

# CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR'S REVIEW

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323	<b>EDITOR'S PREFACE</b>	321
325	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME ISSUE</b>	
	<b>A TRIPARTITE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW</b>	
329	ERIC MILLER, <i>Anti-Intellectualism and the Integration of Faith and Learning</i>	
335	JAY GREEN, <i>On the Evangelical Mind and Consulting the Faithful</i>	
341	JOHN FEA, <i>What is the State of the Evangelical Mind on Christian College Campuses?</i>	
	<b>CHURCHES</b>	
345	ANDREW T. DRAPER, <i>Christ the Center: An Evangelical Theology of Hope</i>	
353	C. CHRISTOPHER SMITH, <i>Addressing the Evangelical Mind-Body Problem: The Local Church as Learning Organization</i>	
363	MAUREEN MINER BRIDGES, <i>Psychological Contributions to Understanding Prejudice and the Evangelical Mind</i>	
	<b>PARACHURCH ORGANIZATIONS</b>	
373	RACHEL MAXSON, <i>People of the Magazine? Evangelical Innovation for Cultural Engagement amid Technological Change</i>	
383	MARK STEPHENS, <i>The Parachurch Down Under: A Case Study</i>	
391	TIMOTHY DALRYMPLE, <i>The Evangelical Mind in the Digital Fields</i>	
	<b>UNIVERSITIES</b>	
401	RICK OSTRANDER, <i>The Role of the Christian University in the Cultivation of the Evangelical Mind</i>	
407	DAVID M. JOHNSTONE, <i>The Unexpectedness of Hope: Good News for a Generation</i>	
415	JACK R. BAKER AND JEFFREY BILBRO, <i>How Wendell Berry Helps Universities Inhabit Their Places</i>	

322

**SEMINARIES**

- 423 GRANT D. TAYLOR, *Commending the Gospel: Evangelical Seminaries and Our "Letters of Recommendation"*
- 433 ERIN E. DEVERS AND JASON D. RUNYAN, *The Impact of Thinking Fast and Slow on the Evangelical Mind*
- 445 KAREN J. JOHNSON, *Remembering Our Racial Past: Using Institutional Lament to Shape Affections*

**EXTENDED REVIEW**

- 455 NATHAN A. FINN, *Restoring the Soul of the University*

**REVIEWS**

- 463 KAREN A. LONGMAN, ED., *Diversity Matters: Race, Ethnicity, & the Future of Christian Higher Education*  
Reviewed by Weishiuan Sandy Chen
- 466 PERRY L. GLANZER, JONATHAN P. HILL, AND BYRON R. JOHNSON, *The Quest for Purpose: The Collegiate Search for a Meaningful Life*  
Reviewed by Glenn E. Sanders
- 469 RYAN MCILHENNY, *Reforming the Liberal Arts*  
Reviewed by Sam Guthrie

- 473 **INDEX FOR VOLUME XLVII**

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# Editor's Preface

By Mark Bowald

323

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The editors of *Christian Scholar's Review* are pleased to present this special issue. As the guest editors' introduction will describe, these papers were delivered at a conference in Indianapolis dedicated to the discussion of "The State of the Evangelical Mind." Todd Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Chris Devers organized and executed an exceptionally well produced conference and are the primary architects of the content appearing in this volume. I was graciously invited to attend and heard all of the included papers which comprised the parallel sessions. The plenary papers will be published as a companion volume by InterVarsity Press. The fact that these are papers from parallel sessions should not be read as a reflection on quality. As a seasoned academic conference goer I can attest that the character of these papers, on the balance, hold their own quite capably with the better known authors and speakers of the plenaries. Indeed, I predict that time will tell that many of the younger scholars published in this volume will themselves become readily-recognized leaders in their fields and in evangelical scholarship.

The special content in this issue is also providentially fitting for the announcement of the winner of the Charles J. Miller Christian Scholar's Award for best article for Volume 46. The winner is Dr. Stephen Monsma whose article shares an adjunct concern with the papers in this issue appeared in Volume 46.4 and is titled: "What is an Evangelical? And Does It Matter?" In it Dr. Monsma assesses the current status of studies of Evangelicalism, indicates flaws and lacunae in them and points the way forward for a more nuanced and care-full approach to its proper understanding. As we had mentioned in that issue, Dr. Monsma, longtime faculty at Calvin College who also served Grand Rapids and the State of Michigan ably and admirably in a variety of political positions, passed away on February 18 of 2017. His article was published posthumously with the permission of his wife of 52 years, Mary Carlisle Monsma, who will receive the award on his behalf.



## Introduction to the Theme Issue on the State of the Evangelical Mind

By Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Christopher J. Devers

Regardless of how one defines it, American evangelicalism is at a crossroads. The last quarter of the twentieth century was replete with signs of prosperity. Many churches, parachurch organizations, universities, and seminaries grew at unprecedented rates. Some analysts argued that the individuals populating those institutions were contributing to an intellectual renaissance. For example, in the October 2000 issue of *The Atlantic*, Alan Wolfe notes, “evangelical scholars are writing the books, publishing the journals, teaching the students, and sustaining the networks necessary to establish a presence in American academic life.”<sup>1</sup>

However, a host of legal, financial, social, and ultimately theological questions now face evangelicals, threatening that renaissance. One key example is the financial challenges that compelled *Christianity Today* to cease publication of *Books & Culture* after 21 years. That decision is a tangible expression of those challenges, and its closure came after various herculean efforts by several leading evangelicals to save the thought journal. This collection of essays stems from both the veneration of *Books & Culture*’s contributions, and a symposium held to reflect on various factors and possibilities around this historical signpost.

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**Todd C. Ream** is professor of higher education at Taylor University and a distinguished fellow with the Lumen Research Institute. He is the co-author and co-editor of many books, including, most recently, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, and contributes to a wide variety of publications including *About Campus*, *Christianity Today*, *First Things*, *Gastronomica*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Modern Theology*, *New Blackfriars*, *Notre Dame Magazine*, *The Review of Higher Education*, and *Teachers College Record*. **Jerry Pattengale** is the author of more than 20 books and numerous essays in publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *Christianity Today*, *The Washington Post*, *Books & Culture*, *Religion News Service*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Patheos*, and *The Chicago Tribune*. He serves as executive director of education for the Museum of the Bible (Washington, D.C.) and is University Professor at Indiana Wesleyan University. **Christopher J. Devers** received a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as an M.S. in educational administration and a B.S. in engineering and technology education from Purdue University. He is an Associate Professor in the School of Education and the Director of Research for the Center for Learning and Innovation at Indiana Wesleyan University. He is also the Director of the Lumen Research Institute at Excelsia College. Professor Devers’ research focuses on online education, video learning, student success, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Caught between fear and hope, many observers propose the evangelical mind is now on the threshold of another "scandal." In contrast, others propose that the opportunities for faithful intellectual engagement and witness are greater now than in recent history.<sup>2</sup>

The answers to those questions have ramifications for evangelicals as well as a nation such as the United States in which many evangelicals find a home. For example, in *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*, Frances FitzGerald argues evangelicals defined the nation in a host of ways. They comprise about 25 percent of the US population but, as the Pulitzer Prize-winning author notes, evangelicals are far from a homogeneous group. As a result, she contends that how evangelicals engage issues ranging from climate change to immigration will have an impact on the range of debates and possible courses of action taken in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The articles in this theme issue of *Christian Scholar's Review* offer a context in which readers can reflect upon that past while also thinking critically about the prospects for the future of the evangelical mind. As argued, those prospects depend in many ways upon the influence exerted by churches, parachurch organizations, universities, and seminaries. For example, what role will each one of those institutions play? What kinds of relationships will they need to share with one another? What kinds of relationships will churches, parachurch organizations, universities, and seminaries need to forge with other institutions? The articles in this issue frame many of the resources needed for answering those questions while also suggesting how those institutions should chart both their respective and common courses for the future.

By drawing upon the wisdom of the past, perhaps some of these questions are best navigated by also reflecting upon the common and respective purposes animating churches, parachurch organizations, universities, and seminaries. Such work was undertaken at a symposium in Indianapolis, Indiana, hosted by Indiana Wesleyan University, the Sagamore Institute, Excelsia College, and Christianity Today on September 21–22, 2017.

Along with a companion volume from InterVarsity Press that bears the same title, the essays in this theme issue reflect what emerged from that effort. As with the symposium, this issue opens with what is referred to as a tripartite review in which noted historians Eric Miller (Geneva College), Jay Green (Covenant College),

<sup>1</sup>Alan Wolfe, "The Opening of the Evangelical Mind," *The Atlantic* (October 2000), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/10/the-opening-of-the-evangelical-mind/378388/>.

<sup>2</sup>Interesting assessments of this range of opinions are found in Dale M. Coutler, "Evangelical Identity and Its Crises," *First Things* (November 30, 2017), <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/11/evangelical-identity-and-its-crises> and Mark Labberton, ed., *Still Evangelical? Insiders Reconsider Political, Social, and Theological Meaning* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018).

<sup>3</sup>Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

and John Fea (Messiah College) each offer an autobiographical review of what changed and what stayed the same since Eerdmans published Mark A. Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* in October 1994.<sup>4</sup> The issue then turns to four blocks of three essays each that explore the roles the previously noted institutional types play in the cultivation of the evangelical mind:

### Churches

Andrew T. Draper (Urban Light Community Church)  
C. Christopher Smith (*The Englewood Review of Books*)  
Maureen Miner Bridges (Excelsia College)

### Parachurch Organizations

Rachel Maxson (John Brown University)  
Mark Stephens (Excelsia College)  
Timothy Dalrymple (Polymath Innovations)

### Universities

Rick Ostrander (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities)  
David M. Johnstone (George Fox University)  
Jack R. Baker and Jeffrey L. Bilbro (Spring Arbor University)

### Seminaries

Grant D. Taylor (Beeson Divinity School–Samford University)  
Erin E. Devers and Jason D. Runyan (Indiana Wesleyan University)  
Karen J. Johnson (Wheaton College)

These essays are not designed to be comprehensive appraisals but, in their own ways, to offer insights into how those four types of institutions are contributing to the formation of the evangelical mind. These articles are shorter than ones often found in *Christian Scholar's Review* in part so all of the worthy contributions could find their rightful place. Their length, however, has less to do with space limitations than an overriding emphasis on raising important questions intended to be “conversation starters.” As a result, readers are encouraged to find their own places in this conversation and seek to fill in the vast array of details still needing consideration.

<sup>4</sup>*The Scandal* became a springboard for numerous discussions and a text intersecting most evangelical circles of higher learning. Like the opening illustration in the following review, many of you reading this will have your own reference points to Mark Noll's *Scandal* and likely its sequel, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (2011). The review begins: “Who is Mark Noll?” was an awkward question coming from an academic administrator, accented by his dazed look when I mentioned *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. I left that Christian campus with mixed feelings, appreciative of meeting goodhearted professors but pricked deeply by that conversation—his obvious unawareness of a leading Christian thinker.” Jerry Pattengale, *The Cresset* 73.2 (Advent-Christmas 2009): 59–62; a review of Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009).



# Anti-Intellectualism and the Integration of Faith and Learning

By Eric Miller

329

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How have evangelical faculties fared in their efforts to move beyond the scandal Mark Noll so sharply exposed nearly a quarter of a century ago? This is the question I take up in this essay, writing as a mid-career faculty member of a Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) institution. What follows are historical and autobiographical reflections that seek to move beyond critique and toward a constructive response to Noll's yet-timely challenge.

As a historian of twentieth-century American intellectual life, when I think of Noll's book I cannot help but remember Richard Hofstadter, the mid-twentieth-century Columbia University historian and intellectual whose ghostly whispers still illumine and afflict our age. Our political circumstance has over the past two years provoked extraordinary efforts at definition, and here Hofstadter hovers, eager to speak, offering pithy sound bites like "the paranoid style,"<sup>1</sup> "the fundamentalist mind,"<sup>2</sup> "status anxiety,"<sup>3</sup> and more. That his naming and framing of key dimensions of American political culture retain their force is surely telling. Among other things, it shows that the cosmopolitan liberalism he so stylishly represents retains its force. In this enlightened world, Hofstadter's voice carries over the decades with the timbre of a founding father.

Young Hofstadter, however, had little reverence for America's founding fathers. So he will, I trust, appreciate a spirited critique. Because that is exactly what Mark Noll, for all the Hofstadterian elements of his book, did in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, and I intend to echo it. Evangelicals have long "adopted procedures of the Enlightenment to express their thought" protested Noll.<sup>4</sup> With appreciation he quoted Harry Blamires's touchstone indictment of the disappearing "Christian mind": "We Christians accept," Blamires had declared in 1963, "a

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frame of reference constructed by the secular mind."<sup>5</sup> Noll urged evangelicals instead to learn to "think within a specifically Christian framework" rather than allowing those outside the faith to "set the agenda for what goes on" within Christian academic life.<sup>6</sup>

It is no coincidence that it was also in 1963 that Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* was published, receiving the Pulitzer Prize the following year. As Hofstadter etched the dreary ways and effects of America's evangelicals, he did so with a cool antipathy nurtured within the very enlightened "frame of reference" that troubled Noll and Blamires. Indeed, Hofstadter's voice was among the most eloquent that the by then fully emerged "secular mind" had yet produced, and his book was certainly a token of it. Over his brief but dazzling career, he helped to fortify the "framework" that Noll was, 30 years later, urging us to dismantle.

I have here turned to the first-person plural because I was among Noll's eager readers in the fall of 1994. I had in fact preordered *Scandal* via that ancient pre-Amazon institution: Christian Book Distributors. Recently rereading *Scandal* evoked that world in ways for which I was unprepared: the go-to citations, the then-innovative scholarship, the books not yet written; above all the sense of a distinct movement and moment.

In 1999 I began teaching at Geneva College, thinking of myself as part of that movement, joining there a small but serious branch of it. Their Calvinism was Scottish at its base but had been extended by Abraham Kuyper, and the college boasted evangelical breadth, too, led by a man who had served as president of the National Association of Evangelicals. The seasoned historian who mentored me warned that his favorite Christian magazines always went extinct: first *Eternity*, then *The Reformed Journal*; he hoped *Books & Culture* would not have the same fate. I was sure it would not.

My confidence was a bad sign. In the midst of my first semester, I asked a true-blue Kuyperian and CCCU insider on our faculty to lunch. "Um," I said, "there doesn't seem to be much going on here intellectually." He smiled, a little surprised and a little embarrassed, as if the institution had just been outed. "You're right," he agreed. And we talked about it, the first of many hopeful conversations about how we might advance what he called simply "the project."

Today I can see I arrived at Geneva looking for the incarnation of every evangelical intellectual ideal I had imbibed over the previous years: the vision of Carl Henry; the mind (and maybe the accent) of Os Guinness; the heart of Mark Noll; the hope of Kenneth Kantzer—all nurtured in an atmosphere something like that of L'Abri. Obviously, I had mistaken earth for heaven.

Despite my initial misgivings, Geneva has in fact offered many heavenly

<sup>1</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1965).

<sup>2</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism and American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 134.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Knopf, 1955), see esp. chap. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 83.

<sup>5</sup>Cited in *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 7, 18.

foretastes. The senior members of the faculty, for one, would refer to Nicholas Wolterstorff as “Nick”—a species of 1990s CCCU cachet if ever there was one. For several years, we ran a robust program of faculty book discussions that took us into Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Cochrane, E. O. Wilson, George Marsden, David Riesman, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Henry Newman, among others. Before a financial crisis hit, each faculty member received a copy of every issue of *Books & Culture*. We even put together a small in-house conference on our institutional identity that Arthur Holmes himself came to keynote. Whatever “the integration of faith and learning” was, Geneva saw itself, justly, as its flag bearer.

And yet I could not help but see the ghost of Hofstadter hovering around that flag, and not just the flag being waved at Geneva but wherever I saw it waving in the orbit of the CCCU. To me, there seemed to be too much peace between the “specifically Christian framework” Noll and others called for and the epistemological structures and pedagogical practices of our highly trained scholarly selves. Christian language was present in our institutions. But it did not seem to structure as deeply as it should our thinking about not just our disciplines, but the world our disciplines were teaching us to see and make—or not see and make.

To me, this became particularly clear in the “integration papers” we were required to write for tenure. In them it became evident that it was not Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, MacIntyre, or Milbank who were most consequentially training our sight. Rather, it was Locke, Smith, Mill, Marx, Weber, Geertz, Hawking, Butler, and their hundreds of acolytes. At our intellectual foundation, we were still creatures of our disciplines.<sup>7</sup> We did not follow such thinkers so much as we traveled in the thought-worlds they spawned. And we mainly seemed to think this was OK—that this was simply what scholarship and education meant. Besides, when teaching four or five courses a semester, raising families, coaching Little League sports, volunteering at our kids’ schools, being part of a church, and simply keeping up with email, who had time for Hauerwas?<sup>8</sup>

Reading *Scandal* in this light, I am struck by the acuity of Noll’s observation on the governing impulses of evangelical culture. We are, he wrote, “activistic, intuitive, populist, and biblicistic.”<sup>9</sup> I think this set of inclinations tends indeed to be our communal norm, whether we are confronting the problem of poverty or the problem of the core curriculum. Like any cultural trait, it is a *trait*: not easily changed apart from serious, sustained, self-conscious effort. And even then, it is a long shot.

To be sure, we certainly are not alone in this semi-Christian condition, as

<sup>7</sup>These are of course the very secularized disciplines whose scandal George Marsden had in *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) so devastatingly exposed at the very moment Noll was elsewhere decrying scandal.

<sup>8</sup>For more on this daunting challenge, see John G. Stackhouse, “Why Johnny Can’t Produce Christian Scholarship,” in Stackhouse, *Evangelical Landscapes: Facing Critical Issues of the Day* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

<sup>9</sup>Noll, *Scandal*, 161.

Catholic scholars Christopher Shannon, Christopher Blum, and Joshua Hochschild have recently made clear in essays about the state of Catholic education and scholarship.<sup>10</sup> My own recent work with Brazilian academics of *evangelic* stripe puts the broader hegemonic authority of Western learning in even sharper relief. We are all following the same leaders. Derrida speaks Portuguese, for better and worse. What must we do?

Newman's *The Idea of a University* has become indispensable to me. Among the passages I often recall—and that Noll's book models—is one in which Newman urges his auditors not to reject the great literature of a given field or people, whatever its degree of hostility toward the Church. Rather, he, perhaps unexpectedly, urges Christian scholars to *absorb* it and respond to it Christianly, "striving," as he says, "to create a current in the direction of Catholic truth, when the waters are rapidly flowing the other way."<sup>11</sup> "We must recognize," he continues, "that historical literature, which is in occupation of the language, both as a fact, nay, and as a standard for ourselves."<sup>12</sup>

To push to the side this body of considerable, indeed historic, achievement represented by the academic disciplines, however wrongheaded, only diminishes the critical endeavor we are pursuing. Among other things, Newman underscores, we need this tradition of scholarship for the standard it raises. But, he makes clear, it must not become the final standard.

It is precisely at this point that I believe CCCU institutions must take heed. If we have tended to attract faculties of good disciplinarians, following the standards of our fields, we have tended not to require, so far as I can tell, the same critical standards when it comes to critiquing those fields in fundamental fashion. The dissertation may be required to demonstrate real theoretical perception. But the "integration paper"? Not so much, or at least not so evenly, in my experience. And this I take to be mainly not a personal but an institutional failing—and, more, an institutional failing not at the level of the college so much as at the level of the network of colleges, where there may reside adequate intellectual authority to make fruitful judgments of the relative merit of our scholarship. In sum: if we are to foster the "Christian mind" for which Noll calls, I believe our tenure process needs the same intellectual fiber the tenure process of the broader academy has. Why *not* require that integration papers be published in peer-reviewed journals?

But such an end would in turn require faculty development programs that can teach us to think as Christians in the deepest ways, reading, yes, in the train of Augustine and Aquinas, Bonhoeffer and Barth. We must see theology not as a set of doctrines but rather as a language. We do not need to recite theology. We need to *speak* it, and with greater and greater fluency.

<sup>10</sup>Christopher Shannon and Christopher O. Blum, *The Past as Pilgrimage: Narrative, Tradition, and the Renewal of Catholic History* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 2014); Joshua P. Hochschild, "The Catholic Vision," *Commonweal* (May 19, 2017): 8–10.

<sup>11</sup>John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Rethinking the Western Tradition, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 185.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

When this happens, good things flow. The most rewarding endeavor at Geneva of which I have been part is a team-taught, interdisciplinary, first-year course in our core curriculum called Invitation to the Humanities. It began in the aftermath of a collective reading of MacIntyre and James Davison Hunter. Now beginning its 15<sup>th</sup> year, it takes students on a journey through death, love, and the modern world. We read O'Connor, Chesterton, Augustine; Stegner, Wiman, King; Hawthorne, Carver, Norris. We go back and forth between small discussion circles and a large lecture hall. We sing and laugh and talk. Some sleep, many groan, and a few curse (including the occasional professor). The students conclude the course by thinking about calling and writing their own Augustinian confessions, tracing how their life stories shaped their fundamental assumptions about the world. In the end, it is a course that has provoked deep movement in many lives.

But no movement has been deeper than that of the professors and teaching assistants involved in this course—a cross-disciplinary company of scholars, usually between eight and twelve, that meets every week to think and pray and talk, working through these texts and themes and, most important, the pressing matter of how to bring them into our students' lives. The course is deeply humanistic, rigorously academic, and expressly theological. It is the sweetest of the foretastes I have come to know at Geneva, one in which we have witnessed, as the years have passed, the steady emergence of not simply young Christian minds but *Christians*.

The scandal Mark Noll astutely brought into view remains plenty evident in the CCCU. Any hope of deliverance will surely come through the patient, costly efforts of communities, large and small, such as this one: constituted for mission by Christ; seeking his mind as his kingdom they seek. And happy to read but not be haunted by Richard Hofstadter.



# On the Evangelical Mind and Consulting the Faithful

By Jay Green

335

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As we near the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, those who wish to make sense of its legacy confront a rather curious puzzle. If the book aimed to energize a generation of evangelicals to establish themselves in elite universities, to produce credible, meaningful scholarship, and to leave a record of thoughtful reflection on modern culture, then mission accomplished! However, if its goals extended to revitalizing the culture of thought among *ordinary evangelicals*, its legacy is much less clear; especially in light of the public witness of American evangelicals in the age of Donald Trump. As someone who has enjoyed the fruits of a post-*Scandal* evangelical intellectual renaissance since 1994, I am perplexed and troubled by its seeming lack of penetration among "folks in the pew." This seeming paradox has led me to reflect anew on features of my own story.

I was raised in small-town Ohio within a Moody-radio-listening, Dobson-reading, PTL-supporting, Republican-voting, evangelical Christian household. At 18, I headed off to a Christian college, followed by an evangelical seminary, and finally a state university where I earned a Ph.D. in history. After that, I went to work at a Christian college where I have been teaching evangelical undergraduates for almost 20 years. My wife and I have raised our three children within our neighborhood evangelical church located in what the Barna Group recently called "the most Bible-minded city in America."<sup>1</sup>

My adult life has been lived in the strange borderlands between the evangelical subculture and the elite professional class of American academia. I have been shaped by simultaneous efforts to remain connected in some kind of authentic way to my evangelical heritage, while pursuing a life of scholarship and intellectual

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seriousness demanded by my discipline. If there is a "scandal of the evangelical mind," I believe I have had a better than average vantage point from which to see it.

Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* could not have emerged at a more auspicious moment in my life. Six years prior, this young culture warrior had headed off to college in a car sporting a bumper sticker that read "I DON'T BELIEVE THE LIBERAL MEDIA." A Christian college education, I was sure, would solidify and deepen my already well-developed but narrow vision of the world. But four years of being inducted into the splendor of a liberal arts education by learned, thoughtful, and faith-formed men and women opened my eyes to the glorious potential of high-level scholarship in a Christian context. It was here I first saw the potential of what Noll would call the evangelical mind. It was here also that I felt my first twinges of contempt for my evangelical heritage.

After graduation I enrolled in a rigorous, seminary-based MA program in Christian thought, hungry for more of the same. Midway through, in February 1993, several classmates and I trekked to Wheaton College, where we heard Mark deliver his inaugural lecture for the McManis Chair, "The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind." His talk seized my imagination like few I have heard, before or since. It made those of us who made the trip that night feel as though we were a part of something much bigger than ourselves. It is not an exaggeration to say that we felt as if Noll was speaking directly to us, presenting a challenge for our generation.

A year and half later, on a long car ride to my first academic conference as a PhD student, I carried along a copy of Mark's just-published book by the same name. I read it from cover to cover. Its prophetic challenge functioned over the next four years as a gentle reminder of why even my modest work in the academy might have consequences. Its central arguments served as a springboard for a group of far-flung Christian doctoral students in history programs from around the country. We learned the protocols of the new-fangled technology known as email that magically enabled us to discuss and debate in real time what it might mean to be "Christian historians." While we deliberated over every imaginable feature of our discipline, "the scandal of the evangelical mind" was never far from our thoughts.

By God's grace, I landed a job teaching at a Christian liberal arts college, an ideal location for me to explore and express the best that the evangelical mind had to offer. Allen Guelzo has more recently described Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCCU) schools such as Covenant as the "intellectual pumping-stations of Evangelical creativity."<sup>2</sup> Working at the only official college of the Presbyterian Church in America, I hoped my station would provide me with larger

<sup>1</sup>The Barna Group, "2017 Bible-Minded Cities: Infographics in Faith and Christianity," June 22, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/2017-bible-minded-cities/>. "For the second year in a row, Chattanooga, TN (50%) is the most Bible-minded city in America. In fact, since 2013, Chattanooga has won every year with the exception of 2015, when it was runner up to Birmingham / Anniston / Tuscaloosa, AL."

<sup>2</sup>Allen Guelzo, "Whither the Evangelical Colleges," *Touchstone* (May/June 2011), <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=24-03-029-f>.

venues for serving the church, perhaps even in confronting some of the lingering vestiges and sources of anti-intellectualism among folk in our wider constituency.

Still fueled by a young man's idealism, I went to work confronting "the scandal" within the small learning community and the broader denomination to which I had been called. I engaged the issue in my classes, in chapel, on campus discussion panels, in General Assembly seminars, and occasionally in print with a naïve confidence that my graduate training and my keen intellect could play a modest but strategic role in helping my brothers and sisters embrace a more sophisticated vision of thinking and living in the world.

Within a few short years, however, I began to question some of my basic assumptions about the problem of the evangelical mind as I understood it from Noll's book, along with my own posture toward "fixing" it. Although I could still agree that the long-standing evangelical resistance to sophisticated reasoning and nuanced thought owed something to the obsessions and theological idiosyncrasies of fundamentalism, I wondered if ordinary evangelicals saw something in this dynamic I was missing. I wondered if their tradition of mistrusting "the life of the mind" might be rooted in deeper, more legitimate sets of concerns.

Writing at about the same time that Noll was framing *The Scandal*, historian Christopher Lasch laid out a devastating critique of America's "new elite," those, in his view, "who control the international flow of money and information, preside over philanthropic foundations and institutions of higher learning, manage the instruments of cultural production and thus the terms of cultural debate."<sup>3</sup> He went on to show the various ways he believed these elites threatened American democracy and Western values.

From the vantage point of ordinary evangelicals, I slowly came to see that the project of rebuilding the evangelical mind relied quite heavily and somewhat uncritically upon the world dominated by those same elites; a world that beckoned those of us mobilized by this project to adopt their perspectives, their postures, and their overarching sensibilities toward the nation's "unwashed masses." I myself had become, far more than I realized, a creature—or at least a wannabe creature—of its professional class. I had the audacity to view myself as a potential redeemer of evangelical culture even as I was increasingly alienated from its rhythms and its deeper concerns. When I endeavored to "fix" their problems of intellectual obtuseness, waxing eloquent about better and more nuanced ways of reading the world, the ordinary evangelicals I encountered in doing so did not have any trouble interpreting my well-meaning efforts as a species of contempt. And, more often than not, they were right in thinking so. In this light, it is not hard to understand their misgivings about our project.

A populist impulse fueled by deep suspicions of secular elitism is baked into evangelicalism. Evangelicals have long drawn strength from feelings of marginalization and embattlement. Although some of these attitudes might be chalked

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 25–26.

up to an “evangelical persecution complex,” they must not all be dismissed as wholesale illusion. In this same book, Lasch describes the prevailing attitudes that America’s elite opinion makers hold toward the ordinary folk of Middle America: “hopelessly shabby, unfashionable, and provincial, ill-informed about changes in taste or intellectual trends, addicted to trashy novels of romance and adventure, and stupefied by prolonged exposure to television.”<sup>4</sup> Fanatically religious. Sexually repressed. Irrationally patriotic. And obsessed with their guns. I could recognize in Lasch’s description my own disposition toward my “anti-intellectual” students and their families, to say nothing of my outlook on my own family and the people back home in the church in which I was raised.

By highlighting Lasch’s observations here, I do not mean to suggest I think there is not or never was an actual “scandal of the evangelical mind” or to dismiss the past generation’s project aimed at enhancing critical reflection among believers as a sham effort at social climbing. That is not my point. I am trying merely to confess that the problem of the evangelical mind has been a good deal more complicated than at least I was willing to admit or acknowledge. It has been in many ways at least as much one of *disposition* as one of ideas or theological perspective.

*The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* did not merely lay out a critique of evangelical shortcomings. This cry from a “wounded lover” also contained a needed prescription for the health and welfare of the evangelical subculture; strong medicine that most in its rank-and-file have not been inclined to take. Thanks in large part to Mark’s book (and to the many dozens that it spawned), to herculean institutional supports that came from many directions, to publications such as *Books & Culture*, to intellectual and institutional leaders such as Mike Cromartie and John Wilson, and to many dedicated academics in the trenches, the “evangelical mind” is by many measures in the best shape that it has ever been. Over the past quarter century, a multitude of young evangelical scholars has risen to meet the challenge of engaging the academic disciplines and of entering the highest spheres of scholarship and public service. In this sense, I do not think anyone can now legitimately say that “there is not much of an evangelical mind.”

But I do not think a very sophisticated autopsy of evangelical engagement amid our recent presidential election is needed to conclude that we are not exactly living in a golden age of healthy, thoughtful, clear-minded evangelical thought and action. We simply are not. As beneficial as many of the developments seen over the past 25 years have been, I wonder if we have considered all the lessons from *The Scandal* that we might have. I wonder if our priorities were always entirely where they should have been.

“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem...the academy with the church?” Tertullian’s ancient question echoes through centuries. Tensions between the power centers of learning and the work of Christian faithfulness are not new, and they are not going away anytime soon. If we hope to address the ongoing and deeper-than-ever challenges of the evangelical mind, we need to attend to those

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 29.

tensions both in our thinking and in our attitudes toward ordinary believers. It is clear that we are not trusted by the very people we claim to love and whose culture we hope to reenergize. It is little wonder that we do not have much of a hearing among them, and that they are more apt to see us as part of “the problem” than as offering anything like a solution.

In a famously controversial essay in 1859, future cardinal John Henry Newman challenged the elite Roman Catholic hierarchy to stop dismissing the views and experiences of laity of the Catholic Church and, instead, urged them to develop a more generous, reciprocal relationship to ordinary “people in the pew.” The fate of the church, Newman believed, depended on responsive leaders that were willing to “consult the faithful.”<sup>5</sup> Just as Catholic leaders were troubled (at best) at Newman’s proposal, evangelical scholars likewise remain uneasy about conferring authority to the insights and experiences of the evangelical masses. Perhaps we need to take a page from Newman’s playbook. We have long been persuaded that the evangelical world would be better off if its members listened to the insights and wisdom of scholars; perhaps they would. But it also may be the case that we would benefit if we spent a little more time listening to and learning from the wisdom of the faithful.

<sup>5</sup>John H. Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1961).



# What is the State of the Evangelical Mind on Christian College Campuses?

By John Fea

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Does Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* still have relevance today, more than two decades after its publication in 1994?<sup>1</sup> As a historian who has spent 16 years in a Christian college affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) and a longtime member of evangelical congregations (for the past 16 years I have attended a congregation affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America), I can safely say that it has more relevance than ever. In this short essay, I want to reflect on why I believe this to be the case.

I first read *Scandal* as a doctoral student in history. The book played an important part of my journey and continues in many ways to serve as a guiding light, an intellectual road map, and a source of inspiration 24 years later. I am a first-generation college student, raised in a working-class community of northern New Jersey. The Italian and Slovak Catholicism that saturated every dimension of the first 16 years of my life was just as anti-intellectual as the evangelicals Noll wrote about in *Scandal*. (Imagine a Catholicism lifted from the pages of a Robert Orsi book, as opposed to a Catholicism informed by the church fathers or the social teaching Noll so admires).

My conversion at the age of 16 to a pietistic, dispensational, and generally fundamentalist brand of evangelicalism, did very little to propel me toward a life as a historian and college professor. Upon high school graduation, I did what most members of my family did—pursued a profession. That led me to Bible college where I would train for the ministry and eventually to an evangelical seminary where, for the first time, I was exposed to the discipline of history and the idea of glorifying God with my mind. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* convinced me that the life of the mind was a legitimate calling despite what my pastors and other spiritual mentors told me.

I began my contribution to this tripartite review with autobiography, because my story is inseparable from what I do every day as a Christian college professor. I want my students—whether they are first-generation college students or not—to

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have the same experience I had. It is worth noting that whatever awakening of the mind I experienced in my early twenties happened *within* evangelicalism and was informed in many ways by what Noll wrote about in his sequel to *Scandal—Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*.<sup>2</sup> I like to think I am in the business of cultivating evangelical minds and helping young men and women to mature in intellect and Christian faith so that they can be leaders in the church and informed members of our democracy. As Noll accurately points out in *Scandal*, Christian colleges will never be in the position of changing the “deep structures of modern intellectual life,” but we do still work in an environment where teaching and mentoring students in the necessity of Christian thinking about the world can and must contribute to overcoming the “scandal.” This is especially the case as it relates to the liberal arts and the humanities.

I use the words *can* and *must* because my assessment of the state of the evangelical mind on Christian college campuses is not an overly positive one. When you have been around long enough and, in my case, enter the back half of a career, you begin to understand more fully institutional priorities and to ask a different set of questions. My understanding of the current state of the evangelical mind also draws from observations I have made, anecdotes I have heard, and assessments I have made as I traveled to more than 20 Christian colleges as an invited lecturer, an external reviewer, and as the parent of two daughters—one currently attending a Christian college and the other making her selection.

As a result, my engagement with Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* revolves around three questions. First, what academic disciplines must thrive on our campuses for the evangelical mind to flourish, and what is the current state of those disciplines on our campuses? I agree with Noll when he says that cultivation of the evangelical mind happens “across the whole spectrum of modern learning: economics, political science, literary criticism and imaginative writing, historical inquiry and philosophical studies, linguistics and the history of science, social theory and the arts.”<sup>3</sup> But in some ways, our heady conversations about the “evangelical mind” seem futile in the face of steep declines in the number of students studying these fields beyond the general education curriculum. This decline is not unique to Christian colleges. According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the number of humanities majors is dropping at colleges and universities across the country.<sup>4</sup> My largely anecdotal and unscientific survey of my fellow History Department chairs suggests most Christian colleges are struggling to attract students interested in the critical study of the past. When I arrived at Messiah College in 2002, we had close to 100 history majors. We now have 42.

<sup>1</sup>Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>Mark Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>4</sup>Scott Jaschik, “Humanities Majors Drop,” *Inside Higher Ed* (June 5, 2017), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/05/analysis-finds-significant-drop-humanities-majors-gains-liberal-arts-degrees>.

And this occurred in a period in which we grew our faculty from three to seven members and significantly strengthened the academic quality of the history major. Our English, philosophy, theology, modern language, and politics departments have taken similar hits.

Second, are Christian colleges willing to invest resources in the strengthening of the evangelical mind on our campuses? Many of our schools are in some degree of financial trouble right now. As tuition-driven institutions of higher learning, we are all desperate to attract students so that we can keep the doors open or avoid painful cuts to budgets and faculty lines. As a result, new programs are created, and resources are spent, on the kinds of programs that will bring in revenue. We are thus seeing more and more online learning and continuing education, an increasing number of cash-generating master's programs with large distant-learning components, and investments in majors such as nursing, engineering, business, and service-oriented programs. Our Christian colleges are now producing graduates with the kind of *training* necessary for them to function well in a capitalist economy. But to what degree are we *educating* our students in the virtues necessary for a thriving democratic society or for roles as responsible thinkers in the life of their churches and congregations?

When we fill our dorms and classrooms with physical therapy and accounting majors, it creates a campus ethos that downplays the life of the mind. In a recent piece for *Inside Higher Ed*, I wrote about my oldest daughter's experience visiting two Christian colleges. My daughter wanted a Christian institution where she could pursue a Christian intellectual life. She also wanted a school with a robust humanities program. We found that very few colleges affiliated with the CCCU made the life of the mind, the humanities, the liberal arts, or the education of thoughtful Christian citizens a priority in the messages sent by admissions departments to prospective students.

During one visit, a couple of students asked my daughter about what she hoped to study in college. My daughter said that she wanted to study History or English. The students quickly responded with "Great! So you want to teach!" When my daughter told them that she was not planning on a teaching career, her new friends responded with surprise: "Then what are you going to do with that degree?" My daughter also realized that admission officers knew how to sell programs but did not know how to talk about an education at a Christian college in a way that transcended utilitarian ends. Promotional videos focused on career opportunities, sports, extra-curricular activities, and professional programs. In the end, my daughter wondered if she would find any like-minded people at this Christian college. I told her she certainly would meet people at these colleges with similar passions and interests, but I also could not deny what my daughter sensed was correct.<sup>5</sup> These Christian colleges lacked a humanities ethos and she felt it.

<sup>5</sup>This essay draws heavily from John Fea, "Searching for the Humanities," *Inside Higher Ed* (May 27, 2016), accessed November 29, 2017 at <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/05/27/humanities-professor-visits-colleges-his-daughter-essay>.

Third, if what I have witnessed both at my own institution and other institutions is true, it leads me to wonder who will be carrying the torch for the evangelical mind as we move forward into the age of Trump and beyond. We cannot avoid this question. A 1995 comment by Richard Mouw perhaps best reflects the way many evangelical intellectuals think about the ways in which their work will benefit the church. Mouw writes, "Tens of thousands of young people in Christian evangelical colleges and seminaries are receiving a trickle-down effect from their professors' work. These are future laypeople."<sup>6</sup>

Like Mouw, I also hope for such a trickle-down effect, but I do not think this strategy for reaching the church with good thinking has worked very well. In other words, I am not sure Noll's clarion call for a more learned evangelicalism has penetrated congregational life. Or maybe Noll's call for evangelicals to pursue intellectual callings has been *too successful*. Perhaps some of the best evangelical thinkers in our communities have left their evangelical congregations to pursue membership in Christian churches and denominations that offer a more rational, traditional, or historically informed faith—the kind of faith megachurches cannot offer. If Christian intellectuals have indeed abandoned evangelical congregations, then we should not be surprised when fellow evangelicals enter the public square and display their anti-intellectual tendencies for all the world to see. Most of the students who show up on Christian college campuses today understand undergraduate education in terms of careerism, training for the marketplace, and the pursuit of a comfortable middle-class life. And they choose their majors and course of study accordingly.

I am sure many of you have read this kind of jeremiad before. It is an old story. But that does not mean we should give up or stop telling it. Those inspired to press onward by Noll's manifesto will find that the journey can be a tiring and lonely one. Indeed, those who speak prophetically about the need to worship God with our minds will find themselves in lovers' quarrels with fellow evangelicals, and we will no doubt suffer emotional and psychological wounds along the way. But in the end, these are the burdens we must bear when we follow what Noll, in another context, has called the "Christ of the academic road."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Richard Mouw, "Scandal? A Forum on the Evangelical Mind," *Christianity Today* (39): 25.

<sup>7</sup>Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 22.

# Christ the Center: An Evangelical Theology of Hope

By Andrew T. Draper

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As the cultural influence of evangelical Christianity in the West wanes, the lack of consensus among evangelicals about their own identity grows. In this paper, I will propose that evangelicals need a more robust theological, biblical, and Christological account of hope that will, in turn, inform an ecclesiology centered on the living Word. Toward that end, I will briefly visit Jürgen Moltmann's theology of hope, the apostle Paul's great Christ-hymn in Colossians, James Cone's reflections on Christ and hope, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christology of Jesus as the living Word. I will close by suggesting a doxological and ecclesiological path forward for an evangelical theology of hope.

In her book *The Politics of Evangelical Identity*, Lydia Bean documents the historical alignment of evangelicalism with the political right and describes the battle for self-definition now taking place within this *religiocultural* group.<sup>1</sup> Having grown accustomed to thinking of themselves as a "majority,"<sup>2</sup> many evangelicals are reeling from political decisions such as *Obergefell v. Hodges*,<sup>3</sup> which they believe challenged the centrality of "traditional" morality or "natural" law in the United States. The controversy surrounding the dismissal of Larycia Hawkins from Wheaton College<sup>4</sup> and the overwhelming support among evangelicals for the candidacy of Donald Trump<sup>5</sup> suggests the presence of a growing anxiety among evangelicals about their theological identity and the political identity of the nation to which they pledge allegiance. While a minority of evangelicals tends to align with the political left, among such groups similarly fearful rhetoric about the future of America is not uncommon.<sup>6</sup> Many evangelicals find themselves between hope and fear.

