Trained as a New Testament scholar and blessed with a pastoral heart, Dr Gasque's guiding passion has been the theological education of the laity. He has pursued this passion through strengthening schools, and through encouraging many students who have had the privilege to be taught and guided by him, as well as by his wife and partner in ministry, Laurel Gasque. Dr Gasque's legacy is substantial and varied, but his main legacy will be the many men and women from around the world he helped to fulfill their potential in Christ.

This Festschrift is presented to Dr Gasque on the occasion of his 75th birthday, to honor him for his contribution to the cause of Christ, and with the hope that the things he has been committed to — biblical scholarship, leadership development, and the equipping of the laity — will continue to receive fresh exposure and momentum.

Susan S. Phillips
Soo-Inn Tan

Rather than creating a career, Ward has had a calling and vocation in which he has enfolded all that life has brought him in an attempt to be a faithful servant of his Lord, who called us his friends (Jn 15:15).

Laurel Gasque

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Serving God’s Community
Studies in Honor of W. Ward Gasque

Serving God's Community

Editors
Susan S. Phillips & Soo-Inn Tan

Regent College Publishing
www.regentpublishing.com

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Editors’ Foreword

Good things happen because good people make them happen. W. Ward Gasque has participated in making many good things happen in God’s community. Most notably, he was on the faculty of Regent College (Vancouver, B.C.) when it began. Together with James M. Houston, Carl E. Armerding, Donald Tinder and others, he shaped the original vision of Regent.

When the College was founded in 1968, most seminaries focused on equipping clergy for the church. Regent was the first graduate school in North America to make the education of the Christian laity its central focus, and the years since then have affirmed this critical initiative.

Dr. Gasque went on to be the founding president of New College Berkeley (California) and did crucial work in several transdenominational schools in North America, including Tyndale Seminary (Toronto), Eastern University (Pennsylvania), and the Pacific Association for Theological Studies (Seattle).

Trained as a New Testament scholar and blessed with a pastoral heart, Dr. Gasque’s guiding passion has been the theological education of the laity. He has pursued this passion through strengthening schools and through encouraging many students who have had the privilege to be taught and guided by him, as well as by his wife and partner in ministry, Laurel Gasque. Dr. Gasque’s legacy is substantial and varied, but his main legacy will be the many men and women from around the world he helped to fulfill their potential in Christ.

This Festschrift is presented to Dr. Gasque on the occasion of his 75th birthday, to honor him for his contribution to the cause of Christ, and with the hope that the things he has been committed to—biblical scholarship, leadership development, and the equipping of the laity—will continue to receive fresh exposure and momentum.
The editors are grateful to the many essayists who so readily agreed to contribute to this volume. Constraints of time and space prevented the inclusion of contributions from other essayists whose lives have been shaped by Dr. Gasque, yet we trust that, by God's grace, this volume of essays will extend the celebration and charism of Dr. Gasque's ministry to them, and also beyond the circle of those of us who have been blessed to know him.

We join many saints worldwide in warmly congratulating our brother, friend, and colleague, Dr. W. Ward Gasque, who has generously given so much to Christ by serving God's community.

Susan S. Phillips
Soo-Inn Tan

December, 2014
A Faithful Servant of His Lord: 
A Biography of Woodrow Ward Gasque

Laurel Gasque

The Impact of E. Marshall Sheppard

From the beginning Ward Gasque shared the visionary ways of E. Marshall Sheppard (1893–1973), a Christian Brethren1 businessman from the Canadian prairies who immigrated to British Columbia in the 1930s and who incontrovertibly was the founder of Regent College. When they met each other in early 1963, Marshall seemed to sense instinctively that they were remarkably like-minded.

