Alumni
GORDON CONWELL

Alumni Spotlight: Martin Dotterweich (MDiv ’93)

Current title: Director, King Institute for Faith & Culture; Professor of History; Chair, Department of History & Political Science at King University

Family: Wife: Heather, Children: Kathleen & Peter

Favorite professor: Dr. Gordon Hugenberger & Dr. Garth Rosell

Favorite class: Revelation with Dr. G.K. Beale

Favorite memory: Something that combines academics and leisure, place and people, is the back-to-school lobster bake. I remember how excited I was for these events, because it meant we were going back to class, that I was seeing friends again after the summer; but more than that, these were moments of community, understated in their sacredness but powerful as they brought the body of Christ together on the Hill.

Please tell us about your area of expertise and what courses you teach.

My PhD examines the early Reformation in Scotland, and my specialty areas are Reformation theology and history, Scottish history, and the print history of early modern English Bibles. I have published in those areas, but my recent publication has shifted to vocation and vocational discernment. Having worked in very small college environments, I’ve become a generalist in European history, as I teach anything from Western Civilization surveys to an early medieval seminar, a course on Europe 1789-1914, and another on historiography. Within my specialty, I teach a church history survey, and a seminar on Scotland 1488-1587.

How did God weave together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now?

I grew up in an academic family, and I discerned a call to teach while I was still in high school. The vocation was confirmed through my college days and then at Gordon-Conwell, not least because I felt a strong affinity with my faculty. But I didn’t know what I wanted to teach. Roger Lundin, a Gordon Divinity alumnus, suggested I come to seminary to give that vocation time to develop, and this was wise counsel. Then at Gordon-Conwell, it was Dr. David Wells who suggested I apply at Edinburgh, my only church history application. And so, Gordon-Conwell played a vital role in my calling, helping me form as a teacher and pointing me in the right direction professionally.

What are some things you love about your roles as a faculty member, professor, and/or researcher?

I love to learn, and I love being in an environment where the pursuit of learning is in service to the Lord. As my career has moved along, my teaching focus has broadened: in addition to building history and memory, I try to address vocational discernment and character formation. I have found that life writing is a good way to get students to understand historical thinking, while also opening doors to spiritual formation.

In 2017, I added another job responsibility. I now direct the King (formerly Buechner) Institute for Faith & Culture at King University. My primary job is arranging and hosting a speaker series that goes through the academic year, which involves both campus and community. I have loved this new vocation and found that I have gifts that I didn't know about before. Here I try to foster friendship and conversation around things that matter, with faithful speakers who are committed to engaging culture for Jesus Christ.

What are the current challenges of teaching in higher education, being a faculty member in general, and in your context specifically?

King is a tiny institution in southern Appalachia, and like so many other colleges, we struggle financially. This means that we tend to be very aware of enrollment, of advancement, of governmental policy, because we exist on a very narrow margin. This takes our attention from teaching and scholarship, but at the same time it means we are very invested in our students' lives and also are forced to trust God. Our mission is as vital as ever, and students need faculty who will challenge them to bring their faith and studies together; they need mentors; they need voices shaped by Scripture and the long wisdom of the Christian church rather than their immediate culture. But it's hard to do this when you are worrying about closure.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your academic work?

Gordon-Conwell helped me form as a scholar. In my first semester, in Old Testament Hermeneutics with Dr. Meredith Kline, I learned how to stay with a subject until I understood it; from Dr. Greg Beale, I learned how to research deeply and doggedly; from Dr. Garth Rosell, I learned how to make church history accessible; from Dr. Richard Lovelace, the way that beauty mattered; from courses at Harvard through the Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium in my final summer, I learned Latin! There are many more examples of this formation.

A surprise for me is that I now do a lot of lay preaching, especially in small Presbyterian churches in the mountain towns around Bristol, Tennessee. Here my entire MDiv

has become important again—my exegetical skills from biblical studies, those no-note sermons that Dr. Haddon Robinson and Dr. Scott Gibson required, the context of church history, the theological categories that Dr. Richard Lints and Dr. David Wells helped me think through. I am more grateful than ever for what Gordon-Conwell gave me!

Do you have any publications or links you would like to share?

- The King Institute for Faith & Culture website and Facebook page.
- A five-part series on vocation, teaching, and parenting autistic children for the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education. This includes a tribute I wrote for Frederick Buechner after his death.
- Personal pieces: I have written a number of occasional pieces – mostly reviews, memorials, and a few letters from my cat.

Scholarly Publications:

- "The Yarn in the Tapestry: Weaving Memory into History, Vocation, and our Common Life," in Erin VanLaningham (ed.), *Called Beyond Ourselves: Vocation and the Common Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), pp. 262-281
- "Habit and Belief in the Scottish Reformation," in Mark Elliott and David Fergusson (eds), *The Oxford History of Scottish Theology*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1.173-188

Reference Works:

- Entries for *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004):
  Balnaves, Henry; Borthwick, John; Buckenham, Robert; Lekpreuik, Robert; Nisbet, Murdoch; Wishart, George
- Entries for *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed Timothy Larsen (Downer's Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003):
  Knox, John; Melville, Andrew