In his classic text *Psychology and Hope*, C. R. Snyder defines hope as a combination of willpower and waypower directed toward the achievement of a concrete goal.<sup>7</sup> For Snyder, willpower, or "determination and commitment," must be accompanied by waypower, or "mental capacity," toward the achievement of a clearly defined objective.<sup>8</sup> For Snyder, the goal of hope is any object or outcome

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that a human “wants” or “desires.”<sup>9</sup> Snyder distinguishes this understanding of hope from “optimism,” which he understands as lacking the component of “planning” that would qualify it as authentic hope.<sup>10</sup> For Snyder, where human will and capacity are combined with clearly articulated and achievable desire, hope is found.

According to this psychological understanding of hope, evangelicals do not seem to have a reasonable ground for hope. Many of the clearly defined goals of this movement, whether world evangelization or moral political reform, do not appear imminent. Likewise, the ability and capacity of evangelicals to plan for the achievement of said goals has not yet been apparent. Snyder claims that self-esteem is a “byproduct of how effective we are in the pursuit of goals.”<sup>11</sup> If that is the case, then evangelicals have every reason to be experiencing a crisis of identity.

That such a well-documented identity crisis does, in fact, exist suggests that evangelicals’ understanding of hope is more secular than theological.<sup>12</sup> Snyder’s humanist definition of hope, built as it is on desire and capacity and devoid of a divine referent, can be read as functionally atheist. It is a psychology that thrives in modern capitalism or what Daniel Bell calls “the economy of desire.”<sup>13</sup> Ironically evangelicals have by and large ordered their ecclesial polities and practices according to the political and economic constructs of free-market neoliberalism. When the body politic is understood as a voluntary collection of mutually consenting autonomous moral subjects<sup>14</sup> whose inalienable human rights involve the “pursuit of happiness”<sup>15</sup> and who are locked in relationships of economic

<sup>1</sup>Lydia Bean, *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup>I am thinking here of the “moral majority” language of Jerry Falwell.

<sup>3</sup>This is the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States.

<sup>4</sup>Ruth Graham, “The Professor Wore a Hijab in Solidarity—Then Lost Her Job,” *New York Times Magazine* (October 13, 2016).

<sup>5</sup>Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martínez, “How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis,” *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016.

<sup>6</sup>See the publications of groups such as Sojourners and Red-Letter Christians, which tend to align with politically liberal causes and often evince a similar apocalyptic tone about conservative trends in American politics.

<sup>7</sup>C. R. Snyder, *The Psychology of Hope* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 6–8.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>12</sup>Lisa Miller, “An Evangelical Identity Crisis,” *Newsweek* (November 12, 2006); Alan Wilson, “The Evangelical Identity Crisis,” *The Guardian* (October 27, 2010); Adam Ericksen, “The Evangelical Identity Crisis,” *Sojourners* (February 3, 2016).

<sup>13</sup>Daniel M. Bell Jr., *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

<sup>14</sup>John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 323–333.

<sup>15</sup>The United States Declaration of Independence, Art. 1, par. 2.

competition, hope cannot but be understood as constrained by human capacity and directed toward self-interested ends. In contrast, I now turn to proposing a theological account of hope centered on Christ, the living Word.

### Moltmann and a Theology of Hope

In his classic work *Theology and Hope*, Jürgen Moltmann claims that theological hope is neither presumption nor despair, neither activism nor absurdity.<sup>16</sup> Rather, Christian hope is found only at the point of the crucifixion.<sup>17</sup> It is there that death is real, the reality of pain is real, and the resurrection becomes real. In other words, the historicity of the Christ event is what distinguishes Christian hope from psychological hope. For Moltmann Christian hope has everything to do with this world and everything to do with the God who creates *ex nihilo*.<sup>18</sup> Christian hope is not escapism, nor is it otherworldly.<sup>19</sup> If the hope of the *parousia* is that the *eschaton* is “all of a sudden ... lit up and seen in a flash,”<sup>20</sup> then Christian hope is history. It is the activity of God and not human utopian thinking.<sup>21</sup> For evangelicals, who should surely be sympathetic with Moltmann’s stress on the historicity of the resurrection, no reason exists for despair at the limitations of our own abilities, potentialities, or capacities. It also means the goal of history is not found in our own desires for moral or political reform or world evangelization but in the God toward whom all history is progressing. For Moltmann, Christology cannot be satisfied only with doctrinal statements about who Christ was, but must also point to who Christ is and will be in the future. With the apostle Paul, Moltmann proclaims: “He is our hope.”<sup>22</sup>

### Paul and the Cosmic Christ

Turning then to the first chapter of his letter to the Colossians, Paul exalts Christ as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”<sup>23</sup> He presents Jesus as the one through whom all things were created and to whom all things are headed. Jesus is the one in whom “all things hold together” and is the one through whom God is “reconcil[ing] to himself all things.” The Jesus of Colossians 1 is the cosmic Christ, the *arche* and *telos* of all things. For Paul, creation is from, to, and for Jesus. His universal lordship is exercised in his headship over the church, his body. The centrality of Jesus is grounded in the peace he has made “by the blood of his cross.” Much like Moltmann, Paul sees the proper ground for

<sup>16</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 24–25.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 19–20.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 15, 21.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 17; see also Col. 1:27.

<sup>23</sup>All quotations are taken from Paul’s Christ-hymn in Col. 1:15–20 ESV.

Christian eschatology (the “to” and “for” Jesus, the reconciliation of all things) to be in Christ’s action on the cross. It is there that time is effectively telescoped; it is there that history coheres, taking meaning and shape. The Jesus of the Christ-hymn is creator, redeemer, and sustainer.

As a result, no mention of human capacity or goals is present in Paul’s account of Christian hope. Jesus already accomplished the work and is himself the goal, toward which hope points. Christian hope begins and ends with the person and work of Jesus. Seen in this light, evangelical anxiety begins to look like unbelief. Paradoxically evangelicals, a group that characteristically stresses the centrality of the bodily resurrection and return of Jesus, seem to be primarily concerned with boundary maintenance. This battle for self-identity has produced a group that is increasingly interested in defining who and what are “in” and “out”—both in the ecclesial body and the national body.<sup>24</sup> Such a focus on the peripheries is resulting in a church that is less focused on Christ as center. The more that human effort is expended in attempting to hold the theological systems or the institutions of evangelicalism together, the less evangelicals tend to focus on the One who all the while holds all things together.

This “tightening up” of a discrete identity for the evangelical church cannot but render evangelicalism more thoroughly secular. In this schema, a theology of hope gives way to a psychology of hope. As evangelicals assume defensive or reactionary postures, we become defined by what we are against rather than Who we are for—the One who is for the world. Increasingly evangelicalism is not seen by others as connected to the “good news” of reconciliation and hope from which it derives its name.<sup>25</sup>

### Cone and a Christology of Liberation

What has proven to be a rather theoretical exercise becomes more concrete when we consider that many Christians of color, particularly African American Christians, hesitate to identify with white evangelicalism. While sharing many of the same doctrinal convictions, many Christians of color do not fall on the same side of political activism as white evangelicals nor do they tend to share the same anxiety about “secularism” or “liberalism.”<sup>26</sup> For African-Americans and many

<sup>24</sup>I am thinking here of the public and caustic manner in which evangelical leaders, such as John Piper and Albert Mohler, try to ensure doctrinal conformity and the manner in which the presidency of Donald Trump, who was supported by many self-described evangelicals, has resulted in the tightening of borders and descriptions of who is “other.”

<sup>25</sup>Jessica Hamar Martinez et al., eds., “Americans Express Increasingly Warm Feelings toward Religious Groups,” *Pew Research Center*, February 15, 2017, which demonstrates the downward trend in perception about evangelicals, especially among younger generations.

<sup>26</sup>For articles describing the trends in how black and white Christians think differently about race, the church, and the future, see Kate Tracy, “A Growing Gap: How Black and White Christians Now Think about Race,” *Christianity Today* (December 23, 2013); Robert P. Jones, “White Christmas, Black Christmas,” *The Atlantic* (December 22, 2014).

people of color, churches, societies, or social movements that define who is “in” and who is “out” based on a vision of an idealized society of the past is a dangerous political reality. For them a return to a “golden age” of “greatness” in American evangelical history would be an understandably unwelcome development.

Although many African American Christian traditions remain theologically sympathetic to the evangelical tradition in important ways, they do not stress continuity with it in the same way as their white counterparts. Instead of being shaped by the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which contributed to the conservative-liberal impasse and the evangelical anxiety of the twenty-first century, non-white theological traditions have conceptualized and expressed Christian faith in ways that resist the marginalization enacted upon non-white bodies by political and theological means.

In the classic articulation of black liberation theology, *God of the Oppressed*, James Cone reflects on who Jesus is for us today.<sup>27</sup> For Cone, Christian hope is Christological but in this vein Jesus Christ is not a decontextualized ideal but a “liberating presence.”<sup>28</sup> Jesus is who he is for us today only because of who he was.<sup>29</sup> Cone contends that in addition to Scripture and tradition, social context must be recognized as an important norm for Christian theology.<sup>30</sup> He thus mitigates against what he sees as the inherent abstraction and Docetism of many contemporary white Christologies by reminding the church of the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth. Because Jesus was a Jew, a member of an oppressed first-century Palestinian ethnic and religious group, and because in his risen presence he is liberator of the oppressed, it is most appropriate today to say that Jesus is black.<sup>31</sup> Cone reflects on the irony that many classic theologies of hope (Moltmann, Käsemann, Pannenberg) have been influenced more by philosophical discourses on hope than the lived experiences of oppressed peoples courageously asserting their own personhood against dehumanizing forces of oppression. For Cone the ground of Christian hope is the sustaining presence of the black Jesus, the God of the oppressed.<sup>32</sup>

In this focus on the centrality of Christ, Cone’s theology shares similarities with Moltmann’s theology of hope and the apostle Paul’s Christ-hymn. Cone commends Moltmann for speaking clearly about the connection between a theology of hope and liberation of the oppressed.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, he recognizes that Christians of color have often better understood the centrality of hope for the Christian life because of their experience of the crucified and resurrected One’s solidarity with their suffering and liberation. Cone’s Christology is an important reminder for evangelicalism that it is problematic to attempt to reassert Christian

<sup>27</sup>James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), chap. 6.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 99–105.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 106–115, 122–126.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

identity through a conservative reclamation of tradition more so than a contemporary joining with the living presence of Jesus Christ in his body, consisting particularly of peoples who are marginalized.

### Bonhoeffer and Christ as Center

At this point, evangelicals may be positioned well to receive a timely word of challenge from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. While Bonhoeffer has been styled as a contemporary conservative by popular writers such as Eric Metaxas,<sup>34</sup> Bonhoeffer's theological trajectory is not reducible to the antiliberalism of the sort propounded by many in the Religious Right. It was because Bonhoeffer refused to succumb to anxiety about the future or capitulate to the church-state nexus of his day that he was able to follow the sustaining presence of Christ back to Germany after his time at Union Theological Seminary and in Harlem at Abyssinian Missionary Baptist Church. As Reggie Williams argues in *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*, Bonhoeffer's path of discipleship against the Third Reich began to develop when "he encountered the black Christ who suffered with African Americans in a white supremacist world."<sup>35</sup>

In *Christ the Center*, a collection of Bonhoeffer's lectures on Christology, we have the clearest picture of his formal Christology.<sup>36</sup> For Bonhoeffer, Christ is not a timeless truth or ideal, but is the concrete Word addressed to humans in history.<sup>37</sup> Christology is not first and foremost a system but an encounter; it cannot properly ask "how" but only "who."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, Christology at its best is not an exhaustive explanation of the mechanics of the hypostatic union, but rather a response to being confronted by the living Christ. In this sense, Christology is not simply a conservative reclamation of tradition or a foundationalist exercise. As a result, Bonhoeffer reads the early church's conciliar formulations not as comprehensive expositions upon which to build, but as safeguards against overly systematized inquiries that would infringe on the mystery of the incarnation.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, while we should not seek to "go back" against the results of Chalcedon, which Bonhoeffer reads as "critical Christology," the goal of theology is the risen and ever-present Christ.<sup>40</sup> Only in this sense can the church be said to have a positive Christology.

<sup>34</sup>Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010). See reviews in *Christian Century* and *Christianity Today* that claim that Metaxas's biography "hijacks" or "mistakes" Bonhoeffer's theological legacy for contemporary conservative evangelicalism: Clifford Green, "Hijacking Bonhoeffer," *The Christian Century* (October 4, 2010); and Jason B. Hood, "Redeeming Bonhoeffer (The Book): The Problem with Eric Metaxas' Portrayal of the German Hero as an Evangelical," *Christianity Today* online (February 7, 2011). For Metaxas's op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* supporting Donald Trump: Eric Metaxas, "The Promise of President Trump: Eric Metaxas," *Wall Street Journal* (January 19, 2017).

<sup>35</sup>Reggie L. Williams, introduction to *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

<sup>36</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 29–34, 106.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 90–92.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 104–106.

For Bonhoeffer this risen Christ is then alive in the community: “Christ is present in the church as a person.”<sup>41</sup> Christ is not Christ in abstraction or in himself, but rather, “Christ is only Christ *pro me*.”<sup>42</sup> This means that asking who Jesus is can occur only in the church; his revelation is self-authenticating: “So the question ‘Who?’ is to be spoken only in faith.”<sup>43</sup> These are timely words for an evangelical church that often reads the tradition as a static system upon which to be built. In seeking to buttress its own identity, contemporary evangelicalism tends to look backward; it operates according to a fundamentally conservative impulse. Bonhoeffer reminds the church that in looking backward we do not encounter the living Christ but a negative Christology. While the established boundaries may help protect us from heresy, in the Chalcedonian definition, “the question ‘How?’ has made an end of itself.”<sup>44</sup>

Rather than an unqualified word of affirmation, Bonhoeffer’s Christology speaks a word of conviction to contemporary evangelicals. Evangelicals who are then committed to boundary maintenance are disposed to miss the living presence of the Word being spoken in history; they risk turning away from Christ, the center. When the church is preeminently concerned with institutional preservation or moral reform, we demonstrate we have already accepted a psychology of hope in which our own capacities and desires are central. When we are free from the anxiety and compulsion to hold ourselves together, we fall into the hands of the One who holds all things together. The *telos* of an evangelical theology of hope is the One in whom all things cohere.

The revitalization of evangelical hope is not to be found through rhetoric in a moral register but in a doxological one.<sup>45</sup> Theological hope is encountered through sustained engagement in ecclesial communities centered on a living and active Christ. This is where the church can make a signal contribution to a theology of hope. If the church is the body of which Jesus is head, then she is freed from anxiety about preserving her own identity.<sup>46</sup> The sustaining work is the work of the risen Christ. Cone reminds us that the cosmic Christ of Colossians is the particular Jew from Nazareth who is present in the marginalized. How can evangelical Christians find hope in this Christ if we are guided by a misaligned *telos*—one busy protecting an identity aimed at power and societal influence? Bonhoeffer reminds us that the risen Christ is encountered not as a decontextualized ideal but as a personal being present in his living body.

As we worship the living presence of Jesus, we reject what J. Kameron Carter calls the “cultural reflex” Christ.<sup>47</sup> The universal Christ of Colossians is also the

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>45</sup>See Brian Brock and Bernd Wannewetsch, *The Malady of the Christian Body: A Theological Exposition of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians*, vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 9–14.

<sup>46</sup>See Col. 1:18.

<sup>47</sup>J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 80.

particular Jesus of Corinthians who is encountered as a rich diversity of people join to one another in worship and shared life.<sup>48</sup> Christocentric hope may be found where a multiplicity of ethnic and socioeconomic groups lives together in somatic unity. When a peculiar group of people who have no other business being together are joined as family, individual desires, capacities, and goals are mutually enfolded into a common desire for the living body of Jesus Christ. It is this body politic against which even the gates of hell will not prevail.<sup>49</sup>

Evangelicals have often focused on human activity, whether evangelism or social justice, at the expense of a robust ecclesiology that prioritizes divine agency and presence. While these actions are indeed important, the most needed posture is *being* the body that waits on the Lord. The church is not to be the moral conscience of society or the priest of civic religion but rather an unlikely and diverse community of people that, through the intertwining of lives, testifies to the presence of the risen Christ in their midst. It is the sustaining presence of Jesus that is hope. This does not mean that the church should not take action when led by the Spirit, but rather that it is only in restful connection to Christ and to one another that divine action takes precedence.

The day is fast approaching when the unraveling of Constantinianism will likely mean many evangelical institutions will no longer exist or will exist in dramatically altered and more modest forms. Although legal work aimed at mitigating against some of the more extreme consequences of these eventualities may be in order,<sup>50</sup> to prioritize protecting the institutions or platforms of evangelicalism suggests evangelicals have misplaced their hopes. Do we truly trust that history is headed toward the One who is reconciling all things to the Father? If so, we would do well to reject the fear, anxiety, and toil that come from laboring at the peripheries and enter into the hope, vitality, and confidence that come from worshipping Christ, the center.

<sup>48</sup>See 1 Cor. 12:12–26.

<sup>49</sup>See Matt. 16:18.

<sup>50</sup>This may be the case in regard to maintaining tax-exempt status or the ability to hold traditional Christian positions in regard to sexual ethics without threat of legal repercussions. However, the manner in which many evangelical Christians frame the battle as between liberal ideologies and conservative free markets suggests that they do not see how both systems are germane to the totalizing nature of neoliberalism.

# Addressing the Evangelical Mind-Body Problem: The Local Church as Learning Organization

By C. Christopher Smith

353

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[Gentile Christians] are those who have become lifelong learners and lovers of others. ... We have entered the story of another people, Israel, and we entered as learners.—Willie James Jennings, "The Place of Redemption: Putting the Church on the Ground"<sup>1</sup>

Evangelicalism has a mind-body problem. We face a widening gap between the evangelical mind (that is, evangelicals in the academy) and the evangelical body (that is, evangelical churches). As early as the mid-1990s, Mark Noll identified this problem in the opening pages of his important book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Borrowing the words of Ronald Chapman, he observes of evangelical churches: "On one hand, there is enormous growth of the Church, and on the other is its almost complete lack of influence."<sup>2</sup> In 2016, more than 80 percent of white evangelicals cast their votes in support of Donald Trump and boosted him into the U.S. presidency<sup>3</sup>—much to the chagrin of many evangelical intellectuals. We find therefore that although the dynamics have shifted over the past quarter century such that evangelical churches now have considerable influence, the chasm between evangelical mind and body persists. How and where do we begin to address this chasm? The evangelical mind-body problem will be resolved, not in the academy or in Washington, but in our local churches, where we all gather to embody Christ together and bear witness to our neighbors of the good news of God's salvation in Christ. In this article, I argue that noted business thinker Peter Senge's concept of a *learning organization* may help illuminate a way forward toward a unity of evangelical mind and evangelical body in our local churches. I will briefly sketch how this problem has emerged, introduce Senge's concept of a learning organization, examine its relevance for our learning and growing in our local churches, and conclude with a brief account of my own congregation's journey toward becoming a learning organization.

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## 354 The Emergence of the Evangelical Mind-Body Problem

The modern age has been one of fragmentation, beginning with the familiar thought experiment of René Descartes, as recorded in the *Meditations*. Descartes endeavored to disentangle himself from all his inherited tradition and explore what he could know solely on the basis of his own sensory perceptions and thoughts. Over the past half millennium, the shredding force of modernity's existentialism has made rubble of human communities and our traditions of thought. Within Protestantism, a key manifestation of this modern splintering is the profusion of church traditions that have evolved in the 500 years since the Reformation. Churches are not the only communities shattered by the powers of modernity. Many of the communities that gave order and meaning to our lives in past eras—from sports leagues to fraternal organizations—also crumbled and declined over the twentieth century, as sociologist Robert Putnam observed in his landmark work *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.<sup>4</sup> Descartes's own dualistic framing of the mind-body problem has fragmented the modern imagination over the past several centuries such that we face a widening gap today between the academy and business, government, and even churches. This modern fragmentation that has shaped our imaginations as well as our daily lives is the origin of the evangelical mind-body problem that we face.

Within local churches, denominations, Christian universities, and seminaries, the destructive forces of modernity have rendered us without a singular narrative strong enough to bind us together and drive us forward. Instead, we find ourselves adrift on the polarizing forces of ideologies of Right and Left, vulnerable to the vicious forces of the marketplace, and isolated by the siloing forces of specialization in the school and the workplace.<sup>5</sup> Evangelical intellectuals are often so specialized in their academic training that it becomes increasingly difficult to see the relevance

<sup>1</sup>Willie James Jennings, "A Place of Redemption: Putting Church on the Ground" (lecture, Slow Church conference, Englewood Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN, April 3, 2014), <http://englewoodreview.org/willie-jennings-slow-church-conference-audio;in part 2, starting at 19:20>.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 10.

<sup>3</sup>See Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "White Evangelicals Voted Overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, Exit Polls Show," *Washington Post* (November 9, 2016), web content: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/>.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, on the fragmentation of modernity and narrative, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); on the effects of this fragmentation on churches, Jonathan Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997); on the polarizing forces of ideology and their effects on the church, David Fitch, "Engaging the Antagonisms of Our Culture: The Peculiar Challenges of Mission in a Post-Christian World" (lecture, Ekklesia Project Gathering, Techny, IL, July 9, 2017), last modified August 23, 2017, <https://ekkleiaproject.podbean.com/e/gathering-2017-plenary-4-david-fitch/>.

of their daily work to the life and challenges of their local church communities.

Amidst the ruins of Western culture, one of the biggest educational challenges facing local evangelical churches in the twenty-first century is our deficient imagination for a singular narrative that can guide our discipleship, one in which God is reconciling *all* things in Christ Jesus. If we are the singular body of Christ, we will have a singular narrative that guides us. We will likely disagree on how various facets of this story should be interpreted, but we cohere in our submission to a singular narrative.<sup>6</sup> Our churches also struggle to imagine how the shape of our life together bears witness to the good news of God healing and restoring the fragmented world in which we live. As one example, our churches too often have little imagination for how the daily work of our members—and perhaps especially members in the academic community—intersects fruitfully with the mission of God into which we have been called together as the church. The prevailing forces of specialization in the academy, the workplace, and the church, along with the rampant consumerism that casts a shadow upon our church experience, conspire to widen the chasm between church and workplace and to obscure how our skills and vocational learning might pertain to the revealing of “the manifold wisdom of God ... through the church” (Eph. 3:10 NASB).<sup>7</sup>

Given the fragmentation pervading our language, our theologies, and the lived realities of our daily lives, what tools do we have available to us to imagine a different way of discipleship, in which the people of God—academics, business people, artists, and others—are being called together in local church communities to bear witness to God’s reconciling work in creation? Sometimes it takes a voice from outside our usual channels of discourse to wake us and stir our imaginations with new language and new possibilities for faithful living. In *The Fifth Discipline*, one of the bestselling business books of all time, Peter Senge proposed the concept of a learning organization.<sup>8</sup> Although there is nothing explicitly theological about Senge’s depiction of a learning organization and although Senge’s theology and metaphysics are outside the scope of this brief article, he provides language and imagery that resonate with certain virtues of the historic Christian tradition that our churches deeply need amidst the cultural wreckage of the twenty-first century.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>See Wilson, *Living Faithfully*, 26–38, on the difference between pluralism and fragmentation and the nature of a coherent community.

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011); C. Christopher Smith, “Discerning Our Call,” chap. 4 in *Reading for the Common Good*.

<sup>8</sup>Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

<sup>9</sup>Senge’s ideas, as I have interpreted them here, do not offer us a theological model, but rather provide us with basic language and concepts, which we can interpose with the historic Christian tradition that we have inherited to fashion new theological models that I believe can guide us into deeper Christian faithfulness.

## 356 The Origins of the Learning Organization

What is a learning organization? Senge opens *The Fifth Discipline* with the recognition of the fragmentation of life in the late modern era and the conviction that our education trains us to propagate fragmentation. "From a very early age," he writes, "we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole."<sup>10</sup> Given these convictions about how we have been trained to learn about the world, and to live within it, Senge frames the contrasting vision of a learning organization:

The tools and ideas in this book are for destroying the illusion that the world is created of separate, unrelated forces. When we give up this illusion—we can then build "learning organizations," organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing the persistent acceleration of Western culture, Senge argues that a learning organization promotes learning across all of its levels, to facilitate intellectual action within a rapidly changing world.

In contrast to the situation of many churches, in which Christian education is largely severed from the daily activities of its members' home and work life (in the academy, for example), a learning organization tightly interweaves learning and action into a cyclical effort to

- create shared meaning by attempting to understand its context;
- jointly plan and imagine effective sorts of action;
- act in a coordinated manner;
- publicly reflect on the action; and
- start the cycle again.<sup>12</sup>

Senge's model is particularly compelling because it focuses primarily on the identity and mission of the organization, as opposed to that of individual members. One of the most destructive forces of the modern age has been that of individualism. Within evangelicalism, individualism has come to dominate not only our reading of Scripture, but indeed nearly all facets of our understanding of Christian discipleship.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the scriptural story is fundamentally about the people

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Peter Senge et al., "The Wheel of Learning," in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 59–65.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, on the fragmentation of individualism, Yuval Levin, *The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); on the effects of individualism on churches, Wilson, *Living Faithfully*; on the effects of individualism on our reading of Scripture, E. Randolph Richards and Brandon O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012).

of God—not autonomous individuals. The primary characters of the Old Testament story, for instance, are God and the ancient Israelites. In the Gospels, Israel continues to play a central role, but in Jesus the groundwork is laid for a new Israel in which God’s people are not defined by their ancestry and in which Jews and Gentiles faithfully follow God together. In Acts and the remainder of the New Testament, the primary characters are God and the churches that emerged across the Mediterranean world, expressions of the new Israel that God had initiated in Christ.<sup>14</sup>

The most pressing challenge for evangelical churches of the twenty-first century is the recovery of the church as the primary community in which we understand and act within the world. For us to continue to act as autonomous Christians—often guided more by our work in the academy, or elsewhere, than by our churches—is to continue to propagate the fragmentation of modernity. Senge’s concept of the learning organization parallels the scriptural narrative in that the primary construct is a community that is seeking to understand who it is, and how it will act and flourish in the world. In addition to recovering a sense of social identity, Senge depicts learning organizations in terms of five disciplines that give shape to their efforts to learn and to act. Each of these disciplines can be helpful for orienting our churches amidst the present challenges of fragmentation.

### *Team Learning*

Recognizing that we are a community, we work together to understand who, why, where, and when we are. Personal learning, while important, is not sufficient. “The discipline of team learning,” Senge writes, “starts with ‘dialogue,’ the capacity of members to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine ‘thinking together.’”<sup>15</sup> Any community that understands itself as having a distinct identity and mission will require team learning to discern how to enact its mission. The Old Testament, or the book of Acts, can be read as accounts of team learning, the people of God discerning—largely through dialogue with God and one another—how to grow into their identity and mission as a community.

### *Personal Mastery*

The organization benefits when all members strive to do their functions to the best of their capacity. “Personal mastery,” notes Senge, “is the discipline of continually deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience.”<sup>16</sup> In the Christian tradition, personal mastery is nearly equivalent to

<sup>14</sup>For a deeper exploration of this idea, see C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, “A Theological Vision for Slow Church,” in *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 21–35.

<sup>15</sup>Senge, *Fifth Discipline*, 10.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

vocation. Our calling into a specific type of work is not just about personal fulfillment, but about how that work, when done well, contributes to the well-being not only of God's people, but also that of all creation. Learning organizations function best when all members know the functions they perform and seek to do them to the best of their capability and in harmony with the functions of fellow members.

### *Mental Models*

We imagine and live within the world on the basis of tacit assumptions about how the world works (or how it should work). "Very often," Senge observes, "we are not consciously aware of our mental models or the effects they have on our behavior."<sup>17</sup> The New Testament writers used the Greek word *stoicheia* to describe these assumptions about how the world works. Learning organizations function best when they reflect on the mental models guiding their actions as teams and, in the dialogue of team learning, rigorously scrutinize themselves and their effects.

### *Systems Thinking*

A learning organization operates within a complex world consisting of intertwined systems. Therefore, we cannot function as isolated, autonomous individuals or groups, as our actions have effects that ripple broadly throughout creation. In biblical language, creation has a common origin, a common purpose, and a common end—"the reconciliation of all things" (Col. 1:19–20 NASB). No part of creation can be taken for granted. We act best as churches when we are mindful of this ecology of creation and are as attentive as possible to the possible effects of our actions.<sup>18</sup>

### *Building Shared Vision*

Learning organizations are driven by a shared vision of where they are headed that organizes and energizes their work. "When there is a genuine [shared] vision," Senge writes, "people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to."<sup>19</sup> Our churches are given a shared vision in the scriptural story, but we also have to create a particular vision for our own congregations that gives life and shape to our efforts to live faithfully within the scriptural story.

In recommending our churches consider the concepts and disciplines of a learning organization, I suggest that we reflect on the ways in which Senge's ideas resonate with the scriptural narrative and the historic Christian tradition we have inherited. We also should reflect on how the framework of a learning

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>18</sup>For a deeper exploration of this idea, see Smith and Pattison, "Ecology," in *Slow Church*, 99–152.

<sup>19</sup>Senge, *Fifth Discipline*, 9.

organization might orient us toward deeper faithfulness amidst the challenges of fragmentation in the twenty-first century. I am not, however, suggesting we accept Senge's philosophical and theological convictions uncritically. For example, Senge's ideas were admittedly developed within the business context, and the end toward which they are driving is undoubtedly one of financial profit. This end likely shapes the means by which it is pursued.

As God's people, we have a very different end, the coming of God's reign on earth as it is in heaven. Although Senge's ideas might stir our imaginations, we will certainly embody them in different ways than practiced in the business world. One distinct difference is that the evaluation of success is much more complicated for us as churches. In the business world, success is generally defined quantitatively by whether a venture is making the expected level of profits. Discerning success versus failure—or faithfulness versus unfaithfulness—in our churches is significantly more complicated. Our discernments are never as simple as whether we are doing the right things, but also, whether we are doing them with the right motives and in love for one another and love for our neighbors. Even though these questions could all be answered with a simple yes or no, if we are truthful with ourselves, the answers are typically much messier, somewhere between yes and no.

Another related theological wrinkle in reading Senge's work follows from the question of how we respond to failure. In the business world, some failures are indeed learning opportunities, but repeated failures ultimately lead to the death of the organization. For the church, the pressure of ultimate failure has been erased by the abundant grace of God. The Old Testament story, for instance, recounts Israel's profuse failures, and yet they remained God's chosen people. Of course, we should not cheapen this grace but recognize the sustaining hope we find in it to keep learning and growing in response to our failures.

### The Local Church as a Learning Organization?

Given the rampant fragmentation of the twenty-first century, how are our churches ever going to be more than networks of autonomous individuals? How are we to bear witness to the good news of God's work of healing and reconciling all things in Christ Jesus? *Community* has been a prevalent buzzword over the past decade in many churches and in popular Christian literature, but too often the exact ends and nature of this community have been left nebulous. What sort of community are we called to be as God's people? How do we mature into that sort of community when the powers of this late modern age vehemently resist its formation? Peter Senge's concept of a learning organization, and the disciplines that give it shape, can orient us to be communities of God's people who are learning and growing in Christian faithfulness.

Above all, Senge's concept is predicated on the reality that the learning organization has a shared identity and is learning to function well *as a community*.

The five disciplines serve to deepen and give substance to this identity. Following in the footsteps of the early churches of the first century that are depicted in Acts and the Epistles, team learning is a discipline by which we practice talking openly with one another and discerning our next steps together as we grow and mature toward the fullness of Christ. Meaningful work is essential for healthy, flourishing communities,<sup>20</sup> and we should encourage personal mastery among the members of our congregations. But beyond personal mastery, part of team learning is developing the capacity to coordinate or orchestrate the vocations of our church's members; that is, how can their gifts and skills be drawn upon in synergetic ways that complement one another, build up Christ's body, and bear witness of the gospel to our neighbors?<sup>21</sup> Just as a baby learns to crawl and then to walk and do many other categories of action, our churches are bodies that need a similar kind of coordination, all the parts and subsystems of the body talking and working with one another for the body's growth and health.

In a fragmented world such as ours, we need a willingness to name and critique the mental models from which we are working. We often adopt particular understandings of concepts from the wider world, and these understandings need to be named and discerned. Many people today do not stay in the church tradition in which they were raised;<sup>22</sup> they often bring the language and theology of other traditions with them as they come to our churches. Pick a familiar theological term—for instance, *gospel*—and you are likely to get a wide range of answers when you ask each congregation to define this term. These definitions are mental models giving shape to our life together, and they need to be surfaced and discussed.

Additionally, we need broader imagination for the positive and negative consequences of any given action, the sort of imagination that Senge and others have called "systems thinking." Churches too often propagate fragmentation because we think and act too narrowly and are not paying attention to the unintended consequences of our actions. Lastly, we will not continue to learn and grow unless we build a shared vision of who we are and the specific directions in which God is calling us. A shared vision and the conversations through which it is

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, on the virtue of work in forming Benedictine communities, Joan Chittister, "Work: Participation in Creation," in *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), ch. 7; on the virtue of work within the Christian tradition more broadly, R. Paul Stevens, "Doing the Lord's Work," in *The Other Six Days* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), ch. 5; within society-at-large, Jon Wisman, "The Moral Imperative and Social Rationality of Government-Guaranteed Employment and Reskilling," American University Department of Economics: Working Paper Series, Fall 2008, <http://w.american.edu/cas/economics/repec/amu/workingpapers/2008-20.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup>For a deeper exploration of this idea, see Smith, "Discerning Our Call," in *Reading for the Common Good*, 68–82.

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, "Changing Denominations Common among Evangelical Leaders," *National Association of Evangelicals*, December 2014, <https://www.nae.net/changing-denominations-common-among-evangelical-leaders/>; "Religious Switching and Inter-marriage," in *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-2-religious-switching-and-intermarriage/>.

discerned are not only energizing, as Senge has noted; they are a vivid, everyday demonstration of the possibility of cooperation, healing, and reconciliation in a world that generally moves in the opposite direction.

### Life Together as a Learning Organization

Peter Senge's depiction of a learning organization is personally compelling because it fits the experience of my own church community over the past 30 years. Englewood Christian Church, on the urban Near Eastside of Indianapolis, was a church of almost 2,000 members in the early 1970s, but we had been reduced to a small fraction of that size by the mid-1980s. Over the course of this numerical decline, we made the intentional decision that we were not going to move to the suburbs as many urban churches were doing at the time. We would stay put in the Englewood neighborhood where we had been sharing life together since we were planted here in 1895. This decision was the kernel from which we would begin to mold a shared vision of our faithfulness as a church in this place.

About 20 years ago, we gave up our Sunday evening worship service in favor of creating an intentional space for conversation. Our Sunday night conversation became a catalyst for team learning, where we could surface our mental models and assumptions and examine them in the light of Christ. These conversations regularly drew upon the gifts of academics in our congregation and beyond (for example, we have read a diverse range of books together as part of our conversations, including many that are rarely read outside of postsecondary classrooms). We looked to these academics not only to understand difficult passages of Scripture, but also to understand the socioeconomic, educational, business, and regulatory dynamics at play in our engagements with our neighbors and others. As we matured in our ability to talk together, we also started businesses (affordable housing, early childhood education, *The Englewood Review of Books*, and more) that drew upon the skills that God had provided in our members and provided channels for what Senge calls "personal mastery," challenging our members to learn and mature in specific vocations, and providing opportunities for at least some of them to do so in direct conjunction with the shared life of the church. As we continued to learn and grow as a church, we were frequently reminded of the importance of systems thinking, of taking a broad perspective and paying attention to efforts that are already in motion and the various interconnected parts that surround any particular area in which we are working.

The call for communities of God's people to think of ourselves as learning organizations could transform our imagination for Christian discipleship from a highly individualistic pursuit to a shared one rooted in our particular congregations, to which we devote ourselves fully—including all our knowledge, skills, and resources as persons and families. This vision will also reshape the ways we interact with universities and seminaries, offering a new set of objectives (related to growing and maturing communities of God's people) that will undoubtedly

shift and enrich the means and methods of education. Too often our educational institutions have functioned primarily on the narrative of an individual's personal vocation, and students have been trained to function as autonomous individuals. Local churches that understand themselves as learning organizations could open up a wide array of new opportunities for interactions with universities and seminaries.

For example, schools could provide instruction for churches on how to understand the socioeconomics of their particular context (such as suburban, urban, rural) or provide entrepreneurial training that helps churches prepare for new ways of working together and of sustaining themselves. Although I am advocating for the local church as the primary community, I believe the emphasis on *learning* could be the genesis of a whole new world of educational opportunities for Christian institutions of higher education. My hope is that all our institutions would be reoriented toward our primary call to discipleship within the community of God's people.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>This paper has been adapted from central ideas in the introduction to my book *Reading for the Common Good: How Books Help Our Churches and Neighborhoods Flourish* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 13–21.

# Psychological Contributions to Understanding Prejudice and the Evangelical Mind

By Maureen Miner Bridges

363

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Much has been written about evangelicalism and the scandalous or otherwise state of the evangelical mind from historical and theological perspectives.<sup>1</sup> Psychologists too are interested in states of mind and their consequences for individuals. For psychologists, states of mind comprise beliefs (including styles of holding beliefs), emotions, and body sensations.<sup>2</sup> One well-researched consequence of evangelical beliefs and belief styles is prejudice, problematic today in both anti-gay and anti-Muslim sentiment. This article examines prejudice as a potential outcome of evangelical states of mind, formed within the context of Christian churches, from the 1950s to the present.

A seminal issue for psychologists in the 1950s was how a Fascist dictator could persuade many Christians to collude in genocide of Jewish people. This issue is a stark example of both racial and religious prejudice of Christians broadly, not specifically evangelicals. It motivated research by Theodore Adorno<sup>3</sup> and followers, generating more than 2,000 studies from 1950 to 1990 of the authoritarian personality as a key antecedent of prejudice.<sup>4</sup> The situation is more complex than a causal relationship between an identifiable personality type and global prejudice, especially by evangelical Christians. This article examines the empirical psychological literature with due acknowledgment that the positivist framework of such research has its own limiting assumptions and methods. There is very little interdisciplinary research, with a particular lack of psychological research that includes theology as a genuine partner. We must move beyond beliefs, belief styles, and personality to consider the whole person in relation to a web of church relationships if we are to develop a satisfactory account of the making and unmaking

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## Psychological Research on Prejudice

Psychologists distinguish between stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, although prejudice also covers all three concepts. Stereotyping is attributing qualities to people based on their perceived membership of social groups; prejudice is prejudging people based on stereotyping, and discrimination is rejection or exclusion based on prejudice.<sup>5</sup> Prejudice can be further classified according to its motivation: as affirming oneself or one's in-group, expressing hostility or hatred, or as a response to a perceived threat. Religious identifications have been linked to all three kinds of prejudice motivations.<sup>6</sup>

### *Evangelical Beliefs and Prejudice*

Evangelical beliefs are broadly consistent with the beliefs of orthodox Christianity as expressed through the historic creeds.<sup>7</sup> They also include the authority and sufficiency of Scripture; redemption through the death of Jesus Christ; personal conversion; and the importance of converting others through witnessing to the gospel.<sup>8</sup> Tim Larsen and Daniel Treier define an evangelical as an "orthodox Protestant ... who has a pre-eminent place for the Bible in his or her Christian life as the divinely inspired, final authority in matters of faith and practice."<sup>9</sup> A psychological measure of evangelical beliefs is the Christian Orthodoxy (CO) Scale,<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>6</sup>Suzanne Oosterwijk et al., "States of Mind: Emotions, Body Feelings, and Thoughts Share Distributed Neural Networks," *Neuroimage* 62 (2012): 2110–2128.

<sup>7</sup>Theodore Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950).

<sup>8</sup>Jos Meloen, "The F Scale as a Predictor of Fascism: An Overview of 40 Years of Authoritarian Research," in *Strength and Weakness: The Authoritarian Personality Today*, eds. William F. Stone, Gerda Lederer, and Richard Christie (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1993), 47–69.

<sup>9</sup>Carrie Doehring, "An Applied Integrative Approach to Exploring How Religion and Spirituality Contribute to or Counteract Prejudice and Discrimination," in *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality*, ed. Kenneth I. Pargament (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2013), 2:389–404.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 391–393.

<sup>7</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 340.

<sup>8</sup>Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 121–122; Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 166.

<sup>9</sup>Tim Larsen and Daniel Treier, *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>10</sup>J. Timothy Fullerton and Bruce Hunsberger, "A Unidimensional Measure of Christian Orthodoxy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982): 317–326.

measuring the degree of assent to core Christian beliefs reflected in the Nicene Creed. Early work suggested CO directly contributed to prejudice toward atheists and nonbelievers.<sup>11</sup> However, subsequent studies pointed to a more complex relationship between the content of evangelical beliefs, styles of holding beliefs, and different types of prejudice.