After hearing from his British friend G. C. D. Howley that there were two young men connected with the Christian Brethren who were studying at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, Marshall immediately made a trip to Southern California to meet them personally, hosting them to a splendid meal at a downtown Los Angeles hotel which was quite extraordinary for these seminarians. Thus it was that he made the acquaintance of both Donald (“Don”) Tinder and Ward Gasque. After conversing with them extensively, he invited them to be speakers that year at the annual Brethren Easter Conference at Granville Chapel in Vancouver.

Marshall, along with his younger brother Stuart, ran a successful retail shoe business with stores in Vancouver and Victoria. He was also a

man steeped in Scripture. He carefully read through every new translation of the English Bible that came out in his lifetime. He had a very keen mind and tremendous discernment. He was well respected in the business community as well as his own church community and, beyond that, by the wider evangelical Christian community in Vancouver. He exuded character and dignity and practical wisdom. It was not surprising he was asked to be the main lay leader of the prayer committee for a Leighton Ford Crusade in Vancouver in the early 1960s.

This experience gave Sheppard an exposure to the diversity of believers in Vancouver as well as an exposure to clergy, which ordinarily he did not have as the Christian Brethren historically have been predominantly led by lay people. Although not a university man himself (two of his brothers achieved very high professional standings as Deputy Judge in the Federal Court of Canada and as Deputy Minister of Revenue for Canada), he could see that more and more Christian young people were seeking a university education. It made him wonder how they would fare with their faith when it would be challenged in an academic environment or tested in professional life. He also looked at his circle of fellowship amongst the Brethren. Granville Chapel had some very promising young men and women—probably because Marshall was a key encourager of them. But many of the other Brethren congregations (“assemblies” as they were known then) were aging, becoming rigid and inward looking as well as dwindling in numbers. The prospect of this demise discouraged him.

It was at this point that Marshall perceived that the only way to staunch this flow of educated young people out of the church was to create a “school” to ameliorate the condition for both his Brethren fellowship and the wider fellowship that he had encountered with his work with the Leighton Ford Crusade. His wide, sweeping mind was open to any and all who could help him with his visionary dream of adequately equipping the “younger generation” with sufficient biblical and theological knowledge to help them find their way in a sophisticated university-educated and professional society. It was obvious to him that church services and Sunday School were not doing this sufficiently. Eventually Marshall Sheppard’s vision resulted in the creation of Regent College.

Other than his conversion to faith, meeting Marshall Sheppard was the key turning point of W. Ward Gasque’s life. Ward took up
Sheppard’s vision and helped flesh it out perhaps more than anyone else in the initial days of developing Regent College. It was completely fitting that he should be given the first named chair at Regent College, and also that it should be named the E. Marshall Sheppard Chair of Biblical Studies.

The Man from South Carolina

So who is W. Ward Gasque? No small essay can sum him up, but here is an attempt at an overview.

Woodrow Ward Gasque was born in Conway, South Carolina, USA, on October 7, 1939. His parents were Claude Jackson Gasque (1881–1951) and Catherine Ward Gasque (1902–1983). His parents brought him up in the tradition of the Methodist Church, although his father came from a Baptist tradition.

Both of his parents came from near Florence, SC. They were versatile. His father grew up on a farm in a town called Friendfield Community, SC, and went on to be a farmer, lawyer, state representative and successful business person, developing several hotels. His mother was a schoolteacher from Darlington, SC, who spent most of her summers helping a close friend with catering and hosting guests at a guesthouse on the South Carolina shore not far from Myrtle Beach.

Although there were more than 20 years between them, it was a perfect match when “CJ” and Catherine met, married and produced a son in 1939. They weren’t conventional. In fact, they stopped on the way to the Carolina coast to be married by a Justice of the Peace in order that they could co-habit when they arrived there to stay with Catherine’s sister and brother-in-law.

“CJ” was a widower. From his first marriage he had one son, Claude Jackson Gasque, Jr. (1915–1942) who died at the battle of Guadalcanal in World War II. Although Ward was three years old when “Jack” died he still has vivid memories of his half-brother, who seems by all accounts to have been a most admirable person.

