

CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR'S REVIEW

**THEME ISSUE—PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS AND THE COMMON
GOOD: CHRISTIAN THINKING FOR HUMAN FLOURISHING**

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TODD C. REAM, JERRY PATTENGALE, AND CHRISTOPHER J. DEVERS, *Introduction to the
Theme Issue*

MARK STEPHENS, *Cruciformity and the Public Intellectual: Christian Weakness for the
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DARIN DAVIS, *Seeking the Common Good by Educating for Wisdom*

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REVIEWS

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Introduction to the Theme Issue: Public Intellectuals and the Common Good: Christian Thinking for Human Flourishing

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

We live in a divided age. Impeachment hearings, the push to the 2020 presidential election, and, of course, Covid-19 dominate headlines in the United States. Unfortunately, the fault lines those events expose will likely only grow by the time these words are published.

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One is thus not likely surprised by the ways such plagues also descended upon the houses evangelical Christians populate. Once a means to refining our common appreciation for truth, debate has collapsed into becoming a means of pursuing the mirage-like balm tribalism affords people during times ruled by fear. As a result, the identities evangelical Christians all too often hold are defined by what they oppose versus what they promote.

Scholars and, in particular, historians, are striving to understand how we came to this point as people of faith. In *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump*, John Fea wrestles with the question concerning how evangelicals and white

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evangelicals, in particular, came to support Trump as a presidential candidate at a higher level than any other candidate for whom such data exists.¹ In *Who is an Evangelical? The History of a Movement in Crisis*, Thomas S. Kidd argues the crisis made evident by the 2016 presidential election was lurking below the surface through at least the latter half of the twentieth century. In fact, Kidd argues “The problems go back at least to the beginning of polling about evangelicals’ partisan preferences.”²

In the introduction to *Evangelicals, Who They Have Been, Are Now, and Could Be*, a book he co-edited with David W. Bebbington and George M. Marsden, Mark A. Noll opens by noting “The word ‘evangelical’ is in trouble—but for different and competing reasons.”³ In general, Noll mentions those reasons as at least including three. First, Noll covers comparable ground as Fea by noting the ways “pollsters and pundits have fixated on the overwhelming support [Donald Trump] has received from a constituency often called simply ‘evangelicals’”—or, if there is a pause for breath, ‘white evangelicals.’”⁴ Second, Noll contends a less obvious yet critical component in these discussions involves divisions between historians concerning how the story of evangelicalism is told. Third, Noll contends that even if a consensus exists concerning how a term such as “evangelical” is defined within the United States, such a definition may not hold when extended beyond those borders. In particular, he notes that what emerges does not involve “political or theological standoffs” but “sheer, mind-boggling diversity.”⁵

Noll, Bebbington, and Marsden, as well as Kidd and Fea, offer their own responses to this crisis that merit serious consideration. We hope that what follows in this issue adds to those responses, doing so in ways that overlap with their contributions while also offering evangelicals and, in particular, evangelical scholars a two-prong option to consider. Such an option is drawn from the larger “Public Intellectuals and the Common Good: Christian Thinking for Human Flourishing” project. It began with a symposium held at the Sagamore Institute in Indianapolis, Indiana on September 26-27, 2019, and now comes to full fruition in these pages and in the pages of a volume bearing the same title scheduled for release by InterVarsity Press.

The first prong in the option we encourage evangelical scholars to consider involves how they may understand themselves as public intellectuals. In *The Second Mountain: The Quest for the Moral Life*, David Brooks argues the walls reli-

¹John Fea, *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2018).

²Thomas S. Kidd, *Who is an Evangelical? The History of a Movement in Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 150.

³Mark A. Noll, introduction to *Evangelicals: Who They Have Been, Are Now, and Could Be*, eds. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2019), 1.

⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

⁵*Ibid.*, 11.

gious people and institutions sometimes build “were caused by the combination of an intellectual inferiority complex with a spiritual superiority complex.”⁶ In essence, Brooks argues one way Christian intellectuals (of which evangelicals are likely part in Brooks’ estimation) respond to that inferiority is not by prayerfully yearning for wisdom but through exercises of self-righteousness. As a result, too many Christians “withdraw into the purity of their enclave.”⁷ Doing so then “gives people a straightforward way to interpret the world—the noble us versus the powerful and sinful them.”⁸

At a time of crisis such as the one detailed by Fea, Kidd, Noll, Bebbington, and Marsden, such a response may prove emotionally explainable. Regardless, it fails to be theologically defensible. In contrast, Jesus Christ came to serve as the perfect mediator between God and humanity, the infinite and the finite, the just and the unjust. To whatever vocational end God created them, all who accept the perfect mediation Christ offers through the gift of salvation are, in turn, called to do the same regardless of how imperfect their efforts may be.

By virtue of their vocation, evangelical scholars are called to serve as not only intellectuals but public intellectuals or, according to Michael Desch, “persons who exert a large influence in the contemporary society of their country through their thought, writing, and speaking.”⁹ While we would add the Church to Desch’s understanding of contemporary society, we believe Desch’s definition and the practices it highlights have merit.

The second prong then involves to what end evangelical scholars as public intellectuals seek to exert influence through “their thought, writing, and speaking.” Space unfortunately prohibits us from detailing the growing body of literature concerning the crisis public intellectuals are also facing. However, a quick assessment of that literature would note the absence of a clear end to which public intellectuals seek to exert their influence.