### *Evangelical Belief Styles and Prejudice*

According to Gordon Allport, Christians display a mature, intrinsic orientation to faith when they hold their beliefs in a committed and questing manner.<sup>12</sup> Subsequent studies generally supported the relationship between an intrinsic orientation and reduced racial prejudice<sup>13</sup> but not reduced prejudice toward lesbians and gay men.<sup>14</sup> The findings suggest people with committed, internalized faith are selectively unprejudiced; they are likely to show some prejudice to people who violate important contemporary religious values such as those around sexuality. Questing is described as “an approach that involves honestly facing existential questions in all their complexity, while at the same time resisting clear-cut, pat answers.”<sup>15</sup> A meta-analysis of studies of relationships between questing and prejudice found questing is either unrelated to prejudice or associated with low general and sexual prejudice.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, religious fundamentalism (RF) is a closed style of holding religious beliefs, associated with high prejudice and lower religious maturity.<sup>17</sup> This definition of RF as a belief style contrasts with historical understandings of fundamentalism as holding to the so-called fundamentals of the Protestant faith.<sup>18</sup> RF as a belief style is strongly associated with negative attitudes toward

<sup>11</sup>Lynne M. Jackson and Bruce Hunsberger, “An Intergroup Perspective on Religion and Prejudice,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (1999): 509.

<sup>12</sup>Gordon Allport, “The Religious Context of Prejudice,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5 (1966): 447–457.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, review by C. Daniel Batson, Patricia Schoenrade, and W. Larry Ventis, *Religion and the Individual: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 302–310.

<sup>14</sup>Gregory M. Herek, “Religious Orientation and Prejudice: A Comparison of Racial and Sexual Attitudes,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 13 (1987): 34–44; Gary K. Leak and Laura L. Finken, “The Relationship between the Constructs of Religiousness and Prejudice: A Structural Equation Model Analysis,” *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 21 (2011): 43–62.

<sup>15</sup>Batson, *Religion and the Individual*, 166.

<sup>16</sup>Daniel F. McCleary et al., “Meta-Analysis of Correlational Relationships between Perspectives of Truth in Religion and Major Psychological Constructs,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 3 (2011): 163–180.

<sup>17</sup>Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, “Authoritarianism, Religious Fundamentalism, Quest, and Prejudice,” *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 2 (1992): 113–133.

<sup>18</sup>W. Paul Williamson and Ralph W. Hood Jr., “Religious Fundamentalism and Perceived Threat: A Report from an Experimental Study,” *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture* 17 (2014): 520–528.

homosexuals, racial prejudice, and religious ethnocentrism.<sup>19</sup>

Although RF is associated with prejudice against blacks, communists, women, and homosexuals, it is most strongly associated with homosexual prejudice.<sup>20</sup> In Australia high RF is associated more strongly with prejudice against gay men and lesbians than against Muslims.<sup>21</sup> People high in RF exhibit both general and morally based prejudice to homosexuals.<sup>22</sup> Further, homosexual prejudice is higher where people are both high on RF and closed-mindedness,<sup>23</sup> suggesting RF is a means of maintaining religious beliefs in the face of value violations.

### *Beliefs, Belief Styles, Personality, and Prejudice*

The importance of considering beliefs and the RF belief style together is highlighted by a study that found both higher RF and CO were associated with higher homosexual prejudice, although the relationship between CO and prejudice was not as strong as the relationship between RF and prejudice.<sup>24</sup> However, the role of personality, and particularly the authoritarian personality, must not be overlooked. Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is understood psychologically to be a personality style characterized by authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism.<sup>25</sup> There is a strong direct relationship between RWA and both racial and homosexual prejudice.<sup>26</sup> Yet RWA is also strongly associated with RF, suggesting that RF is a religious manifestation of RWA.<sup>27</sup> So it is important to clarify the effects of religious beliefs, styles, and personality together on prejudice. From inclusive studies, RWA is associated with explicit and implicit homosexual and racial prejudice; RF is associated with explicit homosexual prejudice; and CO

<sup>19</sup>Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, "Fundamentalism and Authoritarianism," in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, eds. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park (New York: Guilford, 2005), 378–393; Deborah L. Hall, David C. Matz, and Wendy Wood, "Why Don't We Practice What We Preach? A Meta-Analytic Review of Religious Racism," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14 (2010): 126–139.

<sup>20</sup>McCleary et al., "Meta-Analysis of Correlational Relationships."

<sup>21</sup>Wesley James, Brian Griffiths, and Anne Pedersen, "The 'Making and Unmaking' of Prejudice against Australian Muslims and Gay Men and Lesbians: The Role of Religious Development and Fundamentalism," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 21 (2011): 212–227.

<sup>22</sup>Aubyn S. Fulton, Richard L. Gorsuch, and Elizabeth A. Maynard, "Religious Orientation, Antihomosexual Sentiment, and Fundamentalism among Christians," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (1999): 14–22.

<sup>23</sup>Mark J. Brandt and Christine Reyna, "The Role of Prejudice and the Need for Closure in Religious Fundamentalism," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36 (2010): 715–725.

<sup>24</sup>Leak and Finken, "Relationship between the Constructs," 43–62.

<sup>25</sup>Bob Altemeyer, *Right-Wing Authoritarianism* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1981).

<sup>26</sup>Brian Laythe et al., "Religious Fundamentalism as a Predictor of Prejudice: A Two-Component Model," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(2002): 623–635; Eunike Jonathan, "The Influence of Religious Fundamentalism, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and Christian Orthodoxy on Explicit and Implicit Measures of Attitudes toward Homosexuals," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 18 (2008): 316–329.

<sup>27</sup>Altemeyer and Hunsberger, "Fundamentalism and Authoritarianism," 390.

## Integrative Psychological Theory and Prejudice

To integrate research findings, there have been attempts to consider the underpinnings of the relationship between RF, RWA, CO, and prejudice. One approach has been to consider RF as “ideological authoritarianism” rather than a belief style.<sup>29</sup> The core of RF is given as a thought structure in which a sacred text specifies absolute truths that govern the individual’s worldview. Other peripheral beliefs are accepted or rejected according to whether they maintain that worldview. Buttressing the claim of the sacredness of the religious text, and the absolute truths, is the principle of intratextuality: “the text itself determines how it ought to be read.”<sup>30</sup> The authority demanding submission is the sacred text. For Christian fundamentalists, the Bible claims it is the Word of God (that is, a sacred text) and so it is read as specifying absolute truths (that is, revealed by God). The locus of interpretation is the individual reader; no other texts or inputs are required to establish absolute truths. These truths are then authoritative for the Christian’s life; they comprise an ideologically authoritative meaning system. In turn, this meaning system provides a sense of coherence, purpose, control, and value.

From this perspective of ideological authoritarianism, individuals who exhibit RF are not *a priori* more prejudiced than others, but may respond with prejudice when core beliefs and values are threatened. For example, in a simulation study using a scale of intratextuality to measure fundamentalism, those high in RF discriminated against a Christian evolutionist in favor of a creationist.<sup>31</sup> When discussing ideological authoritarianism, it is important to note that RF is not a religious manifestation of a more general personality style, but rather a worldview based upon the authority of a sacred text to give and guide interpretation of propositional truth. If evangelicals hold to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and seek to apply absolute beliefs to all areas of life, they will be religious fundamentalists and are likely to be prejudiced.

## Integrative Psychological Theory and Theological Perspectives

The perspective of ideological authoritarianism provides an explanatory structure for prejudiced fundamentalist thinking and an alternative structure of non-fundamentalist thought marked by permeable relationships between peripheral beliefs and authoritative (not sacred) texts, relative (not absolute) truths, and

<sup>28</sup>Laythe et al., “Religious Fundamentalism as a Predictor”; Jonathan, “Influence of Religious Fundamentalism.”

<sup>29</sup>Ralph W. Hood Jr., Peter C. Hill, and W. Paul Williamson, *The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism* (New York: Guilford, 2005).

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>31</sup>Williamson and Hood, “Religious Fundamentalism and Perceived Threat.”

interpretation via the principle of intertextuality (no text is self-interpreting).<sup>32</sup> However, the resulting bifurcation based on worldview, authority, and interpretation is similar to the categories of fundamentalism and liberalism that theologian-philosopher Nancey Murphy attempted to reconcile from philosophical and theological perspectives.<sup>33</sup> Such work raises possibilities for changing a stance of ideological authoritarianism.

With respect to authority, ideological authoritarians view Scriptures as a rulebook and the only reference book for life. Murphy echoes these claims in her depiction of fundamentalists (categorized together with conservative evangelicals) as upholding the verbal inspiration and complete inerrancy of Scripture in order that Scripture provides an *indubitable* foundation for doctrine.<sup>34</sup> Although Murphy is talking about theologians rather than individual believers, her comments equally apply to individuals seeking propositional knowledge from a sacred text in order to maintain a coherent and certain meaning system.

British evangelical theologian N. T. Wright also depicts the taken-for-granted view of biblical authority among evangelicals as including an unwarranted confidence that the Bible provides correct answers to specific questions of living so that behavior can be controlled.<sup>35</sup> Note that other potential sources of authority, such as tradition (either formulated as doctrinal statements or practices of a Christian church) or experience (whether personal feelings or revelation attributed to the Holy Spirit), are not considered within the framework of ideological authoritarianism. Such sources of authority invite investigation for an alternative epistemology and representational structure.

Regarding questions of interpretation, the primary locus of interpretation by ideological authoritarians is the individual using Scripture, yet Hood and colleagues do not deny the social and historical context of each individual.<sup>36</sup> The point is, once the fundamentalist worldview is adopted, all other beliefs and attitudes are interpreted in the light of that worldview alone. There is no place for absorbing beliefs, attitudes, or values from any competing plausibility structure. Specific peripheral beliefs and associated values will be derived from absolute beliefs through private understandings of Scripture in light of consensus from those who share the same worldview.

Nonetheless, if Scripture alone guides its own interpretation, then tradition and experience are not permitted to usurp Scripture's role. In contrast, Murphy proposes that biblical interpretation is a practice or activity carried out within a Christian tradition, an activity in which interpretation and application coalesce.<sup>37</sup> Interpretation is not given immediately by the text to an individual but is contin-

<sup>32</sup>Hood, Hill, and Williamson, *Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism*, 27.

<sup>33</sup>Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996).

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 16–17, italics in original.

<sup>35</sup>N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7–32.

<sup>36</sup>Hood, Hill, and Williamson, *Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism*, 186.

<sup>37</sup>Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism*, 131.

gent upon communal practice.<sup>38</sup> Application is then made to concrete situations and necessarily involves contemporary experience. Thus Scripture, tradition, and experience are all required for the practice of interpretation.

### Integrative Theory, Theology and Decreasing Prejudice

Approaches to reducing prejudice by considering total worldview, biblical authority, and biblical interpretation will now be considered. The total worldview of ideological authoritarians is governed by absolute truths (known through a reader's interrogation of the sacred text) that determine peripheral beliefs and consequent action. Although absolute truths are not subject to modification, peripheral beliefs may be altered through changing their relation to absolute truths, by experience, or by interactions with other peripheral beliefs.<sup>39</sup>

So it may be possible to change prejudice against homosexual people by worldview modification as follows. Core beliefs held absolutely include the following: homosexuality is sin; God hates sin. Peripheral beliefs include Christians must separate from sin; I must not befriend a homosexual. Alternative peripheral beliefs (without changing core beliefs) include realization that the apostle Peter ate with Cornelius without being "contaminated"; I can be friendly to a homosexual without being "contaminated." The change of peripheral beliefs can occur through information leading to new peripheral beliefs (for example, reading the book of Acts), deliberations that contrast old and new peripheral beliefs (understanding issues of "contamination" and "separation from sin" through further intratextual dialogue) and through experience of unproblematic encounters with homosexuals.

The direct relationship between Scripture and authority over Christian beliefs is taken for granted by evangelicals who are ideological authoritarians. However, it may be possible to shift from a propositional authority structure to authority that recognizes more nuanced narrative. N. T. Wright points out that the Bible's claim that all authority is in God, invested in Christ, and given by the Holy Spirit to the church for its work.<sup>40</sup> The authority that is invested in Scripture is the authority of narrative, of God's people telling their stories so that Christians through the ages can do God's work. In this process, asserts Wright, individuals will be formed and reformed by the Spirit through Scripture.<sup>41</sup> Here Wright introduces a counter to the authority of propositions identified in the Bible by suggesting authority resides in Spirit-applied narrative.

If people are to be remade in ways that decrease the strength or targets of fundamentalism, then they must learn to read scriptural narrative as (at least) equally authoritative as biblical propositions. For Wright, this narrative reading involves entering into the story so that the readers and their world (including

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>39</sup>Hood, Hill, and Williamson, *Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism*, 24.

<sup>40</sup>Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?"

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 32.

their "God view") can be changed by the experience of entering.<sup>42</sup> The parable of the Good Samaritan is an example of a narrative that directly challenges racial prejudice. If a Christian were to enter the narrative imaginatively and in an attitude of openness to the Spirit, the Christian might find that some absolutist beliefs about specific migrants are weakened. Repeated experiences of open engagement with narratives of Christ's interactions with diverse, marginalized people might further weaken absolutist beliefs and change related prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behavior.

If biblical interpretation is to be extended beyond the closed system of intra-textuality, then more radical revisions of thought structures are required. Drawing from E. O. Quine, Murphy presents a holistic understanding of knowledge as a hermeneutical web rather than a hierarchical system.<sup>43</sup> In a web of knowledge, beliefs are supported by their links to neighboring beliefs as well as by linkages within the web as a whole. The kinds of support for the web of beliefs include doctrinal claims, experiences of a particular tradition and a wealth of historically based assumptions. The result of such interpretation is not certainty, but neither is it complete relativism because the interpretation is sifted for reasonableness within its own tradition.<sup>44</sup>

Although not advocated as a counter to prejudice, Murphy's account of non-propositional Bible reading could be used as a method for shifting from the stance of an external knower seeking certainty to an internal participant. Instead of using Scripture to construct an objectively real world, Murphy suggests allowing Scripture to interpret life by dwelling in the broad sweep and details of its stories, symbols, and syntax so these can become internalized and govern one's thinking and imagination.<sup>45</sup> As applied to prejudice, the non-propositional reading could include the kinds of narrative encounters described above, together with pondering the symbols and language of alienation and restoration. The goal is not an intellectual understanding of prejudice but rather a holistic understanding of "exclusion and embrace."<sup>46</sup>

### Functions of Integrative Theory and Reduction of Prejudice

Functionally, ideological authoritarianism is any personal meaning system providing a unifying worldview, personal coherence, and a sense of significance.<sup>47</sup> Prejudice is arguably a consequence of any inclusive, unifying, and purpose-generating meaning system. It is not the product of particular beliefs, religious or otherwise. Nonetheless, if ideological authoritarianism fulfills stated psychological

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>43</sup>Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism*, 94.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 131 (citing George Lindbeck).

<sup>46</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

<sup>47</sup>Hood, Hill, and Williamson, *Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism*, 34.

functions, it raises the question of whether alternative means of fulfilling such functions can be proposed—alternatives that are less likely to engender strong prejudice.

One alternative might include relational theology as a unifying worldview and relationships within Christian churches as a source of personal coherence and significance. Stanley Grenz proposes an evangelical theology that maintains the primacy of Scripture and includes tradition and cultural awareness: it is a relational theology (a theology of community) based in the Trinitarian nature of Christianity.<sup>48</sup> The approach of Grenz is community building and affirms eschatological community in which the proclamation of salvation is for all people (including those whose values are not evangelical). Such an emphasis counters an individualistic referent of textual interpretations and encourages greater inclusiveness.

Christian churches can become a source of secure personal and spiritual attachment relationships that support internal coherence and significance. Attachment is a relational bond in which a person seeks closeness to another for safety, comfort, and security in situations of threat and heightened emotion.<sup>49</sup> For Christian believers, God functions as an ideal attachment figure: always present, powerful, and nurturing.<sup>50</sup> Christian mentors and friends also function as attachment figures.<sup>51</sup> Supportive church communities encourage caring, secure attachment relationships with other members and God.

With community support, internal coherence is maintained because secure attachment overcomes the fragmenting effects of emotional dysregulation.<sup>52</sup> In addition, secure attachment reduces the repeated use of dysfunctional, rigid ways of coping (such as derived from emotionally-based, rigid applications of selective absolute truths). Dysregulated emotion and rigid coping indicate maladaptive ways of understanding oneself and relating to others, rather than healthy, integrated modes.<sup>53</sup> Further, secure attachment to God provides the emotional stability supporting the kinds of theological exploration associated with an open, questing stance.<sup>54</sup> In turn, the questing style allows for holding many religious beliefs as conditional, rather than absolute, truths.<sup>55</sup> In this way, secure spiritual attachment underpins a belief style of low prejudice and provides an alternative pathway to internal coherence.

Secure attachments derived through supportive Christian churches also allow for significance because they engender self-representations as worthy of love

<sup>48</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

<sup>49</sup>John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. 5, *Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

<sup>50</sup>Maureen Miner et al., "Spiritual Attachment in Islam and Christianity," *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 17 (2014): 79–93.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Arnoud Arntz and Gitta Jacob, *Schema Therapy in Practice: An Introductory Guide to the Schema Mode Approach* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Richard Beck, "God as a Secure Base: Attachment to God and Theological Exploration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34 (2006): 125–132.

<sup>55</sup>McCleary et al., "Meta-Analysis of Correlational Relationships."

and nurture.<sup>56</sup> Significance arises and is maintained within relationships where attachment needs are met and particularly in situations of existential threat when God provides a sense of ultimate security.<sup>57</sup> In more theological terms, a secure attachment to God also allows for greater identification with Christ through the Holy Spirit and thereby a stronger sense of self-worth through one's transformed personhood in Christ.<sup>58</sup> Where there are supportive Christian churches and secure spiritual attachment, the evangelical Christian is less likely to need a strong version of ideological authoritarianism to meet needs for internal coherence and significance.

All humans are likely to be prejudiced to some degree against those who violate their values. Evangelical Christians are likely to be prejudiced to some degree against those who violate biblical standards and particularly against homosexual people. The roots of such prejudice among evangelicals are currently understood by positivist psychologists to be beliefs (absolute truths that emerge through the process of intratextuality) that govern all peripheral beliefs and subsequent actions. This model of ideological authoritarianism raises issues of scriptural authority and interpretation on which theologians have much to contribute. Christian churches can form less prejudiced hearts and minds by emphasizing theologies that nuance truth claims and by supporting secure attachment bonds that provide alternative sources of internal coherence and significance.

<sup>56</sup>Maureen Miner, "Back to the Basics in Attachment to God: Revisiting Theory in Light of Theology," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35 (2007): 112–122.

<sup>57</sup>Lee A. Kirkpatrick, "An Attachment-Theory Approach to the Psychology of Religion," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 2 (1992): 3–28.

<sup>58</sup>Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 256.

# People of the Magazine? Evangelical Innovation for Cultural Engagement amid Technological Change

By Rachel Maxson

373

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American evangelicals have always been innovators in communication technology. Dating at least to the early decades of the Republic, we formed parachurch organizations to leverage business strategies and resources and capitalize on the latest forms of technology in an effort to spread the good news.<sup>1</sup> The ministry orientation of these organizations gave them access to revenue streams not available to commercial publications in the form of charitable donations and also freed them from tyranny of a profit motive, enabling them to operate on more slender margins than their for-profit competitors. Such a focus allowed them to achieve considerable success in saturating the market with their message, despite sometimes facing limited access to mainstream distribution networks.

Still, the nonprofit model does not completely insulate evangelical media efforts from the economic realities of the broader media environment, as illustrated by the 2016 decision by Christianity Today<sup>2</sup> to cease publication of *Books & Culture*. The announcement of that closure was met by widespread lament by commentators concerned with fostering rigorous engagement with intellectual culture from a distinctly evangelical worldview, some of whom suggested that this was a dire sign of the state of evangelical intellectual endeavor at large.<sup>3</sup> That singular decision, however, is better understood in the context of both the history of evangelical media innovation and the realities of the current economic and technological environment for publishing. This article explores that history and current reality, with particular attention to *Books & Culture* and its parent company, Christianity Today, to glean possibilities for new innovations by which the conversations of evangelicals concerned with the life of the mind might be carried forward into the future.

## A Tradition of Innovation

David Paul Nord extensively documents the critical role played by evangelical benevolent associations in pioneering American mass media.<sup>4</sup> Organizations

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such as the American Bible Society (ABS), the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union, driven by a zeal to make the gospel available to every household in the country, were early adopters of new communication technologies, including stereotype printing, steam-powered presses, and domestic machine papermaking.<sup>5</sup> By taking advantage of the economies of scale made available by these technological innovations, ABS, in particular, drove its unit price so low that for-profit publishers were unable to compete on price. To differentiate their products, commercial publishers turned to value-added features such as illustrations and commentary to justify their higher price points.<sup>6</sup> This phenomenon was a natural precursor to the plethora of specialty Bibles now available from Bible publishers.

American evangelical print culture included a prolific assortment of magazines from the earliest days. One of the first periodicals printed in the American colonies was *Christian History*, which appeared in Boston in the 1740s.<sup>7</sup> In the century before 1830, the number of Christian periodicals published in the colonies and then the United States numbered nearly 600.<sup>8</sup> After the Civil War, religious journals nearly doubled from about 350 in print in 1865 to more than 650 in 1885.<sup>9</sup> Although not all religious periodicals were evangelical or even Protestant, the

<sup>1</sup>David Paul Nord, *The Evangelical Origins of Mass Media in America, 1815–1835*, vol. 88, Journalism Monographs (Columbia, SC: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1984); Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States: 1777–1880* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Fea, *The Bible Cause: A History of the American Bible Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup>Throughout this article, *Christianity Today* in italics refers to the flagship magazine, Christianity Today in roman text refers to the parent company (headquartered in Carol Stream, IL) that publishes that magazine and other resources.

<sup>3</sup>Alan Jacobs, "John Wilson and *Books & Culture*," *Snakes and Ladders* (blog), October 11, 2016, <http://blog.ayjay.org/john-wilson-and-books-culture/>; Mark Coddington, "What *Books & Culture* Meant," *Medium* (blog), October 15, 2016, <https://medium.com/@markcoddington/what-books-culture-meant-af9f93fab6e7>; Matthew Loftus, "After *Books & Culture*: 9 Ways to Share the Cost of Cultural Engagement," *Christ and Pop Culture* (blog), October 20, 2016, <https://christandpopculture.com/books-culture-9-ways-share-cost-cultural-engagement/>; John Schmalzbauer, "The Life and Death of Evangelicalism's Little Magazine," *Comment* (January 12, 2017), <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/5009/the-life-and-death-of-evangelicalisms-little-magazine/>.

<sup>4</sup>Nord, *Faith in Reading*; Nord, *Evangelical Origins of Mass Media*.

<sup>5</sup>Nord, *Evangelical Origins of Mass Media*, 13–17.

<sup>6</sup>Gutjahr, *An American Bible*, 36–37.

<sup>7</sup>Charles H. Lippy, *Religious Periodicals of the United States: Academic and Scholarly Journals*, Historical Guides to the World's Periodicals and Newspapers (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), xi.

<sup>8</sup>Ken Waters, "Pursuing New Periodicals in Print and Online," in *Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian Communication*, eds. Quentin J. Schultze and Robert Woods (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 80.

<sup>9</sup>Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741–1930*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958) 3:66.

majority of publications represented the majority faith traditions in the country, meaning evangelicalism was well represented among religious periodicals. Publications ranged in scope and audience from scholarly journals aimed at the learned clergy to general-interest publications for lay audiences. According to chroniclers of religious publications Fackler and Lippy, "for much of the nineteenth century [religious titles] outnumbered strictly secular magazines, newspapers, and cognate periodicals."<sup>10</sup>

In the twentieth century, the pattern of evangelicals adopting new communication technologies continued, as evangelists first embraced radio and then television to broadcast their message.<sup>11</sup> Even as they expanded into new media, evangelicals did not abandon print, especially when striving to present their positions as intellectually respectable options to a skeptical society. For example, the project that became *The Fundamentals* was originally conceived as a monthly magazine that would be sent to English-speaking church leaders globally before being recast as a series of booklets.<sup>12</sup> Two generations later, Billy Graham and Carl F. H. Henry launched *Christianity Today* with a similar vision: to articulate an irenic presentation of evangelical convictions in order to win over liberal clergy to the evangelical cause.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout its more than 60 years of existence, and especially during the leadership of Harold Myra (president and CEO 1976–2007), *Christianity Today* continued the pattern of innovation in media, offering resources in a variety of formats and responding nimbly to market research to offer products that were appealing to audiences and financially sustainable. It was an early provider of online content in the 1990s, partnering with America Online, then building its own presence on the world wide web. Although a tabloid-style book review journal might have seemed a little old fashioned even in 1995 when *Books & Culture* launched, the diversified stable of publications operating under the *Christianity Today* umbrella was part of what made possible a new publication whose time had come.

## The Present Media Environment

The print periodical industry as a whole is in a state of upheaval. In certain respects, this is nothing new. The same new media technologies that evangelicals so

<sup>10</sup>Mark Fackler and Charles H. Lippy, eds., *Popular Religious Magazines of the United States*, Historical Guides to the World's Periodicals and Newspapers (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), xi.

<sup>11</sup>Mark Ward, "Air of the King: Evangelicals and Radio," in *Evangelical Christians and Popular Culture: Pop Goes the Gospel*, ed. Robert Woods, 3 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 1:101–18; Quentin J. Schultze, "Evangelicals and the Power of Television," in *Evangelical Christians and Popular Culture: Pop Goes the Gospel*, ed. Robert Woods, 1:119–42.

<sup>12</sup>Timothy E. W. Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 168.

<sup>13</sup>Phyllis E. Alsdurf, "The Founding of *Christianity Today* Magazine and the Construction of an American Evangelical Identity," *Journal of Religious and Theological Information* 9.1/2 (2010): 27–28.

willingly embraced for more than a century (radio, television, internet, and so on) have at every turn presented competition to print publications on both elements that are essential for the success of their business model: consumer attention (and ultimately subscriptions) and advertising share.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, new forms of media, such as recorded music and computers, presented opportunities to create corresponding print magazines in both the mainstream market (*Rolling Stone*, *PC Magazine*) and the Christian market (CCM, *Christian Computing*). General-interest magazines, such as *Life* and *Look*, never quite recovered from the encroachment of television as the new dominant general-entertainment medium, but niche publications flourished, even as the Internet age began.<sup>15</sup>

Although new forms of media did not destroy the market for print,<sup>16</sup> print publishing was not a financially secure endeavor even in the pre-Internet days. *Christianity Today* depended on subsidies from J. Howard Pew and other donors for its first two decades.<sup>17</sup> After instituting sweeping changes that put the magazine on a self-sustaining path for the first time in its history and launching a sister publication, *Leadership Journal*, that operated in the black from the first issue, Myra warned the board in 1984 that

we are fighting large odds against survival ... the advertising base is limited, and religious magazines generally operate in the red. ... We cannot emphasize too strongly that survival is not probable in this kind of setting unless we have enormous discipline and the very finest and wisest energies applied at all levels of the organization.<sup>18</sup>

External factors, such as the cost of paper and postage and the vagaries of the interests of both readers and advertisers, meant the fiscal security of print publications was never a sure thing.

The early years of consumer commercial Internet access did not pose an immediate existential threat to the magazine industry, even though, like every media innovation before, it presented new competition for readers' attention and advertisers' dollars. Slow and unreliable dial-up connections, limited market penetration, and a shortage of quality content on the early world wide web—not to mention the fact that reading off a page was more comfortable and convenient than reading off a computer screen—meant that magazine readers demonstrated no big rush to give up their print periodicals when home Internet service became widely available. Indeed, at the same time, home Internet usage was experiencing exponential growth, a record number of new print magazine titles were launched

<sup>14</sup>Quint Randle, "A Historical Overview of the Effects of New Mass Media: Introductions in Magazine Publishing during the Twentieth Century," *First Monday* 6.9 (September 3, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v6i9.885>.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Douglas A. Sweeney, "Christianity Today," in *Popular Religious Magazines of the United States*, eds. Mark Fackler and Charles H. Lippy (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 146.

<sup>18</sup>Harold Myra, Report to the Board, January 25, 1984, cited in Phyllis Elaine Alsdurf, "Christianity Today Magazine and Late Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism" (University of Minnesota, 2004), 281.

in 1998 at 1,076.<sup>19</sup>

One enduring legacy of the first decade of consumer commercial Internet access was the evolution of an ad-supported content model that conditioned consumers to expect that online content should be delivered free of charge (beyond monthly access fees paid to the Internet service provider).<sup>20</sup> Most print periodicals used a dual income stream that draws revenue from both advertisers and consumers. Once online readers grew used to “free” content, they proved resistant to any business model that asked them to contribute financially for the things they read online. This made it difficult for print magazines to develop a viable financial strategy for providing content online, as ad rates were generally insufficient to cover costs and readers were unwilling to pay.

In 2007 everything changed. Although Internet usage was steadily trending up among American adults (from 52 percent in 2000 to 74 percent in 2007 to 88 percent in 2016),<sup>21</sup> until 2007, readers of online content were generally either tethered to their computers or compelled to print material for offline reading. In 2007, Apple released the first iPhone and Amazon released the Kindle eReader. These devices and their competitors ushered in an era of mobile access to digital content that changed consumer patterns of media consumption more than home Internet access had. Consumers’ willingness to pay for content on mobile devices in the form of smartphone apps and eBooks suggested the move to mobile might present new opportunities for magazine publishers to monetize digital content. However, most experiments with subscription-based eZines/digizines floundered. Christianity Today’s entry into the market, *The Behemoth*, outlasted many peer publications but was folded into the parent magazine in September 2016 after a two-year run.<sup>22</sup>

That year, 2007, also saw the subprime mortgage crisis that triggered the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression, with devastating effects on an industry already operating on thin margins and dependent on the discretionary spending of advertisers and consumers to pay for its operating costs. The years 2007–2009 saw widespread magazine closures, with 643 publications shuttering in 2007, 613 in 2008, and 428 in 2009.<sup>23</sup> Several Christianity Today titles were caught up in that wave of closures, including *Ignite Your Faith* (formerly *Campus Life*), *Marriage Partnership*, *Today’s Christian Woman*, and *Christian History* (subsequently

<sup>19</sup>Randle, “A Historical Overview.”

<sup>20</sup>Ethan Zuckerman, “The Internet’s Original Sin,” *The Atlantic*, August 14, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/08/advertising-is-the-internets-original-sin/376041/>.

<sup>21</sup>Pew Research Center, “Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet,” *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, January 12, 2017, <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>.

<sup>22</sup>Ted Olsen, “Editor’s Note,” *The Behemoth* 55 (August 18, 2016), <http://www.christianity-today.com/behemoth/2016/issue-55-august-18-2016/editors-note.html>.

<sup>23</sup>Vanessa Voltolina, “Believe It or Not, Fewer Magazines Folding in 2009,” *Folio* (October 13, 2009), <http://www.foliomag.com/magazine-foldings-track-match-last-year-s-totals/>; Michael Rondon, “Magazine Closures Double in 2014,” *Folio* (December 16, 2014), <http://www.foliomag.com/magazine-growth-slows-2014/>.

relaunched by Christian History Institute). The original move, beginning in 1980, to expand Christianity Today's publishing menu from a single flagship journal to a "family" of magazines had been a strategy to provide more stability for the ministry by dispersing overhead expenses across several publications.<sup>24</sup> Now market pressures were forcing the ministry back in the other direction of fewer titles in the hopes of keeping core products sustainable.

*Books & Culture* survived the purge of 2007–2009, even celebrating its own longevity with a fifteenth-anniversary cover (September/October 2010) that noted how it had outlasted several notable secular peer publications and asked "Scandal? What Scandal?" However, this was not a sign that the publication was financially self-sustaining. So-called "thought-leader" magazines virtually never produced a self-sustaining revenue stream in the United States through advertising and subscriptions alone even when the industry had fewer competitors for readers' attention. With the exception of the profitable *New York Review of Books*, journals of opinion and review need patrons or endowments to survive in the long term.<sup>25</sup>

*Books & Culture* received some significant external funding over the years, including start-up funds from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Likewise, more than \$500,000 in grants from Baylor University and Indiana Wesleyan University were received.<sup>26</sup> However, those funds, and even the impressive reader-led Twitter drive that staved off closure in 2013,<sup>27</sup> were not sufficient to keep the publication going in the long run. Decreasing revenue from other publications made it less and less sustainable for the parent ministry to subsidize *Books & Culture*. Institutions of Christian higher education, which are in many ways natural partners for the publication, were experiencing their own financial difficulties, leaving them without resources to invest elsewhere, and major philanthropic organizations, whether or not they style themselves as "venture philanthropists," tend to prefer

<sup>24</sup>Stephen Board, "Moving the World with Magazines: A Survey of Evangelical Periodicals," in *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media: Perspectives on the Relationship between American Evangelicals and the Mass Media*, ed. Quentin J. Schultze (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 131.

<sup>25</sup>Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941–1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 231–32; Morgan Lee and Mark Galli, "Should Evangelical Intellectuals Despair 'Books and Culture's' Demise?" *Quick to Listen* (podcast), October 20, 2016, <https://soundcloud.com/christianitytoday/october-20-2016>.

<sup>26</sup>Lee and Galli, "Should Evangelical Intellectuals Despair?" Jerry Pattengale, co-editor of this volume, was directly involved in Indiana Wesleyan University's assistance, serving as assistant provost during that time. (David Wright was provost and now is president.) He also served on a long-standing committee Harold Smith (CEO of Christianity Today) organized to solicit funds to sustain *Books & Culture*. Other members included Nathan Hatch, who led the last major charge—raising an additional \$250,000 through a last appeal. Throughout this intense effort, Christianity Today was subsidizing the thought magazine and exerted considerable funds and efforts to sustain this "gem," as Mr. Smith often noted. The B&C Development Board was made up of Nathan Hatch (as co-chair with Harold Smith), Mark Noll, Richard Mouw, Shirley Mullen, David Skeel, and Jerry Pattengale.

<sup>27</sup>Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "Books & Culture Survives Financial Crisis," *Christian Century* (September 9, 2013), <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2013-09/christianity-today-s-books-culture-survives-chopping-block>.

investing in new projects over providing operating funds for existing ones. The combination of these factors made finding funding for continuing the publication a difficult task indeed.

The fact that Christianity Today continued publishing *Books & Culture* for so long “even in the wake of too much red ink”<sup>28</sup> illustrates how closely the publication was identified with the core mission of the ministry. When Myra began expanding the family of publications under the Christianity Today banner, he declared that “our main concern was to make *Christianity Today*, the flagship publication, fully effective in the three basic areas: editorial, circulation, advertising. Anything which would drain off energies from the prime task was unthinkable.”<sup>29</sup> The organization was never shy about pulling the plug on underperforming properties or redesigning them to reach a wider audience.

The fact that *Books & Culture* outlasted so many other publications in Christianity Today’s “family” is an indication that the ministry’s publishing decisions were not driven solely by immediate financial considerations. After making the controversial decision to pivot *Christianity Today* from an intellectual journal aimed primarily at pastors to a general-interest periodical for evangelical laity, Myra described *Books & Culture* as filling the role of a thought-leader journal that the flagship magazine had originally played.<sup>30</sup> The publications closed in 2016—*Books & Culture*, *Leadership Journal*, and *The Behemoth*—were three of the publications most closely aligned with the spirit of the flagship magazine *Christianity Today*, and the surviving publication bears the stamp of those publications that have ended a separate publishing existence.

### What’s Next?

Has the time come to give up on print as a viable medium for conveying thoughtful engagement with culture? Despite the admitted economic challenges of that industry, there are indications that a wholesale shift to digital may not be the only possibility for magazines of the future. After the dramatic losses of print publications in 2007–2009, the industry turned a corner. Beginning in 2010, the number of closures per year dropped below 200, and sometimes under 100, with annual net gains in the number of titles being published as more magazines were launched than shuttered.<sup>31</sup> Although emerging titles tend to address increasingly niche audiences compared to the magazines that disappeared, and the long-term prospects of these new titles are of course untested, these trends suggest the print magazine industry is stabilizing in a post-recession market.

Developments in the market for books also indicate the ongoing viability of

<sup>28</sup>Harold B. Smith, “Note to Our Readers,” *Books & Culture* (December 2016), <http://www.booksandculture.com/articles/2016/novdec/note-to-our-readers.html>.

<sup>29</sup>Harold Myra, “A Message from the Publisher,” *Leadership* 1.1 (Winter 1980): 138.

<sup>30</sup>Myra, Report to Board, June 21, 1995, cited by Alsdurf, “Christianity Today Magazine.”

<sup>31</sup>Rondon, “Magazine Closures Double in 2014.”

print. After an initial spike in eBook purchases, recent surveys indicate that print books remain more popular with readers than eBooks,<sup>32</sup> and college students in particular overwhelmingly express a preference for print.<sup>33</sup> Magazines that provide *booklike* content—serious, long-form writing rather than ephemeral distractions—still have a place in the print ecosystem. Those who would consider launching new print publications will require exceptional creativity, discipline, and clear-eyed vision in order to survive (just as Myra called for in 1984), but the fact that hundreds of print magazines continue to enter the marketplace each year testifies that the era of the print magazine is not yet past. The ongoing print existence of publications such as *Comment*, *The Other Journal*, *Image*, and *The Englewood Review of Books* continue the project of Christian intellectual engagement with culture that *Books & Culture* represented.

Although it is too soon to abandon print, it is undeniable that mobile digital media offers new possibilities for communication and collaboration among evangelical thought leaders and their audiences. Much of the kind of conversation *Books & Culture* fostered has moved online, hosted by digital publications such as *Christ and Pop Culture*, online platforms such as *Patheos*, and a growing number of podcasts following the lead of *Mars Hill Audio Journal*. Of course, publishing on a digital platform does not by itself solve the problem of financial sustainability. It reduces, but does not eliminate, overhead costs, so it remains necessary to find funding models that can provide the means to continue to create and share the discussions readers find valuable. Membership programs and ecommerce integration are models gaining traction with some online content providers, which may provide more financial possibilities to add to more traditional approaches such as standard advertising, subscriptions, and donation appeals to build the necessary financial support to cover publication costs. Drawing on the expertise of “entrepreneurial theologians” such as Timothy Dalrymple<sup>34</sup> and John Dyer<sup>35</sup> can help cultivate both the technological and business innovations to sustain quality content in digital media contexts.

Christian institutions of higher education are also well positioned to support the publication of thoughtful-yet-accessible writing that engages and inspires the life of the evangelical mind, even if they are not in a position to make substantial ongoing financial grants to help sustain external publications. A growing number of schools host digital institutional repositories to preserve and showcase their faculty and students' scholarly work. These same platforms can be used to publish works of public intellectual output for informed lay audiences. If universities

<sup>32</sup>Andrew Perrin, “Book Reading 2016,” *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, September 1, 2016, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/01/book-reading-2016/>.

<sup>33</sup>Alice Robb, “92 Percent of College Students Prefer Reading Print Books to E-Readers,” *New Republic* (January 14, 2015), <https://newrepublic.com/article/120765/naomi-barons-words-onscreen-fate-reading-digital-world>.

<sup>34</sup>Timothy Dalrymple, “Theological Vocation and the Marketplace,” *Journal of Markets and Morality* 18.2 (Fall 2015): 409–417.

<sup>35</sup>John Dyer, *Don't Eat the Fruit* (blog), <http://donteatthefruit.com/>.

and seminaries understand it as part of their missions to contribute to the wider public discourse and not just the education of their own students, they should incentivize service in editing and publishing such materials (either in their own house organs or other publications) by making clear that such work counts toward promotion and tenure. By making technological infrastructure and the expertise of staff and faculty available to support the dissemination of Christian critical engagement with culture, universities and seminaries can contribute to this vital project in ways other than with cash.

In the wake of *Books & Culture*, there remain abundant outlets for thoughtful Christian criticism and public scholarship, both in Christian publications (print and digital) and the mainstream press. John Schmalzbauer barely scratched the surface of respected venues that give voice to evangelical public intellectuals when he wrote, “Readers looking for evangelical voices in the mainstream media should turn to *Harper’s*, *Slate*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and the *New Republic*.”<sup>36</sup> One of the great challenges of the new media environment is discoverability—with good-quality content spread around the Internet, interspersed with so much noise and fake news, coming across pieces that will be a delight to read and provide edifying new perspectives becomes increasingly difficult. Perhaps rather than looking for a new publication to rise from the ashes of *Books & Culture*, as *Books & Culture* itself came into being following the discontinuation of *The Reformed Journal*,<sup>37</sup> its devotees would be better served by the development of digital clearinghouses—means to find the things worth reading across a variety of publications and platforms. Savvy deployment of digital platforms and social media can spread the reach of the evangelical intellectual conversation. Attention to the ever-shifting locus of the digital public square is a necessary part of a strategy for effective communication in a disaggregated digital age.

A media ecosystem marked by technological and economic change calls for communication strategies that are innovative, flexible, and multipronged. Fortunately for evangelicals intent on supporting the life of the mind, the evangelical movement has a strong tradition of embracing and developing new communication technologies even as it continues to invest in traditional media that support its message. As the magazine industry continues to respond to emerging technologies and consumer behaviors, neither unwavering commitment to well-known formats nor headlong embrace of the latest trends will guarantee survival and success. Tight financial margins and the periodic necessity of discontinuing well-regarded properties or strategies need not be cause for dismay but, rather, inspiration to experiment. Thoughtful adaptation to changing circumstances can provide new opportunities to nurture evangelical thought and reach a wider audience.

<sup>36</sup>Schmalzbauer, “The Life and Death of Evangelicalism’s Little Magazine.”

