Jesus is the Yes and Amen to it All

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (II Peter 1: 3-8)

In II Corinthians 1, the Apostle Paul writes that Jesus is the Yes and the Amen to it all. Below find some reflections on what this might mean. GCU Blog: ubcgcu.org

- Colossians 1: 15-20 speaks of Jesus as the source and “glue” of creation and the purpose or end (telos) of creation, both the alpha and omega. He is more than 13.8 billion light years of time. He is above all things in creation and at the same time the ground of creation (the very ground of being itself), without which nothing would exist, without which this very text would be meaningless. All the fullness of God dwells in him (he is God with us—Emmanuel). He is God incarnate (fully God and fully man as per the Athanasian view); in him, God’s eternity connects with creation’s temporality. It is through Christ that all things are reconciled to God—providing the source and basis of healing relationships, both divine and human, the prince (champion) of peace. He is the cornerstone or foundation of the church, through which he is most visible and present to the world by means of the Holy Spirit.

- He is the fulfillment of all the promises made to the ancient Hebrew patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Israel) and the prophetic utterances and longings of the Old Testament, the Jewish Messiah, fulfilling the promise of redemption, renewal, justice and reform. He is the mysterious Son of Man spoken about in ancient Hebrew discourse. Jesus is prophet, priest and king. His is the final priestly sacrifice for the sins of mankind. He brings to an end the human obsession with sacrifices. He is also a poet, firing the imagination with his life giving, inspiring teaching, causing us to rethink our identity and purpose, our vices and virtues, the self-justifying games we play. He is imagination personified. His life represents both a unique and universal story, real story, an anchor for a powerful human narrative (providing its very architecture). He calls humanity to a new level of existence, a journey or spiral upward, calling us to a new level of responsibility for the Other, for wise personal choices and substantive values. He cares about the whole of created biosphere. He calls an end to the victimization of the Other, to scapegoating behavior, to our blame games. He rescues us from our narcissism. He carves out a redemptive path, a hope for forgiveness and reconciliation amidst the chaos of life, the possibility of healing our pain. He offers hope of change in our lives and outlook, giving perspective on our troubles and joys.
• He is the wisdom of God and the power of God, the nexus of faith and reason. As divine logos (John 1), he is the transcendent word made flesh, the underwriter/guarantor of all human thought and all language. He is reason personified, the raison d’être of it all, the meaning of it all, the answer to the deeper questions: Why is there something rather than nothing? Why are we here? What is our calling? Where are we going? We are called to take captive (recalibrate) all thought to his Lordship (II Corinthians 10), his oversight, his scrutiny. He is the end point, the fulfillment, of every human spiritual, moral and philosophical aspiration to make sense of our existence on planet earth. He has renewed and healed the current broken semiotic relationship between word and world (James Davison Hunter). He is public truth (Lesslie Newbigin) and this truth leads out into wider truth about all of reality. He offers more, the chance to make transcendent sense of life itself: revealing its often hidden purpose and telos. This wisdom provides a framework and a profound motivation for our thinking and reflection. Humanities Scholar Jen Zimmermann at Trinity Western University captures it:

Christ the creative wisdom of God, and God’s active Word in creation, is enfleshed in the temporal-historical dimension of our world as the concrete Jewish Messiah, Jesus the Christ.... This is the Word through whom all things were made, and the Word hid in the eternal bosom of God, the Word who spoke through the prophets, the Word whose mighty acts defined the history of Israel. In Jesus the Christ this Word has become flesh, and the eternal has become temporal, but without ceasing to be eternal.... In Christ temporality and eternity are conjoined.... In the incarnation, creation, the world, time and history have been taken up into the God-man, who is the center of reality.... Faith and reason are inseparable because their unity is in Christ. (J. Zimmermann, 2012a, pp. 264-5)

• He is the complete human, a fullness of humanity, the true icon of God (imago dei). He is the presence of God in the world, heaven come to earth, the nexus of the eternal and the temporal. He is a master exemplar, a gift to us to direct our passions and show us the way to live robustly, honestly, humbly and justly. He came to take us higher, out of the murky shadows and into the light, to show us the infinite goodness and agape love of God, to transform us thereby. This changes everything. He is the source and character of true virtue, infinite goodness enfleshed in (communicated by) a human body, a bridge to divine goodness (D. Stephen Long), the archetype of goodness. He is the renewed image that we long for in our honest moments, the most excellent representative of God on earth. He is joy unspeakable when we reach the center of goodness and truth. His kingdom teaching in the Sermon on the Mount offers a bright source of weighty hope for our species (Jim Wallis, The (Un)Common Good), for the reconciliation of all things. Dietrich Bonhoeffer broadens our relationship to culture:

