

Community or *Communitas*?
The Academy as a “Liminal State”

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In this paper I intend to make the case that the Academy should be viewed as a “liminal state” in which students may potentially experience *communitas*. I will first outline the conceptual frameworks of “liminality” and *communitas* as set forth by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner respectively. Secondly, I will address Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost’s inclusion of these concepts into their “missional ecclesiology.” Finally, I will seek to demonstrate why the Academy ought to be viewed as a “liminal state” and as such, how an environment for *communitas* might be cultivated within the Academy.

Arnold van Gennep

In 1909 Arnold van Gennep, a French ethnographer and folklorist, wrote his seminal work entitled *Les rites de passage* (The Rites of Passage). In this work van Gennep “describes rituals of passing from one stage of life to another. [He] noticed, as he worked among different peoples of Africa and Oceania, that birth, puberty, marriage, and death, are specially commemorated in every culture. The actual ceremonies may differ, but their meaning is universal—celebration of the transition from one phase of life to another.”¹ In detailing these “rites of passage,” van Gennep began to notice three distinct phases in which “rites of passage” occur.

He argued that all rites of passage share similar features, including: (1) A period of segregation from a previous way of life (preliminary phase); (2) A state of transition from one status to another (liminal phase); and (3) A process of introduction to the new social status and the new way of life (postliminal phase). The concept of “liminality” (from the Latin word *limen*, meaning “a threshold”) was introduced by van Gennep to describe the quality of the second stage of a ritual, especially a rite of passage, that involves some change to the participants, especially their social status. The liminal state is characterized by ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. One’s sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. Liminality is a period of transition, during which

¹ New World Encyclopedia contributors, “Arnold van Gennep,” *New World Encyclopedia*, <<www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Arnold_van_Gennep?oldid=686052>> (accessed February 11, 2010).

the normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior are relaxed, opening the way to something new.²

Les rites de passage “was highly influential in the structuring of Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell divided the journey of the hero into three parts: ‘Departure,’ ‘Initiation,’ and ‘Return.’”³ One should note that van Gennep did not coin the term “liminal.” The term began to be used in the field of psychology in the late 1800s, but it was van Gennep’s usage of the term in *Les rites de passage* which propelled it to the forefront of academia, particularly in the field anthropology. Van Gennep published several other influential works before his death in 1957.⁴

Victor Turner

A champion of van Gennep’s idea of liminality was a British anthropologist by the name of Victor Turner.⁵ After finishing his “degree in Anthropology at age 29, Turner left London for graduate study at the University of Manchester in the Department of Anthropology just begun by Max Gluckman. In association with the Rhodes-

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Among the many works of Victor Turner, the following (excluding works cited in this paper) are of notable mention: *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press), 1957; *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1967; *The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes Among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1968; *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1974; *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1975; *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press), 1978; *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press) 1985.

⁵ A few of his works are especially germane to the topic at hand. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), and “Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas,” part 1, *Worship*, 46 (1972).

Livingstone Institute (which was directed by Gluckman) Turner conducted fieldwork among the Ndembu of Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia).”⁶ In this context, Turner

began by examining the demographics and economics of the tribe but then shifted to ritual, a topic he would focus on for the rest of his career. He completed his Ph.D. in June 1955 and stayed on at Manchester for several years as a Senior Fellow and Senior Lecturer (McLaren, 1985).⁷ During this time he published two monographs and his dissertation, “Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life” [in 1957].⁸

Although he later moved to the United States to teach at a number of universities (most notably Cornell University, University of Chicago and the University of Virginia⁹), he and his wife eventually returned to Africa to study the Gisu tribe in Uganda. His previous work with the Ndembu, however, heavily influenced his thoughts and writings.

What Turner observed in the villages of Zambia eventually led to his development of van Gennep’s concept of “liminality.” Shortly after, Turner advanced his theory of “communitas,”¹⁰ noting that the two are uniquely conjoined. Turner noticed how Ndembu tribal elders initiated the male youths into a period of “accelerated maturation” – a rite of passage that served as a prerequisite for rejoining the tribal community. Around the age of 13, all male youths were banished from the village to survive in the jungle for

⁶ Beth Barrie, “Victor Turner.” <http://www.indiana.edu/~wanthro/theory_pages/Turner.htm> (Accessed February 11, 2010).