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*



# The Parachurch *Down Under*: A Case Study

By Mark Stephens

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A Scottish clergyman once described Australia as the “most godless place under heaven.”<sup>1</sup> Although his comment was ill-informed, as a provocative statement it clues us in to something of a popular sentiment regarding the religiosity of Australia.<sup>2</sup> Yet contrary to popular impression, it can be forcefully argued that Christianity in general, and evangelicalism in particular, has been a potent influence on Australian society and culture for the past 200 years.<sup>3</sup>

In three major sections, this article investigates the way the Australian evangelical mind is represented by its parachurch institutions. First, I briefly summarize the overall religious context of Australia, including salient data pertaining to Christian affiliation and church attendance. Second, I examine three spheres of parachurch influence for evangelicals: social services, education, and politics. Third, I offer a tentative proposal as to what is presently missing in Australian evangelical engagement through the parachurch.

## The Australian Religious Context

To begin, it is important to situate this discussion within the broad religious context of Christianity in Australia. Evangelicalism arrived in Australia in 1788, on board the first fleet of convict ships from Britain. Richard Johnson, an evangelical Anglican with substantial ties to the Clapham Sect, functioned as the colony’s first chaplain.<sup>4</sup> Despite challenging beginnings, evangelicalism flourished throughout the nineteenth century,<sup>5</sup> but the nation that eventually emerged with Federation in 1901 cannot confidently be defined as either Christian or secular.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, in terms of the affiliation of its inhabitants, the overwhelming majority identified themselves as Christian.<sup>7</sup> However, the constitution of Australia deliberately

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sought to be secular, insofar as it prescribed freedom of religion and the freedom to be nonreligious.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, up until the 1960s, the self-perception of many Australians would have been to configure their national identity in terms of being a Christian country.<sup>9</sup>

From the 1960s onward, Christian affiliation and church attendance declined substantially. In 1966 approximately 88.2 percent of Australians identified as Christian; in 2016 this number had reduced to 52.1 percent.<sup>10</sup> In 1961, 41 percent of Australians attended church monthly, but, by 2007, this number had declined to just 17 percent.<sup>11</sup> Yet what this headline data can mask is “evangelical constituencies have become even more disproportionately important among church attenders.”<sup>12</sup> In simple terms, a great deal of the decline in church attendance has been experienced in the mainline denominations.<sup>13</sup> The present situation of the evangelical church in Australia is one where church attendance is no longer normative, or even normal; at the same time, evangelicalism is managing to persist and in some cases thrive.

### Evangelical Influence through Parachurch Institutions

Throughout the history of the nation, the parachurch has been a vital feature of Australian evangelical life. Key parachurch initiatives include the Bible Society, transdenominational Christian conventions, and missionary Bible colleges.<sup>14</sup> However, this discussion of evangelical parachurch institutions will be limited to

<sup>1</sup>James Denney, as cited in Thomas R. Frame, *Anglicans in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales [UNSW] Press, 2007), 125.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh Chilton, “Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia: Nation and Religion in the Public Square 1959–1979” (PhD diss., University of Sydney 2014), 12–16.

<sup>3</sup>For a vigorous defense, see Stuart Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, Word, and World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 4–6, 11–12.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 24–78.

<sup>6</sup>Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 60.

<sup>7</sup>96 percent identified as Christian in the first census in 1901; see “Religious Affiliation,” Australian Bureau of Statistics, last updated January 24, 2007, <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/BFDDA1CA506D6CFACA2570DE0014496E?opendocument>.

<sup>8</sup>Amanda Lohrey, “Voting for Jesus: Christianity and Politics in Australia,” *Quarterly Essay* 22 (2006): 36, 40, 42.

<sup>9</sup>Chilton, “Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia,” 49–84.

<sup>10</sup>See the helpful summary “Religion in Australia,” Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed September 14, 2007, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Data%20Summary~25>.

<sup>11</sup>Ruth Powell, “Why Innovation Is Needed in Church Life,” National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Research, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.ncls.org.au/download/doc4485/FactSheet10.03.03-WhyInnovationIsNeededInChurchLife.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup>Mark Hutchinson and John Wolfe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 216.

<sup>13</sup>The one great exception is the robustly evangelical Sydney Anglican diocese.

<sup>14</sup>See, for example, Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, 91–92, 99–100, 110–112.

### *Social Services*

Notably, 23 out of the top 25 charities in Australia are what may reasonably be termed faith-based.<sup>15</sup> This is by no means a recent phenomenon; it has been a feature of Australian society since the beginnings of white settlement. Within the early social development of Australia, poverty relief was at the bottom of the government's laissez-faire economic agenda, leading private charitable groups to fill the space.<sup>16</sup> By the time the modern welfare state began to be fully implemented in the mid-twentieth century, the Australian government often chose to work through the existing charitable sector, as opposed to replacing it.<sup>17</sup>

This compact between government and the charitable sector can bring both promise and peril. As Judd, Robinson, and Errington frame it:

The crisis for Australian charities is one of identity. They are in crisis because so many of them do not know who they are and they do not know why they are doing what they are doing. And what is sad is that many do not even understand the concept.<sup>18</sup>

The challenges of maintaining a religious identity are many. For example, being in receipt of government funding has, on occasion, gagged the political voice of the charities.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the complex demands of running a major organization can mean hiring staff members who might be professionally competent but struggle to articulate the faith basis of the charity.<sup>20</sup>

Yet positive examples of attempts at theological reflection can be adduced. One of Australia's biggest charities, World Vision Australia, continues to self-identify as a Christian organization and is happy to explicate their identity within a Trinitarian, prophetic, and holistic framework.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Mission Australia retains within its mission statement a desire to "spread the knowledge of the love of God."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, it was Mission Australia that helped initially fund the

<sup>15</sup>See the comments of Stephen Judd, in Sophie Timothy, "Story of Courage and Survival Wins Christian Book of the Year," August 9, 2013, <http://www.archive.biblesociety.org.au/news/story-of-courage-and-survival-wins-christian-book-of-the-year>.

<sup>16</sup>Douglas Hynd, "Church-Related Social Welfare Agencies in Australia: A Historical Perspective on Their Development and Their Relationship with the State," *Zadok Papers* 220/221 (2017): 3.

<sup>17</sup>Stephen Judd, Anne Robinson, and Felicity Errington, *Driven by Purpose: Charities That Make the Difference* (Sydney: Hammond Care, 2014), chap. 3, Kindle ed.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, introduction.

<sup>19</sup>Brian Howe and Renate Howe, "The Influence of Faith-Based Organisations on Australian Social Policy," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 47.3 (2012): 328.

<sup>20</sup>Judd, Robinson, and Errington, *Driven by Purpose*, Kindle locations 2592–2594.

<sup>21</sup>See "More about Our Christian Identity," World Vision Australia, accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.worldvision.com.au/about-us/our-policies/more-about-our-christian-identity>.

<sup>22</sup>See "Mission Australia," accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/>.

Centre for Public Christianity (CPX), perhaps Australia's preeminent think tank for promoting the public understanding of the Christian faith.<sup>23</sup>

### *Education*

Christian influence on education began early within the Australian colony, by way of denominational schooling.<sup>24</sup> Indeed it was only in the late nineteenth century that the state completely intervened to provide a "secular" education to the Australian public;<sup>25</sup> even after this, private schools remained an essential feature of the educational landscape. Nationwide roughly one-third of all Australian students are educated in private schools.<sup>26</sup> In recent decades, one of the primary drivers of growth in the sector has been the increasing presence of independent schools with an explicitly evangelical identity.<sup>27</sup>

As would be obvious from our earlier statistics on religion, private schools proved attractive to a much broader constituency than just churchgoing families. For those schools that espouse evangelical convictions, however, the challenges of forming an "evangelical mind" remain profound. Many evangelical schools still operate with a bifurcated vision of Christianity's relationship to the educational disciplines, such that the religious "bit" of the school is confined to Christian Studies class or classes. Additionally, many parents who send their children to such schools have little interest in how theology might inform epistemology, or how one might reorient learners toward the goal of *shalom*; they see private school as a prophylactic barrier protecting their fledgling learner from a nebulous set of bad influences.<sup>28</sup> Finally, despite the avowed ethos of any particular school, many teachers within these schools are not Christian. Even if they are, they have often never been extensively trained in how to think theologically about their praxis.

One positive sign for education is the number of tertiary-level evangelical colleges providing teacher training from a Christian perspective.<sup>29</sup> But this optimism needs to be tempered by the fact that many teachers, having been given a small taste of thinking theologically, find the day-to-day demands of teaching squeeze

<sup>23</sup>John Dickson, personal communication, September 14, 2017.

<sup>24</sup>Roy Williams, *Post-God Nation? How Religion Fell Off the Radar in Australia and What Might Be Done to Get it Back On* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2015), 186.

<sup>25</sup>On the complexity of what was meant by the term *secular* in key Education Acts, see David Hastie, "The Latest Installment in the Whig Interpretation of Australian Education History: Catherine Byrne's JORH Article 'Free, Compulsory and (not) Secular,'" *Journal of Religious History* 41.3 (2017): 386–403.

<sup>26</sup>Jennifer Buckingham, *The Rise of Religious Schools* (St. Leonards, NSW: Centre for Independent Studies, 2010), 2.

<sup>27</sup>See "A Snapshot of Schools in Australia, 2013," McCrindle Research, accessed September 14, 2017, [http://mccrindle.com.au/resources/Snapshot-of-Schools-in-Australia-2013\\_McCrindle-Research.pdf](http://mccrindle.com.au/resources/Snapshot-of-Schools-in-Australia-2013_McCrindle-Research.pdf).

<sup>28</sup>Buckingham, *Rise of Religious Schools*, 8, citing the research of Craig Campbell, Helen Proctor, and Geoffrey Sherrington.

<sup>29</sup>For a list, see "Tertiary Partners," Christian Schools Australia, accessed September 15, 2017, <https://csa.edu.au/resources/partners/tertiary-partners/>.

out any possibility for further theological reflection.

### Politics

Despite the presence of a constitutional provision<sup>30</sup> that sounds substantially similar to the US First Amendment, Australian society avoided enforcing a strict separation between church and state.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, from its very beginnings, Australian parliamentary democracy has been surrounded by Christian hymns and prayers.<sup>32</sup> Even today, both houses of the federal Parliament are opened with a set prayer, which includes within it the Lord's Prayer.<sup>33</sup> While these overtly religious practices occasion regular criticism,<sup>34</sup> the outcry against them has been insufficient to see the practice ended, a fact that gives some insight into the more relaxed mood of Australians regarding this topic.

Regarding parachurch institutions, perhaps two merit our attention. The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) emerged in the mid-1990s, initially from the efforts of Queensland Pentecostals.<sup>35</sup> Although it positions itself as nonpartisan, its deliberate goal of being a "Christian voice for values" led it to prioritize conservative issues relating to family, sexuality, and the right to life.<sup>36</sup> This should not surprise, because what church data we do possess on voting patterns suggests a decided skew toward right-wing political perspectives.<sup>37</sup> Yet for all that Australian evangelicals might lean in a rightward direction, alternative political voices are clearly present, who argue the ACL does not represent them or the evangelical

<sup>30</sup>"The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth" (§ 116).

<sup>31</sup>T. R. Frame, *Evolution in the Antipodes: Charles Darwin and Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 176.

<sup>32</sup>Meredith Lake, *The Bible Down Under: How the Bible Helped Shape Australian Culture, History, Art, and Everything Else* (Sydney: NSW Bible Society, 2016), 46.

<sup>33</sup>See "Acknowledgement of Country and Prayers," Parliament of Australia, accessed September 15, 2017, [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/House\\_of\\_Representatives/Powers\\_practice\\_and\\_procedure/Practice6/Practice6HTML?file=Chapter8&section=03](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_Representatives/Powers_practice_and_procedure/Practice6/Practice6HTML?file=Chapter8&section=03).

<sup>34</sup>"Greens Push to Dump Lord's Prayer from Federal Parliament," ABC News, February 13, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-13/greens-push-to-dump-lords-prayer-from-federal/5256744>.

<sup>35</sup>Stuart Piggin, *Spirit, Word, and World: Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Brunswick East: Acorn, 2012), 243–45; Marion Maddox, "Right-Wing Christian Intervention in a Naïve Polity: The Australian Christian Lobby," *Political Theology* 15.2 (2014): 133.

<sup>36</sup>See "About the Australian Christian Lobby," ACL, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.acl.org.au/about>.

<sup>37</sup>In 2011 close to 50 percent supporting right-leaning parties, 25 percent supporting left-leaning parties, and 13 percent identifying as "swinging" voters (the remaining percentages reflect respondents who voted for independents or who could not vote because of age). See "Voting Patterns by Church Attenders," NCLS Research, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.ncls.org.au/download/doc5358/NCLS%20Fact%20Sheet%2013007%20Voting%20by%20church%20attenders.pdf>.

constituency as a whole.<sup>38</sup> The past three years has seen a new movement, Common Grace (CG), form a diverse coalition of Christians to prioritize issues such as indigenous rights, climate change, and domestic violence.<sup>39</sup> Although CG does not self-identify as evangelical, many of its key contributors are prominent evangelical ministers and theologians.<sup>40</sup> Thus the notion of a "Christian vote" is quite complex and subtle in Australia.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the same data that show Christian voting patterns to be right-leaning also demonstrate that many either support left-leaning political parties or are open to changing their vote from election to election.<sup>42</sup>

An additional feature of evangelical political engagement has been the formation of Christian political parties, such as the Christian Democratic Party (CDP, formed in 1977) or the Family First Party (formed in 2001). Both parties stress "family values" issues, although the CDP has also endorsed policies that tend toward Islamophobia and climate skepticism.<sup>43</sup>

Yet for all of their strident appeals, Christian parties struggled to capture a sizable proportion of church attenders.<sup>44</sup> In part, this is based in a recognition that Christian parties are often positioned as "single-issue" parties, rather than offering a wide-ranging engagement with the full task of government. In terms of published pieces, Australian evangelicals demonstrate a basic awareness of moving "beyond left and right," although this awareness rarely translates into anything approaching a full-orbed evangelical political philosophy.<sup>45</sup>

### Tentative Proposals for the Evangelical Parachurch

In spite of declining Christian affiliation and a reduction in church attendance overall, evangelicals maintain a vital presence and exercise influence in the broader Australian culture. Within the varying domains of social services, education, and

<sup>38</sup>Stephanie Judd, "Australian Christian Lobby Is Not Nearly as Influential as Some Suggest, Stephanie Judd writes," ABC News, February 29, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-01/australian-christian-lobby-is-not-as-influential-as-some-suggest/7210300>.

<sup>39</sup>See <http://www.commongrace.org.au/>.

<sup>40</sup>The list of contributors to Common Grace includes representatives from Sydney Anglicanism, Hillsong, and evangelical Baptists. See "Contributors," Common Grace, accessed September 14, 2017, <http://www.commongrace.org.au/contributors>.

<sup>41</sup>For more, see Mark Stephens, "The Complexity of the Christian Vote," Centre for Public Christianity, August 12, 2010, <https://publicchristianity.org/library/the-complexity-of-the-christian-vote/>; John Dickson, "In Political Realm, Birds of a Feather Don't Necessarily Flock Together," *Sydney Morning Herald* (July 29, 2010), <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/in-the-political-realm-birds-of-a-feather-dont-necessarily-flock-together-20100728-10vy3.html>.

<sup>42</sup>See the data referred to in note 36.

<sup>43</sup>See <http://www.cdp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CDP-FE16-25-Policies-Complete.pdf>, esp. pp. 17–20 (on halal food) and 32–33 (on climate change).

<sup>44</sup>See "NSW Election Result a 'Disaster for Christians': Moyes," *Sydney Anglicans* (April 28, 2003), <http://sydneyanglicans.net/news/722a>.

<sup>45</sup>For an example from an American context, see Amy E. Black, *Beyond Left and Right: Helping Christians Make Sense of American Politics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

politics, numerous possibilities are available for Australian evangelicals to grow and mature their contributions. In 1994 Mark Noll opened his seminal volume by stating: “The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind.”<sup>46</sup> What Noll was meaning had a peculiar meaning to his North American context. The same statement could be uttered about Australian evangelicalism in 2017, but for different reasons.

What Australia predominantly lacks is the presence of strong “communities of discourse”<sup>47</sup> that can sustain the necessary discussion, critique, and further maturation of evangelical thinking as it applies to domains outside the church. Perhaps it is the education sector that best illustrates the problem for all the sectors we have discussed. As indicated above, Christian education is a robust presence at primary and secondary levels, but it then nearly disappears at the tertiary level. Simply put, there is no Protestant Christian university in Australia.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, there are only a few degree-level Christian tertiary institutions offering courses outside of the domains of ministry and theology. Even if one includes enrollments in Protestant theological colleges, the proportion of students is less than 1 percent of the total.<sup>49</sup> As a result, most Christian academics ply their trade within state tertiary institutions, and thus participants within the evangelical parachurch learn their craft in contexts that usually elide the theological dimension.

This lack of coordinated Christian thinking at a tertiary level demonstrably impacts the quality and maturity of the Australian evangelical mind. A little more than a decade ago, Richard Mouw wrote of the need to cultivate a “deep commitment to a new kind of evangelical scholarship that would wrestle seriously with the important issues being raised in the large world of the mind.”<sup>50</sup> It is likely that only by developing a more intentional tertiary discussion will Australian evangelicals be able to resolve the questions of identity, cohesion, and strategy with which they are constantly wrestling in the domains of social service, education, and politics.

<sup>46</sup>Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 3.

<sup>47</sup>I borrow this term from Erik Borg, “Discourse Community,” *ELT Journal* 57.4 (2003): 398–400.

<sup>48</sup>Todd C. Ream and Perry L. Glanzer, *The Idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination for Today's University* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 141.

<sup>49</sup>These are based on rough calculations using “Student Data,” Australian Government Department of Education and Training, accessed September 15, 2017, <https://www.education.gov.au/student-data>.

<sup>50</sup>Richard Mouw, foreword to Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), x.



# The Evangelical Mind in the Digital Fields

By Timothy Dalrymple

391

It is hardly possible to examine comprehensively the state of the evangelical mind today without giving careful attention to the impact of digital media. The rise of digital media<sup>1</sup> continues to disrupt and transform communications, education, business, entertainment, politics, forms of social organization, and more.<sup>2</sup> Roughly half the global population today uses the Internet; in Europe and North America the percentage exceeds 80 percent.<sup>3</sup> More than 2 billion people log onto Facebook at least once per month, and almost 1.4 billion log on daily.<sup>4</sup> Although reliable numbers are hard to come by, every sixty seconds there are tens of millions of messages sent through mobile apps, millions of Facebook posts, more than one hundred thousand emails, and millions of Google searches.<sup>5</sup> The amount of content disseminated and consumed online is overwhelming and shows no signs of slowing down.

Earlier communications revolutions—printing, newspapers, radio, and television among them—altered the economics of information distribution in ways that had profound effects on religious communities and authorities.<sup>6</sup> Early signs suggest social media will prove at least as consequential. It behooves us then to question how digital media shapes the evangelical mind. The following (a) examines Patheos.com in order to survey some of the dynamics of online traffic that shape the production and distribution of digital content and (b) considers three implications for the habits and qualities of evangelical thought. I will argue that digital media (a) accelerates the global distribution of information in a manner that forms communities around shared interests and beliefs instead of geographical proximity, (b) shifts authority and influence from institutions to individuals, and (c) encourages media that is instantaneous, superficial, partisan, and hyperbolic. These forces are already shaping evangelical communities and evangelical intellectual life in a manner that deserves careful attention.

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The full story of Patheos.com is a long and fascinating one, with colorful characters and surprising reversals of fortune. For present purposes I can offer only an overview.<sup>7</sup>

The original intention for Patheos was to recreate online the marketplace of religious ideas and make it more elevated and informed. Readers seeking answers to humanity's most enduring questions could find clarity on the ways in which different religious traditions addressed those questions. Before the site launched, the founders and early employees of Patheos forged relationships with faculty and departments at numerous universities. They also composed a structure for encyclopedic content on scores of religious traditions allowing website visitors to

<sup>1</sup>In this article I will have in mind a broad definition of "digital media" as digitized content transmitted over the Internet and computer networks. This would include "social media" (apps, blogs, and web platforms that allow users to share their own content with one another) and also media websites, online gaming, video and audio streaming services, and so on.

<sup>2</sup>Anyone living outside a cave in recent decades will have had ample opportunity to observe the truth of this statement. For those who wish to research further, a fair place to start is the work of Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, including *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014). The annual Kleiner Perkins digital trends report is also helpful, <http://www.kpcb.com/internet-trends>.

<sup>3</sup>The International Telecommunication Union, a United Nations agency devoted to the advancement of information and communications technologies, put the number at 3.2 billion (or 43 percent of the global population) in 2015). An assessment two years later from the Miniwatts Marketing Group, June 30, 2017, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>, set the figure at 3.88 billion, or 51.7 percent, with 88 percent penetration in North America and 80 percent in Europe.

<sup>4</sup>For regularly updated Facebook total user figures, see News Room, <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>.

<sup>5</sup>Data assembled by Smart Insights from reported data by What'sApp, Facebook, Radicati, and Google, <https://www.smartinsights.com/internet-marketing-statistics/happens-online-60-seconds/>.

<sup>6</sup>The development of the printing press in mid-fifteenth-century Europe made it less expensive to distribute information and opinions via letters, pamphlets, and books. Whether it was the printing of indulgences, or Reformation and Counter-Reformation pamphlets, or a variety of printed vernacular translations, the consequences for religious organization were profound. See John Man, *The Gutenberg Revolution: How Printing Changed the Course of History* (London: Transworld, 2010). Radio made it possible to connect to preachers and congregations in new ways, and the careers of some figures, such as Aimee Semple McPherson, are hard to imagine apart from mass media. See Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 66–89. The rise of televangelists would provide another example from the television era. See Razelle Frankl, *Televangelism: The Marketing of Popular Religion* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup>It should be noted for transparency's sake that this is largely a firsthand account. I was hired by Patheos as a writer and consultant in the winter of 2008–2009. Immediately after its public launch, I became the managing editor of its Evangelical Channel; later I became director of content, supervising roughly half the site, and then vice president of business development, before leading a digital creative services arm called Patheos Labs.

delve into progressively deeper layers of information on a single tradition or cut transversely across multiple traditions and compare their origins, histories, and teachings. Scholars wrote and peer-reviewed that content, and Patheos published it in a section of the site called the Library.

Alongside the “timeless” and more dispassionate content in the Library would be “timely” and more opinionated content on “channels.” There would be separate Evangelical, Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Mormon, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Pagan, Atheist, and Spirituality channels, among others.<sup>8</sup> Each channel was permitted to have its own distinctive character, but the channel managers (who were members of those religious traditions) in the beginning generally defaulted to covering the news within their communities, interviewing newsmakers, and the occasional opinion piece.

Finally, set apart from the Library and channels, Patheos offered a Public Square, where Patheos convened multi-religious discussions around specific questions. A handful of the earliest employees were doctoral students in religion at Harvard’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Most other employees came from other institutions of higher learning. The Public Square also drew the participation of scholars, public intellectuals, and religious leaders.

Patheos launched publicly in May 2009, and an article in *Time* magazine drove enough traffic initially to make the first month a success.<sup>9</sup> From there, the philosophy was to fail quickly and cheaply, in order to burn away the dross and identify what worked before incurring significant cost. Patheos was a true start-up, intent on testing, iterating, and optimizing.

What quickly became apparent was the enormity of the challenge of monetizing online content. While the Library built credibility and fortified the site’s search rankings, it did not attract a great deal of traffic. The Public Square attracted media attention and built relational capital with scholars and institutions, but the amount of work required was out of proportion to the amount of traffic it produced. The channels showed promise, but even there the economic challenge was daunting.

To simplify, imagine a website has 1,000 visitors per month and each visitor visits the site once per month (1,000 visits), viewing a single page per visit (1,000 pageviews), and each page serves a single advertising impression (1,000 ads are served). If an advertiser is willing to pay \$5 per thousand ad impressions, this is known as a \$5 CPM (cost per mille) and the website will make \$5 from advertising

<sup>8</sup>Channels were initially called gateways, then portals, and finally channels. The Mainline Protestant Channel was later renamed Progressive Christian, and the Atheist Channel was later renamed Nonreligious. Patheos later added channels defined not by the boundaries of tradition but by their subject matter, such as channels on Religion and Entertainment, Family, Politics, and Work.

<sup>9</sup>Jeninne Lee-St. John, “What Do Religions Believe?: A Website with Answers,” *Time* magazine (May 5, 2009), <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1895735,00.html>. On the founders as well as the founding of Patheos, see Jenny An, “Let the Spirit Move You at Patheos.com,” *WestWord* (November 15, 2011), <http://www.westword.com/content/printView/5114701>.

to those 1,000 visitors. Perhaps the website also attracts some revenue through partnerships or book sales or other means, which (let us say) adds an additional \$5 per thousand ad impressions. This would be known as a \$10 RPM (revenue per mille). The question then becomes, "What does it cost to attract those 1,000 visitors?" If a single article attracts 1,000 visitors, but it costs \$100 to pay the writer for that article and another \$50 to pay an editor, then the website is losing \$140 per article, to say nothing of the many overhead costs and the large sums invested in the development of the platform in the first place.

One solution is to increase the multiples.<sup>10</sup> If each visitor visits on average twice per month, views two pages per visit, and receives two ad impressions per page, then the same 1,000 visitors will yield 8,000 ad impressions. Optimizing the design and functionality of the site to increase these multiples dramatically improves the prospects of any online content venture. However, in order to increase the average number of visits per visitor, and pages per visit, one needs effective mechanisms for bringing first-time visitors back (such as subscriptions and loyal social media followings) and one must have more content from one's writers. Still, one cannot afford to pay a writer \$100 (much less, a writer and editor a combined \$150) for an article that may yield only \$50 in revenue. One needs, in other words, abundant low-cost content where editorial requirements are minimal, and the content producers can be paid an amount proportionate to the revenue they generate.

Such was the calculus that led Patheos first to experiment with blogs and then to embrace them wholeheartedly. Carefully chosen bloggers required minimal editorial oversight. They produced regular streams of content. They brought loyal readerships and significant social media followings along with them. The Evangelical Channel led the way in the recruitment of bloggers, and many of its first bloggers were academics—people such as Scot McKnight, Ben Witherington, and Mark D. Roberts. Others contributed to group blogs as philosophers, historians, sociologists, and biblical scholars, such as John Mark Reynolds, Philip Jenkins, Thomas Kidd, John Fea (whose review is one of the three that opened this issue), Margarita Mooney, and Peter Enns. Others later would include scholars Roger Olson, Gene Veith, Peter Leithart, D. G. Hart, Owen Strachan, and Michael Bird. Some spoke to political issues, such as David French (now at *National Review*) and myself. Others wrote on the graces of everyday Christian living, such as Amy Julia Becker (now at *Christianity Today*) and Michelle van Loon.

Patheos today hosts nearly 500 blogs across numerous channels, and those blogs account for the vast majority of the traffic to the site.<sup>11</sup> It was the blogging

<sup>10</sup>There are many ways to attempt to solve the economics of online content, many of which supplement digital advertising with other sources of revenue. Among them are donations and crowd-funding, grants, sponsored content, memberships, premium content subscriptions, pay-walls for paid content, affiliate sales, packaging content into online courses and minicourses, and pairing content with live events and community gatherings.

<sup>11</sup>Some authors on the *topical* channels also participate in evangelical communities. To pick just one example, Dave Willis (teaching pastor at an evangelical church in Augusta, Georgia)

strategy that led to Patheos's explosive growth. By November 2015, it was serving in excess of 30 million pageviews per month. It was not enough, however, merely to host blogs. Patheos also had to scrutinize the major drivers of web traffic.

## The Incentive Structures of Online Content

It became apparent in the early months after Patheos's public launch that the primary referrers of content were search engines, social media, and larger websites. With visibility into the analytics of a growing stable of writers, Patheos stood exceptionally well positioned to understand the primary drivers of traffic. We learned quickly (as have many others) that there were strategies particular to each category.

### *Search Engine*

Capturing the attention of search engines required content that piggybacked on trending search phrases. When Rob Bell published *Love Wins* in 2011, for instance, traffic across the Evangelical Channel exploded. Our writers published posts with the names of the author and book in the title (and in other locations important to search engines) and received significant traffic from people searching those terms. Of course, some phrases are always "trending." For example, as an experiment I published a post (on my view of pornography as a father of girls) titled "Naked Women, Naked Girls," and reiterated common search phrases at strategic locations. The article generated more than 2 million pageviews. (If the title was misleading, it was an illuminating experiment, and I reasoned that at least I was capturing web surfers in search of pornography and supplying them with an argument for why they should not be doing so.)

### *Social Media*

To capture traffic on social media, the rules were somewhat different. While still important to capitalize on current interests and "personalize" titles (that is, to mention the names of noteworthy individuals addressed in your post), it was just as important to excite enough curiosity for readers to click on the links in their social media streams. A post titled "On the Virtues of Christian Charity: A Response" would get a small fraction of the social media traffic of "10 Things Christopher Hitchens Got Wrong about Mother Teresa." Once readers clicked and viewed the content, of course, it was equally important that they should be inspired to share the content with their networks. Content that reinforced the readers' sympathies as well as their antipathies—that helped them articulate

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and his wife, Ashley, attract massive audiences for their insightful commentary on marriage and parenting in the Faith & Family Channel.

already-held views to their social groups—fared particularly well.

To be clear, Patheos did not (and does not) tell its bloggers what to write about, much less instruct them to reinforce their readers' antipathies. Doing so would have been against the spirit of the enterprise. The trends, however, were easy to see both within and beyond Patheos. Bloggers and social media personalities built massive followings on the basis of antipathies they share with their readers—whether that means castigating “the liberal media” to an evangelical audience, mocking theists to an antireligious audience, or caricaturing conservative Christians to a progressive audience. Selling scorn is one of the simplest ways to build a large and loyal following online.

### *Larger Website*

New content websites, or new writers seeking to build an audience, need time to build their social media followings and their prominence in the search engine landscape. This gives larger websites an outsized role in the early going. In the first year at Patheos, the articles that drew the most traffic were those that earned links from other sites that had already built their audiences. At the Evangelical Channel, these were generally conservative political websites. Several articles I wrote on the Tea Party movement were among the most-read at Patheos in 2009, largely because of links from aggregators and referrers like Instapundit, Powerline, and Hot Air. This, of course, makes it tempting to write in ways and on topics that are likely to be picked up in echo chambers where the post will be broadly shared and discussed.

Another way to earn traffic from referring websites (as well as prominent social media accounts) is to be the first compelling commentary available on a current event. The event itself may be an election, a scandal, a natural disaster, a terrorist attack, or the public debut of a new book or film. The difference between publishing something immediately and publishing something a day or two later is enormous. Be the first to publish, and readers who rush online to understand and process the event will find a link to your post on their favorite websites and in their social media feeds. Publish a day or two later, and your post gets lost in the flood.

### **Implications for the Evangelical Mind**

The point of this examination is not to curse the darkness but to cast a light on the processes and incentive structures intrinsic to the world of digital content and social media. Let us consider, then, what the rise of digital media means for the evangelical mind.

1. *Digital media accelerates the global distribution of information and forms communities around shared interests and convictions rather than geographical proximity.* There are countless obvious ways in which this has been a salutary development. The

global church is more interconnected than ever before. Where in the past it would have taken weeks to respond to the needs of the church across vast distances, or to the needs of people groups beset by tragedy, the church today is more informed and more equipped to respond when the need is most acute. Also, individuals who might otherwise have lacked communities of worship and encouragement, not to mention biblical guidance and theological training, can find all of them online. The consequences for the spread of the gospel and for the education of the church are profound.

The same networks that empower communities to connect and coordinate, however, can also isolate us from those unlike ourselves. Where earlier generations of evangelicals gathered in local and regional communities where there was, more often than not, diversity of opinions on social and political matters, today social media permits evangelicals to gather online in narrowly defined subcultures. In other words, evangelicals have been increasingly divided into self-contained media spheres where their prejudices and presuppositions are encouraged and not challenged. This is not peculiar, of course, to evangelicals. Patheos's best efforts to encourage an exchange of views between the religious (and nonreligious) communities represented on the site generally led to disappointing results. The vast majority of visitors wished to remain within the confines of their channels. Rather than developing the sensitivities essential to meaningful social discourse or moving beyond the battlegrounds of "us" versus "them," many evangelicals today surround themselves in the digital landscape with the like-minded, isolate themselves culturally and politically, become less gracious in tone, and get lost in hyper-partisan worldviews.

2. *Digital media shifts authority and influence from institutions to individuals.* Even after the advent of the printing press in Europe (ca. 1454), and well into the age of newspapers and magazines, radio and television, the means to produce and distribute content were so expensive they generally remained in the control of institutions and a small set of highly wealthy individuals.<sup>12</sup> Yet social media, alongside other technological advances, profoundly changed the economics of content generation and dissemination. As the bar of entry has lowered, the role of mediating institutions diminished. Today's aspiring world-changer no longer needs the platform of a magazine, publisher, or television network. She can develop her own following directly and reach a potential audience of millions or even billions, through social media tools that are entirely free to operate.

The use of the feminine pronoun here is deliberate as one of the most encouraging expressions of this development is the rise of evangelical women who might

<sup>12</sup>I am indebted here to the thoughts of social media consultant Richard Stacy, "Gutenberg and the Social Media Revolution: An Investigation of the World Where It Costs Nothing to Distribute Information," November 20, 2008, <http://richardstacy.com/2008/11/20/gutenberg-and-the-social-media-revolution-an-investigation-of-the-world-where-it-costs-nothing-to-distribute-information/>. For another interesting take, see Tom Standage, *Writing on the Wall* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2013).

not otherwise have had a platform.<sup>13</sup> Women bloggers such as Ann Voskamp, Lysa TerKeurst, and Jen Hatmaker provide guidance and encouragement to vast audiences.<sup>14</sup> They have far larger social media followings than widely renowned evangelical authorities such as Tim Keller. Millions of Christian women (and men) have been well served by new voices.

The problem is not with faithful bloggers such as these,<sup>15</sup> but with the riptides of social and political movement scattered across millions of social media accounts and blogs and content sites. As evidenced in the past decade of evangelical political participation, evangelicals continue to be implicated in movements that are nationalistic, anti-intellectual, and prejudiced against certain people groups. The rise of social media overturns long-standing authority structures and threatens organizations that served as the gatekeepers of information with obsolescence. It also serves to throw the field open to demagogues and provocateurs, content makers who play to their viewers' baser instincts.

For many of the reasons detailed in Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* and in the writings of others since, contemporary evangelicalism is particularly susceptible to destabilization. It lacks deeply rooted authority structures and regards claims to intellectual or theological authority with skepticism. The shallow roots of modern American evangelical communities make them susceptible to the latest movements and trends. When digital media replaces the authority of the pastor or professor with the authority of the peer group, serious thought is needed on the best way to raise the collective evangelical mind toward its higher callings.

3. *Taken together, the economics of digital media and the dynamics of traffic flow encourage media content that is instantaneous, superficial, partisan, and hyperbolic.* Counterexamples are not hard to find in the evangelical sphere. Countless writers and public intellectuals, evangelical and otherwise, perform admirable work in the digital fields. Still, incentives shape behavior. When blog content that is

<sup>13</sup>See Tish Harrison Warren, "Who's In Charge of the Christian Blogosphere?" *Christianity Today* (April 2017), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2017/april/whos-in-charge-of-christian-blogosphere.html>; Hannah Anderson, "By Whose Authority?: Women Bloggers and the Evangelical Church," Religion News Service (May 3, 2017), <https://religionnews.com/2017/05/03/by-whose-authority-women-bloggers-and-the-evangelical-church-commentary/>.

<sup>14</sup>I do not mention here figures like Joyce Meyer, who commands an enormous following for her digital content as well as her print books and events. She is not often placed in the "blogger" category, but one might question whether this is a distinction without a difference. Major bloggers also become authors of printed books and speakers at events; writers/speakers also repurpose content through blogs and social media. Most are content generators and distribute that content through means digital and otherwise.

<sup>15</sup>Recently there was angst over authority and accountability for bloggers when Jen Hatmaker challenged historically Christian views on same-sex relationships. See Emily McFarlan Miller, "Women Bloggers Spawn an Evangelical 'Crisis of Authority,'" Religion News Service (May 15, 2017), <https://religionnews.com/2017/05/15/women-bloggers-spawn-an-evangelical-crisis-of-authority/>. Personally I welcome the addition of thoughtful voices to these discussions and do not believe in imposing (if it were even possible) some sort of command and control over online commentary. The solution will lie in more speech, not less.

considered, reflective, self-consciously balanced, and modest in its claims earns \$700 per month, and content that is swift, shallow, demagogic and exaggerated (or even false) earns \$7,000 per month, builds a larger social media following, and even recruits book contracts and speaking engagements, the temptation will be to lean in the latter direction. Moreover, even when these incentive structures do not shape the *intentions* of writers, they shape the distribution of content to readers. Content that caricatures and castigates will generally travel further than content that seeks to comprehend and contextualize.

One might be tempted to say that digital media leveled the playing field, allowing all content makers (the pastor, the professor, the public intellectual, and the angry neighbor down the street) to compete on even terms for an audience. The truth is rather worse. The financial dynamics of online content, shaped overwhelmingly by the extraordinary power and pervasiveness of social media, generally mitigate against thoughtful and balanced content. The angry neighbor down the street has an advantage. Evangelical underinvestment in intellectual life has left evangelical audiences particularly susceptible to this trend. Frankly put, it is difficult to sell intellectually nuanced content to evangelicals in the social media marketplace; swift, short, angry, one-sided content sells out quickly. This puts the evangelical statesman at a decided disadvantage to the evangelical scorn merchant.

Perhaps this article can serve as an introduction (but nothing more than an introduction) to the many ways in which digital media are influencing the development of the evangelical mind. The evangelical community deserves more extended reflection and research on the topic. How is digital media best integrated into the lives of families, congregations, and communities? How does it influence evangelical views on politics, science, and culture? Who are the most influential figures in the digital media sphere for evangelical audiences? How should we think about authority and accountability in the digital age? What are better and worse ways for evangelical academics as well as their colleges, universities, and seminaries to leverage digital media?

In conclusion, the meaning of the digital revolution remains to be determined and will depend in large measure on how we interpret and respond to it. Evangelical intellectuals can and should be proactive when it comes to understanding the trends shaping the digital landscape and providing guidance to evangelical communities struggling to keep up with the rapid rate of technological change. While the rest of the world rushes forward, there is an opening here for thoughtful believers to think Christianly about the social, cultural, and intellectual impact of digital media and for thoughtful entrepreneurs to shape the technology itself in directions that are fruitful, generative, and humane.



# The Role of the Christian University in the Cultivation of the Evangelical Mind

By Rick Ostrander

401

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If the “evangelical mind” is going to thrive in modern society, one would expect Christian universities to be instrumental in that process. They have mission statements that typically include the promotion of rigorous Christian thinking, and they employ professors who are paid to read, write, and think (among other things). In today’s educational landscape, however, several factors exist that make the promotion of Christian scholarship problematic. Despite the challenges, the Christian university can be a vital contributor to the renewing of the evangelical mind. This article will explain both the challenges and the possibilities regarding Christian scholarship within Christian universities. But first, some personal background.

In 1994 historian Mark Noll published his memorable *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, in which he argued the “scandal” was that no evangelical mind existed. Two decades later, in January 2016, four Christian scholars—George Marsden, Richard Mouw, Alvin Plantinga, and Nicholas Wolterstorff—addressed a packed auditorium at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in a symposium titled “The Renaissance of Christian Scholarship.”<sup>1</sup> Calvin College had supported and helped nurture these scholars early in their careers through research grants and a culture of critical inquiry.

Over the past few decades, they observed, a significant number of evangelical college graduates have gone on to doctoral programs and embarked on academic careers. Funding sources such as Lilly, Pew, the Issachar Fund, and the Templeton Religious Trust helped to nurture scholarly work among evangelicals. In his portion of the symposium, George Marsden noted the considerable growth in the number of professors in the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

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with PhDs and scholarly publications. "Visit just about any of these schools," he remarked, "and you will find Christian scholars of the most impressive quality."

I am a former student of George Marsden. After studying with him, I spent several years as a professor, dean, and provost at two Christian colleges. I now serve at the "home office" of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) in Washington, D.C., where part of my job consists of supporting Christian scholarship through faculty grant programs. I interact regularly with Christian college provosts and have visited dozens of our campuses over the past few years. In reflecting on the role of the Christian university in cultivating the evangelical mind, therefore, I will base my observations on the 140 or so CCCU institutions in the United States—all of whom claim a commitment to being both seriously Christian and truly academic. Such a sample, of course, leaves out some significant Christian universities, such as Notre Dame, Valparaiso, and others.<sup>2</sup>

Is the "evangelical mind" flourishing in CCCU institutions? Yes and no. My provost colleagues claim to be generally optimistic about the state of faculty scholarship on their campuses. Nevertheless, there are significant challenges to cultivating the sort of robust scholarly life that those Calvin-symposium scholars have exemplified in their careers. So first, let me outline the challenges to Christian scholarship that exist among our schools and then speak to its future possibilities.