To be realistic, to live authentically in the world and before God, is to live as if the whole of reality has already been drawn up into and held together in Christ.... [It is] a fundamental hermeneutical claim to participate realistically and responsibly in the reconciliation of humanity in Christ. (Bonhoeffer, DBWE, 6: 55, 223)

He does not accept injustice and violence, oppression and exploitation, racism and exclusion of others, imperialism, privileging of the rich and powerful.
• Jesus is *perlocutionary* speech act, God’s most powerful communication to human ears and lives (Kevin Vanhoozer). He addresses us, calls our name, draws us forward into an adventuresome life. His words and teaching (e.g. the Sermon on the Mount) are a phenomenal message that has helped to shape the world in positive ways, to promote a kinder world. His compassion for the needy and broken is a sign that God has not given up on us, that he is there for us and that he cares deeply what happens to us. His resurrection is a starting point, a *singularity* that cannot be explained by anything prior; it stands as a huge revelation, an epiphany, a new beginning, a brilliant hope for change, for forgiveness and renewed relationships. It offers hope for rethinking our loves. He calls us to practice resurrection (Eugene Peterson), to move into resurrection life. He speaks for God from a powerful, dynamic center, a communion of love within the Trinity. This communion is the ground of being itself, the ground of human community and morality. God’s wisdom, love and will are revealed in astounding ways through the incarnation, with poetic force. Through him, we have been identified and called into a new community, given a new identity (I Peter): the people of God, his loved ones. He is the hermeneutic of a new reconciled humanity, drawn from all the nations of the globe, committed to bless and make peace, to be compassionate, to live with integrity (*shalom*), to shine as moral light. He is the *sign*, the *signifier* and the *signified*.

• He is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah the prophet who empathizes with our human struggles, brokenness, alienation, despair, shame and pain, the *wounded healer* (Henri Nouwen). He is compassion and empathy personified. He has suffered and does suffer for individuals, society and the world (I Peter). It is a redemptive, deeply meaningful suffering for the Other, the neighbour. This self-giving suffering is patient and has deep and profound purpose: it is a love that is stronger than death. He represents compassion for the vulnerable, shed tears for the city, the corporation and the university. At the same time, he is anger against exploitation, victimization, marginalization and injustice. His Lordship is our home (Luke 6), our foundation, safe space of refuge from the challenges, tragedies and transitions of life. This is a space where we can become *persons* and find freedom that is connected to the common good. His way of suffering love will help exegete life. It will humanize us. It will give us courage to live authentically, embracing the capital virtues, to contribute moral will, moral capital and moral capacity to society. Marquette theologian D. Stephen Long wraps up this thought:

> Jesus reveals to us not only who God is, but also what it means to be *truly human*. This true humanity is not something we achieve on our own; it comes to us as a gift ... The reception of this gift contains an ineliminable element of mystery that will always require faith. Jesus in his life, teaching, death and resurrection and ongoing presence in the church and through the Holy Spirit ... orders us towards God. He directs our passions and desires towards that which can finally fulfill them and bring us happiness ... [and] reveal to us what it means to be human. (D.S. Long, 2001, pp. 106-7)
In conclusion, University of Virginia sociologist James Davison Hunter highlights the implications of Jesus as Yes and Amen to it all:

Pursuit, identification, the offer of life through sacrificial love—this is what God’s faithful presence means. It is a quality of commitment that is active, not passive; intentional, not accidental; covenantal, not contractual. In the life of Christ we see how it entailed his complete attention. It was a whole-hearted, not half-hearted; focused and purposeful, nothing desultory about it. His very name, Immanuel, signifies all of this—“God with us”—in our presence. (J.D. Hunter, 2010, p. 243)

We commend to you this Jesus, this Christ, this Hope of the World, this Metaphor of robust, meaningful Life, this Conduit of truth, this intensely personal means to know and glorify God, this True Humanity, this Inspiration of Research, this Ultimate Reality, this Strong Purpose, this Love that is Stronger than Death, this Ground of Culture. There is here much substance with which to grapple intellectually, psychologically and spiritually. Let him inspire you beyond your wildest imagination. He is that good, the highest goodness incarnate.

Gordon E. Carkner, Ph.D. in Philosophical Theology, University of Wales, Working at the InterFace: Graduate Student and Faculty Dialogue, UBC Blog: ubcgcu.org