⁷ Cf. P.L. McLaren, “A Tribute to Victor Turner,” 1985. *Anthropoligica*, 21 (1-2), 17-22 as cited in Barrie.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Victor Turner’s wife Edith is Lecturer of Anthropology at the University of Virginia and has published many articles and books as well. A brief bio and overview of her specializations, courses, and publications may be found at <<http://www.virginia.edu/anthropology/faculty/turner.html>> (Accessed February 10, 2010)

¹⁰ Turner’s definition of *communitas* is distinct from that of Paul Goodman; cf. Mathieu Deflem, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner’s Processual Symbolic Analysis.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30(1):1-25, 1991. See also Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006) and Alan Hirsch’s *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006).

as many as up to six months.¹¹ Once a month an Elder would visit the youths to bring them encouragement and instruction for about an hour. Once the hour was finished, the Elder would return to the village.¹² Turner came to describe this period of time away from the village as an “in-between” place, or as a place “neither here nor there.”

According to Turner, a “liminal state” is a locus of uncertainty, self-discovery, and growth. It is a threshold in which peers, out of sheer necessity, find a way to live, survive, and persevere together. In his book, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, Turner maintains that “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.”¹³ The corollary (and perhaps in some cases the antecedent) of this period of liminality is what Turner would eventually call *communitas*.¹⁴

To understand Turner’s view of *communitas* one must appreciate his conception of it as an anti-structure. In his book, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Turner seeks to clarify his use of the term anti-structure, saying: “I have used the term ‘anti-structure,’ . . . to describe both liminality and what I have called ‘communitas.’ I meant by it not a structural reversal . . . but the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc. from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses.”¹⁵

¹¹ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Peabody, MA: Brazos Press, 2006), 221.

¹² *Ibid.*, 221.

¹³ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing), 95, as found in Beth Barrie (see above).

¹⁴ Random House Dictionary defines *communitas* as “the sense of sharing and intimacy that develops among persons who experience liminality as a group.” *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/communitas> (accessed: February 12, 2010). Italics mine.

¹⁵ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 45, as cited in Barrie, “Victor Turner.”

Offering a helpful assessment of Turner's thesis Charles La Shure maintains that,

For Turner, liminality is one of the three cultural manifestations of *communitas* – it is one of the most visible expressions of anti-structure in society. Yet even as it is the antithesis of structure, dissolving structure and being perceived as dangerous by those in charge of maintaining structure, it is also the source of structure. Just as chaos is the source of order, liminality represents the unlimited possibilities from which social structure emerges. While in the liminal state, human beings are stripped of anything that might differentiate them from their fellow human beings—they are in-between the social structure, temporarily fallen through the cracks, so to speak, and it is in these cracks, in the interstices of social structure, that they are most aware of themselves. Yet *liminality is a midpoint between a starting point and an ending point, and as such it is a temporary state that ends when the initiate is reincorporated into the social structure.*¹⁶

Turner maintained that *communitas* must be viewed as something more than community. It “denotes an intense feeling of social togetherness and belonging, often in connection with religious rituals, in which people stand together ‘outside’ society, and society is strengthened by this. *Communitas* is the opposite, in many ways, of normal society, but with each one feeding and enriching the other.”¹⁷

Mathieu Deflem, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of South Carolina, surveys the demarcation of Turner's three “cultural manifestations” of *communitas*. He points out that,

In Turner's work, *communitas* in rituals refers to liminality, marginality, inferiority, and equality . . . [He] distinguished three types of *communitas* in society: (1) *existential* or *spontaneous* *communitas*, which is free from all structural demands and is fully spontaneous and immediate; (2) *normative* *communitas*, or *existential* *communitas*, which is organized into a social system; and (3) *ideological* *communitas*, which refers to utopian models of societies based on existential *communitas* and is also situated within the structural realm. The types of *communitas* are phases, not permanent conditions.¹⁸

¹⁶ Charles La Shure, “What Is Liminality,” 4. <www.liminality.org/about/whatisliminality/> (accessed February 9, 2010).