### Challenges to Christian Scholarship

First, although it is less prevalent than 20 years ago, something of a "scandal of the evangelical mind" still exists in certain parts of American evangelicalism. Some of our schools' constituents fear what unfettered faculty research in areas such as human origins or human sexuality could mean for a professor's theological beliefs. Infrequent, but widely publicized, episodes in which faculty publications or social media posts create controversy for an institution can spark concerns among administrators about supporting faculty scholarship.<sup>3</sup> After all, most CCCU institutions are heavily tuition driven and therefore depend on the trust and goodwill of constituents and supporting denominations. Faculty controversies that undermine that trust can lead to enrollment declines, which in turn create financial problems. In such a tenuous environment, is the risk of public controversy through faculty scholarship really worth it?

And even if theological concerns do not exist, it can be difficult to make the case that significant resources should be devoted to supporting scholarship, which for many Christians seems tangential to colleges' main purpose of preparing

<sup>1</sup>These addresses were published in *Christian Scholar's Review* 47.1.

<sup>2</sup>Two "collaborative partner" institutions of the CCCU, Baylor and Pepperdine, are outliers to some extent because of their significantly larger resource base compared to most CCCU member institutions.

<sup>3</sup>One of the more prominent recent examples concerned a professor at Wheaton College. See, for example, Elizabeth Dias, "Questions Linger after Tenured Wheaton College Professor Agrees to Leave," *Time* (February 8, 2016).

students to enter the workforce—albeit with Christian character. Many CCCU schools pride themselves on being teaching-focused institutions, which naturally leads to questions about the role of scholarship. What does a professor's research on sea barnacles, for example, have to do with preparing education majors to be science teachers?

In addition, if one queries the typical provost on our campuses, CCCU institutions may value faculty scholarship, but financial realities often get in the way. The fact is, supporting scholarship costs money—for release time for research, for lab equipment, for travel to conferences, and so on. The average tuition discount rate at private universities in the United States is nearly 50 percent. In other words, with fewer tuition dollars, our schools are being asked to meet rising student (and parent) expectations regarding the college experience. Imagine having to weigh a faculty summer research grant or that new electron microscope against a badly needed cafeteria upgrade or leaky roof repair.

Moreover, tight budgets mean that teaching loads for full-time faculty remain high, despite good intentions by administrators. The typical teaching load for professors at Christian colleges is four classes per semester, in contrast to two courses per semester at research universities. Then there are academic advising responsibilities and committee assignments. Thus, CCCU professors have many demands on their time that can crowd out that research monograph, musical composition, or lab experiment. I know from personal experience that a Christian academician's scholarly career is often maintained in life's margins such as Christmas holidays, summer breaks, and Saturday mornings.

### **Future Possibilities for Christian Scholarship**

Clearly, significant challenges exist for the evangelical mind at Christian universities. Despite such challenges, however, I remain cautiously optimistic that CCCU institutions will continue to cultivate Christian thinking in the future. One reason for optimism is that the supply of seriously Christian scholars continues to issue forth from secular graduate schools such as Harvard and Michigan and from Christian Ph.D. programs such as Baylor and Notre Dame.

Moreover, by and large, these professors are committed to pursuing their vocations as scholars, as indicated by broad faculty participation in CCCU faculty grant programs and faculty institutes. For example, over the past two decades, fifty professors have participated in the CCCU's Bridging Two Cultures of Science and Humanities grant program; nearly ninety have received CCCU Networking Grants to support collaborative research, and more than two hundred have participated in the CCCU New Faculty Institute.

As one provost put it,

I am optimistic about the future of Christian scholarship because our newer faculty are highly motivated to contribute their voices and perspectives to their scholarly fields. They love discovery and dissemination as a celebration and expression of gratitude for God's

These professors expect institutional support for their scholarship, and by and large our institutions are getting creative in finding ways to do that.

If Christian universities are going to continue nurturing Christian scholarship in the future, two guiding principles will be important. The first is flexibility. Faculty hiring reflects student enrollment, and enrollment trends are clearly in the direction of health sciences, engineering and technology, and professional fields such as business and education—not philosophy and history. To take two disciplines as examples: From 2006 to 2016, the number of CCCU students majoring in history declined 25 percent, from 845 to 674. At the same time, the number of engineering majors more than doubled from 425 to 940.<sup>5</sup>

As Christian universities develop academic programming and hire more faculty in these professional areas, our schools will need to be more flexible in their understanding of what constitutes scholarship worthy of institutional support. Many educators are familiar with Ernest Boyer's call for a new understanding of scholarship, put forth in his 1990s book *Scholarship Reconsidered* (recently updated).<sup>6</sup> In addition to the traditional understanding of scholarship as the discovery of new information, Boyer described what he called the scholarship of teaching (what makes for effective teaching?), the scholarship of application (how do we apply new discoveries to real world problems?), and the scholarship of integration (what are the connections between different disciplines?).

With the growth of professional programs and the decline of the liberal arts, we are seeing on our campuses more professors who practice the scholarship of teaching and application. In the future, the most common type of scholarship from our institutions may not be a history of World War II but an engineering professor developing—and applying—a new technique for getting clean water to rural African villages.

Of course, this shift away from the humanities creates a more pressing need for conversations about what Christian scholarship means in these professionally oriented disciplines. After a half-century of talking about it, we generally know what it means to think Christianly as historians—or at least how to debate the subject.<sup>7</sup> But future conversations will need to center on equipping our CCCU professors to probe the implications of Christianity for nursing, healthcare, and finance. Are we helping our faculty prepare for those conversations?

Second, along with flexibility, patience is integral to the nurturing of the evan-

<sup>4</sup>Email interview with Carol Simon, provost of Whitworth University, July 19, 2017.

<sup>5</sup>Data available from the Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Data System: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>.

<sup>6</sup>Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016).

<sup>7</sup>See, for one of many examples, John Fea, Jay Green, and Eric Miller, eds., *Confessing History: Explorations in Christian Faith and the Historian's Vocation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

gelical mind in Christian universities. In his insightful book *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, historian Alan Kreider explores a question that has fascinated many historians: What explains the remarkable growth of the early church from a small, obscure sect to the dominant religion of the Late Roman Empire? His answer is both counterintuitive and provocative: in a word, *patience*.<sup>8</sup>

Christians in the first couple of centuries, he argues, did not do missions, evangelism, or “outreach” as we tend to think of them today. Rather, they occupied themselves with daily habits of moral living, caring for the poor, and communal worship. Most significantly, they practiced patient endurance amid hardship and let God take care of growing the church. They believed that Christianity lived out patiently and in community would attract others who noticed their countercultural practices in work, sexual ethics, entertainment, charity, and nonviolence.

While these early Christians did not build universities, their practice of patience is just as relevant to us today. Deep thinking, innovative research, and insights worth pursuing require time and consistent habits of study and reflection to generate. Unfortunately, not just our society but our universities increasingly seem to lack extended time for such things—which perhaps explains the popularity of a recent book, *The Slow Professor*.<sup>9</sup> One can whip up a lecture on supply-side economics fairly quickly but generating insights that change the field of economics requires significant time and cannot be rushed. It requires extensive reading and study in the history of economics and society, as well as countless hours spent writing and rewriting that groundbreaking book or article. Quality scholarship requires patience.

While reflecting on the subject of Christian scholarship, my attention was caught by the fall 2017 Calvin College alumni magazine featuring Alvin Plantinga on the cover.<sup>10</sup> Plantinga recently received the Templeton Prize, which puts him in company with renowned figures such as Mother Teresa, Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama. In the interview, Plantinga recounts that he attended Harvard for his first year of college. Then he attended some summer lectures on ethics by Henry Jellema at Calvin and was so impressed that he transferred to Calvin. Later he spent much of his scholarly career at Calvin before moving to Notre Dame. Amid Plantinga’s teaching and other duties, Calvin College afforded him the freedom and the patience to generate new insights that revolutionized the discipline of philosophy.

Amid the challenges that exist, I hope that our institutions will follow Calvin’s example in encouraging and supporting professors in their scholarly pursuits. Doing so will require that administrators devote scarce resources to supporting

<sup>8</sup>Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

<sup>9</sup>Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber, *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

<sup>10</sup>Matt Kucinski, “Award-Winning Wisdom: Templeton Prize Laureate Shares Thoughts on Christianity and Philosophy,” *Spark* (Fall 2017), <https://calvin.edu/publication/spark/2017/09/06/award-winning-wisdom?dotcmsredir=1>.

406 faculty research and provide professors with the freedom to produce scholarship that is appropriate to their discipline. Above all, it will require professors who pursue their calling not just as teachers but as Christian writers, scientists, and artists. If that happens, then perhaps the evangelical mind in America will no longer be a scandal.

# The Unexpectedness of Hope: Good News for a Generation

By David M. Johnstone

407

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The gospel of Jesus Christ is wrapped in the notion of God's "will be[ing] done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10 NIV). The *good* in the good news (or gospel) looks a little different for every age, culture, and context. Unlike the Eastern notion of karma, or what goes around comes around, the Christian gospel centers on God's grace being offered to those who accept Jesus's kindness and authority. God extends grace so that men and women do not receive what they deserve; therefore, what goes around does *not* come around. Many find this to be good news, particularly when they realize that they are not as kind, merciful, and conscientious as they might wish. My premise is that current North American college students have a deep sense of their flawed nature and are genuinely attracted to the possibilities of hope being restored in their lives. I will unpack what observers, practitioners, writers, and theologians note (a) about these students and (b) about hope. I will then reflect on my own interactions and observations with regard to students, hope, and the good news of Jesus Christ.

In Christian theology, followers of Jesus understand the idea of good news as grace intimately related to the scriptural notions of faith, hope, and love, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13:13. The idea of *love* so saturates our Western culture that it has lost much of its power for college students. Further, *faith* seems to cover much of their inner life, but that self-awareness and introspection is not encouraging. Many college students are unsettled with their own moral inner character. Many are not happy with who they are becoming or have become.<sup>1</sup> The *hope* that there is the possibility of change seems to be the "good news" or the means of grace to many of this current generation of college students.

My suggestion is that this generation links the good news of the gospel with hope. Although love is still rich with meaning, hope is more immediately pertinent

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because it seems to be less common. Hope may be the central message of Jesus's good news for today's college students: hope that they are acceptable in spite of the way they are and hope that the Holy Spirit will enable them to change. They hope that the Holy Spirit can transform the tragedy and circumstances of their lives. Hope pulls them from despair and gives them a vision for the future.

### Reflections on Student Culture

Much of our popular culture depicts American undergraduate culture in simplistic, embellished, and entertaining ways. It would be more realistic to describe it as harassed, broken, cynical, depressed, and damaged.<sup>2</sup> Traditional undergraduates bring a growing list of concerns, tragedies, medications, illnesses, and negative experiences with them to college. Upon matriculation, they join a community of peers who are encountering similar challenges with hormones, personal identity, faith development, academic disorientation, and complex relationships. The pressure-cooker environment of academic seasons often causes students' anxiety and desperation to boil to the surface. Panic, stress, eating disorders, despair, and suicidal ideation are all too often parts of their lives, even becoming normative for many students. In some cases, the stressors encountered by students are so paralyzing that the hopelessness leads to substance abuse, self-harm, and at times suicide.<sup>3</sup> The variables of collapsing family dynamics, changing sexual mores, and the increased chaos of life wreak havoc and create complexity in students' lives.<sup>4</sup>

Jon Dalton notes that the spiritual lives of students provide a way for them to make meaning of their experiences and studies. He also observes that, for college students, "the spiritual journey almost always involves traveling companions."<sup>5</sup> Students are looking for the "transcendent and sacred"; they are led "inevitably to the desire to connect with others."<sup>6</sup> The needs that students have for both meaning and relational significance will often come together.

For college students, this connection with a community creates a sense of belonging, intimacy, and security.<sup>7</sup> They gain tremendous support from one another during a time of life that is full of transitions. Sharon Daloz Parks notes

<sup>1</sup>Richard Kadison and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo, *College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What We Must Do about It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004); Christian Smith et al., *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup>Kadison and DiGeronimo, *College of the Overwhelmed*; Smith et al., *Lost in Transition*.

<sup>3</sup>Kadison and DiGeronimo, *College of the Overwhelmed*.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Smith et al., *Lost in Transition*; Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup>Jon Dalton, "Integrating Spirit and Community in Higher Education," in *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education*, eds. Arthur Chickering, Jon Dalton, and Liesa Stamm Auerbach (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 2006), 171.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.; Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

the importance of community, particularly within the world of college students' spirituality.<sup>8</sup> As young people mature, the presence of a community around them enables and facilitates that growth, especially when a community "poses a trustworthy alternative to earlier assumed knowing," thereby helping them see beyond themselves.<sup>9</sup>

## Reflections on Hope

Hope is often viewed as a virtue—something of high value and integrity. A more modern perspective views hope as "the virtue that orients us to fulfillment, the virtue by which we consistently seek, despite hardships and discouragement, our most magnanimous possibilities in life."<sup>10</sup> In his theological discussions about hope, Thomas Aquinas notes that hope is a virtue because it provides the possibility for attaining difficult things.<sup>11</sup> We hope along with others and do so even better when within a community. As humans we are prone to discouragement and liable to abandon our quest unless others support and "remind us of the value of our quest."<sup>12</sup> The community's role in hope is vital.<sup>13</sup> At both the communal and individual levels, hope refers to belief in the potential or possibility of change along with awareness of steps for how to achieve said change.<sup>14</sup>

I consider hope to be (a) an emotional response to the circumstances of life, (b) a virtue, and (c) a cognitive and intellectual approach to life as reflected in theology and philosophy. On one level, hope is a response to life events, frequently a reaction to our experiences. Successes usually reinforce a sense of optimism and increase hope, while failures often undermine and decrease hope.<sup>15</sup> Individual experiences both in the past and present frequently determine responses to life. Often individuals base their hope for future success on successful experiences in the past.<sup>16</sup> Theologically, hope can be built upon how we have interpreted the ways God has acted in the past, as revealed in Scripture. In our lives, "Hope enables people to transcend the difficulties of today and envision the potentialities

<sup>8</sup>Parks, *Big Questions*, 89.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>10</sup>Paul J. Waddell and Darin H. Davis, "Tracking the Toxins of Acedia: Re-envisioning Moral Education," in *The Schooled Heart: Moral Formation in American Higher Education*, eds. Douglas Henry and Michael Beatty (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 146.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 3. Westminster: Christian Classics (trans. 1911, 1981), 1237.

<sup>12</sup>Waddell and Davis, "Tracking the Toxins," 147.

<sup>13</sup>Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions*; M. Phillips, "The Relationship between Hope and Psychological Sense of Community: An Examination of Students, Faculty and Staff in a Small Campus" (doctoral diss., University of Missouri–Columbia, 2002).

<sup>14</sup>Charles R. Snyder, *The Psychology of Hope: You Can Get There from Here* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>Marva J. Dawn, *Truly the Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 89.

of tomorrow."<sup>17</sup>

The discussion of hope in Christianity spans the centuries, illustrated by the biblical reflections in Paul's letters (1 Cor. 13:13; Rom. 8:24) and various psalms (71:5; 119:43; 130:5). Hope was seen as a virtue, "the virtue by which we consistently seek, despite hardships" the great possibilities of life.<sup>18</sup> In a small handbook, written at the beginning of the fifth century, Augustine reflected on how individuals should view hope as beyond themselves. Hope is both (a) temporal and (b) future focused; in either case, the fulfillment of that hope is determined externally from our own actions.<sup>19</sup>

Aquinas viewed "hope as a future good, difficult but possible to obtain."<sup>20</sup> In his theological discussions about hope, he asserted that hope was not a solitary experience. Aquinas observed men and women as being more capable of hope when they are in community. We are prone to discouragement and liable to abandon our hopes unless there are others who support us;<sup>21</sup> others help us remind us of our goals and dreams.

John Calvin described the interrelated roles that hope plays with other virtues. He specifically referenced the connection between hope and faith: "faith believes God to be true, hope awaits the time when his truth shall be manifested."<sup>22</sup> Calvin connected hope to the belief that what God has promised will come to fruition.

Biblically, hope is more than having objectives or goals or viewing circumstances positively. There is a future element of anticipation in biblical hope.<sup>23</sup> Yet there is also a sense that the implications of future hope should also affect daily lives. The scriptural view of hope also has a future focus: God will make wrongs right; injustice will be dealt with; and the wounded will be made whole. Yet hope is not escapist in nature, as there is an expectation that hope should shape current perspectives and actions. In anticipating the future, hope yields implications for the present.<sup>24</sup>

N. T. Wright observes that this future perspective is accurate but only half of the story. He also notes that the transformative power for the present suggests neither Jesus's teaching nor that the biblical writers intended to create a separation between the present and the future.<sup>25</sup> Although believers can anticipate God will one day make the world right, there is no reason for delaying efforts to redeem

<sup>17</sup>James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 341.

<sup>18</sup>Waddell and Davis, "Tracking the Toxins," 146.

<sup>19</sup>Augustine, *Faith, Hope, and Charity* (New York: Newman, 1947).

<sup>20</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1236–37.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. J. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 590.

<sup>23</sup>Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 78.

<sup>24</sup>N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 265.

the world in order to bring about temporal justice.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the church's history, Christian thinkers (theologians, pastors, mystics, and laypeople) grappled with hope's definitions and implications.<sup>27</sup> In these reflections and conversations, they emphasized the centrality of hope by understanding what hope is not. The opposite of hope would seem to be hopelessness.<sup>28</sup> However, Jürgen Moltmann observed despair is not the absence of hope, but "the pain of despair surely lies in the fact that a hope is there, but no way opens up towards its fulfillment."<sup>29</sup> It is better to understand hope's antithesis as despair. It is being able to see a solution to a problem or a needed change but having no idea or means to get there.

Aquinas linked despair with apathy or acedia, one of the seven deadly sins.<sup>30</sup> He saw despair and acedia as mutually reinforcing and destructive. Paul J. Waddell and Darin H. Davis, reflecting on Aquinas, note despair is a belief "that moral and spiritual excellence, however admirable, is impossibly beyond [individuals] ... acedia is the paralyzing spirit of dejection that robs them of hope."<sup>31</sup> Aquinas saw despair as a pervasive sadness that immobilized the individual.<sup>32</sup>

Søren Kierkegaard suggested alienation and despair are closely related.<sup>33</sup> Developing this observation, C. Stephen Evans sees the sense of marginalization, loneliness, and alienation experienced by many in Western culture as having arisen from acedia, apathy, fatalism or "the sickness of despair."<sup>34</sup> Making further observations about alienation, Waddell and Davis say, "Acedia is a dejection of the soul—a moral and spiritual torpor—that leads to the trivialization of oneself and one's relations to others."<sup>35</sup> That relationship to others becomes a theme in understanding the nuances of hope. The opposite of hope is being able to envision a solution but being unable to reach it; it is a paralyzing resignation that nothing can change attended by isolation and alienation.

Over the past dozen years of professional experience and research, I observed the emergence of a battery of common themes in the lives of American college students as noted in literature. First, students had no need to be convinced that they were a mess—sometimes of their own making, sometimes due to the actions and decisions of others. Second, potential eternal salvation is of less importance

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 276.

<sup>27</sup>Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).

<sup>28</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed August 19, 2017, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry88379>, s.v. hopeless, adj.

<sup>29</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 23.

<sup>30</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1255.

<sup>31</sup>Waddell and Davis, "Tracking the Toxins," 134.

<sup>32</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1255.

<sup>33</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness unto Death*, trans. W. Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954).

<sup>34</sup>C. Stephen Evans, *Existentialism: The Philosophy of Despair and the Quest for Hope* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 74.

<sup>35</sup>Waddell and Davis, "Tracking the Toxins," 136.

than immediate needs—eternal life is a bonus, but the current conditions of life take preeminence. Third, many desperately want the conditions to change. However, they could not envision that happening. They needed to know their circumstances have the potential or the possibility of being transformed. My conjecture is that for these students, the gospel of Jesus is good news because it offers the hope of change.

## Observations

American culture likes to leverage the idea of hope; however, it is still quite rare. If the gospel of Jesus Christ is truly good news, the hope Jesus offers to those who trust in him is very good news even to many college students. Drawing on the themes I noted above, I anticipated in my research that relationships and community would play a significant role in the lives of students and indeed my conversations confirmed these assumptions. The surprise came when I observed that meaning-making was equally important for these students as they experienced the good news. Meaning-making, drawing an understanding of the nuances and complexities surrounding a significant life experience, was necessary to their well-being.

### *Relationships*

My first observation is that students often need support to move beyond experiences of tragedy, trauma, or hard times. This support was provided by both men and women who invested in the students' lives before and after the trauma. Their roles were diverse, being teachers, family, friends, or colleagues. Their unique role was assisting the students in discerning the meaning that underlay their particular experiences of trauma. These men and women helped students recognize and interpret the faith-related dynamics of their particular situations and helped them wrestle with existential questions arising from their experiences.

Both individual and communal relationships played an important role in the lives of students. Indeed, pain and despair only became magnified if a particular participant was alone.<sup>36</sup> This support often took the form of encouragement or a perspective that challenged the students' interpretations of events or helped them make sense of these experiences.

### *Community*

With the assistance of sustaining and challenging communities, students began to discern their experiences had not happened in a vacuum.<sup>37</sup> Their com-

<sup>36</sup>See Gerry Sittser, *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows through Loss* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>37</sup>Parks, *Big Dreams*; Dalton, "Integrating Spirit."

munities helped impart a vision of hope even when the participants themselves had little or no hope. The sense that others might have hope for their lives played a crucial role in moving the subjects away from despair. That others could assist or see good things in their future is very significant for one who is struggling with despair.<sup>38</sup>

### *Making-Meaning*

Students, as faithful followers of Jesus, were trying to work out the personal implications of their faith. Their faith kept them grounded amid the chaos of their tragic experiences and served as the lens through which they were able to discern the redemptive implications of these experiences and embrace hope. They began to see that their experiences enabled them to identify with others, deepened their relationship with God, and prepared them in one way or another for the future.

The meaning that supportive communities facilitate, and faith they promote, could not be reduced to answers to the question, "Why did this happen?" Students may indeed have dealt with this question as part of the processing of their lives and traumas. There was a growing sense that their suffering had a benefit beyond their pain, particularly in developing empathy for others who had also experienced difficulties. This growing empathy helped students move away from an internal focus and allowed them (a) to invest in others, (b) to see the hope that was hidden in the pain of others, and (c) thereby to gain a more robust understanding of their own experiences and a deepening hope.

Today's college students have experienced illness, pain, and difficult times caused by themselves and others. Hard experiences often lead to the belief that things cannot change. As a result, some students collapse into cynicism, fatalism, or despair—losing hope. Followers of Jesus trying to convey good news can lean into the good news that circumstances do not have to remain the same and change is possible. I would suggest this hope is the good news of Jesus Christ for this generation; it has impact for coming to faith, but it also has deeper and enduring implications for life. Through supportive relationships and a sustaining community, meaning can be made in the most difficult of circumstances, and we as educators have a role to play. Hope is thus possible, and that is good news, indeed.

<sup>38</sup>David M. Johnstone, "The Journey from Tragedy to Hope: The Experience of Christian Undergraduates" (doctoral diss., George Fox University, 2014).



# How Wendell Berry Helps Universities Inhabit Their Places

By Jack R. Baker and Jeffrey Bilbro

415

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When reflecting on the past and future of the evangelical mind, we thought it fitting to hark back to a time not long after Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* was first published. I (Jack) remember as a young teenager visiting the Family Christian Bookstore on Cornerstone University's campus to buy CDs; I was an impressionable Christian teenager who wore a "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelet and a hat with *Messiah* written across it in imitation of the Mossimo brand script. I enjoyed browsing the music section because it was organized by genre, and I could relate to the small cards with preference tips, such as "If you like The Wallflowers, you'll love Third Day!" Or "If you like Tool, you'll love P.O.D.!" Or "If you like Jars of Clay, you'll love Jars of Clay!" (Those of you who ever debated just *how* Christian the band actually was will get that.) We were sold Christian music and merchandise not for their own good or their intrinsic merit, but because they sounded and looked like secular counterparts. They were marketed as imitative goods copying secular standards of success and prestige.

Christian bookstores are not alone in branding themselves in such derivative, consumerist ways. In fact, we wonder if Christian schools often follow the same marketing strategies. Like this Christian bookstore, Christian universities tend to borrow their standards from secular models rather than developing intrinsically Christian goals for education and then embodying these goals in distinctive

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practices. Recognizing this default imitation allows us to take a step back and consider what the goals of Christian education should be and what practices Christian universities might cultivate to work toward these goals.

We live along the I-94 corridor in southern Michigan. Driving up and down the freeway, one can see many billboards advertising nearby institutions of higher education: Albion College, Western Michigan University, Wayne State University, Jackson College, University of Michigan, Michigan State University. Even our own Spring Arbor University (SAU) is represented. Although each billboard is tailored to a slightly different demographic niche, they all offer remarkably similar messages, messages emphasizing the economic, career benefits of enrolling: "Aim Higher: Educating Tomorrow's Social Workers in Detroit," Wayne State. "Preparing Tomorrow's Doctors ... Today! College of Osteopathic Medicine," MSU. "Jordan. 4.23 GPA. Mattawan High School. Lee Honors College. SMART RIDE," WMU. "#1 BEST VALUE of Christian Universities in Michigan (ranked by *The Economist*)," Spring Arbor University.

Though all the signs embrace in some way the mantra of "upward mobility," the last one is the hardest for me (Jack) to see on a regular basis because it is where Jeff and I invest our energies, our loves, and our time. Although we believe SAU does offer a distinctive, Christian form of education, this billboard mimics the economic standards by which secular schools market themselves. As Kelly, my wife, recently noted, such marketing risks making us look like a fast-food liberal arts university. "BEST VALUE" conjures images of overflowing burger-and-fry cornucopias procured for only a few bucks. "BEST VALUE" seeks to persuade families they will only need to put in a comparatively small amount of money when one considers the high return on their investment; and one has to assume the return is a high-paying job that justifies the expense and time. In the end, "BEST VALUE," as assigned by *The Economist*, can be read only in financial terms.

We certainly recognize the very real financial pressures on Christian schools such as our own. We are forced in some ways to play the economic-marketing game because finances have become the central driving force in higher education. At some point, however, marketing Christian higher education as a niche knock-off brand erodes its intrinsic goals, goals that are in many ways inimical to our modern, consumerist economy. In much the same way that the music sections of Christian bookstores in the '90s failed to articulate the intrinsic and distinctive values of evangelical artists, many evangelical schools have failed to articulate a robust vision of a successfully educated Christian person. Do Christian universities offer excellence in education? Or do they merely offer a safe alternative that is derivative of secular higher education?

We are thankful that many evangelical universities, including our own, *do* offer distinctive, Christian formation. But we need to do a much better job articulating what this distinctive brand of formation entails. What, after all, does a well-educated Christian look like? How might we imagine vocation so that it is not simply a lucrative career with a thin Christian veneer pasted on top?

We have wrestled with these questions in much of our work together—both in the classroom and in our scholarship.<sup>1</sup> And we have found great help in the work of Wendell Berry, a Kentucky farmer and writer. Although Berry calls himself a “marginal Christian,” his position on the outskirts of our dominant, consumerist culture gives him a perspective that many evangelicals with more orthodox theology lack.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the greatest threat to the evangelical mind today is not falling for some doctrinal heresy but implicitly adopting consumerist, secular standards of success. It is all too easy to assent to the right doctrines and recite the right creeds while inhabiting a counter-Christian narrative and loving money more than the kingdom of God.

If Christian universities are to foster genuinely evangelical minds, they will have to stop judging success based on income or celebrity; they will have to stop marketing themselves as a discount ticket to upward mobility. As Jack’s experience in the Christian bookstore indicates, imitating secular standards to increase profit is a fool’s errand. Instead, evangelical universities need to embrace a truly countercultural narrative and begin to imagine how they might form students to inhabit their places virtuously and restoratively—to tend the needs of their neighbors rather than to add impressive acronyms to their résumés.

### What Is Christian Education For?

As the billboards posted along I-94 indicate, the narratives most universities—even Christian universities—tell about their educational offerings center on “upward mobility.” But, as Berry warns, “upward mobility, as we now are seeing, implies downward mobility, just as it has always implied lateral mobility. It implies, in fact, social instability, ecological oblivion, and economic insecurity.”<sup>3</sup> Evangelical universities need to be more explicit about the *telos* or purpose for which they are forming and educating their students. As we have seen, too often their marketing language plays into these self-centered, damaging tendencies rather than challenging them.

We do not often see engraved on the walls of evangelical universities Jesus’s warning, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:24 KJV). Instead, evangelical universities promise to educate their students “for lives of leadership and service in a global society”; they declare that they are “committed to changing the world”; they cast abstract visions declaring their students will “impact the world.” Although

<sup>1</sup>For our extended work on Berry and education, see Jack R. Baker and Jeffrey Bilbro, *Wendell Berry and Higher Education: Cultivating Virtues of Place* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017). Portions of what follows are adapted from this book.

<sup>2</sup>Morris Allen Grubbs, ed., *Conversations with Wendell Berry*, Literary Conversations (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 192.

<sup>3</sup>Wendell Berry, “Major in Homecoming: For Commencement, Northern Kentucky University,” in *What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2010), 33.

such language has roots in evangelicalism's missionary heritage, it is largely congruent with the aspirations valued by a cosmopolitan, extractive economy. Too often, these promises encourage students to find significance in impressive (read lucrative) careers or far-flung influence. Colleges rarely tout their alumni who are faithful kindergarten teachers, skilled plumbers, or stay-at-home parents deeply invested in the lives of their neighborhoods.

This work of educating students to inhabit their places faithfully will require evangelical universities to re-narrate their purpose from career preparation to forming neighbors who can serve the *shalom* of their communities. Alasdair MacIntyre, in his seminal book *After Virtue*, argues one of the requirements for sustaining virtues is a coherent cultural narrative that gives context and purpose to our lives and to community practices.<sup>4</sup> James K. A. Smith draws on this connection between narrative and right practices in his three-part Cultural Liturgies series. In his first volume, *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith outlines an "anthropology that emphasizes the primacy of love and the priority of the imagination in shaping our identity and governing our orientation to the world." He also argues "that education is primarily about the formation ('aiming') of our love and desire, and that such formation happens through embodied, communal rituals we might call 'liturgies'—including a range of 'secular' liturgies that are pedagogies of desire."<sup>5</sup> In other words, the stories we tell shape our practices, and our practices, in turn, shape the stories we come to tell.

One of Berry's core distinctions might help Christian universities discern whether they are inducting students into a richly Christian story or a thinly veiled consumerist one. Following his teacher Wallace Stegner, Berry contrasts those motivated by the *boomer* desires for "greed, the desire for money, property, and therefore power" with those motivated by the *sticker* desire for the health—the *shalom*, to put it in Hebraic terms—of their places.<sup>6</sup> These contrasting motivations have drastic implications for the kind of education we offer our students. Much of our current educational system seems designed for students who have been told all their lives to "follow your dreams," which usually lead toward glamorous, lucrative, influential lives: a college diploma is a ticket to a successful boomer life. What Berry proposes instead is that we tell students to "seek the peace of [your] city" (Jer. 29:7) and then design an education that enables them to do so.

An education for health, one that enables students to serve their homes, has to begin by reforming students' affections and imaginations so that they will ask different sets of questions. As Berry explains, the boomer or

<sup>4</sup>Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup>James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 7.

<sup>6</sup>Wendell Berry, *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lecture and Other Essays* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2012), 11.

[the] exploiter asks of a piece of land only how much and how quickly it can be made to produce, the nurturer [or sticker] asks a question that is much more complex and difficult: What is its carrying capacity? (That is: How much can be taken from it without diminishing it?)<sup>7</sup>

Berry articulates these contrasting questions even more simply in an interview with Bill Moyers: "The answers will come not from walking up to your farm and saying this is what I want and this is what I expect from you. You walk up and you say 'What do you need?'"<sup>8</sup> These different questions stem from different desires: a desire for quick profit or a desire for health. And these questions result in different complexities of accounting: one values only profit and externalizes costs and damages, and the other seeks to account for all things. Berry draws a similar distinction in "Two Economies" between our industrial economy, which "tends to destroy what it does not comprehend," and the "Kingdom of God," which "includes everything" in its comprehensive "pattern or order."<sup>9</sup>

A consumerist education, then, trains students in techniques of extraction that enable them to get what they want from their places. It gives them skills so that they will be able to command a high salary and achieve a high quality of life. A Christian education, on the other hand, one that forms students to be participants in the kingdom of God, habituates students into the virtues and disciplines that enable them to serve the *shalom* of their places. Such an education will certainly need to move "virtue towards virtuosity—that is, toward skill or technical competence." As Berry recognizes, "There is no use in helping our neighbors with their work if we do not know how to work."<sup>10</sup> The purpose for learning these employable skills, however, is not individual achievement, but the ability to better serve our neighbors. We certainly hope our students can make a living, but we also hope they will know the difference between making a living and making a killing.<sup>11</sup>

### Rooting Education in Practice

To make these goals more tangible, we want to suggest three practical consequences that Berry's vision of rooted service might have for evangelical universities: (a) how we narrate success, (b) how we order the curriculum, and (c) how we practice the Sabbath. We might consider these as three liturgies of "counter-formation," to use Smith's phrase, liturgies that form students to desire the *shalom* of their places.

<sup>7</sup>Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 7.

<sup>8</sup>"Wendell Berry on His Hopes for Humanity," television interview by Bill Moyers, Moyers & Company, last updated November 29, 2013, <http://billmoyers.com/segment/wendell-berry-on-his-hopes-for-humanity/>.

<sup>9</sup>Wendell Berry, "Two Economies," in *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point, 1987), 54–55.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 73–74.

<sup>11</sup>"Wendell Berry on His Hopes for Humanity."

Judging from the alumni who are profiled in college magazines and blogs, Christian colleges share a similar view of success with their secular counterparts. Alongside wealthy business owners and innovators, you might find stories about missionaries in far-off places, but all of the stories are about heroes, people who do extraordinary things. Yet Berry warns that our obsession with heroes obscures the kinds of challenges most of us will face in ordinary life. In particular, "There are two issues that [heroic stories] are prohibited by their nature from raising: the issue of life-long devotion and perseverance in unheroic tasks, and the issue of good workmanship or 'right livelihood.'" And, as Berry points out, "It may, in some ways, be easier to be Samson than to be a good husband or wife day after day for fifty years."<sup>12</sup> So perhaps our marketing departments could begin including profiles of alumni who courageously persevere in ordinary work, accomplishing it with skill and rendering a beautiful life from mundane service. And as faculty talk with prospective students and advise current students, perhaps we can find ways to praise lives of faithful service rather than remarkable examples of individual achievement.

One way professors can work to re-narrate success would be to advise students for homecoming. A few years ago, I (Jack) had the opportunity to advise a student who was wrestling with where he should attend law school. His LSAT score was high enough to get him into just about any law school in the country. But I sensed that at some level he wanted to remain in the Midwest, near his home. Of course, I could have advised him to get out of Michigan, to "make something of himself." Had I done so, I would have been one small voice in the contemporary chorus singing the refrain that the best life is anywhere but home. Instead, I encouraged him to consider the local state university as one of his top choices; he did not need to go far away to make something of himself because he already *was* something. When I heard he had chosen the local state university after gaining acceptance into some of the top law schools in the nation, I was encouraged. Educating (even advising) students for homecoming does not mean simply telling them to return to their hometowns; it means teaching them to see goodness in local places and, when they find that goodness, to imagine how they might tend to its flourishing. It means not being afraid to put down one's roots in a place.

Second, Berry's vision for faithfully serving our places requires us to be responsive inhabitants rather than specialized professionals. This shift in disposition suggests Christian colleges need to reaffirm their commitment to a rich liberal arts education. Many Christian schools are reducing the general education requirements and setting aside more credit hours for professional or specialized courses. We recognize the economic pressures behind such shifts but graduates from Christian schools ought to be able to use their specialized skills to serve the needs of their places.

<sup>12</sup>Wendell Berry, "The Gift of Good Land," in *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009), 277.

To accomplish this goal, Berry recommends that schools model their curricula on the long-standing image of knowledge as a deeply rooted tree.<sup>13</sup> Students should begin with the roots and trunk—traditionally described in terms of theology and the liberal arts—before branching out into their particular subfield. Without this core education, they will not understand how their specific skills fit within a broader context. Specialized students might be able to code an effective computer program or design a structurally stable bridge, but they may not be able to judge whether their program or bridge helps its users and their communities to flourish.

In this way, students educated in a robust and intentional liberal arts curriculum should be capable of making a two-part judgment: they will know whether the product of their work is good according to the specialized standards of their discipline *and* whether it is good according to the broader standard of the kingdom of God. This relationship between internal and external accounting weds praxis and theory, teaching students that their ideas and skills lead to tangible, practical results in the world. And once theory is embedded in local and particular ways, students may also learn responsibility; they will have to stand by their words and actions among people who live nearby and know them.

Finally, one of the simplest yet most radical ways universities can offer a counter-liturgy to the consumerism and heroism of our culture is to encourage their members to practice the Sabbath. As Walter Brueggemann writes, “Sabbath is the practical ground for breaking the power of acquisitiveness. . . . Sabbath is an arena in which to recognize that we live by gift and not by possession, that we are satisfied by relationships of attentive fidelity and not by amassing commodities.”<sup>14</sup> When we put away our school books, turn off our Internet devices, and attend to Christ and his gathered body, we bear witness that we are not the authors or redeemers of the world. If God rested after creation, if he commanded his people to rest after he brought them out of Egypt, then we too can rest. We do not have to be heroic world changers or global leaders; we do not have to judge our self-worth by how much money we make or how many possessions we can afford. We have time to love our neighbors.

As professors, we can model this disposition by taking a Sabbath ourselves. One way that I (Jeff) practice the Sabbath is to avoid using my computer on Sundays. This can be a challenge in the midst of a busy semester when students expect quick responses to their last-minute questions, but establishing this limit frees me to spend time with my family and to redirect my attention away from the many distractions my computer provides: emails, sports scores, breaking news stories, social media. Perhaps all these are not as important as they claim to be; perhaps they do not need my immediate attention; perhaps reading the latest Internet news does not equip me to “impact the world” but rather just distracts me from my more immediate responsibilities.

<sup>13</sup>Berry, “The Loss of the University,” in *Home Economics*, 76–97.

<sup>14</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 84–85.

Berry's vision has many other implications for schools wanting to inhabit their places faithfully and redemptively. Such schools will get serious about keeping tuition low; they will challenge students and graduates to embrace manual, embodied work; they will cultivate a culture where faculty and staff stay at the same institution for decades; they will plant campus gardens. Through these practices, practices that will take different forms at different institutions, evangelical universities might form graduates who desire to serve the *shalom* of their places and who have the intellectual training to do so.

# Commending the Gospel: Evangelical Seminaries and Our “Letters of Recommendation”

By Grant D. Taylor

423

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Through the church, God commends his gospel to the world and his wisdom to its rulers and principalities (see, for example, Eph. 3:10). The gospel is the authoritative story about the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the declaration of his reign as Lord, which was accomplished through his death and resurrection (Mark 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:1–8). It conveys power for salvation for any person who believes it (see Mark 1:14; Rom. 1:16–17). Thus, it is the core conviction for evangelicals and the basis for their name.<sup>1</sup> In the West, evangelicals and other orthodox Christians see the church and culture on the brink of epochal change. As Rusty Reno comments, “We all sense that the social context for Christian faith and practice is changing in America, and in the West more broadly, and we know we need to decide what it means to be the Church today.”<sup>2</sup> As a partner in the formation of the church’s future leadership, evangelical seminaries should play a key role in deciding what it means for evangelicals to “be the Church today.” To do so, evangelical seminaries can and should follow biblical paradigms for Christian ministry.

As has always been the case, seminaries change as the Western church and culture change.<sup>3</sup> Dan Aleshire observes that seminaries in America first functioned like abbeys tightly related to the church, places of “study, prayer, and preparation for ministry.”<sup>4</sup> They later developed into academies as they raised the standards and monies for academic teaching and learning.<sup>5</sup> These ecclesial and academic identities worked well for seminaries, as long as religion had social value in America.<sup>6</sup> Over the past 50 years, however, religion in America “has shifted from being a societal value to a personal choice.”<sup>7</sup> Steadily, American society has divorced anthropology from theology, the body from the transcendent. Romanticism, rationalism, and their child consumerism have created the new norm for society:

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the self. Thus, in higher education, identity politics, whether conservative or liberal, often replace charitable inquiry.<sup>8</sup> The downgrade of religion and education in America, combined with acute economic pressures, has created “a mergers and acquisitions environment” for seminaries.<sup>9</sup> Almost 25 years after Mark Noll’s *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, do these strong cultural forces mean the evangelical mind cannot flourish again? Will evangelical seminaries survive the next 25 years?

Though useful, by focusing solely on demographic changes and institutional survival these questions stress secondary matters. Seminary leaders, teachers, and supporters must ask a more fundamental question: Will our seminaries and churches commend the gospel to the world over the next 25 years? We must consider the verities of the gospel and Christian ministry to prepare God-called men and women who will proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth and teach others how to do the same. As Aleshire suggests, in addition to their identity as abbeys and academies, seminaries of the twenty-first century will need to give increasing attention to their role as apostolates, centers for “Christianity’s mission to propagate the gospel.”<sup>10</sup> By name and heritage at least, “evangelical” seminaries agree with the suggestion to place the gospel in the forefront of theological education. Even so, we may differ on how that education can or should be offered to reflect the gospel’s priority.