At the time of his father’s death on September 11, 1951, Ward was less than a month away from his twelfth birthday. To this day he says he had a premonition that night as he went to sleep that something was wrong with his father. This was the second time in his brief years that
death had overshadowed his family. Ward was too young to understand immediately the impact of Jack's death, but he felt it and it probably intensified his sense of loss when his father died.

The following years were not easy for Ward's mother. “CJ” had left Catherine reasonably well off financially. Ward now became her main worry. His behaviour gradually became more and more unmanageable. So much so that with counsel she decided he should be sent to a military academy in Camden, SC, for discipline and more male presence in his life. Although he was there for only one academic year, it enabled Ward to skip a grade when he returned to his hometown of Florence to finish school at McClenaghan High School. Camden Military Academy may not have given him all the discipline that his mother would have wished, but it introduced him to serious academic study with highly qualified teachers. During these years his mother was courageously and capably running the Hotel Gasque in Florence.

Ward launched his teen years with tumultuous and unpredictable behavior. By the time he was 14 he had had several car accidents and was drinking a lot with his buddies, especially when he went to the beach with them. Then an amazing thing happened to him in the summer of 1954. He had just come back to Florence from the beach to pick up some clean clothes and head back to the beach to party on, when one of his buddies, Buck Harris, invited him to attend a city-wide crusade at the Florence Memorial Football Stadium. The featured speaker was Howard E. Butt Jr., at that time a young lay Baptist preacher and scion of the Texas grocery chain store magnate, Howard E. Butt, Sr.

Ward’s turnaround was more than a dash back to the beach that summer. It was the complete turnaround of his life as Howard Butt shared the Good News of Jesus Christ and his saving grace with this confused young man. The transformation began immediately and was quite astounding to his friends and his mother.

Not all of Ward’s enthusiasm for his newly found faith was pleasant. He could be right in your face with his evangelizing. His mother was one of his first targets. At first, she wasn’t sure his behavior was much better than it was before. A wise woman, she didn’t overreact to Ward’s preaching at her. Her faith tradition was Methodist and that was the tradition Ward knew. In fact, he was named after her brother, Woodrow Ward (1896–
1982), who was a liberal Methodist minister and quite concerned that his nephew might be becoming a fanatic.

During the rest of his high school years, Ward turned to sharing his faith with his fellow students. He also became a very keen student of the Bible and began to feel frustrated with the lack of focus on Bible study at First Methodist Church that he had attended with his family since he was a boy. One lay member of his church, Roddy Brown, however, gave him an image of the Christian life as a three-legged stool that stuck with him. The three supporting legs were: Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. Without even one of them, the stool could not stand.

With this wisdom Ward embarked on building his life with a fervor equal to that which he had spent formerly on dissipation. His first move was to find a church that took Bible study seriously. Mary Easterling (1907–2002), a teacher at McClenaghan High School, told him about her church, The Chapel (later called The Florence Bible Chapel), where emphasis was placed on systematic Bible study. The Chapel also had a very dynamic and brilliant young lead teacher and pastor, William (“Bill”) F. Anderson (1934–2014), who became one of Ward’s key mentors in his high school years and beyond. Bill introduced him to expository Bible teaching and to the Christian Brethren movement of which The Chapel was an independent congregation. It was also through people there that Ward heard about Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, when he asked around what was the best Christian college.

Wheaton College
Meanwhile, by the time he went off to study Bible at Wheaton College in the fall of 1956, he had packed in a lot of leadership experience by organizing youth rallies and Bible studies, and going on a missionary trip to the Bahamas. During this time Ward’s mother was being gradually introduced to people at The Chapel who were obviously having a good influence on him. She was especially impressed by Bill Anderson and always held him in the highest esteem.

Ward had no trouble finding a church home as soon as he got to Wheaton as Bill Anderson had told him about Bethany Chapel which to this day is located adjacent to the Wheaton College campus. At Bethany