¹⁷ Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 110.

¹⁸ Deflem, 14-15.

In fact, Turner used the “hippie movement” to illustrate the distinction between the three manifestations of *communitas*, claiming that

its development can be outlined as having started with the spontaneous *communitas* which occurs in “happenings” (rock concerts, experiments with drug-use). Around these happenings a union of followers was normatively organized, with their own places and times where *communitas* could be experienced on the margins of the society at large. Eventually complete ideologies were developed to promote, ideally for all members of the society, the type of *communitas* the hippies experienced. In the end, however (as was the case with the hippie movement), the fate of any type of *communitas* is inevitably a “decline and fall into structure and law” (Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, 132), after which a new form of *communitas* may rise again (Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, 132).

Although *communitas* may indeed manifest in one of three forms (spontaneous, normative, or ideological) Turner does not maintain that all three types must take place.

Michal Frost and Alan Hirsch

In their efforts to exhort the Western Church to embrace a missional paradigm for cultural engagement, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch have embraced the concepts of *communitas* and liminality. Frost acknowledges that “for *communitas* to develop, the members of a group must all be involved in the same challenge.”¹⁹ This “challenge,” as Frost calls it, fits naturally within a Missional ecclesiology. He argues that truly “missional Christians” cannot

be placated by the promises of church leaders who think that by creating a committee for *communitas* within the church they’ll keep [them] happy. Creating *communitas* – something we all desire – is not necessarily about developing new programs. It’s about a band of Christians discovering their grand sense of purpose and pursuing it . . . For Christians, *communitas* emerges naturally when we commit ourselves to a mission beyond ourselves.²⁰

Frost recognizes a natural congruency between missional theology (ie. theory) and *communitas* (ie. practice), for when Churches are engaged in missional activity, in brings

¹⁹ Frost, 122.

²⁰ Ibid. 125.

an uncommon bond to all involved in it. Ironically, when Churches spend less time on “community,” so to speak, and more time on Mission, *communitas* is developed.

Too many mainstream churches are trying to get their so-called internal life right before reaching out to others. They’ll find that they’ll never get the internal stuff right. If you focus on community formation solely, you almost never get to any mission . . . I’m convinced that when we get our thinking right about Jesus, he propels us into mission – that is, into the service of others, a cause greater than ourselves. Knowing that cause, that mission, and, together with others, embracing the challenges involved, naturally lead[s] to *communitas* . . . The church needs exiles²¹ to have the liminal experience of *communitas* because it pushes the church forward, bothering it with the freshness and vitality that come from the deeper communion of mission. The liberty experienced in Christian *communitas* plants the germ of cultural regeneration back into the mainstream Church.²²

In his final analysis, Frost asserts that “in a liminal stage, coping with the difficulties and ordeal of being outside the structure of normal society, people find themselves thrown together in a richer, deeper, more powerful sense of togetherness. Not community, *communitas!*”²³

Alan Hirsch too suggests that “*communitas* . . . happens in situations where individuals are driven to find each other through a common experience of ordeal, humbling, transition, and marginalization. It involves intense feelings of social togetherness and belonging brought about by having to rely on each other in order to survive.”²⁴ Hirsch continues,

Communitas is therefore always linked with the experience of liminality. It involves adventure and movement, and it describes that unique experience of *togetherness* that only really happens among a group of people inspired by the vision of a better world who actually attempt to do something about it.²⁵

²¹ In *Exiles*, Frost’s working definition of an “exile” is one who is living missionally in a post-Christian culture.

²² *Ibid.* 129.

²³ Frost, 111.

²⁴ Hirsch, 221.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 221.

For Hirsch, *communitas* lies at the core of the Missional imperative given to the Church.