<sup>1</sup>On the gospel, see Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 53–58. For the religious, theological sense of the term *evangelical* as I use it in this article, see Stephen Monsma, “What Is an Evangelical? And Does It Matter?” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 46.4 (2017): 323–340.

<sup>2</sup>R. R. Reno, “Benedict Option,” *First Things* (May 2017), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/05/benedict-option>.

<sup>3</sup>See Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Antebellum Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education 1870–1970* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Plurality: Theological Education since 1960* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

<sup>4</sup>Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 125, following the observations of David Tiede, former president of Luther Seminary.

<sup>5</sup>The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) approved the first set of accreditation standards in 1936. *Ibid.*, 125, 140.

<sup>6</sup>The birth of America’s universities, at a time when religion held great social value, followed the need for training colleges for Christian ministers in New England. See Roland Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957); Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>7</sup>Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels*, 136.

<sup>8</sup>See Mark Lilla, “How Colleges Are Strangling Liberalism” in *The Chronicle Review* 64.2 (August 10, 2017), <http://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Colleges-Are-Strangling/240909>.

<sup>9</sup>Dan Aleshire, cited in Ian Lovett, “Seminaries Reflect Struggles of Mainline Churches,” *Wall Street Journal* (August 10, 2017), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/seminaries-reflect-struggles-of-mainline-churches-1502357400>. See also Lyman Stone, “‘Mainline’ Churches Are Emptying. The Political Effects Could Be Huge,” *Vox* (July 14, 2017), <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/7/14/15959682/evangelical-mainline-voting-patterns-trump>.

<sup>10</sup>Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels*, 126. He commends the apostolate as the “third phase” of theological education.

This essay therefore addresses the methods and goals, the how and the why, of theological education. I will argue that evangelical seminaries can and should follow biblical paradigms for Christian ministry. These paradigms embody the gospel’s verities in personal, formational, and cruciform theological education. This argument will be based on an explication of 2 Corinthians 2:14–3:3, where the apostle Paul offers a biblical paradigm for the personal, formational, and cruciform nature of the gospel and thus of Christian ministry. This paradigm is commended because seminary work is a Christian ministry and our students are, and always have been, our “letters of recommendation” that commend the gospel to the world.

### A Pauline Paradigm for Christian Ministry and Evangelical Seminaries

Authentic Christian ministry passes down through people and paradigms. The seminary ought to follow biblical paradigms because it is a ministry of the church. As Paul House comments, “A seminary is a ministry of the body of Christ as believers use their spiritual gifts to minister to and with other believers. If it is not such an operation of the body of Christ, it should not be preparing pastors.”<sup>11</sup> In 2 Corinthians 2:14–3:3, Paul explicates the origin, essence, purpose, and effects of his apostleship. He describes what is true of his ministry “always” and “in every place” (2:14)<sup>12</sup> and defends its authenticity against the false claims of Corinthian “super-apostles.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, he offers a ministry paradigm for seminaries to follow.

### Paul’s Theological, Cruciform, and Revelatory Apostleship in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14–17)

In 2 Corinthians 2:14–17, Paul explains the cruciform essence, theological origin, and revelatory effects of his ministry by using two metaphors. As for the first, borrowing from Roman culture, Paul writes, “Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ” (2:14a).<sup>14</sup> He refers to parades led by victorious Roman generals or emperors, who marched through Rome adorned with a red-painted face, royal clothing, and instruments that resembled the statue of Jupiter. The “triumphator,” as he was called, led a processional of freedmen as

<sup>11</sup>Paul R. House, *Bonhoeffer’s Seminary Vision: A Case for Costly Discipleship and Life Together* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 186–187.

<sup>12</sup>The section on his ministry spans 2 Cor. 2:14–7:4. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Scripture are my own.

<sup>13</sup>On the occasion and purpose of the letter, see Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 69–70.

<sup>14</sup>The interpretation of this metaphor has been debated extensively. See Christoph Heilig, *Paul’s Triumph: Reassessing 2 Corinthians 2:14 in Its Literary and Historical Context* (Biblical Tools and Studies 27; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 4–5; 74–116; Scott J. Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit: Paul’s Defense of His Ministry in 2 Corinthians 2:14–3:3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 18–19, listed no fewer than ten options in 1990.

well as conquered prisoners of war, the most prominent of whom would later be sacrificed.<sup>15</sup> Most New Testament scholars rightly view the triumph as “one of the most venerable and revered of all Roman customs” and interpret 2 Corinthians 2:14 in its light.<sup>16</sup>

New Testament scholarship, however, has less frequently observed the Roman triumph’s theatrical nature. In his study of theater in Imperial Rome, Richard Beacham suggests it was a carefully choreographed drama staged to induce emotional, political, and religious responses:

The triumph itself was in essence a particularly magnificent parade. ... The primary expressive element of a parade is, of course, the ranks of marchers, who ... are simultaneously the “performers” as well as a highly effective living scenic device. ... An emotional response could be encouraged by juxtaposing, for example, captured and condemned enemy chieftains and the newly rescued Roman victims of their oppression, just as a selected sequence of images in television ads can strongly affect modern viewers. As a performance, the triumph approached a “total” work of art.<sup>17</sup>

In this “‘total’ work of art,” freed and captured marchers dramatically displayed the triumphator’s political and religious significance.<sup>18</sup>

In 2 Corinthians 2:14, the apostle Paul likens himself to one of these captured marchers in a cruciform procession under God’s commission and direction.<sup>19</sup> He is the trophy of God, the triumphator, marching throughout the world. Because the procession is “always in Christ,” it leads to death, at least figuratively through death to self. Paul has been “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). As he is “led unto

<sup>15</sup>Richard C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 19–22, note 34, p. 259, for the criteria for a triumph. Josephus, among others, describes the execution of captives as a climax in the triumph. See Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 22–31; Josephus, *Jewish War* 7, 153–155. Harris, *Second Epistle* (p. 243), notes the ceremony is attested more than 350 times in Greco-Roman literature.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 19. See also, for example, H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>17</sup>Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments*, 40–41. My thanks to Frank Thielman for commending this book to me.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* Versnel, *Triumphus* (p. 1), observes, “In no other Roman ceremony do god and man approach each other as closely as they do in the triumph. ... It seems as if Iliupiter [*sic*] himself, incarnated in the triumphator, makes his solemn entry into Rome.” See, for example, Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 21; Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments*, 51.

<sup>19</sup>The lexicography of the verb *to triumph* (θριαμβεύω) and the syntax of the verse supports such an interpretation. The only other use of the term in the NT is in Col. 2:15, but with a different connotation. Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, writes (p. 31), “The use of ‘to lead in a triumphal procession’ with prepositional phrases to indicate its object or with a direct object alone, *always* refers to the one who has been conquered and is subsequently led in the procession, and never to the one who has conquered or to those who have shared in his victory (e.g., his army, fellow officers, etc.).” This makes sense of the grammar and syntax of the clause (Τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ): God is the subject of the dative participle “triumphing” θριαμβεύοντι, which takes a direct object. Paul provides that direct object with a prepositional phrase, *us in Christ*.

death,”<sup>20</sup> God publicly spreads the knowledge of Christ “through us [Paul and other apostles] in every place” (δι’ ἡμῶν ἐν παντί τόπῳ).<sup>21</sup> The gospel of the crucified and resurrected Christ governed Paul’s life, which dramatically displayed the gospel to the world. As he writes elsewhere to the Corinthians, “It seems God has put us apostles on display as condemned to die, because we have become a spectacle (θέατρον) to the world, to angels, and to men” (1 Cor. 4:9).<sup>22</sup>

Paul’s second metaphor comes from the Old Testament. In 2 Corinthians 2:14–16, he explains that he and his coworkers reveal the “fragrance” (ὄσμῃν) of the knowledge of Christ as “the aroma of Christ” (Χριστοῦ εὐωδία). Therefore, they are the “fragrance” (ὄσμῃ) of life to some and death to others. In the Septuagint, the terms *fragrance* and *aroma* appear together with reference to particular sacrifices that produce a “pleasing aroma” (ὄσμῃ εὐωδίας) for Yahweh.<sup>23</sup> Paul uses the same technical expression in Ephesians 5:2 and Philippians 4:18.<sup>24</sup> The two metaphors of 2 Corinthians 2:14–16, then, connote the cruciform essence and revelatory purpose of his ministry. The Christlike suffering he endures as an apostle confirms rather than denies the rights he could claim due to his apostleship.

Paul explicates his apostleship in this manner because, according to 2 Corinthians 2:17, his suffering evidences “the divine origin and nature of his apostolic ministry and gospel.”<sup>25</sup> Unlike his opponents, the “super-apostles” who “peddle” (καπηλεύοντες)<sup>26</sup> God’s word, Paul ministers with “pure motives” (εἰλικρινείας).<sup>27</sup> This is because he and his coworkers “speak in Christ as from God and in God’s sight.”<sup>28</sup> Christ’s authentic apostles display the theological origin and cruciform essence of their ministry. As a result, some hearers receive life while others incur

<sup>20</sup>See Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 16–34. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 245–246, questions this view.

<sup>21</sup>The verb φανερώω, “to manifest, to reveal” is a verb of sensation and cognition. BDAG, 1048, notes the verb has the connotation of sensory, not only cognitive, disclosure. It is used of the incarnation of Christ in the world (1 Tim. 3:16), his bodily appearance as resurrected Lord (John 21:1, 14), and his second advent (Col. 3:4a; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2). It is also used of the Christian community (Col. 3:4b).

<sup>22</sup>Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 55–59, shows the statements in 1 Cor. 4:9 and 2 Cor. 2:14 are parallel. See, for example, Victor Paul Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (AB 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 187.

<sup>23</sup>See Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18; Lev. 1:9, 13 (LXX). Note the different interpretations in George Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 172–173, and Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 35–49.

<sup>24</sup>Paul refers in Eph. 5:2 to Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death and in Phil. 4:18 to the Philippians’ sacrificial financial gift for him. Both sacrifices pleased God (ὄσμῃ εὐωδίας).

<sup>25</sup>Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 170, italics in original.

<sup>26</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Introduction & Domains*, vol. 1 of *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 581.

<sup>27</sup>Paul uses εἰλικρινείας, which refers to sincerity and purity of motives; see 1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 1:12; BDAG, 282.

<sup>28</sup>It is worth noting that Paul’s ministry of speaking as “from God” (ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν) compares well with the OT prophets who, as Peter noted (2 Pet. 1:21), did not write Scripture by their own will, but “spoke from God” (ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ).

death. The method and impact of authentic ministry is personal, as 2 Corinthians 3:1–3 shows.

### Paul's Sufficiency Shown in Embodied "Letters of Recommendation" (2 Cor. 3:1–3)

A primary question of 2 Corinthians is, "What commends an apostle to the Corinthians and, by implication, a Christian minister to God's people?" Paul begins to answer when he writes, "Are we beginning to commend (συνιστάνειν) ourselves again? Or do we need as some do letters of recommendation (συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν) to you or from you?" (3:1).<sup>29</sup> The rhetorical question expects a "no" in reply (see, for example, 2:16). Paul answers surprisingly. Instead of providing recommendation letters or none at all, he supplies an altogether different commendation. He writes, "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, being known and read by all people, making clear that you are a letter of Christ served by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of fleshly hearts" (3:2-3).

Recommendation letters provide substitute forms of authority and credibility. They were well known and used in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, just as they are today. Yet, as Scott Hafemann notes, "To need such letters is to admit that one lacks that evidential accreditation from one's own life which is already evident or available to those whose acceptance is being sought."<sup>30</sup> The Corinthian "super-apostles" needed letters to substantiate and expand their ministry because it was greedy and competitive by nature (see 2:17; 10:12).<sup>31</sup>

Paul's ministry, however, was sacrificial and personal. He explains the Corinthian Christians are his letter of recommendation (ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμῶν ἐξεῖστε) because they are a letter of Christ (ἐστὲ ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ). They are personal, embodied proof of Paul's apostleship because through his ministry they are new creations in Christ (see, for example, 2 Cor. 5:17).<sup>32</sup> They are new creations because the Spirit of the living God, not Paul, inscribed these letters on human hearts, not on parchment.

<sup>29</sup>Note the theme of commendation throughout 2 Corinthians: 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 7:11; 10:12,18; 12:11; see, for example, Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 181–87. Harris, *Second Epistle* (p. 259), notes a distinction between the phrase ἐαυτοῦς συνιστάνειν, where the sense is pejorative (2 Cor. 3:1; also 5:12; 10:12, 18), and συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοῦς, where the sense is positive (2 Cor. 4:2; 6:4; 7:11).

<sup>30</sup>Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 184–185. Paul himself used this method, commending others in ink when he could not in person. For Paul's use, see Philemon, Rom. 16:1–2; 1 Cor. 16:10–11; 2 Cor. 8:16–24; Col. 4:7–9; see also Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry*, 184. On letters of recommendation, see W. R. Baird Jr., "Letters of Recommendation: A Study of 2 Cor. 3:1–3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 166–172; C. W. Keys, "The Greek Letter of Introduction," *American Journal of Philology* 56 (1935): 28–44.

<sup>31</sup>On the identity of these opponents, see Harris, *Second Epistle*, 67–77; Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 38–46.

<sup>32</sup>As Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry* (p. 205), explains, Paul's logic is compelling: "1. You are our letter because you are a letter of Christ 2, which has been engraved in our hearts because it was ministered by us."

Paul’s apostolic ministry thus fulfills Old Testament promises of a new covenant in which God’s people will be known by the Spirit’s activity within them giving them new hearts of flesh to know and love him (see Ezek. 36:22–36; also Rom. 5:5).<sup>33</sup> God’s covenant purposes in Christ, which establish and display his kinship bond with sinful humans, offer the method and impact of authentic Christian ministry and, thus, a paradigm for all believers and all ministries to follow.

### Implications for Christian Ministry from 2 Corinthians 2:14–3:3

Christian ministry is an embodied, public, and suffering ministry (2 Cor. 2:14-17). It follows the person and the paradigm of Jesus Christ and his apostles (see, for example, 2 Cor. 4:10). The purpose of ministry is to proclaim the gospel of Christ to see new humans created by Word and Spirit, Christians who mature and endure in community and thereby commend the gospel to the world (2 Cor. 3:1-3). Proclamation of the gospel is fundamental because the Spirit alone applies the Word of God to people’s lives. The effects of such ministry provide embodied evidence: persons, families, and communities transformed into the image of Christ by Word and Spirit (such as in 2 Cor. 3:18). Like Paul, our seminaries will not need commendation from the world because our students will be our “letters of recommendation,” new humans in community in Christ, wrought and led by the Spirit (see 2 Cor. 6:14-18).<sup>34</sup>

### Embodied Apostolates: Evangelical Seminaries Commending the Gospel to the World

How will the evangelical mind commend the gospel to the world in the twenty-first century? A trustee once remarked to a seminary president, “The seminary is where the future of the church is embodied.”<sup>35</sup> This quote may overstate the seminary’s role. The future of the church is embodied in individuals, families, and communities where the gospel takes root. The quotation does, however, stress the point that the individuals, families, and communities that become the church will need faithful pastors to teach and serve them. Since seminaries are ministries of the church and serve the future of the church to propagate the gospel, they should follow Paul’s paradigm in 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:3 and embody the characteristics of Christian ministry in at least three ways.

First, seminaries must remain committed to the *evangel* in curricula and, most important, their people. This means we ought to take 2 Corinthians 2:17 as

<sup>33</sup>See Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; Jer. 31:33; also Prov. 3:3; 7:3; Jer. 17:1; Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians* (WUNT 81; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 122–153.

<sup>34</sup>See, for example, 1 Cor. 9:2. Harris, *Second Epistle* (p. 261), states well, Paul “implies that for him to carry commendatory letters to Corinth would be completely superfluous.”

<sup>35</sup>Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels*, 133.

a baseline to evaluate faculty and students to discern if these men and women are sent from God and accountable to God. If they are not, they will not speak "in Christ" during or after seminary. Given acute financial and enrollment challenges, one wonders if we take the time to evaluate student applications along these lines. Open enrollment, or nearly open enrollment, will not achieve this aim. Furthermore, the full-fledged biblical gospel forms the core subject of seminary curricula. Faculties should teach theology derived (exegetically) from Holy Scripture, as well as the practices and affections through which loving brothers and sisters in Christ have handed down theology throughout church history. The temporal matters only in the context of the eternal. Thus, social justice and cultural awareness certainly should be taught and practiced in the seminary as necessary implications of the gospel, but not as independent subjects. The gospel must be the governing principle for seminary mission statements, faculties, curricula, and students, because it is the animating reality for Christian ministry.

Second, because Christian ministry is personal and embodied, evangelical seminaries should renew their focus on personal, embodied theological education for pastoral ministry. This is not to say that only pastors will ever graduate from our seminaries. Nor is it to claim that many seminaries do not already give significant attention to the gospel in their people and programs. Still, pastors are a strategic group of ministers tasked with equipping the church for ministry in the world unto maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:11-14; also 1 Pet. 5:1-5). Pastors, Kevin Vanhoozer argues, are the directors of the triune God's drama enacted in the church, the theater of the gospel. They direct Christian churches in obedient performance of the drama's authoritative script primarily by preaching the Scriptures, "to instill confidence that playing *this* script is the way to truth and the abundant life." Faithful gospel proclamation necessitates personal obedience to the gospel. Thus "the pastor is also a player in the drama who directs as much by example as by precept."<sup>36</sup> Pastors, then, must also practice forgiveness, reconciliation, humility, suffering, and love.<sup>37</sup> Players in the drama are on-stage, with the other players, not off-stage or on a screen.

Like other Christians, pastors learn from others (see 1 Cor. 11:1). Ministry students learn to minister the gospel authentically as they learn doctrine inextricably connected to life from professors, their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters in Christ. If the affections and habits of persons matter for Christian life and ministry,<sup>38</sup> we ought to model Christlike affections and habits for students in face-to-face community. It is difficult to see how we can attend to these if we "meet" students only in a threaded discussion online. As long as evangelicals imbibe consumerist and rationalist assumptions underlying the American industrial-education com-

<sup>36</sup>Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 448.

<sup>37</sup>See *ibid.*, 399–444, esp. 426–444.

<sup>38</sup>See esp. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

plex, we will miss opportunities to embody the gospel for people that idolize, transform, or ignore the body. In this visceral romantic age, seminaries would do well to steward the gospel with personal, embodied, face-to-face ministry and, thus, theological education. Their boards and supporters will do well to take financial responsibility for making incarnational education possible, rather than expecting seminaries to work educational markets for survival.

Finally, if our seminaries carry out an embodied, apostolic mission, they will necessarily operate in a cruciform manner. For Paul, ministry in Christ was like marching in a Roman triumph to his death (2 Cor. 2:14; also 1 Cor. 4:9; 2 Cor. 4:10-11). Seminaries, too, can learn the triumphal procession of Christian ministry and its dramatic implications for the watching world if faculty and students bear one another’s burdens in embodied community. As Joseph Ratzinger writes, “The capacity for loving corresponds to the capacity for suffering and for suffering together.”<sup>39</sup>

Students who practice this love with faculty and other students will become pastors and missionaries who continue learning and teaching the love of God.<sup>40</sup> If we desire for our own pastors to bear our burdens and we theirs, we must ask, “Where will these pastors learn such affections and practices if not from their seminary pastor-teachers, the ones the church has set aside for this holy purpose?” The cruciform nature of Christian ministry calls for a cruciform theological education. To be properly cruciform, it must be embodied. Our graduates who minister with theological, personal, and cruciform convictions will then become our Spirit-formed letters of recommendation in the world.

In changing times, we must remember what is constant: Jesus Christ is the hope of the world, and his gospel is the power of salvation for humans alienated from the triune God and one another. Theological educators must be the pastors and teachers of the church’s future pastors and teachers who steward the gospel to persons in community. Such stewardship reveals the glory of God in Christ and still matters for life and death. Ratzinger writes hopefully,

Why has faith still any chance at all? I should say it is because it corresponds to the nature of man. ... None of the attempted answers will do; only the God who himself became finite in order to tear open our finitude and lead us out into the wide open spaces of his infinity, only he corresponds to the question of our being. That is why, even today, Christian faith will come to man again. It is our task to serve this faith with humble courage, with all the strength of our heart and mind.<sup>41</sup>

The Christian faith requires Christian ministers taught and mentored by other ministers. Such work is challenging but hopeful work rooted in faith, hope, and

<sup>39</sup>Pope Benedict XVI, introduction to *A Reason Open to God: On Universities, Education, and Culture*, ed. J. Steven Brown (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>40</sup>See Pope Benedict XVI, *Teaching and Learning the Love of God: Being a Priest Today*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2017).

<sup>41</sup>Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 137.

432 love. Like Paul, then, we can persevere in personal, embodied, and cruciform seminary ministry with thankfulness: "Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14).

# The Impact of Thinking Fast and Slow on the Evangelical Mind

By Erin E. Devers and Jason D. Runyan

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At first blush, the idea of thinking fast sounds desirable. In our culture, doing things quickly is often more highly valued than taking time. This preference translates into a tendency to give precedence to activities that do not require deep thought. Although it feels strange to have to make this argument, this preference for shallow thinking has had, and will continue to have, negative consequences for our culture, the evangelical subculture, and the broader church.

The idea of fast and slow thinking, however, is not new.<sup>1</sup> In social psychology—and, more specifically, dual process theory—the distinction is drawn between “automatic” and “deliberate” thinking. Automatic thinking is nonconscious, unintentional, and efficient. Alternatively, deliberate thinking is above awareness, intentional, and takes more time.<sup>2</sup>

The use of automatic thinking is not an indicator of lower intelligence. In fact, given the sheer amount of information we are constantly taking in—and the various acts and activities we are engaged in at any point—it is essential that not everything we take in or do be processed through deliberate thought. Rather, automatic thinking is what frees us up to think slowly and deliberately about certain matters. Deliberate thinking is a limited resource that needs to be used wisely. This raises the question, “How do we think *well*?” Learning to think fast *well* involves devoting our thought—and *ourselves*—to certain things over time. Here, we will explore these questions while, at the same time, taking Jesus’s

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teachings seriously. If his way, his yoke, is light—and if experiencing the fullness of life centrally involves loving the Lord our God with our hearts, souls, and minds (that is, in a constant, single-minded way) and loving *all* our neighbors, including those we think of (often automatically) as enemies or as threats—then experiencing the fullness of life involves thinking slow *and* fast in a consistent way.<sup>3</sup> It involves having “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) both in our armchairs and on the fly. But what does this involve? How can we devote ourselves to being single-minded, with Christ, even when thinking fast? What implications might this have for seminary professors and students? Let us start with common hurdles to thinking well.

### Hurdle 1: Attribution Errors

A dual process model helps explain a wide range of human thought and behavior, including the way we make attributions for another person's behavior; that is, the way we explain why someone behaves the way someone does. Considerable research shows we tend to make automatically—and without deliberate thought—what is called “the fundamental attribution error” or the way we perceive and come to treat others.<sup>4</sup> It shapes our first impressions—whether we categorize someone as dispositionally good or bad—and this can be hard to change.

The fundamental attribution error, also called “the correspondence bias,” is the bias toward explaining the bad behavior of others in terms of their dispositions and personality, while explaining our own bad behavior in terms of the particulars of the situation.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, we are also biased toward attributing our good behavior to our goodness.<sup>6</sup> So we have a tendency to think automatically that others do bad because they are bad, while we do bad as a result of situational constraints. We can be quite self-serving when it comes to doling out blame. We have a natural tendency to be more generous in our self-assessments of personal failures than our attributions for the failures of others. This is in stark contrast with Christ's teaching, “For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.” (Matt. 7:2 NRSV). More specifically, the fundamental attribution error pulls us away from loving our neighbor *as ourselves* and from living out Christ's teaching that our weaknesses

<sup>1</sup>Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

<sup>2</sup>A. Bargh, “The Four Horsemen of Automaticity: Intention, Awareness, Efficiency, and Control as Separate Issues,” in *Handbook of Social Cognition*, 2nd ed., eds. Robert Wyer and Thomas Srull (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994), 1–40.

<sup>3</sup>See Matt. 22:36–39.

<sup>4</sup>Edward E. Jones and Victor A. Harris, “The Attribution of Attitudes,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 3.1 (1967): 1–24.

<sup>5</sup>Lee Ross, “The Intuitive Psychologist and His Shortcomings: Distortions in the Attribution Process,” *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 10 (1977): 173–220.

<sup>6</sup>Keith W. Campbell and Constantine Sedikides, “Self-Threat Magnifies the Self-Serving Bias: A Meta-Analytic Integration,” *Review of General Psychology* 3.1 (1999): 23–43.

should not be seen as places for finding fault, but opportunities for God's work to be manifested in each life.<sup>7</sup>

## Hurdle 2: Confirmation Biases

A decision to seek—or not seek—additional information before drawing a conclusion might seem to be a deliberate process. But automatic processes shape our tendencies to seek out information and influence how we go about it. Two types of biases often influence this process.

The first is what Daniel Kahneman refers to as the “what you see is all there is” bias.<sup>8</sup> We tend to have a pernicious and automatically activated belief that when asked for an opinion we need not seek additional information. The information we currently have is all the information there is or at least all that is needed to provide an answer. For example, if asked for an opinion on a political topic such as immigration, rather than acknowledging the nuance of a complicated issue, we are often quick to give a definitive answer without recognizing that our knowledge is limited. However, if we were to give it careful thought, it would be obvious that we do not have all the relevant information. There are few if any topics for which any of us has all the pertinent information available on the fly. Nevertheless, operating out of this bias, we often assume an authoritative position on a topic regardless of the amount of knowledge we possess.

This leads us to the second type of bias that comes into play, “confirmation bias.”<sup>9</sup> When we do seek additional information on a topic, we tend to seek information that confirms our preexisting beliefs and conclusions; even when thinking automatically, we like to be right. Particularly relevant in the present age of social media and search engines, confirmation bias is also referred to as “hostile media bias,” reflecting our tendency to be drawn to media that confirms our beliefs.<sup>10</sup> It is not that we consciously set out to avoid disconfirming information, but the automatic motivation to experience the positive associations of being right, and having others agree with us, often subconsciously overwhelms the desire for accuracy. In this case, the only way to ensure we gather the information needed to consider a topic deeply, judiciously, and accurately requires (a) a deliberate process of information gathering and (b) a deliberate process to seek out all of the pertinent and best information possible, including potentially *disconfirming* information.

As we have noted previously, people engage in deliberative processing if the topic is deemed important, which is usually judged in terms of relevancy to one-

<sup>7</sup>See John 9:1–12.

<sup>8</sup>Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.

<sup>9</sup>Raymond S. Nickerson, “Confirmation Bias: A Ubiquitous Phenomenon in Many Guises,” *Review of General Psychology* 2.2 (1998): 175–220.

<sup>10</sup>Robert P. Vallone, Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper, “The Hostile Media Phenomenon: Biased Perception and Perceptions of Media Bias in Coverage of the Beirut Massacre,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 49.3 (1985): 577–585.

self.<sup>11</sup> This, however, begs the question of how judgments of relevancy are made. Often this judgment is automatic, though, like most, this judgment can be made deliberately when we think it is important and take the time. Nevertheless, as Daniel Kahneman, Amos Tversky, Norbert Schwarz, and others observed, judgments of relevancy are often shaped by the ease with which a person can recall cases from memory.<sup>12</sup> For example, if you are trying to judge whether a person is likely to behave dishonestly, you might consider the number of cases you can easily retrieve from memory of other “similar” people behaving dishonestly. If you can recall many cases, you will assume that this should be a relevant concern for you; if not, you set aside the concern. This sets up an availability bias. We tend to draw judgments on the basis of which memories readily come to mind.

But our ability to remember things is often disconnected from the actual *base rate* of events, that is, the rate at which they are likely to occur. This is because recall often involves heuristics that give preference to certain kinds of memories (for example, recency effects, primacy effects, emotional salience). At times, your memory may line up with base rates, but base rates are a more reliable measure than memory.

### Hurdle 3: The Tendency toward Immediate Gratification

Walter Mischel famously describes the process by which children are able to stare down a desirable marshmallow in order to receive two marshmallows as a reward for waiting.<sup>13</sup> To do this successfully, children employ strategies such as distraction, or they are able to view the marshmallow as something else, such as a cube. These successful strategies are the result of deliberate, rather than automatic, thinking. Similarly, as Daniel Wegner observes, when given the instruction to avoid “thinking about a white bear,” it becomes very hard to do so.<sup>14</sup> The instruction itself tempts us to think about white bears. To then avoid thinking about white bears requires both deliberately generating a replacement thought (such as a pink bear) and actively keeping this replacement thought in mind. This is a taxing mental process. Individuals who have tried to “not think about” something they are tempted to think about know the mental fatigue this can cause. And mental fatigue makes giving into temptation more likely.

<sup>11</sup>Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, “The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion,” *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 19 (1986): 123–205.

<sup>12</sup>Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Availability: A Heuristic for Judging Frequency and Probability,” *Cognitive Psychology* 5.2 (1973): 207–232; Norbert Schwarz et al., “Ease of Retrieval as Information: Another Look at the Availability Heuristic,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61.2 (1991): 195–202.

<sup>13</sup>Walter Mischel, Ebbe B. Ebbesen, and Antonette Raskoff Zeiss, “Cognitive and Attentional Mechanisms in Delay of Gratification,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 21.2 (1972): 204–218.

<sup>14</sup>Daniel Wegner et al., “Paradoxical Effects of Thought Suppression,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53.1 (1987): 5–13.

To illustrate, in a recent study people used smartphones to report immediate desires throughout their day. This included whether they were able to resist when these desires conflicted with their goals.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, the number of times a person had exercised self-control throughout the day negatively predicted success in resisting later temptations. Thus, the more our self-control has been exercised, the more likely we are to give into temptation, as self-control is a limited resource. As Mark Muraven and Roy Baumeister suggest, self-control is a “muscle that becomes exhausted with use.”<sup>16</sup>

In sum, being prone to attribution errors, confirmation biases, and immediate gratification, we are prone to not live, or *think*, as Christ taught us. Common automatic processes tend to pull us away from experiencing the fullness of life—and personal intimacy—into which God invites us: a life characterized by personal intimacy with God and others and by participation in what God is doing in our midst. The thread that seems to course through such a life is humility and an openness toward, and love for, God and all with whom we interact. In short, it is the posture of a “listening heart” throughout the moments and situations of daily life.<sup>17</sup> But, as we confess, we are prone to not love the Lord our God with our heart, soul and mind nor to love our neighbors as ourselves. In keeping with a long Christian tradition of understanding communal practices and disciplines as means of grace, additional psychological studies indicate how our automatic thinking can be transformed. Our automatic biases can be changed; the automatic bias toward giving into temptation can be replaced with a tendency to *not* be tempted. So, let us explore some ways over these hurdles. From the outset, it is important to note that lasting change does not typically happen individually or in isolation. It happens communally.

### Way 1: Being Present and Taking Time to Love Our Neighbors

Automatic biases are likely to prevail under situations of cognitive load,<sup>18</sup> such as when a person is tired, hungry, angry, busy, stressed, or thinking about something else. This means that contemporary Americans are likely engaging in attribution errors, confirmation errors, and drawn toward immediate gratification. However, when in the right state and *motivated*, a person can reduce these errors.<sup>19</sup> Part of this involves, as a matter of habit, being rested, slowing down, being present to or mindful of oneself, of others, and of situational influences.

<sup>15</sup>Wilhelm Hofmann et al., “Everyday Temptations: An Experience Sampling Study of Desire, Conflict, and Self-Control,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102.6 (2012): 1318–1335.

<sup>16</sup>Mark Muraven and Roy F. Baumeister, “Self-Regulation and Depletion of Limited Resources: Does Self-Control Resemble a Muscle?” *Psychological Bulletin* 126.2 (2000): 247–259.

<sup>17</sup>See 1 Kings 3:9.

<sup>18</sup>John Sweller, “Cognitive Load during Problem Solving: Effects on Learning,” *Cognitive Science* 12.2 (1988): 257–285.

<sup>19</sup>Daniel T. Gilbert and Patrick S. Malone, “The Correspondence Bias,” *Psychological Bulletin* 117.1 (1995): 21–38.

Interestingly, these actions and processes have historically been practiced as spiritual disciplines.<sup>20</sup>

Daniel Gilbert has observed that when we are rushed, our first, automatic tendency is to characterize people and thereby make *attribution errors*.<sup>21</sup> But all is not lost. By taking time and being motivated to be mindful and to get things right (or closer to right), we can make deliberate corrections. With the proper patience, an awareness of ourselves and others, and motivation, we can deliberately think through which attributions we are likely to make without sufficient evidence and thus potentially in error. We are also able to pay attention to how situations are likely to influence others and make corrections to our initial assessments. In this way, through self-awareness and deliberate attention, we are able to show grace rather than judgment.

We can also reduce attribution errors by taking time to align others with ourselves or to see others as our neighbors or even as brothers or sisters. As previously noted, the attributions one makes for one's own behavior are different from the attributions made of or for others. For close others (with whom our self-concept is involved, such as children, siblings, spouse, parents), the attribution process is less likely to reflect the fundamental attribution error.<sup>22</sup> So this error is reduced if one is motivated to associate oneself with another or to see shared characteristics, or characteristics shared with one's close friends and family.

As a result, we should practice seeing "family resemblances" between ourselves and others. Likewise, in the case of *confirmation biases*, a deliberate effort to seek out ideas that contradict our own (and to understand what motivates others to hold these ideas) will reduce bias.<sup>23</sup> This can be done by practicing other-oriented perspective-taking.<sup>24</sup> In sum, we should deliberately practice being present to and loving our neighbors as ourselves as Jesus taught, starting with the way we *think* about others. Ultimately, what can motivate us to do this is having opportunities to be part of close communities that help participants live this way—Jesus's way—and discovering that this really is the fullest, most deeply fulfilling way to live.

<sup>20</sup>St. Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (New York: Doubleday, 1975); St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991); Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Doubleday, Image, 1971).

<sup>21</sup>Daniel T. Gilbert, "Thinking Lightly about Others: Automatic Components of the Social Inference Process," in *Unintended Thought*, eds. James S. Uleman and John A. Bargh (New York: Guilford Press, 1989), 189–211.

<sup>22</sup>Constantine Sedikides et al., "The Self-Serving Bias in Relational Context," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74.2 (1998): 378–386.

<sup>23</sup>Christina Schwind et al., "Preference-Inconsistent Recommendations: An Effective Approach for Reducing Confirmation Bias and Stimulating Divergent Thinking?," *Computers & Education* 58.2 (2012): 787–796.

<sup>24</sup>Daniel C. Batson, Shannon Early, and Giovanni Salvvarani, "Perspective Taking: Imagining How Another Feels versus Imagining How You Would Feel," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23.7 (1997): 751–758.

## Way 2: Changing Automatic Biases and Tendencies through Habits and Practices

Adding to what was already argued, we also need to have daily habits and practices that nourish us and enable us to grow. We have to take seriously what Jesus says about his way of living in relation to God and all others: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am *gentle* and *humble* in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29–30 NIV, italics added). Jesus’s way involves continually finding *means* to rest in God’s loving presence and work in both thought and behavior. This requires allowing various means of grace—in which God regularly and consistently works—to cultivate the dispositions of Christ in us. Social psychology helps illumine means of grace and their effects. Relying on them, on the other hand, takes practice and time and is typically social. They take effect in and through close relationships.

To illustrate, if a bias is readily activated automatically, the deliberate and repeated use of another conceptual schema—or new way of thinking and seeing the world—can eventually facilitate one’s replacing the bias with tendencies toward *other* automatic thoughts.<sup>25</sup> So if our automatic bias is to apply a dispositional attribution first but we deliberately practice thinking and learning about how situations influence others, we eventually could come to see the reality of people’s situations more accurately and how those situations influence them.<sup>26</sup> In this way, we might practice being “*gentle*” toward one another, as Christ is gentle.

Likewise, given enough practice seeking out disconfirming information, our bias toward confirming our initial views could be changed. By deliberately practicing openness to reevaluating our initial thoughts and admitting when we are wrong (that is, by practicing humility), our automatic responses can come to express humility. We might come to be “*humble in heart*.”

Finally, as noted earlier, Muraven and Baumeister provide evidence that self-control is like a muscle that can be exhausted with use. They have also observed that self-control is like a muscle, in that through training it can be strengthened.<sup>27</sup> Repeatedly pairing thoughts about temptations and higher-order goals leads to the simultaneous automatic activation of both.<sup>28</sup> As a result, because one’s goals and their positive associations are at the forefront of one’s awareness, a person is able to resist the temptation to indulge in immediate gratification without using the cognitive resources of deliberate thinking. Further, research suggests that those

<sup>25</sup>Nilanjana Dasgupta and Shaki Asgari, “Seeing Is Believing: Exposure to Counterstereotypic Women Leaders and Its Effect on the Malleability of Automatic Gender Stereotyping,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 40.5 (2004): 642–658.

<sup>26</sup>Philip E. Tetlock, “Accountability: A Social Check on the Fundamental Attribution Error,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* (1985): 227–236.

<sup>27</sup>Muraven and Baumeister, “Self-Regulation and Depletion of Limited Resources.”

<sup>28</sup>Ayelet Fishbach, Ronald S. Friedman, and Arie W. Kruglanski, “Leading Us Not into Temptation: Momentary Allurements Elicit Overriding Goal Activation,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84.2 (2003): 296–309.

who regularly attend religious services are best able to engage in self-control, and neuroscience studies show that parts of the brain active during prayer are also active when engaging self-control.<sup>29</sup> Thus, as Michael McCullough notes, "The rituals that religions have been encouraging for thousands of years seem to be a kind of anaerobic workout for self-control."<sup>30</sup>

### Some Practical Approaches for Seminary Professors

What social psychology is revealing about us has wide implications for the formation of clergy in seminary contexts. This being said, we want to explore briefly specifically how seminary professors might encourage their students to engage in deliberative practices that can transform automatic tendencies. These are practices that can change us so that, instead of:

(1a) judging others unfairly,

(2a) processing information incompletely, and

(3a) seeking gratification that is inconsistent with our highest goals,

we might have the disposition to:

(1b) consider a person's situation,

(2b) seek opposing viewpoints, and

(3b) behave consistently with our highest goals and intentions.

In very few situations do people carve out distraction-free time to think, let alone to be present and mindful of oneself, of others, or of God's presence. Today more than ever—rather than allowing space to be nourished—we are distracted with "empty-calorie" information consumption; typically, through our computers, phones, and watches. Ordinarily deep, deliberative habits and practices first get instantiated in social situations of minimal distraction. This makes educational communities, such as seminaries, particularly important for encouraging the kind of deliberative practices that can cultivate dispositional change not only for future ministers, but also for the congregations they will serve. Therefore, seminary professors and curricula should seek *repeatedly* to encourage and invite students to engage in these deliberative practices and cultivate new habits. Several best practices can help us do this more effectively.

#### *Make Examples Relevant*

Although seminary professors are given the privilege of a captive and interested audience that makes deliberative thought more likely, it is still incumbent upon the professor to add relevance. This helps prevent students from zoning out even

<sup>29</sup>Michael E. McCullough and Brian L. B. Willoughby, "Religion, Self-Regulation, and Self-Control: Associations, Explanations, and Implications," *Psychological Bulletin* 135.1 (2009): 69–93.

<sup>30</sup>Cited in John Tierney, "For Good Self-Control, Try Getting Religious about It," *New York Times* (December 30, 2008).

in the face of minimal distractions. One would hope students, especially graduate-level students preparing for the ministry, would not need a heavy-handed appeal to relevance, but it is risky to make this assumption. In fact, these days it seems to be wishful thinking, so some attempt to establish relevance needs to be made.

Cues to relevance encourage attentive and deliberative thinking.<sup>31</sup> However, when trying to find points of relevance, the temptation is often to use whatever comes to mind first, or most immediately, to establish prevalence and thus relevance to daily life. For example, if the pastor has been noticing the media attention given to the “opioid epidemic,” the pastor might be tempted to incorporate this into a sermon without knowing the prevalence of opioid use in the congregation. In social psychology, this is called the *availability heuristic*. The problem is, as noted earlier, this heuristic leads to the *availability biases*.<sup>32</sup> Most often what readily comes to mind does not match up with actual prevalence or corresponding relevance; that is, it does not align with base rates or what tends to occur in daily life.

Given the importance of the task of teaching seminary students, it behooves professors to ensure that what would seem relevant to the students is in fact relevant. This data, however, might not be readily available in the existing literature, especially given the specific demographics of any one cohort of students. Therefore, it is incumbent on the professor to survey students (or even come to know them well enough) at the beginning of a course to determine what predispositions exist in the class. In this way, the professor can tailor examples and practices to target specific areas of growth relevant to enrolled students.

To illustrate, a seminary professor might isolate the types of congregants most likely to be on the receiving end of a negative dispositional attribution and help students consider the kinds of situations these people face. Similarly, a professor might help students seek out disconfirming information on topics that will help their conceptual growth where they need it most. Finally, a professor might tailor discussion of temptations to specific examples faced by enrolled students and help them develop practices, such as associating temptations with their highest aims, that can help them increase their tendency to act on their highest goals.<sup>33</sup> It may also be beneficial to find base rates of behaviors, interests, and attitudes of church populations, so that seminary students can prepare to address relevant areas of growth in their future congregants, perhaps even by implementing practices they are learning to use themselves.

