to reduce “the perceived distance” between teachers and students, so that a genuine dialogue begins to take place in which hopes and problems are shared honestly.<sup>20</sup> For preachers who do not have the same opportunity for immediate dialogue as teachers, Bishop Ken Untener has pointed out that “the most frequently voiced complaint about homilies” is “too many thoughts.” Therefore, it is important “to focus on just one core thought and stay with it.”<sup>21</sup> Both teachers and preachers can learn from experience to trust and respond to their listeners, to see that “beneath the broken surface of our lives there remains—in the words of Thomas Merton—‘a hidden wholeness’.”<sup>22</sup> It is that “hidden wholeness” that we each seek within our own lives; and often we can find that wholeness by being together, by listening to each other, by not having a fixed or private agenda.

The probability of learning new skills and ideas is greatly increased when we understand some of the latest scientific research, because that research has changed significantly our understanding of learning. In addition to the points already made above in the section of this lecture on “How do we learn . . . and remember what we have learned,” four points stand out: (1) Learning is often sudden and unexpected, with “tipping points” into new learning;<sup>23</sup> (2) The brain is plastic—it changes and can recover formerly lost attributes, so that there is the real “possibility of high-speed learning later in life;”<sup>24</sup> (3) Sleep helps our ability to learn, especially when we know there is something we are trying to understand; because “during sleep the brain specifically preserves nuggets of thought it previously

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<sup>18</sup> Pp. 148, 151, drawn from the work of Robert J. Sternberg. See R. J. Sternberg, E. L. Grigorenko & L. Zhang, “Styles of learning and thinking in instruction,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (2008), pp. 486-506.

<sup>19</sup> *Make It Stick*, p. 199.

<sup>20</sup> See Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 200), p. xii.

<sup>21</sup> Bishop Ken Untener, *Preaching Better: Practical Suggestions for Homilists* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, p. x.

<sup>23</sup> (Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Little Brown, 1990) with a comprehensive free summary of the book at Wiki Summaries: [www.wikisummaries.org/The\\_Tipping\\_Point](http://www.wikisummaries.org/The_Tipping_Point)).

<sup>24</sup> Norman Dodge, *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 84.



tagged as important;”<sup>25</sup> and (4) Integrative thinking is possible in which we “hold two opposing ideas” in our mind “at once, and then reach a synthesis that contains elements of both but improves on each.”<sup>26</sup>

Making use of all four of these perspectives, there is a way of learning that has been called “serial tasking,” that is:

a slow multitasking mode [in which] one project takes center stages for a series of hours or days, yet the other projects linger in the margins of consciousness throughout. That cognitive overlap is what makes this mode so innovative. The current project can [draw and adapt] ideas from the projects at the margins [and] make new connections. It is not so much a question of thinking outside the box, as it is allowing the mind to move through multiple boxes. That movement from box to box forces the mind to approach intellectual roadblocks from new angles, or to borrow tools from one discipline to solve problems in another discipline.<sup>27</sup>

If you have a lot of hobbies, you are well-placed to serial task a great deal.

### **How Can We Practice Learning?**

The great pianist and conductor, Arthur Rubinstein once said, “When I don’t practice for day, I know. When I don’t practice for two days, the orchestra knows. When I don’t practice for three days, the world knows it.”<sup>28</sup> Adapting this to a parish setting, it is fair to say: When I don’t pray or reflect about the relevance of Christ to my life for a day, I know. When I don’t pray or reflect about the relevance of Christ to my life for a month, my friends know. When I don’t pray or reflect about the relevance of Christ to my life for a year, the world knows it.”

So how can we practice learning? First, we have to set our objective clearly, as explained above. Then we have to have to set aside sufficient time to achieve that objective; and finally we have to be patient with ourselves and with others. Learning often requires handles—old knowledge onto which we attach new knowledge. Consider the most famous example of cracking a code in history—the deciphering of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. Rosetta Stone in which Greek was used to understand the two different forms of the Egyptian alphabet placed on the stone in symbols and characters. The stone had been found in Egypt by the French, taken by the British as a spoil of war, and placed in The British Museum in 1801. Although the Englishman Thomas Young had started to decipher the hieroglyphics in 1810, it was the Frenchman Jean-François Champollion who fulfilled his childhood dream and fully cracked

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<sup>25</sup> *The Journal of Neuroscience*, DOI: 10.1523/neurosci.3575-1-.2011, “Sleep sorts the memory wheat from the chaff,” *New Scientist*, 5 February 2011, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Roger L. Martin, *The Opposable Mind: How Successful Leaders Win through Integrative Thinking* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come from: The Natural History of Innovation* [London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2010], p. 172.

