



***The Detenuring of an Eminent Professor: A Personal Story***

By “Graham Nanton”

Edwin Mellen Press

Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter, 2009

Price: N/A

Reviewed by Mike Jones

For most of us, being bullied at work is an extremely stressful and traumatic experience which is depressingly common in churches and other Christian organizations. There is an incredible physical, psychological, and spiritual cost to this type of situation. It’s heartbreaking to expect fairness, justice, and due process in the workplace and not receive it. *The Detenuring of an Eminent Professor: A Personal Story* is a first-hand account of what bullying, or “mobbing” in the workplace looks like in academia. Nevertheless, much of what is said applies to church and similar situations too. Therefore, this book is instructive for clergy and other Christian workers as well as academics.

*Detenuring* begins with an essay that offers a helpful introduction to and explanation of what workplace mobbing is all about. We read about the type of person who gets mobbed. We walk through some of the steps that can lead to unfortunate outcomes like suspensions and outright termination. This is important material that can help us appreciate and understand much of the narrative that follows.

The main body of the book is the story of Professor Graham Nanton. At one time, Nanton taught in the Religious Studies Department of the “University of Mobbsville”. As events unfold we can see Nanton being bullied out of both the department and the teaching job he loved. We can tell by the name of the University that the details of this book have been changed to protect the identity of the various people connected with this situation. Given the content and implications of this story this is important to ensure the privacy of each and every person involved.

This book addresses the critical, life-changing situations and decisions Nanton had to deal with as a result of the bullying he experienced. There were several times in Nanton’s journey when due process was not followed and decisions were forced on him that he normally wouldn’t make under any other circumstances.

Nanton relies on personal correspondence to document much of his experience. We can tell by the book’s content that Nanton likes to write a lot of letters. He includes both the letters that were sent and the ones he held on to. While including all of this material can be more than a little repetitive in places, we do get some insight into the extent to which Nanton is willing to go in order to clear his name and return to the classroom where he feels he belongs.

*Detenuring* is a book that gives us a personal understanding of what workplace mobbing is all about and where it can lead. This book is also an attempt by Nanton to clear his name. Nanton is trying to tell his side of the story and he tells it in such a way that we find ourselves supporting his point of view throughout. Nanton saves this from being a completely self-serving book by being extremely honest about his mistakes, shortcomings, and contributions to what happened. He names and discusses his tactical errors and addictions. He also talks about how his health issues affect his interacting with others. While his medical history does not excuse his choice of words and actions it does provide some important background information to help us understand why much of this situation developed.

This book raises a number of questions for the reader. We can wonder why Nanton didn't see any of his problems coming. Much of this story began in the early 1990's and that was an era when scholars and students learned the hard way to watch what they said and did on campuses everywhere. People had to make their way through the verbal and cognitive minefields with extreme caution. Nanton, on the other hand, seems to make his way without even looking down to see where the mines are placed. He doesn't seem to learn from his mistakes and it shows by his insistence on inviting people to lunch and sending letters when he feels he has somehow made a mistake.

*Detenuring* can also help us understand and examine our own experiences of workplace mobbing. How do we respond to being bullied? How do we contribute to a workplace in which people are mobbed? How can we navigate the minefields in our own professional worlds?

For all of the above reasons *Detenuring* is a must read for scholars who feel they have been or are currently being mobbed in their respective workplaces. This is an excellent resource for union officials, counselors, and anyone else finding them in a place where they are dealing with the victims of mobbing. I commend it to each and every one.