Helping students *intentionally* do and practice these things, will (a) raise their self-awareness; (b) help them experience firsthand the benefits of growth in these areas together, as a community, so they are motivated to continue growing; and (c) give them tools to continue to grow. And these are three good predictors for future growth and positive change.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Petty and Cacioppo, “Elaboration Likelihood Model,” 123–205.

<sup>32</sup>Tversky and Kahneman, “Availability: A Heuristic for Judging,” 207–232.

<sup>33</sup>Hofmann et al., “Everyday Temptations.”

<sup>34</sup>Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997).

Being motivated to generate counterarguments also facilitates attentive and deliberative thinking. Professors can motivate students by encouraging them to engage with views that oppose their own or go against their initial attitudes, intuitions, or feelings.<sup>35</sup> Given that people only rarely seek out new information (“what you see is all there is” bias) and that the information they do seek is likely to be consistent with their preexisting views (confirmation bias)—seminary offers a unique opportunity to challenge existing automatic thinking and attitudes as they relate to attributions, information seeking, and immediate gratification.

One might start from perspectives, or by offering perspectives and examples, that challenge students’ automatic judgments, attitudes, and affective-based moral views, where these need challenging. For example, students who hold an unwavering view of predestination might well read material that advocates for free will. Further, professors might encourage students to develop close relationships, or have immersion experiences, that challenge their attitudes and perspective.

Although a person is unlikely to relinquish a belief the first time it is challenged, that person is likely to have to engage in deliberative processing, which can start the change process. Additionally, providing opportunities to form personal relationships with people who hold differing perspectives and attitudes also promotes deliberation and change.<sup>36</sup> This can cause strongly held attitudes and beliefs to weaken, though of course strong attitudes are difficult to give up. In this way, beliefs are like possessions.<sup>37</sup>

### *Repetition in Everyday Life*

Even more than efforts to encourage deliberative processing, repetition is required to replace negative, automatically activated attitudes. In fact, developing stable habits, including habits of thought, requires repetition across everyday contexts and situations.<sup>38</sup> As a result, various situational cues become associated with certain ways of responding and influence preparatory neural states that make these responses more likely.<sup>39</sup> This is true not just of ways of thinking, but

<sup>35</sup>William J. McGuire, “Resistance to Persuasion Conferred by Active and Passive Prior Refutation of the Same and Alternative Counterarguments,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63.2 (1961): 326–332.

<sup>36</sup>Stefania Paolini, Miles Hewstone, and Ed Cairns, “Direct and Indirect Intergroup Friendship Effects: Testing the Moderating Role of the Affective-Cognitive Bases of Prejudice,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 33.10 (2007): 1406–1420.

<sup>37</sup>Robert P. Abelson, “Beliefs Are Like Possessions,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 16.3 (1986): 223–250.

<sup>38</sup>Robert J. Rydell and Bertram Gawronski, “I Like You, I Like You Not: Understanding the Formation of Context-Dependent Automatic Attitudes,” *Cognition and Emotion* 23.6 (2009): 1118–1152; Wendy Wood and David T. Neal, “The Habitual Consumer,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 19.4 (2009): 579–592.

<sup>39</sup>Daniel Thoenissen, Karl Zilles, and Ivan Toni, “Differential Involvement of Parietal and

also of emotional responses, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies. In this way, by repeating certain ways of thinking or behaving, they can become dispositional. That is, they can become stable tendencies across life's ever-changing landscape.

In this case, seminary professors need to invite students into *daily practices* that include considering a person's situation before making an attribution, seeking out disconfirming information, and slowing down to meditate on the link between one's highest goals and intentions and temptations. They should find communal ways to help their students repeatedly implement these practices across the moments and situations of daily life. In other words, they should help their students train.<sup>40</sup> For this, we have a rich Christian tradition of spiritual disciplines that might be pressed into service.

In his book *The Righteous Mind*, Jonathan Haidt presents a dual process model of moral decisions he metaphorically describes as "a rider on an elephant." In this metaphor, the elephant is the very strong affective component of moral attitudes, and the rider is the cognitive, deliberate component. The rider of the elephant is not often successful in taking the elephant where it does not want to go. As a consequence, according to Haidt, much of the time moral decisions are affect-driven. We tend to misattribute the cause of a thought or behavior to a cognitive reason because this sounds right to us. (No one chooses to believe that one's moral decisions are just emotional whims.)<sup>41</sup> If this model is accurate, often moral decisions are not the result of a careful consideration of the relevant arguments. Instead, they stem from affectively based attitudes, which may have been acquired early in life without much reason at all.

Under this scenario, if individuals have early positive experiences with a Christian community, they may later dogmatically cling to the tenets of that community and, in turn, feel threatened from outside forces. This affectively based attitude may close them off from intellectual curiosity—from examining and exploring the facts. It may also close them off from developing relationships with and otherwise showing love toward others who are not like them or do not share their beliefs or attitudes. When this is the end of the story, faith is like a seed shallowly planted on rocky ground—threatened to be washed away in the face of a potential challenge—and never growing deep roots or flourishing.

However, the research we have discussed here challenges the assumption that this is the way things have to be. The elephant does not have to be a static entity. We do not have to live as slaves of passion. Instead, given repeated exposure and discipline, the rider can not only better direct the elephant; the rider can participate in the *transformation* of the desires of the elephant itself. Being in certain

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Precentral Regions in Movement Preparation and Motor Intention," *Journal of Neuroscience* 22.20 (2002): 9024–9034.

<sup>40</sup>Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

<sup>41</sup>Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012).

states as a matter of habit—and engaging in daily practices together—can make it easier *automatically* to love God and others in thought, word, and deed. These are ways of daily and repeatedly aligning ourselves with Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and saying, “Father ... not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42 NIV). They are ways of dying to self and experiencing new life. Over time and by opening ourselves to consistent means of grace, both “rider” and “elephant” can come to have “the mind of Christ,” and we can experience the fullness of life that comes with it. This is a contagious and motivating experience. Dual process theory helps us see the depths to which this experience requires renewal. As a result, it can also enrich the ways in which we surrender to being renewed daily.

# Remembering Our Racial Past: Using Institutional Lament to Shape Affections

By Karen J. Johnson

445

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My students at Wheaton College in Illinois come from all fifty states and are three-quarters white and one-quarter American ethnic minorities. They offer one snapshot of American evangelicalism today. When I teach classes on race in America and the Civil Rights Movement, students' first assignments are to write a brief history of the subject. Some students are aware of race's enduring power in America, but many see it as ancillary to American history, surfacing mostly during slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. Many know of more recent events, made prominent by the Black Lives Matter movement and others. But almost no student mentions the role Christianity played in creating and institutionalizing racial hierarchies. Neither their schools nor their churches teach them about this history.

This historical knowledge deficit constitutes a scandal for pastoral reasons, therefore tying it to seminaries, because it hamstring evangelicals' ability to work toward racial reconciliation and justice in the present. Race matters tremendously, both for unity in the church and for Christians' witness to those outside Christ. Racial dynamics, hierarchies, and subjugation, which have never been static, have deeply wounded and divided the body of Christ in the past. While not the only cause, contemporary Christians' thinking about the history of race and religion continues to foster these sins. As Carl Becker, a former American Historical Association president, observed in 1955,

The kind of history that has the most influence upon the life of the community and the course of events is the history that common men carry around in their heads ... [their picture of the past], however little it corresponds to the real past, helps to determine their ideas about politics and society.<sup>1</sup>

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As I tell my students, stories about “our” past are stories about who “we” are. If we—American evangelicals of every race and especially white ones—are not implicated in the problem of race, we have little responsibility for the solution. And if we do not know how we got to this point, we cannot walk forward in wisdom. Seminaries, therefore, have a responsibility to foster deep understanding—Christian thinking, as Mark Noll put it in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*—about race in America.<sup>2</sup>

This article offers a model both for thinking Christianly about the history of race and for shaping seminary students as whole people as they engage that history. In the first section, I explore American evangelicals’ relationship with history and use broad strokes to sketch out a history of race and Christianity in the United States. I argue, however, that helping seminarians develop a general understanding of the history of race and religion is not a strong enough position to foster reconciliation; their knowledge must also be local. In the second section, I use my own institutional context as an example to suggest how seminaries can ground their institutions and students in their particular racial historical contexts by situating themselves in local racial histories. This knowledge component connects most obviously to questions of the “evangelical mind.” In the third section, I argue that helping students learn what happened must be paired with teaching them to practice the disciplines of love and lament as they engage these local racial histories. These habits are crucial, because knowledge without action—knowledge without love—is dead and cannot shape Christians’ affections. If evangelicals’ affections do not bend toward flourishing for all members of Christ’s body, race will continue to rend the church and stunt its witness.

### The Scandal Continues: Evangelicals’ Minds and Narratives of Racial Histories

Sociologists suggest that contemporary white American evangelicals who live in majority-white contexts are unable to see how race matters for one’s life experiences, opportunities, and social relationships.<sup>3</sup> Michael Emerson’s and Christian Smith’s *Divided by Faith* argued in 2000 that white evangelicals’ theological toolkits, which included emphases on individuals’ free will, personal relationships, and anti-structuralism, limited white evangelicals’ ability to see systemic discrimination against African Americans. *Divided by Faith* inspired excellent scholarly work on the intersections between religion and race and, notably, did the uncommon—it crossed the divide between the academy and the pew.<sup>4</sup> But despite the book’s

<sup>1</sup>Carl L. Becker, “What Are Historical Facts?” *The Western Political Quarterly* 8.3 (September 1955): 339–340.

<sup>2</sup>Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*: (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>3</sup>Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup>Phillip Luke Sinitiere, “Will the Evangelical Church Remove the Color Line? Historical Reflection in *Divided by Faith*,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* (Fall 2013): 41–62; J. Russell Hawkins

influence, most white evangelicals continue to prioritize individualistic rather than systemic causes in their assessments of race in America and, often, fail to see how they can live in and contribute to systemic racism if they are not personally racist.<sup>5</sup> Thus, many of evangelicals' efforts for racial reconciliation, justice, and inclusion fall short because of a lack of deep understanding. In terms of race, the scandal of the evangelical mind continues.

The history of race in America, and especially the history of Christianity's intersections with race, certainly has moments worth celebrating: some white missionaries' support of the Cherokee's right to land in Georgia in the 1820s, white and black evangelicals' anti-slavery activism from the 1830s, the black church's prophetic call to America during the Civil Rights Movement, and many white mainline Christians' positive response to that call after 1963.

However, this history is more often a sobering one. The interconnections between race and Christianity are stunning, from white Christians' more common commodification of land and removal of Native Americans, to biblical arguments for slavery, to white evangelicals' antagonism to the Civil Rights Movement, to the racial divides between white evangelicals and black Christians today. Consistently, Christians—their institutions, their theologies, stated and unstated, and their practices—have fostered segregation and discrimination in complicated ways and for complex reasons.<sup>6</sup> But overall, we have not lived a life together that is characterized by love.

Why, then, does this gap remain between the history of what happened and the history my students, most of them evangelical Christians shaped by their churches, carry around in their heads? Evangelical scholars have contributed to the rich literature on race and religion.<sup>7</sup> But most of my students were raised in a

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and Phillip Luke Sinitiere, eds., *Christians and the Color Line: Race and Religion after Divided by Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup>Ryan Cobb, "Still Divided By Faith? Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America," in *Christians and the Color Line: Race and Religion After Divided by Faith*, eds. J. Russell Hawkins and Phillip Luke Sinitiere (New York: Oxford, 2013), 128–140.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Hawkins and Sinitiere, *Christians and the Color Line*; Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*; Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Carolyn Renee Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997); John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Eileen McMahon, *What Parish Are You From? A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

<sup>7</sup>Constructing a list of scholars who are evangelicals working on the subject would be a complicated task in part because of evangelicals' embeddedness in non-Christian institutions and the complicated contemporary politics of evangelical identity (see Jay Green, "Whither the Conference on Faith and History?: The Politics of Evangelical Identity and the Spiritual Vision of History," *Fides et Historia* 49.1 (2017): 1–10.). My statement relies on my personal networks.

culture looking forward rather than backward, a culture that, when it remembers, tends to focus on the things that make people feel good about themselves.<sup>8</sup> Young Americans often learn their history from textbooks that avoid discussing racial violence or distort its nature, blaming acts of violence on the moral failings of those who commit them, and ignoring the connections between racial violence and institutions that support and benefit from it.<sup>9</sup> But students' sense of history, the place of race, and what their faith might have to do with race, not only comes from their schools but also from their churches, which often do not counter these narratives in their local practices.

To foster reconciliation in the present, seminaries must teach those who lead our churches to remember rightly America's racial past, and especially the church's role. This remembering must have two components. First, it must be concerned with knowledge: true and accurate understandings of what happened. This knowledge should be both national in nature, drawing on scholars' meticulous good work, and local, specific to the particular places where students are learning. Many national stories have already been written, and they matter, certainly, for reconciling members of Christ's body to one another.

However, the work of reconciliation is always placed, always specific, and so the knowledge must also be specific to the places where seminaries seek to foster reconciliation. Christians in the West neither imagine themselves bounded by particular places nor think of their faith as fundamentally about joining people together in Christ's body, as the theologian Willie Jennings demonstrates in his magisterial *The Christian Imagination*.<sup>10</sup> This faith, in Jennings' words, is mangled. Christian institutions, therefore, must not hover above the spaces where they exist, but rather connect themselves to those places, a connection that includes learning those places' particular pasts and the institutions' roles in them. This knowledge will require more research and work, but it is crucial to reconciliation. Learning and teaching this history can help seminaries model to students what it means to seek the good of the places God has planted them, so that when students leave, they can lead their congregations in local social, cultural and historical exegesis.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup>As W. E. B. DuBois put it in 1935, "One is astonished in the study of history at the recurrence of the idea that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over." Quoted in Derrick Alridge, "The Limits of Master Narratives in History Textbooks: An Analysis of Representations of Martin Luther King, Jr.," *Teachers College Record* 108.4 (April 2006): 663.

<sup>9</sup>Anthony Brown and Keffrelyn Brown, "Strange Fruit Indeed: Interrogating Contemporary Textbook Representations of Racial Violence Toward African Americans," *Teachers College Record* 112.1 (2010): 31–67; Alridge, "The Limits of Master Narratives in History Textbooks: An Analysis of Representations of Martin Luther King, Jr."

<sup>10</sup>Jennings shows how Christianity in the late medieval period helped legitimize racial and social segregation by making separation a fundamental component of Christians' "social imaginations" – what they saw as possible, as constituting Christianity – when a world "where people were bound to land" was lost. Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 248.

<sup>11</sup>Jeffrey Bilbro and Jack Baker, *Wendell Berry and Higher Education: Cultivating Virtues of Place* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017).

Let me offer one example out of my own particular context to model beginning to engage our particular pasts.<sup>12</sup> Founded about two decades after Chicago incorporated as a city in 1837, Wheaton College is an institution that from its earliest days sought to serve Christ and advance his kingdom by ending slavery immediately, not gradually, in contrast to most people who opposed slavery. It was founded as the Illinois Institute by Wesleyan Methodists and the institution's first African American student, Mary Barker, enrolled in 1857. John Cross, the Illinois Institute's first president, was a leader of the Underground Railroad. Jonathan Blanchard became president in 1859 and convinced the Illinois Institute's Board of Trustees to change the school's name to Wheaton College in 1860, honoring Warren Wheaton, who had donated 50 acres of land to the school. Blanchard was a committed abolitionist, convinced that the sin of slavery was anathema to Jesus Christ, whose kingdom he wanted to see unfold.<sup>13</sup>

But we must also remember the Midwest's, Wheaton College's, and evangelicalism's more unsavory history of racial exclusion, frequent blindness to structural injustices, and support of racial hierarchies. In 1831 Erastus Gary moved from Connecticut to DuPage County, IL and started a farm and a mill. He was part of a new generation in the new state of Illinois who would soon replace the interracial culture of whites, Native Americans and people of mixed ancestry who traded in Illinois. White easterners like Gary streamed to Illinois, drawn by news that Chicago would build a canal to connect the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, which made land in the Chicago area more valuable to white settlers. In 1832, the people of the Sauk Tribe returned to Illinois, peacefully attempting to reclaim land after being forced west according to a treaty they did not sign. The first regular United States Army troops came to the Chicago region to expel the Sauk in what became known as the Black Hawk War, brutally destroying the men, women and children who fled. The Black Hawk War was part of the federal government's decisive shift toward a policy of removing Native Americans to west of the Mis-

<sup>12</sup>The racial institutional history I lay out relies on David Malone's archival work. Before becoming dean of the College & Seminary Library at Calvin College, Malone was an archivist at Wheaton and presented his work at all levels of the college. David Malone, "The Wheaton Context," in *Wrestle On, Jacob*, ed. Jill Peláez Baumgaertner (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 2017), exhibition catalog; Brian Miller and David Malone, "Race, Town, and Gown: A White Christian College and a White Suburb Address Race," *The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, forthcoming (112, nos. 3-4, Fall 2019). For Wheaton College's history more generally, see Paul M. Bechtel, *Wheaton College: A Heritage Remembered* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1984); Willard Wyeth, *Fire on the Prairie: The Story of Wheaton College* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1950); David E. Maas, *Marching to the Drumbeat of Abolitionism: Wheaton College in the Civil War* (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 2010). Wheaton College as an example complicates understandings of race—particularly the black/white divide—as a Southern problem.

<sup>13</sup>The college dates its founding to 1860, although the Illinois Institute began classes in late 1853. Bechtel, *Wheaton College*, 13–16.

Mississippi River that Andrew Jackson's 1830 Indian Removal Act concerning the Cherokee in Georgia displayed.<sup>14</sup>

In 1833, members of the Potawatomi tribe, who inhabited most of the land in the Chicago region and, according to early nineteenth-century accounts lived on the land that surrounded what would become the town of Wheaton, assessed their situation. They had seen the Sauk's devastation and white Americans' desire for land, and, under great pressure from the United States government, exchanged their last five million acres in Illinois for desolate land further west and a pittance of money.<sup>15</sup> When Jesse and Warren Wheaton joined their old Connecticut neighbor Gary in DuPage County and claimed almost a thousand acres of land in 1837-1838, they took land where Native Americans had lived. Thus, Wheaton's generous donation to the College in 1860 was made possible by the unjust exclusion of Native Americans from the Chicago region. The college still sits on Native American land, literally grounded in native soil that American Indians continue to see as their homeland. Years later, Jonathan Blanchard would lament the American military's poor treatment of Native Americans, but, like most white men of his time, Blanchard nonetheless thought removal was necessary and, in line with the federal government's policy by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, believed Native Americans needed to be "civilized," which meant eliminating their native cultures.<sup>16</sup> Many Native Americans today view this position as promoting cultural genocide.

Despite the school's radically inclusive posture toward African Americans from its founding, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, change was afoot. Black students had mixed experiences at the college and the historical record seems to suggest that in 1909, fellow Wheaties forced Nellie Bryant, a light-skinned African American, from the school when they discovered she was black. Bryant's situation seems strange because just years earlier, Charles Raysor, a black student, had been president of the Beltonian Literary Society. Nonetheless, from the 1920s to World War II, college leadership excluded African Americans from enrollment as an unofficial policy.<sup>17</sup> In the 1930s, Wheaton College refused to consider Rachel Boone for admittance. The Executive Council said she would cause "social problems" and the College could not "provide for colored students on the Wheaton campus."<sup>18</sup> When C. Herbert

<sup>14</sup>"Wheaton, IL," accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1350.html>; "Black Hawk War," accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/141.html>; Kerry A. Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America*, 1st ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 2006); Ann Durkin Keating, *Rising Up from Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>15</sup>Donald Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 59–63. Not all the Potawatomi left. See John N. Low, *Imprints: The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the City of Chicago* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2016).

<sup>16</sup>Gene Greene, "On Native Ground," *Wheaton College Alumni Magazine* (Winter 2013).

<sup>17</sup>Department of Sociology and Anthropology, "Wheaton College Statement on Race Relations" June 1960, Folder Race Relations, 1961-1964, College Archives and Special Collections, Buswell Library, Wheaton College.

<sup>18</sup>Michael S. Hamilton 1994., "The Fundamentalist Harvard: Wheaton College and the Con-

Oliver graduated in 1947, the *Alumni Magazine* noted that he was the college's first "Negro graduate" since the 1920s.<sup>19</sup> When admitted again, black students like Ruth Lewis Bentley, who later became a trustee, were excluded from aspects of campus life. Bentley shared in a 2017 chapel that when she was a student, the college did not support interracial dating or marriage. Archival records confirm that "rules governing dating and permissions for marriage" were not uniform for the whole student body.<sup>20</sup>

In 1960, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement and a century after Blanchard's arrival at the institution, the college chose not to speak prophetically about race despite a clear opportunity. President V. Raymond Edman asked the Sociology/Anthropology department to draft a statement on race for the institution. The statement called the college to take up its "heavy responsibility toward the Christian community, toward our nation, and particularly to our College family of various races and nationalities to face the issues of race relations on our campus and in the world-wide Body of Christ." Upon reviewing a draft, one member of the president's executive council, which was instructed to keep the statement in "utmost confidence," speaking not even to family members about it, cautioned "that we should not rush into print until we know precisely what we are going to do and whether we can pay the cost of our resolution."<sup>21</sup> The statement did not become public. Even today, despite good faith efforts and measurable progress in recruiting and retaining faculty and students of color, Wheaton's campus culture can make many people of color feel like guests when they should feel at home.<sup>22</sup> Institutional histories like Wheaton's concerning race need to be uncovered and told, becoming, with great humility, a part of an institution's culture.

## Practices to Shape Evangelical Minds and Bodies

What do we do with this knowledge? The stories of the past are powerful on their own, but how we use them matters. They can remain in students' heads, to be vaguely remembered as perhaps important, but still part of the past. Or we can bring these stories to the present using the Christian disciplines of love and lament.

First, love is a most essential beginning for all, but especially for individuals called to lead our churches. It would be easy to castigate those in the past for their sins, jumping to judgment. Instead, we must practice a hermeneutic of love that

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tinuing Vitality of American Evangelicalism, 1919-1965" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1994), p. 213, quoted in Malone, "The Wheaton Context," 47.

<sup>19</sup>*Wheaton Alumni Magazine*, 14 (September 1947), 7, quoted in Malone, 47.

<sup>20</sup>Department of Sociology and Anthropology, "Wheaton College Statement on Race Relations."

<sup>21</sup>Merrill Tenney to Dr. V.R. Edman, July 29, 1960, Folder Race Relations, 1961-1964, College Archives and Special Collections, Buswell Library, Wheaton College; V.R. Edman to My dear Brethren, July 22, 1960, Folder Race Relations, 1961-1964, College Archives and Special Collections, Buswell Library, Wheaton College.

<sup>22</sup>Malone, "The Wheaton Context"; Miller and Malone, "Race, Town, and Gown: A White Christian College and a White Suburb Address Race."

sees historical subjects with a pastoral imagination, acknowledging how their context shaped their actions. This approach will allow us to love our neighbors who are dead—and who remain a part of the communion of saints—as ourselves. The knowledge we gain about our particular pasts must not be a knowledge that leads to power but one that, in humility, leads to love.<sup>23</sup>

What does this mean for Wheaton College's past? Here, broader trends can help situate the local events. For instance, Charles Blanchard, Wheaton College's second president and son of Jonathan Blanchard, was not the post-millennialist his father was. We must contextualize its racial exclusion starting in the 1920s under Charles Blanchard and solidifying under James Oliver Buswell, who was appointed president in 1926, as part of a broader, complicated turn inward and away from social justice among evangelicals in the early twentieth-century fundamentalist movement.<sup>24</sup> The 1960 still-born statement on race came into a white evangelical world at best unsure about civil rights and troubled by what could be read as divisive calls from African Americans, and, at worst, actively opposing school and church integration.<sup>25</sup> The black Civil Rights Movement did influence some evangelical leaders, including *Christianity Today's* editor Carl F. H. Henry to emphasize the "evils of segregation." But even among those white evangelical leaders sympathetic to the movement like Henry, few supported a "specific 'program of integration' as the Christian solution" for fear, in part, of fracturing the national evangelical alliance.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Historical thinking, more generally, drives its practitioners to humility if done well. See Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>24</sup>George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1982); David Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Reconciling Evangelism and Social Concern* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2007).

<sup>25</sup>J. Russell Hawkins suggests that most evangelicals want to imagine the evangelical response to the Civil Rights Movement as misguided "apathetic non-involvement" when the major thrust of white evangelicalism was to oppose the movement (Rusty Hawkins, "Religion, Race, and Resistance: White Evangelicals and the Dilemma of Integration in South Carolina, 1950-1975" (Rice University, 2010); J. Russell Hawkins, "Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Southern White Evangelicals: A Historians Forum," *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), February 9, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/jim-crow-civil-rights-and-southern-white-evangelicals-a-historians-forum-rusty-hawkins/>; J. Russell Hawkins, "The Causes and Consequences of Indifference: White Evangelicals, Historical Memory, and the Pursuit of Racial Justice" (conference paper, Conference on Faith and History, Regent University, 2016.) For southern evangelicals' opposition to the movement, see Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement*.

<sup>26</sup>See also Darren Dochuk, "'Praying for a Wicked City': Congregation, Community and the Suburbanization of Fundamentalism," *Religion and American Culture* 13.2 (2003): 167–203; Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: Norton, 2010); Mark Mulder, "Evangelical Church Polity and the Nuances of White Flight," *Journal of Urban History* 38.16 (2012): 16–38; Mark T. Mulder, *Shades of White Flight: Evangelical Congregations and Urban Departure* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012); Miles Mullen, "Neoevangelicalism and the Problem of Race in Postwar America," in *Christians and the Color Line: Race and Religion after Divided by Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

If seminarians contextualize and listen attentively to the dead who used to walk the streets of their own institutions, it should drive them to a humility that causes them to admit that were they in that context, they likely would have done no differently. They must not be like the Pharisee Luke describes who went before God in prayer and thanked God for his own faithfulness. Instead, they must be like the tax collector, who, aware of his own sin, beat his breast and asked for mercy.<sup>27</sup>

The second discipline seminaries must teach their students to practice is lament. Lament is born out of love. Even as we love those who did not love their neighbors as themselves, we love those excluded by grieving with them and grieving our loss. At Wheaton College, this would mean that we would weep with Charles Satchell Morris, Jr. over his painful experience at Wheaton, his deep sense of not belonging on campus, and weep for the College's loss. Morris was a black soldier who was removed from a college dining hall while in uniform, and whose anger over President Charles Blanchard's lack of response caused him to say he would "never, never, never" support Wheaton when asked to donate years later.<sup>28</sup> Wheaton College, it seems, had no place for black, militant men like Morris. Morris was part of a generation of New Negroes, African Americans during the Great War who refused to submit to white notions of African Americans' place in society. Morris noted in 1921, while still a Wheaton student, that "ours is not a plea for sympathy, an appeal for pity; ours is a clarion call that demands opportunity, not alms."<sup>29</sup> The New Negro, Morris said after leaving the college, is "determined to demand every emolument guaranteed him in the sunlight of the American Constitution; a Negro who by his baptism in fire and blood is conscious of the nobility of manhood."<sup>30</sup> Wheaton's administration called Morris "something of a rascal."<sup>31</sup>

This lament should be personal and corporate, private and public and it will require seminarians to identify with both those who have sinned, and those who are sinned against. This identification requires a full understanding of sin as corporate and systemic as well as personal. Like the prophet Jeremiah who had not sinned himself but identified with his people's sin, we must admit our corporate guilt. Lament is a liturgy, a practice that can shape our affections and counter white American evangelicalism's cultural captivity that so easily blinds us to racism, materialism, and individualism.<sup>32</sup> Seminaries will need to think deeply

<sup>27</sup>See Luke 19.

<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Malone, "The Wheaton Context," 47.

<sup>29</sup>"Returns to College," *The Chicago Defender*, February 5, 1921.

<sup>30</sup>"Plans Speaking Tour," *The Chicago Defender*, April 9, 1921.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Malone, "The Wheaton Context," 47.

<sup>32</sup>Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009). For lament, see Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015); Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009). For using lament in the classroom, see Jamie Huff, "Practicing Lament to Teach for Justice," *Journal of Christian Higher Education*, forthcoming. For liturgies and habits, see James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The*

about how to practice lament. They must go beyond someone mentioning briefly that the institution is grieved by its racial past or praying while others sit quietly, awkwardly. Learning to lament will require white evangelical leaders to adopt of posture of humility and brokenness, within which God can work.

## Conclusion

Students who come to evangelical seminaries training for ministry need to know America's racial past and be shaped by the disciplines of love and lament if they are ever to promote healing in the present. This learning will first require historians, archivists, and others to research what has happened at their institutions and to situate those stories in broader narratives. Seminaries must then form their students through specific knowledge and practice, so pastors can lead their congregations in these disciplines. This hard intellectual work, coupled with the actions of love and lament, can slow evangelicals down. We must sit with the histories, see their complexities, talk to God about how Christians—in good conscience and seeking to be faithful to Scripture—did not love their neighbors, and grieve with those who suffered before jumping to activism.

If seminaries teach pastors to know their racial pasts and to respond with love and lament, future evangelical students might come to my classes carrying the histories of the church's racial failings and God's faithfulness in their heads, their bodies and therefore their affections shaped by the discipline of crying out to God for forgiveness of *our* sins and for him to work for reconciliation. Christians, because of the disciplines of love and lament so fundamental to our faith, are poised to lead the long, hard work of reconciliation and justice. But we cannot bring reconciliation in the present without reckoning with the past, learning a new narrative about our racial history. We cannot turn away from buried sins.<sup>33</sup>

Admittedly, engaging with specific racial histories as I have called for would be costly. Who, after all, wants to be with sinners? But, as Hebrews 11 reminds us, the cost was high for Moses, too, who refused to be identified as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and instead cast his lot with the despised Hebrew slaves.<sup>34</sup> God used Moses, with all his failings, for great things. May the same be said of evangelical seminaries.<sup>35</sup>

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*Spiritual Power of Habit* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2016).

<sup>33</sup>See D. L. Mayfield, "Facing Our Legacy of Lynching," *ChristianityToday.com* (August 18, 2017), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/september/legacy-lynching-america-christians-repentance.html>.

<sup>34</sup>Willie Jennings made this connection for me.

<sup>35</sup>Thank you to Melissa Harkrider, J. Russell Hawkins, Eric Johnson, Matthew Lundin and David Malone for offering feedback on this work. Vincent Bacote, Wheaton College's Center for Applied Christian Ethics, my Wheaton College colleagues in the 2017 CACE seminar, and Willie Jennings influenced my thinking on placed education. I am also grateful to the faculty at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, especially Peter Cha, Bruce Fields, and Doug Sweeney, who shaped my understanding of and responses to race in America.

# *Restoring the Soul of the University* —An Extended Review

By Nathan A. Finn

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Perry L. Glanzer, Nathan F. Alleman, and Todd C. Ream. *Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. xi + 385 pp. \$40.00, ISBN 9780830851614.

455

Those of us working in the world of higher education often hear about the fragmentation of American universities. Many observers, inside and outside the university alike, have lamented that “multiversities” have lost any coherent educational center. Accusations abound of proliferating programs, endless elective options, growing preference for professional and pre-professional programs over the liberal arts and more traditional majors, bloated administrative bureaucracy, and over-emphasis on intercollegiate athletics. Christian colleges and universities have not been immune to these trends, which have often been linked to secularization, the pursuit of higher standing in the academy, or sometimes simply a loss of nerve.

Perry Glanzer and Todd Ream are two scholars of higher education who write widely and helpfully on how these trends, and many others, affect Christian institutions in particular. In their latest book, *Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age*, they collaborate with Nathan Alleman to make a substantial contribution to the ever-growing body of literature about how best to approach the task of Christian higher education. The title is a nod to George Marsden’s widely discussed declension narrative of American universities, *The Soul of the American University*.<sup>1</sup> However, unlike Marsden’s work, *Restoring the Soul of the University* is not a historical survey, nor is it a historical jeremiad like James Burtchaell’s provocative *The Dying of the Light* (though it includes elements of both).<sup>2</sup> It is, rather, a manifesto that attempts to diagnose the root cause of higher education’s fragmentation, sketch the historical development of trends related to this fragmentation, emphasize its effects on Christian higher education, and offer a pathway to greater coherence (and, in turn, faithfulness) in Christian universities and colleges.

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The authors argue that the soul of the university was originally theology, which they define as “the worship, love, and study of God” (10). Thus the authors have in mind not the technical disciplines of systematic theology, constructive theology, or similar fields of inquiry, but rather a more pre-modern understanding of theology-in-general (the study of God). Theology is unique because “it is the only field of study that can properly worship the subject that it studies—God” (10). The nod to the role of the affective alongside the cognitive echoes James K. A. Smith and helps to keep theology appropriately practical and even pastoral in its application to university life.<sup>3</sup> The authors attest that recovering this theological soul, which has been increasingly eclipsed in higher education (even, to varying degrees, in Christian institutions), will lead to the renewal of higher education and the advancement of authentic human flourishing.

Following a brief introduction, the authors divide their book into three large sections. Part One is mostly historical narrative, chronicling the rise and fall of theology in the life of the university, attempts to find alternative souls to animate higher education in the West, and the ascendance of multiversities in the United States. When the original universities were founded in the Middle Ages, pioneers such as Hugh of St. Victor made theology a unifying theme that was intended to sanctify the classical pagan liberal arts that were being recovered in the Christian West. Soon, however, two tendencies emerged that unintentionally undermined this theological soul: the emergence of theology as a specialized discipline and the division of theology and philosophy into distinct, if related, fields of inquiry. In light of the Reformation, emerging denominations and European nationalism led to institutional fragmentation and arguably secularization in higher education. While universities proliferated, theology was further removed from the center, since theological differences drove much of the Reformation and post-Reformation conflict in Western Christendom. Philosophy took the place of theology, since the former was thought to foster civic virtue while the latter was considered divisive and, increasingly, sectarian. Though some educators, notably John Henry Newman, made valiant attempts to recover a theological soul, these efforts proved Quixotic. At its best, theology was one discipline among many, relegated to its own department, replaced by philosophy as the queen of the sciences.

American higher education, which remained closely tethered to Christianity prior to the Civil War, was not immune to these trends. The Christian identity of most institutions declined as secularization increased, the latter fueled in part by growing religious diversity. While denominational colleges continued to be established, even there moral philosophy normally trumped theology. After the Civil

<sup>1</sup>See George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Unbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>3</sup>See James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), especially chapter 6, which focuses on higher education.

War, the rise of secular research universities further contributed to the decline of theology in higher education. The hard sciences replaced philosophy as queen, and other disciplines attempted to situate themselves as sciences in the modern sense of that term. The twentieth century saw the development of full-blown multiversities, with their ever-growing catalogs of electives and lack of any sort of center (soul), resulting in the fracturing of higher education alluded to in the book's subtitle. Efforts were made to find a new soul, notably the Great Books proposals of the early-to-mid twentieth century. But such approaches never caught on outside of a few institutions, and even those programs were disconnected from a theological soul, leaving the canon of Great Books to be selected according to the preferences of a given advocate.

Following this historical framework, Part Two digs deeper into the fragmentation of American multiversities. The authors discuss the professionalization of the professorate and note the growing importance of research over teaching. They commend the work of Ernest Boyer, which seeks to integrate teaching and scholarship as one aspect of a more holistic approach to the latter; Boyer was informed by his own deep Christian faith.<sup>4</sup> The elective system continues to be the norm in higher education. Though a liberal arts core remains an important part of many universities, it has lost its own core in its detachment from theology, which Christian educational pioneers such as Hugh and William Ames believed transformed potentially enslaving arts into liberating arts. Thus, it is difficult to offer a holistic education in such fragmented institutions that lack common moral ideals or a shared sense of human flourishing, though efforts such as Living-Learning Communities attempt to overcome this fragmentation (though again, normally without a theological soul).

The proliferation of administrative positions is evidence of soulless bureaucracy, and intercollegiate athletics has replaced Christianity as the animating religion of American higher education. Even non-religious critics of higher education often voice these two concerns, but the authors add to the discussion by making a good case that only universities with a theological soul can tame athletic excellence, resulting in a rightly ordered approach to competition rather than the athletic idolatry one most commonly finds. I would suggest a similar argument could be made about the pursuit of academic excellence without the influence of a theological soul. The quest for any sort of excellence can quickly devolve into idolatry when it is not rightly ordered. The authors understand for-profit institutions and online academic programs to be some of the worst fruit of a soulless vision for higher education. They also note the need for a consciously theological vision for how to approach the mechanical arts, which at present enjoy the goodwill of politicians and other cultural leaders because these fields ostensibly lead to higher paying jobs and contribute in more obvious ways to

<sup>4</sup>See Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, updated ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015). Ream was one of several scholars who contributed new material to this updated edition of Boyer's classic work.

technological advancement.

In Part Three, the authors become explicitly prescriptive, offering their vision for how to restore the theological soul of Christian universities. Chapter 12, which leads off this section, is arguably the most important in the book. Theology has been domesticated, relegated to religion departments, and often treated as a social science rather than “a servant that can nourish the soul of the university” (227). But theology is more than just another discipline. Because theological reflection includes God and all his ways and works, it has a bearing on every other discipline. For each discipline is part of God’s created order and intended for good, despite the effects of the Fall. Theologians can help scholars in other disciplines to name their idolatries and recover the importance of worship for all of life, including education. Theology can point to the coherence of all things in Christ (Colossians 1:17) and thereby help various disciplines overcome their own tendencies toward fragmentation.

However, as the authors helpfully point out, this should never be a one-way street. Because theology matters for every discipline, theologians should dialogue with other disciplines and learn from God’s created gifts found in (so-called) secular fields. The authors suggest several practical ideas for recovering theology, including making doctrinal formation part of faculty development, adding doctoral programs that combine theology and other disciplines, and ensuring general education courses are engaging theology rather than relegating ultimate questions to one or two required courses in a religion department. The fact that this chapter is co-authored by three scholars of higher education rather than three professional theologians or Bible scholars adds further credibility to their arguments that theology should be emphasized across the curriculum; they are not elevating the importance of their own discipline.

The remaining chapters speak to the desired fruit that would result from restoring the university’s theological soul. The authors argue that a robustly theological center is necessary to make sure that the current emphasis on virtue formation in so many Christian schools is robustly Christian. They also suggest that a strong theological vision can help achieve a rightly ordered balance, or “coinherence” (253), among faith, learning, and service. They argue for a theologically informed curricular unity as the remedy for hyper-compartmentalization and an overemphasis on electivity, and revisit the idea yet again that the liberal arts become only truly liberating arts when they are framed as part of the Christian story. The chapter on co-curricular concerns helpfully envisions universities as “greenhouse communities” (277) that cultivate Christian virtues in students and reform their identities in light of the gospel, thereby helping them to overcome their own individual tendencies toward fragmentation. The book closes with advice for academic administrators to focus on faithfulness-in-exile rather than cultural conformity: to restore the theological soul for the sake of the common good.

*Restoring the Soul of the University* is an important book that ought to provoke many conversations among Christian academics. While the authors claim to be

writing for two audiences—Christians working in secular multiversities and faculty and other leaders in Christian institutions—the latter group will almost certainly find this work most relevant to their particular contexts. For thoughtful accounts of the role theology can play in secular institutions, the works of Gavin D’Costa, Stanley Hauerwas, and Mike Higton are perhaps more applicable.<sup>5</sup> I will direct my remaining comments toward the sorts of explicitly Christian institutions that sponsor *Christian Scholar’s Review*, maintain close ties with denominational bodies, and/or participate in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities.

First, I want to offer two points of friendly critique from one who deeply resonates with the message of this book. I appreciate the broad definition of theology that does not narrowly equate it with the modern academic disciplines such as systematic theology and related fields. However, the book would have been strengthened had the authors devoted some space to what it looks like actually to engage with the text of Scripture and the best of the Christian intellectual tradition and apply it to various disciplines and professions. They might counter that this was implicit throughout, and at times it certainly was. But for academic leaders who want to frame their work in explicitly theological categories, it would have been helpful to be able to turn to a discussion that provides some advice and examples. Many readers will likely think to themselves, “Yes! But, how?” Perhaps the authors, or others, will flesh this out more in follow-up essays, books, or conferences.<sup>6</sup>

Another critique is that the authors take too negative a posture toward online education. Admittedly, this is not surprising. Too many devotees of online education, especially those that are led by administrators rather than faculty, discuss online education mostly in market terms (“if we do not capitalize on the market for online education, the folks down the road will beat us to it”) or, perhaps worse, purely economic terms (“online education will open up exciting new revenue possibilities for the university”). While the authors at least imply that recovering the university’s theological soul would undermine online education, it might also be the case that a more substantive theological center could help equip faculty and administrators to think about better ways to approach online education. Two brief examples will suffice. Deep reflection on the *missio Dei*, especially in light of the role of Christian higher education in increasingly post-Christian contexts, might lead to more theologically informed rationale for offering at least some programs to students who are unable, or at least unlikely, to relocate to a physi-

<sup>5</sup>Gavin D’Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy, and Nation* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005); Stanley Hauerwas, *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007); Mike Higton, *A Theology of Higher Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup>In February 2017, the Transdisciplinary Group sponsored a conference on Radical Christian Scholarship that attempted to dig deeper into this very issue: what does it actually look like to bring Scripture and the Great Tradition to bear on every discipline and profession? The conference had an ecumenical and evangelical feel to it, though one that often leaned in the direction of the Neo-Calvinist tradition.

cal campus. Also, sustained discussions of the importance of ecclesiology could lead to creative partnerships between universities and local congregations or Christian non-profit organizations. This sort of reflection has begun to happen in the world of theological education, but could also be applied to Christian higher education in general.<sup>7</sup>

These criticisms aside, *Restoring the Soul of the University* is not just an important book, it is a good book. And as a good book, it raises good questions that should help advance discussion on some issues that loom in Christian higher education. Again, a couple of examples will suffice. Discussions about the importance of the Christian worldview and the integration of faith and learning animated evangelical colleges and universities for two generations, but in recent years have begun to fall out of favor in many circles. There are many reasons for these trends—more than can be addressed in this review. However, one common critique of these concepts is that they are treated like automatic remedies to the very sort of fragmentation the authors discuss in this book, even while faculty disagree about what these terms even mean. Whatever the Christian worldview is, it is informed by theological commitments that arise from Scripture and help to frame all of life. And the integration of faith and learning is at least in part deconstructing and reconstructing the educational task according to theological categories for the sake of a more intentionally Christian education. More attention given to the explicitly theological commitments that underlie these concepts—as well as how ecclesial traditions affect how that theology is framed—may lead to renewed ways to conceive of them and apply them across the disciplines and professions.