<sup>28</sup> Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences*, p. 43.

the code in 1822. For Champollion, it was a lifetime ambition in which he persevered and thereby learned and taught many others a great deal about Egyptian civilization.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Core Requirements for Learning: Diligence, Doing Right, Ingenuity**

What is one to conclude from this wide-ranging discussion about the modes of learning? Thus far there are four key points: (1) Whatever we are seeking to learn, we also need to seek to remember well, because learning and memory are a unity; (2) It is essential to define a precise objective; (3) It is worthwhile to learn about recent scientific research; (4) Practice learning; and (5) Seek to do good work. These five points might be summed up with the words: make the effort to do better.

The surgeon and MacArthur Fellow, Dr. Atul Gawande, sets out how to do better in his book, *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*<sup>30</sup>, in which he suggests that betterment is “a perpetual labor” and to achieve it requires diligence (“the necessity of giving sufficient attention to detail to avoid error and to prevail against obstacles”), doing right (“No choice will always be right. There are ways, however, to make our choices better”) and ingenuity (“thinking anew” because ingenuity is “not a matter of superior intelligence but of character”). For Dr. Gawande and for each of us, all these modes of learning link into a single goal, a single practice—“to live a life of responsibility” in a community. By seeking to become better teachers and preachers, using different modes of learning, we have already accepted personal responsibility; and now we need to learn how to teach and preach better.

### **Conclusion: Tips from Winston Churchill and . . . Rely on the Holy Spirit**

Having begun this discussion with the recognition of the overwhelming breadth of learning, it is appropriate to conclude that it is possible *not* to be overwhelmed by the particular task that is before us. In the twenty-first century, the breadth of knowledge has become so complex that the simplicity of a checklist is often essential.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, a single trait that Gawande has termed “diligence” might also be called “conscientiousness;” and, as the Longevity Project has discovered, “The best predictor of a long and healthy life turned out to be conscientiousness—the extent to which a child was prudent, dependable and persistent in the accomplishment of his or her goals.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, if we each choose in free will, as children and as adults to be diligent or conscientious in the tasks that confront us (or the tasks that we choose to do), we can live long and healthy lives in which we learn and share our learning with others.

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<sup>29</sup>Simon Sigh, “The Decipherment of Hieroglyphs” and Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* [London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2010], Object 33, Rosetta Stone, pp. 209-214).

<sup>30</sup>*Better* (London: Profile Books, 2008), pp. 9, 8, 83, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Atul Gawande, *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right* (London: Profile Books, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Marten Lagergren, “Health: A long, diligent life” *Nature* **471**, 443-444, 24 March 2011. Doi: 10.1038/471443a provides a summary of Howard S. Friedman & Leslie R. Martin, *The Longevity Project: Surprising Discoveries for Health and Long Life from the Landmark Eight-Decade Study* (New York: Hudson Street Press/Hay House, 2011).

In the context of preaching, three tips from Winston Churchill about public speaking also provide guidelines for preachers: (1) “Every speech [and every sermon needs] the big idea. . . the flashing lighthouse, the idea which sets the pulse racing;” (2) It is often appropriate, especially near the end of a speech (or sermon), to become “very personal,” to seek to make each member of the audience believe there is only “you and me, heart to heart, voice to voice calling across the depth of humanity;” and (3) as you speak, “the slower the better. It helps the listener to absorb the words, and to savour the thoughts, and to feel the emotion. Never hurry. Take your time, because if [words are] given time to work, words come alive and stay in the mind.”<sup>33</sup> Even more important than the many ideas in this reflection on modes of learning is to pray and to stay in touch with the Holy Spirit who guides every good sermon.

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<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Smith, *The Churchill Secret KBO* (London: Little Brown, 2015), pp. 171, 190, 130.