The Early Church experienced it, the Chinese church today is experiencing it, every

“phenomenal Jesus movement” has experienced it. Hirsch puts it this way:

. . . manifestations of Apostolic Genius teach us that liminality and *communitas* are more the normative situation and condition of the pilgrim people of God. This is certainly the case for the phenomenal Jesus movements in view; it is in the conditions of shared ordeal that these Jesus movements thrive and are driven to the activation of Apostolic Genius. What is clear is that both the early Christian movements and the Chinese underground church experienced liminality through being outlawed and persecuted.

In this perspective, the phenomenal Jesus movements were/are expressions of *communitas*, and not community as we normally conceive it. As far as I can discern, *communitas* is always a normative element of Apostolic Genius. The loss of it leads to a diminution of the total phenomenon of Apostolic Genius—the life force of the authentic Christian movement wherever it truly manifests.²⁶

Before we look at liminality and *communitas* in the Academy, allow me briefly recap what has been stated thus far: (1) Arnold van Gennep observed three stages in “rites of passage,” including preliminality (a pre-liminary state), liminality (an “in between” state), and postliminality (a reintegration into a normative social structure). (2) Victor Turner added to van Gennep’s concept of liminality his theory of *communitas*. According to Turner, *communitas* may be experienced in one or more of three cultural manifestations: liminality, marginality and inferiority. Furthermore, *communitas* should be viewed as something wholly distinct from our common notion of community; instead, it should be thought of more along the lines of a super-community or comradeship. (3) Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch have incorporated both van Gennep’s concept of liminality and Turner’s theory of *communitas*, highlighting their usefulness within a Missional-ecclesial paradigm.

²⁶ Ibid. 222.

Liminality and Communitas in the Academy

As one begins to consider liminality and *communitas* in the Academy, three questions rise to the fore: (1) Is the Academy a “liminal state”? (2) Can collegians and seminarians experience *communitas* within the Academy? (3) If the Academy is a liminal state, and *communitas* can be experienced within the Academy, what considerations should be made by Administrators and Academicians within the Academy? Each of these questions will be addressed below.

(1) *Is the Academy a “liminal state”?* By now it should be apparent that the Academy fits the general criterion for an “in between” state, a transitional phase in which students find themselves between two realities – the one left behind, and the one that lies ahead. Furthermore, if liminality is, as Alan Hirsch describes it, a “situation where people find themselves in an in-between, marginal state in relation to the surrounding community,”²⁷ certainly this describes many a Christian/Bible College student or Seminarian preparing for vocational or avocational ministry. For the emerging leader who is enrolled in some form of Christian higher education, he or she will find him/herself in a liminal state. Such a person is often no longer part of their adolescent youth group, nor have they found their place in post-Academy life and service. Likewise, many prospective seminarians uproot their family and move across the country (or globe for that matter) to attend a seminary of their choosing. For students such as these, an awareness of liminality is especially heightened. In these scenarios, and in many others, the Academy serves as a liminal state where learning and growing, working and changing occurs.

²⁷ Hirsch, 220.

Recall that “liminality is a midpoint between a starting point and an ending point, and as such it is a temporary state that ends when the initiate is reincorporated into the social structure.”²⁸ The Academy fits this description quite well. In most cases the Academy is viewed as a temporary destination (perhaps not for academicians and administrators, but at least for the “traditional student” it is). For the aspiring Minister, Bible College or Seminary is viewed as a temporary stepping stone on the way to pastoral ministry, the mission field, or some alternative ministerial destination. Many, if not most, collegians and seminarians view their time in school as simply “passing through” a necessary, albeit important, place of equipping and ministerial training. It is, most assuredly, not viewed as a final destination. Upon completing one’s formal education, it is not uncommon for the graduate to feel as if he or she is “reintegrating” into “normative Church life.” This, in all likelihood, is simply the “laminar” (what Turner calls an individual in a liminal state) becoming aware of postliminality. In such a scenario, an individual may describe this experience as a type of “re-entry,” as he or she re-assimilates into normal “Church life” (or as Turner would probably prefer to call it, the “normative social structure”).