In many schools where less attention is being given to worldview and faith-learning integration, the focus has turned to forming particular virtues in students. The authors of *Restoring the Soul of the University* discuss the virtues at various points, and their caution that Christian institutions frame the virtues theologically is worth heeding. In some discussions about virtue formation, even in Christian schools, there is almost an eagerness to treat the virtues as the common stock of multiple faith traditions. But the gospel transforms how we think about virtue and vice—or, put in more theological terms, about holiness and sin. Theology as broadly defined in this book (which in many Christian institutions also includes philosophy) has to be at the center of discussions about what the virtues are, how they are formed in students, and the role that a Christian education plays in such formation. It might even be the case that an explicitly theological framing of the virtues will help to bridge the artificial divide between educators who are still strongly committed to a focus on the Christian worldview and the integration of faith and learning and those who would prefer to talk more about the virtues. Institutions rooted in particular ecclesial traditions should not be afraid to draw upon their theological heritage to help them in engaging these concepts in ways

<sup>7</sup>See John Cartwright, Gabriel Etzel, Christopher Jackson, and Timothy Paul Jones, *Teaching the World: Foundations for Online Theological Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017).

that are meaningful in their context.

Much more could and should be said in response to this book, and likely will be in the coming years. For now, *Restoring the Soul of the University* should be required reading for administrative leadership teams in Christian universities. It should make its way onto syllabi for faculty development programs and faculty book discussions. Deans and department chairs should help their faculties think through how to engage meaningfully with theology within their respective disciplines, regardless of what sort of language they typically lean on when it comes to matters like worldview, faith-learning integration, and virtue formation. One of my colleagues likes to say that, in a Christian university, every department needs a resident theologian/philosopher—this book can help to cultivate such faculty leaders. *Restoring the Soul of the University* could also stimulate creative thinking for how faculty in religion departments and schools of theology can serve the wider university community by offering theological resources that are applicable to other disciplines and even co-curricular departments such as student affairs. At the end of the day, there will be no “one-size-fits-all” approach to recovering the theological soul of Christian universities, and there should not be; Christian higher education is as diverse as the institutions that populate that world. But if Christian universities are to thrive in a post-Christian and increasingly anti-Christian context, then attempting the recovery is worth the effort.



# Reviews

**Karen A. Longman, ed.** *Diversity Matters: Race, Ethnicity, & the Future of Christian Higher Education*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2017. 384 pp. \$29.99, ISBN 9780891124542.

**Reviewed by Weishiuan Sandy Chen, University Libraries, Azusa Pacific University**

*Diversity Matters* is an important book—timely, sensitive, honest, challenging, yet hope-filled. The title *Diversity Matters* can be read as a rallying cry (subject-verb statement) and (as an adjective-noun phrase) as descriptions of how different schools and individuals have wrestled with racial, ethnic, and gender matters of inclusion, especially within PWIs (predominantly white institutions). Professor Longman has gathered some 29 multi-ethnic voices from CCCU settings as co-editors and authors of 25 chapters in five categories: “Campus Case Studies,” “Why We Stayed,” “Voices of Our Friends,” “Curricular/Cocurricular Initiatives,” and “Autoethnographies.” These five sections sum up the book’s organization and its contents about “matters” of painful personal experiences and modest successes regarding diversity at several schools. Each chapter’s authors speak personally about why diversity matters in Christian higher education and about everyday difficult diversity matters under the umbrella of Christ’s love. The chapters also include “For Discussion” questions. This book is intended to be read by current campus administrators, faculty, and scholars, or by those who may aspire to fill any one of these leadership positions, especially against all sociological odds, or despite institutionalized micro-/macro-aggressions, or, simply, at God’s persistent calling. *Diversity Matters* relates all these matters in stories, reflections, advice, and faith. As Eastern University professor Kathy-Ann C. Hernandez says to introduce the final “Autoethnographical” section,

Each of us has committed to stepping out from behind the data to make ourselves visible ... to give readers of this volume a close-up view of our lived experiences as minorities positioned in predominantly white institutions ... to make known the challenges we face as outsiders within the academy. (289)

While the narratives in the fifth section speak truth most loudly and personally to this reviewer, who has shared many of these same matters, the first four sections describe, often also autobiographically, the what, why, how, and hope “[for] the ways God continues to work amid these learning communities, and the lessons these stories may hold for Christian higher education more broadly” (36). Pete Menjares (Vanguard University) lays out the data, foci, and “a guiding theological framework” (20) of the book as a whole and its intended impact in an initial introductory essay. Then, each section’s lead essay re-

introduces and briefly reviews its respective contents. This re-echoing allows the reader to gain more perspective on the many unique voices and approaches within individual chapters. Menjares cites, as do other authors, Nicholas Wolterstorff's "vision of shalom" as the Christian mission which "seeks to educate students in character and intellect, and ... to graduate students who are virtuous, caring, compassionate, and service oriented" (26). The question is whether Christian higher education institutions will reflect this commitment in the core curriculum. Menjares points out the slowly shrinking disparity between "Student Ethnic Diversity in the CCCU" and "Faculty Ethnic Diversity in the CCCU" in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 (29). He looks to a hopeful future in which "[t]he CCCU and its members appear to be uniquely and strategically positioned to fulfill this vision" (28). It all depends on the leaders to whom this book is addressed.

Four CCCU schools serve as case studies on promoting diversity—Nyack College, North Park University, Warner Pacific College, and Greenville University. Leaders from each shared their school's critical moments when core principles were challenged, strategies made, the status quo on campus and in society confronted, "and when programs to support increasing diversity and to advance their mission were implemented" (34). These stories represent the breadth of the CCCU in terms of very different regional and ethnic settings, size, and backgrounds. While some *hows* are given, the authors (two presidents, a provost, a COO, themselves diverse ethnically and by gender) focus more on *why*—"the reason it matters is faith" (36). The subsequent discussion questions are forthright, hard-hitting, leader-to-leader: "What is the tipping point for your college to become a diverse community?" (46); "Do you have a plan for hiring diverse faculty and staff?" (77); "What would an 'all-in' to diversity and inclusion look like for your institution?"; and "What is your institution's 'identity'?" (76). Despite some successes, each writer urges continued striving toward *shalom* for all through persevering, not quitting, learning in community, all with foundations to be built upon. Those are their final words. There may be no cookie-cutter answer for administrator-readers to duplicate and take from these four case studies, but the stories themselves convince this reviewer that the matter and matters of diversity can be and must be done, not simply attempted. "Don't try, do!" says another voice (266), remembering her own leader's echoing admonition.

Storied memories, in fact, form the book's subsequent sections. First are those faculty and administrators who chose to stay in PWIs. Why? Subtitled "Lessons in Resiliency and Leadership from Long-term CCCU Diversity Professionals," these chapters represent over 140 years of Christian service by self-identified persons of color with a reputation for "implementing positive diversity change" at their respective schools. These authors speak "openly about their faith in connection with their work" (99). They answer the "why?" with many "hows," if not the big "who": "who am I?" Glen Kinoshita (Biola University) cites Parker Palmer's *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* as one of many Christian signposts to connect vocation and personal values "that keeps me grounded to this day" (105). Another Asian-American Christ-follower, Jeanette Hsieh (Trinity International University), refers to her culturally based mindset in Confucianism that respects authority and leans toward social harmony and attention to community to affirm why and how she stayed. She recalls some detestable racist messages on campus and how she worked with other trusted university leaders to defuse the situation and affirm the school's commitment to diversity. Hsieh speaks of the safety net of "a community of trusted advisers" (119) not just in moments of crisis, but meeting regularly. Similarly, a community of faculty partners can advocate for shared governance, strengthened by weekly prayer gatherings, to build "relational capital"

(119). Azusa Pacific University's Chief Diversity Officer, Kimberly Battle-Walters Denu and Michelle R. Lloyd-Paige of Calvin College speak scripturally and personally of the inevitable battles encountered and the resiliency necessary to stay on at their schools. "God is strong and will use us despite our limitations and imperfections," says Denu, who recalls her president and boss reminding her, "Sometimes our battles choose us" (130-131). And Lloyd-Paige affirms three practices that helped her: "empowering affirmations, therapeutic spaces, and centering indebtedness" (143). Each conveys community, self-awareness, and faith in a higher power. Lloyd-Paige echoes Denu's insight that "Diversity work and leadership is about relationship, relationship, relationship" (131). Using a jazz music metaphor, Rodney K. Sisco (Wheaton College) continues the theme of diversity played out in community and of shared responsibility. Cautioning against righteous indignation that goes solo and lacks Christian "artistry," he hopes for a group work that better "reflects a joyous groove that embodies serving in Christian higher education in terms of both longevity and impact" (154).

Section Three underscores the need for a broad community with chapters by "White Allies Striving to be Aware and Engaged." The co-editors Ash (Wheaton College) and Jun (Azusa Pacific University) state that "the voices of white people are a necessary part of the solution to racial discord" (189). They review their own research on the continuum scale of awareness and engagement for social justice (160) to introduce these four chapters by "white allies," best described as confessional and honest and discomfiting, yet faithfully hopeful. Again, the follow-up discussion questions show that the book and particularly these chapters are meant for academic professionals who can lead beyond racial and ethnic divides. For example, "When have you witnessed a positive impact of guilt that led to growth and change?" or, "Identify the causes and impacts of 'White Fragility' on your campus?" (213).

"[T]he beauty, creativity, and strength" (217) of programming for diversity is addressed in the fourth section. The work of God's kingdom is complex, messy, and too often without immediate impact. More than one writer uses the giant timber bamboo metaphor: it takes three years from planting to break through the ground. In the meantime, farmers can work the land above with other crops while also watering and feeding the unseen roots below, which by faith and work eventually can grow a foot and a half a day! (219). Listed in these four chapters are some real "how-to" suggestions. They build on the community, partnership, and leadership themes advocated earlier. Again it includes stories and reflections of difficult situations in the lives of institutions and individuals that envision growth and change through new and necessary, yet difficult, initiatives. Yvonne RB-Banks (University of Northwestern, St. Paul) spells out three career-shaping "anchors" that other authors also touch on: mentorship (others prefer "sponsorship"), professional development opportunities, and the CCCU's commitment to diversity. The authors refer to diversity within spiritual development programs, what administrative strategies to articulate, what can foster an atmosphere of belonging, and how to start conversations about these complex matters. The section concludes with a multi-voiced "Moving from Theory to Practice" chapter with concrete ideas that readers in leadership should find useful: the Quaker value of helping all people "Be Known"; the World's Got Talent nights with food, music, and educational components; the book *Pondering Privilege* to help the PWI majority find its role; and SCORR (Student Congress on Racial Reconciliation). The volume also highlights the CCCU's Multi-ethnic Leadership Development Institute (M-E LDI) in this section and the ensuing one, an institute which all of the authors of the "Autoethnographies" had attended.

The final section is by diverse leader-authors reflecting on their 2015 M-E LDI experiences and speaking about how they chose or were chosen to participate in "a year-long

leadership development program for emerging leaders of color at CCCU institutions" (302). They touch on shared themes of the potholes, barriers, only-ness, and silos that made their personal stories of advancement so difficult and often discomfiting to read. One recurrent idea is sponsorship. They frequently cite Sylvia Ann Hewlett's seminal business-related book, *Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor*. It treats institutional partnerships and promotion, beyond just a sympathetic ear. The clear message is that we persons of color, especially women, need not struggle alone. But we must be engaged in the community and in the team-oriented *how-to's* of the earlier sections to experience the full life that God intends for us and of belonging "because God has led me here" (344). To be sure, the Black/Hispanic/Asian, immigrant/native-born, female/male intersections may voice separate experiences and have unique answers in the long struggle, as these autoethnographies show. Each category, perhaps, deserves of its own book. They, and we, are not all alike, although we all have felt the sting of working in PWIs. Yet, Messiah College's Kevin Williams, Jr. sums up this book's matter and what matters most: "Kindred spirits who want to be supportive can be found in other ethnic-minority groups as well as among white allies" (314). Supportive books and articles, authors, and contributors to the cause of diversity are found in an extensive bibliography which the authors reference in many of the chapters. These resources invite readers, especially leaders, to continue the discussion on these diversity matters and on why diversity matters.

**Perry L. Glanzer, Jonathan P. Hill, and Byron R. Johnson.** *The Quest for Purpose: The Collegiate Search for a Meaningful Life*. Albany: State University of New York, 2017. xii + 413 pp. \$95.00, ISBN 9781438466859.

**Reviewed by Glenn E. Sanders, Anthropology, History, and Political Science, Oklahoma Baptist University**

Perry Glanzer, Jonathan Hill, and Byron Johnson have produced one of the most valuable studies of this generation on the problem of meaning and purpose among undergraduate students. It belongs alongside other books on the subject by Sharon Daloz Parks and Christian Smith.

The book's first strength—a primary one—is its tight focus on a particular question: What do undergraduate students think about meaning and purpose and about the role their colleges and universities play in helping them find meaning and purpose? The book refers to contemporary higher education theory, but is not theoretical. It does not try to map the broad spiritual and psychological lives of students. Instead, it seeks to explore and expound nuanced, varied answers to that single question. The answers arise in a complex interplay among quantitative surveys, qualitative analyses, and interviews with students from a wide variety of institutions. The results include a clearly written and organized summary of data, useful typologies taken from actual student responses, and a set of meaningful recommendations for institutions of all sizes and missions.

A second strength is the authors' strong commitment to follow the evidence wherever it leads. This commitment arises from two sources. The first is the move in the social sciences over the past few decades toward the examination of normal, positive human experiences. The studies of psychologists on virtues and economists on human behaviors are two prominent examples. This shift has included a general willingness to accept religious influences

as data. The net result here is a project fueled by the writers' Christian beliefs (for example, that the search for meaning and purpose is a worthy subject), but framed evenhandedly to determine what students actually experience. The second source for this commitment to evidence is the writers' pointed rejection of Anthony Kronman's argument and conclusions in *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*: "Kronman maintains that research concerns and political correctness distract faculty and, therefore, universities from helping students in this area" (4). Rather than follow Kronman's impressionistic assessment of the university's internal workings, the writers decided to ask students about their searches for meaning and purpose. Again, the result is a balanced assessment of realities.

The nuanced descriptions arising from this assessment count as a third strength. Noteworthy is the need to distinguish the two—meaning and purpose—and the discovery that most students have distinct sources of meaning, but struggle in early adulthood to find purpose. The student samples lead the writers to identify ten common sources of meaning under three types:

*Type 1: Self-Achievers*

1. Accomplishment in general
2. Career
3. Happiness
4. Experiences
5. Creative accomplishments

*Type 2: Relationalists*

6. Family
7. Relationships/Friends
8. Service and/or helping others

*Type 3: Transcendents*

9. God or religion
10. Change the world for good (summarized from pp. 116-117).

They also identify Gary Reker and Paul Wong's theory of meaning as approximating their empirical findings that meaning is both global and situational, both created through choice and action and discovered through life's givens and boundaries (133). A dozen identified purposes map adequately on the meaning schema as purpose "ingredients for the good life" (144), with various sociological factors influencing student perceptions of purpose. Students seeking meaning and purpose in college divided between Instrumentalists (in two subcategories, Happiness and Achiever) and Holistics (182-185). These are just a few of the carefully delineated categories drawn from the writers' empirical research.

A fourth strength is the book's comprehensiveness. After an introduction on "Searching for Meaning and Purpose in College: A Dying Quest?" a first section explores "the context of the quest"—history, adolescent experiences, and pre-collegiate identity, socialization, and education. Part Two explores student responses about meaning and purpose in general, concluding with a chapter on purposelessness. Part Three treats the university's place in students' quests, scrutinizing curricula, professors, and extracurricular influences. This part is most immediately useful for faculty and administrators. It qualifies Kronman's conclusions, affirms common distinctions among institutional types—such as state universities versus evangelical colleges—and highlights certain unpopular realities—for example that, despite its benefits, diversity discourages the trust necessary to promote quests for meaning and purpose. A fourth part explores the place of religiosity, nontheism, and teleological expectations in the search for meaning and purpose. A tight conclusion summarizes recom-

mendations scattered earlier throughout the book. Multiple appendices explain details of qualitative and quantitative method, complementing initial descriptions in the introduction. The net effect is a clear and complete picture of what twenty-first-century students think about meaning and purpose, as well as the current roles of higher education in finding and promoting them.

The writers' careful, deliberate efforts to place their analyses, understandings, and conclusions in the context of recent scholarly literature form a fifth strength. The analysis slows at times to consider the relationships of questions and conclusions to the ideas of theorists such as James Fowler and Sharon Parks. These considerations always complement the emphasis on data, but they never replace it. The writers' sharp focus on student experiences of meaning and purpose remains consistent. Most significantly, although never hesitating to disagree when the evidence suggests, the writers do so respectfully, parsing arguments cleanly and emphasizing positive scholarly insights. The absence of polemic—a quality rare among critical studies of higher education—and the book's steady tone provide an outstanding example of positive exchange on a crucial subject.

Finally, a sixth strength is the writers' use of case studies throughout. Often these serve as illustrative "hooks" at the beginnings of chapters. But they also generally serve the dual purposes of simultaneously vivifying and forwarding the analysis. They complement the use of statistical data and qualitative surveys, and they illustrate the people behind the conclusions. In doing so they remind the reader that meaning and purpose pertain to flesh-and-bone students, not generalized statistical types.

Ultimately this emphasis makes the book's substantive conclusions about institutional improvements both valuable and applicable. The writers hold that "simply focusing on students' meaning and purpose development, while simultaneously acknowledging and educating students about the influence of different faith and philosophical traditions, provides the most inclusive approach to addressing big questions" (324). They take seriously the difficulty of promoting an inclusive diversity while cultivating commonalities that build trust. This approach translates into an openness to both religious and non-religious contributions to conversations about meaning and purpose. But the writers go further, beyond curricular and cocurricular initiatives, to call for "deeper understandings about how one lives out one's life in light of a particular moral, philosophical, or religious tradition" (332). "'Good life' mentoring" has a particularly important role to play (336).

Despite all these strengths and substantive contributions, *The Quest for Purpose* has two significant omissions: an extensive treatment of vocation, and a consideration of unique disciplinary contributions. Of course, these omissions likely arise from the book's tight focus and social scientific methodologies, two strengths. The writers do acknowledge the concept of vocation in their discussion of the role of the classroom:

A third group of students experienced life-changing discussions about meaning and purpose in courses that talked about vocation or first-year seminar courses that discussed purpose. These courses were often associated with funding the university received from the Lily Foundation to sponsor the exploration of vocation and purpose. (190)

In a sense, this emphasis on vocation fits in an analysis as just one of many ways students seek meaning and purpose. But I wanted more, in two ways. First, vocation concerns a student's sense of compulsion, usually generated by internal convictions and external needs. A more thorough consideration of this complex process, perhaps drawn from the growing literature on vocation generated by that same Lily initiative, has a place in a study of students' search

for meaning and vocation. Second, how institutions might best encourage the processes of vocational discernment is itself an important question. The book's narrow emphasis on what students actually experience does not at times leave adequate space for what they *should* experience, given social needs and contexts, as well as institutional missions and resources.

Again, the book's tight focus means the contributions of particular disciplines get treated in aggregate. The writers emphasize the benefits of liberal education in searches for meaning and purpose, and some courses—such as the first-year course mentioned above—stand out. But the analysis would benefit from both a consideration of underlying disciplinary philosophies (for example, “What is history good for?”) and of pedagogies proven to encourage good conversations on meaning and purpose. Similarly, more on mentoring from specifically disciplinary perspectives would help.

Despite these limitations, *The Quest for Purpose* has provided an invaluable snapshot and blueprint for higher education today. It should remain valuable for years to come, especially with some additional analyses in later revisions.

**Ryan McIlhenny.** *Reforming the Liberal Arts*. Beaver Falls, PA: Falls City Press, 2017. xii + 163 pp. \$14.99, ISBN 9780986405129.

**Reviewed by Sam Guthrie, Education Policy Studies, Penn State University**

In an age in which higher education options are increasingly commodified to match the hegemonic forces of today, it is encouraging to have voices like Ryan McIlhenny's observing the higher education terrain. In his book *Reforming the Liberal Arts*, McIlhenny offers insightful perspectives and a timely diagnostic of the state of higher education. As the title implies, McIlhenny's solution is a practical, pedagogical reform of higher education, specifically the liberal arts, centered in the reformational philosophy of John Calvin and the neo-reformational luminaries that followed in his footsteps.

McIlhenny's reformational philosophy compiles several overarching themes that are consistent to the tradition. For instance, John Calvin's belief that knowledge of self requires knowledge of God is a common reformational strand in McIlhenny's commitment to holistic learning. He aptly sets the stage with considering the implications and importance of Martin Luther's 95 Theses as a symbolic gesture to return to biblical theology and practices in education. He also does well by framing his philosophy within the structure of reformed catechesis that includes God's sovereignty, special and general revelation distinctions, and the overarching creational narrative.

With a movement as vast and nuanced as the Reformation, McIlhenny does well in succinctly compiling and drawing from several reformational perspectives. These include theologian and educator Abraham Kuyper, who saw God's sovereignty as a charge to defend the post of Christian higher education against the modernist *Zeitgeist*, as well as Herman Dooyeweerd, who bolstered Kuyper's sentiment and advocated for the heart of learning to be a sanctifying journey toward the kingdom and knowledge of God. As the book develops, McIlhenny's use of modern-day voices like his colleague at Geneva College, philosopher Esther Meek, whose insights on wisdom, knowledge, and embodied experience of learning, strengthen his platform, as well.

His reformational overview helps to contextualize what he defines as *critical creative citizens*. The *critical creative citizen* is the aim of his reformational foundation and evidence

of his pedagogical realignment that fashions the whole person to better understand God. Framed in this way, liberal arts, rightly ordered, allows students of faith to explore, learn, and experience their studies in a way that "trace[s] out a path to explore God's revelation in greater depth" (53).

Two areas of reconsideration that McIlhenny invites the reader to explore are the areas of technology and the integration of faith and learning. McIlhenny begins with a critique of one of the most significant disruptors in the higher education field: technology. Although McIlhenny's reform spans several academic spheres, how liberal arts colleges interact with technology is at the forefront in *Reforming the Liberal Arts*. He argues that the paradox of togetherness and separation runs rampant in our age of incoherence, in which the guise of "global community" and the danger of siloed online communities and friendships have taken the place of traditional ones. For McIlhenny, liberal arts educators must combat the technology giant by adhering to pedagogy that will change and challenge both thought and habit in a world that has seemed to have abandoned both.

One way McIlhenny attempts to combat the incoherence of technology is through the lens of neuroscience. McIlhenny argues that "The brain, like the world it perceives, is an integrated system" (35) and that our brains are always working to make sense of the world. In classic liberal arts fashion, McIlhenny draws from another field to prove the point that we are wired to build a perspective of the world and make coherent what is confusing. Through neurological examples, McIlhenny is quick to note that such harmony is difficult and at times painful, but that commitment to coherence in and of God's creation is challenging work worthy to be embraced. While neuroscience seems like an odd rebuttal to technology, McIlhenny's critique of technology and solutions found in neuroscience are worth considering.

McIlhenny explores and reconsiders phrases often used in religious liberal arts schools. His revision of "integration of faith and learning" to "faith as integral to learning" is thoughtful and in line with his reformed preference toward holistic learning rather than a dualistic dichotomy. Although the distinction might strike the reader as mere semantics, McIlhenny skillfully explains what is at stake in distinguishing *integration* and *integrality*. Drawing from the work of higher education professional V. James Mannoia Jr., McIlhenny quotes that "integration presupposes that things not necessarily together are brought together: multiple disciplines, theory and practice, values and learning" (70). The reason McIlhenny favors *integrality* is that he believes faith cannot be mutually exclusive to learning. For him, they are not two autonomous concepts to be melded together but rather both pertain to a whole, in which faith is the heart from which learning springs.

McIlhenny continues his critique of Christian liberal arts jargon by also attempting to replace the often-used term *worldview*, which he defines as one's "philosophy of life," with *life-situations*. McIlhenny argues that the nascent development and formation of human experience can only be cognitively understood once they have words to describe their experiences. Considering his argument, *worldview* falls short in that it could be used to describe a set perspective rather than a perspective that is reflectively and continuously influenced, reinforced, challenged, and developed. The reason McIlhenny advocates for *life-situations* is that he believes it encapsulates the dynamic experiences that "yield" a philosophy rather than a static articulation of *worldview* (70). McIlhenny's language reform is thoughtful and can be useful for educators considering vocabulary to express the importance of lifelong learning. Such language reconsideration can also be a helpful tool with students as they consider the way their dynamic and continuous *life-situations* are actively shaping their perspective of the world.

McIlhenny's unabashed critique of technology and emphasis on reconnecting with reformational thinkers sets a platform from which his reform springs. Once the groundwork is laid and the pedagogical bearings are marked, McIlhenny illustrates what reforming the liberal arts can and should look like through the remainder of the book. Using philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff's vision of *shalom*, an indwelling of living rightly with oneself and others, McIlhenny offers a powerful call for Christian educators to lead students in heart formation aimed at reconciliation in their respective fields. Wisdom, for McIlhenny, is "a combination of both critical reasoning and emotional investment" (105) and should be a pursuit supported by humility. As he elaborates on humility and wisdom, McIlhenny successfully provides a profound vision for what the liberal arts is capable of when wisdom is the pursuit: "it exposes our hearts (and the hearts of others), shatters our foolish pride, and forces us, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to move outside the self to our transcendent-immanent Creator" (112).

McIlhenny elaborates on the importance of the Christian liberal arts college and its formative power of community. With broad brushstrokes, McIlhenny touches on the false idea of the self-made person and the modern mind's divorce between self and environment, and also revisits his critique of technology by looking specifically at how online learning reinforces both. Identifying the foes of communal learning allows McIlhenny to explore the robustness of what a liberal arts college can offer. He does this best in his section on "mirroring" others, where he argues "the habits of others provide models for our own self-creation, becoming who we are by actively pursuing who we are not" (123). To that end, he concludes that the most fertile soil students can be placed in is a community that learns, grows, and lives together. The "mirroring" section is McIlhenny's most applicable, as he provides tangible ways liberal arts schools can strengthen community and frame the desired *telos* of their students. He elaborates on what it means to put humans before technology, to demonstrate the joy of teaching, to model the process of learning, to focus on the students, to be flexible in teaching styles, and to employ habits of retention. Each of the examples is broad enough for many types of colleges to apply, yet potent enough to improve or reinforce institutional pedagogy. One tangible suggestion he includes is for faculty and staff to memorize the institution's mission statement; another is to be communally involved (137).

McIlhenny's lexicon is akin to philosopher James K. A. Smith and his Augustinian perspective on matters of the heart, wherein the spiritual component to learning shapes and directs a person's highest loves. Smith's work on cultural liturgies and his insights on the constant formative experiences humans encounter would be an appropriate and rich resource to draw from in many areas of the book, especially with regard to teleological formation. But in his chapter on spiritual formation, McIlhenny seems to diverge from these central influences. Surprisingly, a good portion of the chapter examines spiritual formation through the lens of mysticism. Though an unexpected medium for a book framed by reformational perspectives, his insights work in conjunction with a notion of students as "worshippers," where the pursuit of worthy things, through rhythm and repetition, help to contextualize the transcendent in our everyday lives. Toward the end of the chapter, McIlhenny nicely ties several of his ideas of formation, mystical longing, and purposeful practice with the concept of wonder. He concludes that the liberal arts, rightly reformed, can help recapture a sense of wonder for learning and realignment towards the knowledge of God to which we aim.

McIlhenny's attempt to reform the liberal arts is timely, especially in an age in which many lament an increasing incoherence. His ability to weave in several sources from different fields, backgrounds, and perspectives is both an argument for and testament to a liberal

arts education. But while this approach provides accessible modes of reforming liberal arts pedagogy, the same technique also takes away from the vital component of framing it within a reformational worldview. McIlhenny would have done well to specify his camp within the reformed tradition and form an argument from there. Instead, the reader gets brief snippets and a cursory review of several reformed perspectives. The argument of the reformed perspective would be strengthened by honing a specific direction and ethos within the tradition. For instance, McIlhenny's theological anchor, as it were, is "sovereignty." Instead of drawing connections to sovereignty with brief reviews of "reformed" buzzwords, he would have done better to more specifically on Abraham Kuyper (which he features already) and sphere sovereignty or Evan Runner and the Holy Word's connection to learning. Identifying a particular reformed persuasion would help readers pinpoint more clearly what McIlhenny means by "reformed" and provide himself an opportunity to display the richness of the reformed tradition by distinctly showing, rather than quickly telling. And while many readers with a reformational background will still nod in agreement with McIlhenny's content, the book's argumentative brevity may dissuade readers that may benefit most from "reforming."

Additionally, I was surprised that McIlhenny's reformational philosophy did not feature more of an emphasis on Augustine's rightly order loves or the wealth of reformed knowledge that James K. A. Smith speaks to on matters and formation of the heart that is deeply rooted in Augustine. To be sure, McIlhenny cites both of these sources throughout his text and alludes to matters of the heart especially in his chapter "The Heart of Learning," though not as much as I had expected. And while defining and describing general and special revelation and common grace can be helpful in arguing for reforming the liberal arts, the philosophical argument could have been strengthened by building more on matters of the heart, its *telos*, and the strong reformational conviction that to be human is to worship. Doing so would have held more reformational weight, while also making it more accessible for educators who would benefit most by considering McIlhenny's call of reform.

Still, *Reforming the Liberal Arts* is a helpful resource as educators consider what the liberal arts are to be in an age of educational incoherence. Through it, those from a reformed persuasion will be encouraged and those curious will be intrigued by both his philosophical framework and the helpful, practical wisdom McIlhenny offers. Books like this will only strengthen the pursuit of a more robust and diverse education that will, as McIlhenny concludes, "yield a picture of the world that reflects God's own being—a unity in plurality" (161).

# CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR'S REVIEW

*Index to articles and book reviews, Volume XLVII*

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## Article Index

- Baker, Jack R. and Jeffrey Bilbro, *How Wendell Berry Helps Universities Inhabit Their Places*, 4:415
- Beebe, Gayle D., *Response to Dr. Phil Ryken's CSR Article on Christ's Threefold Office as the Paradigm for Presidential Leadership*, 2:127
- Bowald, Mark, *Editor's Preface*, 4:323
- Bridges, Maureen Miner, *Psychological Contributions to Understanding Prejudice and the Evangelical Mind*, 4:363
- Dalrymple, Timothy, *The Evangelical Mind in the Digital Fields*, 4:391
- Devers, Erin E. and Jason D. Runyan, *The Impact of Thinking Fast and Slow on the Evangelical Mind*, 4:433
- Draper, Andrew T., *Christ the Center: An Evangelical Theology of Hope*, 4:345
- Fea, John, *What Is the State of the Evangelical Mind on Christian College Campuses?*, 4:341
- Green, Jay, *On the Evangelical Mind and Consulting the Faithful*, 4:335
- Hoekema, David A., George Marsden, Richard Mouw, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Alvin Plantinga, *Christian Perspectives on Learning*, 1:3
- Johnson, Karen J., *Remembering Our Racial Past: Using Institutional Lament to Shape Affections*, 4:445
- Johnstone, David M., *The Unexpectedness of Hope: Good News for a Generation*, 4:407
- Maxson, Rachel, *People of the Magazine? Evangelical Innovation for Cultural Engagement amid Technological Change*, 4:373
- Miller, Eric, *Anti-Intellectualism and the Integration of Faith and Learning*, 4:329
- Mullen, Shirley A., *Response to a Christ-Centered Presidency: The Threefold Office of Christ as a Theological Paradigm for Leading a Christian College*, 2:139
- Ostrander, Rick, *The Role of the Christian University in the Cultivation of the Evangelical Mind*, 4:401
- Parrott, Roger, *Response to Dr. Ryken's Article on Presidential Leadership*, 2:137
- Parler, Branson, *Organic in the Bedroom: The Fertile Vision of Wendell Berry and Humanae Vitae*, 1:17
- Ream, Todd C., Jerry Pattengale, and Christopher J. Devers, *Introduction to the Theme Issue*, 4:325
- Robinson, William, *Response to Dr. Ryken's Essay on a Christ-Centered Presidency*, 2:149
- Ryken, Philip, *Christ-Centered Presidency: The Threefold Office of Christ as a Theological Paradigm for Leading a Christian College*, 2:107
- Ryken, Philip, *Author's Response to Comments for the CSR Issue on the Threefold Office of Christ as a Model for Presidential Leadership at a Christian College*, 2:159
- Sansom, Dennis L., *The Security of the Self: The Bazaar Versus Contemplation*, 3:219
- Smith, C. Christopher, *Addressing the Evangelical Mind-Body Problem: The Local Church as Learning Organization*, 4:353

- Smith, R. Scott, *Toward a More Biblical (and Pneumatological) Model for Integration, Teaching, and Scholarship*, 1:31
- Snyder, Peter J., *Introduction to the Special Issue on a Christ-Centered College Presidency*, 2:105
- Starckenburg, Keith E. and Mackenzi Huyser, *A Christian Perspective on Belonging: A Case Example of a Gentrifying Urban Neighborhood*, 3:239
- Stephens, Mark, *The Parachurch Down Under: A Case Study*, 4:383
- Taylor, Grant D., *Commending the Gospel: Evangelical Seminaries and Our "Letters of Recommendation,"* 4:423
- Yancey, George and Michael O. Emerson, *Having Kids: Assessing Differences in Fertility Desires between Religious and Nonreligious Individuals*, 3:263
- Book Review and Reviewer Index**
- Bacote, Vincent, review of Bartholomew, 2:205
- Badley, Ken, review of Smith and Felch, 3:317
- Bartholomew, Craig G., *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*, 2:205
- Brodnax, Sr., David, review of Dreisbach, 1:88
- Buratovich, Michael, review of Fugle, 1:96
- Buratovich, Michael, review of Greenwood, 1:96
- Carlson, Clayton D., review of Venema and McKnight, 2:212
- Chen, Weishuan Sandy, review of Longman, 4:463
- Dreisbach, Daniel L., *Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers*, 1:88
- Finn, Nathan A., *Restoring the Soul of the University – An Extended Review*, 4:455
- Finn, Nathan A., review of Glanzer, Alleman, and Ream, 4:455
- Fugle, Gary N., *Laying Down Arms to Heal the Creation-Evolution Divide*, 1:96
- Gladd, Benjamin L. and Matthew S. Harmon, *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*, 1:65
- Glanzer, Perry L., Jonathan P. Hill, and Byron R. Johnson, *The Quest for Purpose: The Collegiate Search for a Meaningful Life*, 4:466
- Gonzalez, Justo L., *The History of Theological Education*, 1:51
- Greenwood, Kyle, *Scripture and Cosmology: Reading the Bible between the Ancient World and Modern Science*, 1:96
- Guthrie, Sam, review of McIlhenny, 4:469
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*, 1:85
- Howard, Thomas Albert, *The Pope and the Professor: Pius IX, Ignatz von Dollinger, and the Quandary of the Modern Age*, 2:171
- Howard, Thomas Albert, *A Response to Rick Kennedy*, 2:177
- Johnson, Lenore M. Knight, review of Hochschild, 1:85
- Jones, Beth Felker and Jeffrey W. Barbeau, eds., *The Image of God in an Image-Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, 3:307
- Kallenberg, Michael J., review of Olson, 1:90
- Keeley-Jonker, Bethany, review of Thompson, 3:305
- Kennedy, Rick, *The Pope and the Professor – An Extended Review*, 2:171
- Kennedy, Rick, review of Howard, 2:171
- Larson, Marion H. and Sara L. H. Shady, *From Bubble to Bridge: Educating Christians for a Multifaith World*, 1:59
- Longman, Karen A., ed., *Diversity Matters: Race, Ethnicity, & the Future of Christian Higher Education*, 4:463
- McIlhenny, Ryan, *Reforming the Liberal Arts*, 4:469
- Megoran, Nick, *Warlike Christians in an Age of Violence*, 3:312
- Olson, Roger E., *The Essentials of Christian Thought: Seeing Reality through the Biblical Story*, 1:90
- Oord, Thomas Jay, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence*, 1:93
- Perez, Adam and Glenn Stallsmith, *Making All Things New – An Extended Review*, 1:65
- Perez, Adam and Glenn Stallsmith, review of Gladd and Harmon, 1:65
- Peters, Mark A., *Advancing Mariology – An Extended Review*, 3:287
- Peters, Mark A., review of Schaeffer, 3:287
- Rasche, Carl A., *Critical Theology: Introducing an Agenda for an Age of Global Crisis*, 2:207
- Reimer-Kirkham, Sheryl, *The Christian College and the Meaning of Academic Freedom – An Extended Review*, 2:163
- Reimer-Kirkham, Sheryl, review of Ringenberg, 2:163
- Ringenberg, William C., *The Christian College and the Meaning of Academic Freedom: Truth-Seeking in Community*, 2:163

Roudkovski, Viktor, review of Witherington, 3:309

Sanders, Glenn E., review of Glanzer, Hill, and Johnson, 4:466

Schaeffer, Jame, ed., *Advancing Mariology: The Theotokos Lectures 2008-2017*, 3:287

Schultz, Carl, review of Stump, 3:315

Smith, David I., *The History of Theological Education – An Extended Review*, 1:51

Smith, David I., review of Gonzalez, 1:51

Smith, David I. and Susan M. Felch, *Teaching and Christian Imagination*, 3:317

Spence, Martin, review of Megoran, 3:312

Spiegel, James S., review of Oord, 1:93

Stump, J. B., ed., *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology)*, 3:315

Thompson, Deanna A., *The Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World*, 3:305

Van Dyke, Michael, review of Jones and Barbeau, 3:307

Van Groningen, W. (Bill), review of Warren, 2:210

Van't Land, Andrew, review of Rasche, 2:207

Venema, Dennis R. and Scot McKnight, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science*, 2:212

Visser, Lauren Anders, *From Bubble to Bridge – An Extended Review*, 1:59

Visser, Lauren Anders, review of Larson and Shady, 1:59

Warren, Tish Harrison, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*, 2:210

Witherington III, Ben, *A Week in the Fall of Jerusalem*, 3:309

### Review Essay and Response Index

Beck, Richard, *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted*, 1:71

Burwell, Rebecca C., *Families Living on the Margins – A Review Essay*, 3:293

Burwell, Rebecca C., review of Desmond, 3:293

Burwell, Rebecca C., review of Edin and Shaefer, 3:293

Burwell, Rebecca C., review of Shedd, 3:293

Desmond, Matthew, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, 3:293

DeVan, Benjamin B., *God, Jesus, and the Apostle Paul Behaving Badly – A Review Essay*, 2:179

DeVan, Benjamin B., review of Lamb, 2:179

DeVan, Benjamin B., review of Richards and O'Brien, 2:179

DeVan, Benjamin B., review of Strauss, 2:179

DeVan, Benjamin B., *Summary Response: God, Jesus, and the Apostle Paul Behaving Badly*, 2:203

Edin, Katherine J. and H. Luke Shaefer, *\$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in the U.S.*, 3:293

Huyser, Mackenzie, *Perspectives on Racial Segregation in Chicago*, 1:71

Huyser, Mackenzie, review of Beck, 1:71

Huyser, Mackenzie, review of Moore, 1:71

Huyser, Mackenzie, review of Mulder, 1:71

Huyser, Mackenzie, review of Wilkerson, 1:71

Lamb, David T., *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?*, 2:179

Lamb, David T., *A Response to Ben DeVan*, 2:191

Moore, Natalie, *The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation*, 1:71

Mulder Jr., Jack, *A Response to Van Kuiken on the Immaculate Conception*, 3:281

Mulder, Mark, *Shades of White Flight: Evangelical Congregations and Urban Departure*, 1:71

Richards, E. Randolph and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Paul Behaving Badly: Was the Apostle a Racist, Chauvinist Jerk?*, 2:179

Richards, E. Randolph and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Response to Ben DeVan's Review of Paul Behaving Badly*, 2:199

Shedd, Carla, *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice*, 3:293

Strauss, Mark L., *Jesus Behaving Badly: The Puzzling Paradoxes of the Man from Galilee*, 2:179

Strauss, Mark L., *Response to Ben DeVan's Review of Jesus Behaving Badly*, 2:195

Wilkerson, Isabel, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, 1:71