(2) *Can collegians and seminarians experience communitas within the Academy?*

Whereas the Academy is, in its very nature, a liminal state, *communitas* is not always experienced by collegians and seminarians. This is so primarily because *communitas* is a unique phenomena, resulting from a combination of four key ingredients:²⁹ (1) *A Shared*

²⁸ La Shure, 4.

²⁹ Each of these components can be clearly seen in the writings of van Gennep, Turner, Frost and Hirsch, despite the fact that the actual terms may vary from author to author. The particular phrasing of these criteria is my own and should not necessarily be viewed as the normative nomenclature set forth by these authors. The concepts, however, are replete throughout their works.

Ordeal – a challenge, or external tension or pressure; (2) *A Common Goal* – something toward which everyone is striving; (3) *A Mutual Status* – everyone is considered on the same level, and (4) *A Synergistic Collaboration* – a partnership through mutual exchange and corporate cooperation. The combination of these four elements creates an environment for *communitas* to occur.

A case in point that helps to illustrate these four components at work may be seen in the example of “Boot Camp” in the Military. As a liminal state, Boot Camp is an “in between” place where soldiers are no longer civilians, yet they have not fully integrated into the typical military social structure. The soldiers’ “Shared Ordeal” is not hard to observe, as they seek to survive the stringent regimen, drill instructors, textbook learning, hand to hand combat training, etc. Each soldier also has a “Common Goal” – to become a *bona fide* Soldier, and to serve one’s country. The element of “Mutual Status” is also present, as Boot Camp sets every soldier on the same level. They dress alike, they march alike, they sleep alike, etc. In fact, “standing out” in the crowd does not bode well in this type of setting. The fourth component – “Synergistic Collaboration” – is equally recognizable, for Boot Camp helps soldiers learn how to work collaboratively, as each soldier gives of him/herself for the betterment of all. When these four ingredients come together, conditions for *communitas* are ripe. Many soldiers (and veterans) can testify to a grand sense of “togetherness” that results from such a liminal state.

One could argue that *communitas* is developed on the ball-field, the battle-field, and the mission-field. But what happens when these four criteria are applied to the Academy? One might suggest that every collegian and seminarian’s Shared Ordeal may include pressures of rigorous academic struggle – tests, quizzes, foreign languages, late

night study-sessions, getting homework done on time, etc. Those of us who have gone through such an “ordeal” know that the list goes on, and on, and on. The tension felt by the student may in fact be intensified when scholarships are on the line! The external pressures of coursework, time management, and maintaining some resemblance of a spiritual life all fit into this Shared Ordeal.

Do students in Academy share a Common Goal? It *is* true that students attend Academy for different reasons. Some view it as a means to an end. Others may attend due to cultural or familial expectations. And yet for others a decision to enter the Academy may grow out of a desire to be the first person in his/her family to graduate from college. For Christians, however, commonly held goals for attending Bible College or Seminary might include one or more of the following: A desire to (1) study the Bible, (2) grow closer to the Lord, (3) answer the “call of God” on one’s life.

When students attend the Academy, they share a Mutual Status. Each student is on the same level – all of them must answer to the Professor and must fulfill the guidelines and requirements for passing their courses, not to mention that each must satisfy all necessary requirements for graduation. In most cases, family lines, socio-economic status, titles, popularity and many other matters of distinction are leveled within the classroom. Everyone must fulfill the course requirements, and everyone is in the same boat, so to speak.

So what about Synergistic Collaboration? Do *all* students offer mutual exchange, co-laboring in the educational venture? Not necessarily. Of the four criteria outlined above, Synergistic Collaboration is the most tenuous within the Academy. Only students who truly give and receive from their peers can develop a sense of *communitas* with

them. It is in this give-and-take correspondence that a sense of “togetherness” is fostered. Activities such as class discussions, presentations, study sessions, group projects and the like help to promote synergy and mutual exchange. Exercises such as these can help to create a sense of mutuality and true partnership. In one sense, this type of dynamic denotes a “giving of one’s self,” inasmuch as it is a giving (or exchanging) of knowledge and “know-how.” When all four components are present within the Academy, *communitas* may very well occur. Conversely, if any one of the elements is removed, the climate for *communitas* is jeopardized.

In seeking to discover how graduates of Canby Bible College (CBC) viewed their tenure at CBC, the alumni were asked to identify factors that contributed to their personal formation while at school.³⁰ Not surprisingly, the ‘communal environment’ within the college ranked toward the top. The small, cohort structure was viewed to be highly conducive for student interaction and mutual exchange. Data taken from the study presents a strong case for *communitas* having been generated in this very small college.

For instance, one respondent offered the following comment:

My class was very small, so we all ended up studying together, for most tests or projects. The relationships that were formed during this time were some of the richest, most transformative relationships I’ve ever had. We challenged each other, encouraged each other, and taught each other. I believe CBC’s environment was the reason these relationships started and grew.³¹

A similar statement was offered by another respondent:

[CBC contributed to my spiritual formation] through the dedication and passion of the Instructors, and the Holy Spirit’s teaching through them. The focus was constantly brought back to Christ and how we were not merely on an intellectual

³⁰ For a complete review of the research findings, see Chapter 4 in Jeremy Wallace, *Measuring Change: The Need to Quantify Transformation in the Context of Christian Education*. D.Min. Diss., Western Seminary. Portland, Oregon: 2009.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

pursuit. The relationships that were fostered by the loving and focused environment at CBC played a key role in my personal formation.³²

Statements such as these seem to suggest that what was experienced in the liminal state of Canby Bible College was, for lack of a better word, *communitas*. “Rich . . . transformative relationships” in which they “challenged each other, encouraged each other, and taught each other,” resulting in “personal formation” – these are statements of perceived *communitas*. In fact, one graduate described the CBC community as a “tight-knit family, and a very diverse family, at that. I loved that I could hear what God was doing in a peer’s life one day, and hear from someone forty years older than them the next. I was blessed and encouraged by the *community* at CBC.”³³ The mere fact that over eighty-five percent of the respondents believed the “community life” at CBC to be transformative offers strong evidence that *communitas* is indeed achievable within the liminal state of the Academy.

(3) If the Academy is a liminal state, and communitas can be experienced within the Academy, what considerations should be made by Administrators and Academicians within the Academy? Since it has been demonstrated that the Academy is in fact a liminal state, and that it is indeed possible for *communitas* to be experienced within the Academy, I would like to offer four considerations to Academicians and Administrators within the Christian Academy.

First, leaders (Faculty, Staff and Administration) within the Academy should see it for what it is – a *liminal* state. It is not the “final destination” for our students, but serves as a mere “rest stop on the highway of life,” so to speak. Second, the Academy must be seen as a place in which students may not only gain an education, but experience

³² Ibid., 121.

³³ Ibid., 128.

transformation. Subsequently, we would do well to note that one reason students may be experiencing the transformative work of Christ in their lives is, in part, linked to their experiencing *communitas*. Third, efforts should be made to cultivate an environment within the Academy so that *communitas* may occur. Ensuring that students have a Shared Ordeal, Common Goal, Mutual Status, and Synergistic Collaboration will increase the likelihood for *communitas* to result. Finally, leadership within the Academy would do well to take some time, perhaps through personal reflection, to recount his/her own liminal experience while in the Academy. What (and who) did Christ use to bring about maturation and transformation within his/her life? What can be gleaned from such experiences, activities, and relationships, and how might these be incorporated into the classroom, the dorm-room and the boardroom? Is it even possible for these to be incorporated into the Academy (assuming they are not already extant)?

In conclusion, I am encouraged at the potentiality of *communitas* occurring within the Academy. It is my belief that every Christian institution of higher learning ought to be fully committed to our primary objective of “making disciples of all nations.” Furthermore, I am persuaded that Christ wants to use (and is using) the liminal state of the Academy for the purpose of disciple-formation, and *communitas* fits well within this schema. Implications of liminality and *communitas* abound within the broader scope of the Church as well. She would do well to identify the liminal, marginal, and inferior states within which *communitas* may manifest.

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