In contrast, we argue that end is the common good. Offered in his recent book simply titled *The Common Good*, Robert B. Reich argues the common good is determined by a society’s need to “agree on basic principles—such as how we deal with our disagreements, the importance of our democratic institutions, our obligations to the law, and our respect for the truth—if we’re to participate in the same society.”¹⁰ While we do not disagree with Reich’s understanding of the common good, we do not believe it proves to be wholly sufficient. In particular, it lacks what a Christian anthropology alone can offer—that our gratitude for what Christ did for us then demands we owe one another. Regardless of how human depravity makes it difficult to see the image of God in others, nothing

⁶Ibid., 256.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Michael C. Desch, introduction to *Public Intellectuals in the Global Arena: Professors or Pundits?*, ed. Michael C. Desch (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 1.

¹⁰Robert B. Reich, *The Common Good* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018), 22.

can negate its existence.

As a result, the evangelical scholar's concern with the common good is determined by the ways one sees all persons as bearing that image. That line of sight is thus often referenced within the wider Christian tradition as the beatific vision.¹¹ In more eloquent terms than we could offer, Jacques Maritain writes in *The Person and the Common Good* that:

The beatific vision is therefore the supremely personal act of the soul, transcending absolutely every sort of the created common good, enters into the very bliss of God and draws its life from the uncreated Good, the divine essence itself, the uncreated common Good of the three divine persons.¹²

Regardless of the challenges posed by a particular crisis, evangelical scholars are called to exert influence through "their thought, writing, and speaking" in ways that reconnect members of the created order if for no other reason than doing so bears witness to the Triune nature of the God they are called to serve. We, in fact, believe that the more pressing the crisis, the more a witness to God's nature is needed.

In their own ways, the essays explore dimensions of those options and do so in ways we believe merit consideration by individual Christian scholars as well the institutions they serve. Mark Stephens' "Cruciformity and the Public Intellectual: Christian Weakness for the Common Good" opens this issue by adding to this theological understanding in relation to public intellectuals and the common good. Darin Davis' "Seeking the Common Good by Educating for Wisdom" extends that line of thinking in relation to institutional contexts such as the Christian university. Abson Pr edestin Joseph's "Shaping Prophetic Voices for the Public Sphere" then discusses how such understandings can be formatively put into practice.

This issue then closes with two essays that argue that such an understanding of the relationship shared by public intellectuals and the common good is predicated upon how we diversify our understandings of the public intellectual. In "From 'Stranger' to 'Neighbor': Neurodiversity's Visionary Opportunities as Public Intellectuals Promote the Common Good," Mark Eckel contends we expand our thinking to include what individuals with neurodiverse gifts offer. Hank Voss then argues in "The Public Theology of all Baptized Believers: Wisdom from Don Davis, Robert Romero, and Paige Cunningham" for including voices previously excluded from conversations led by public intellectuals. If an understanding of the common good such as a beatific vision offers is to be pursued, including such voices proves necessary.

¹¹For an elaborate discussion of the beatific vision in the Christian tradition, please see Hans Boersma's *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2018).

¹²Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 21.

In many ways, this theme issue and the essays it contains is just the beginning of a conversation we now invite you to join. The divided age in which we find ourselves may have lurked below the surface long before the 2016 presidential election. However, the cross confirms such divisions are not permanent. The sacrifice Christ offered not only serves as the means by which we are reconciled to God but by which we are also reconciled to one another. While such efforts will undoubtedly not be easy, we hope these essays offer encouragement to evangelical scholars who embrace the calling serve as mediators in Christ's name.

Cruciformity and the Public Intellectual: Christian Weakness for the Common Good

By Mark Stephens

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In 2017, Alan Jacobs released *How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds*.¹ Within this slim volume, Jacobs offers practical strategies for improving thinking and conversation in a fractious age. Drawing upon his many years of experience as a humanities professor, Jacobs appropriates insights from an eclectic mix of psychologists, anthropologists, journalists, and essayists. The aim throughout is to build our capacity to disagree charitably, to counteract our cognitive bias, and to learn the art of virtuous conversation. The value of Jacobs work to all public intellectuals seems immediately apparent, and his work sits as one amongst many helpful volumes which diagnose the parlous state of public discourse throughout Western democracies.²

One prominent lacuna in *How to Think* is the lack of theological reflection upon the practice of thinking in public. Despite Jacobs own prominence as a Christian intellectual,³ *How to Think* does not intend to offer biblical or theological insights. This statement is offered as an observation, not as a criticism, in order to highlight that a space remains to consider how a distinctly Christian approach might contribute to being a public intellectual. Accordingly, this article is dominated by one overriding question: what is the manner and means of the *evangelical* public intellectual?

In order to answer this question, we shall proceed in three distinct sections. First, we need to briefly define what we mean by the terms “evangelical” and

Public intellectuals deploy their thinking as a way of exercising power and influence. Simply put, their aim is to change the world through spreading ideas and winning debates. An evangelical approach to being a public intellectual involves redefining that power through the lens of the cross. In deliberate conformity to the example of Christ, evangelical public intellectuals influence the world according to a cruciform pattern. This template, which recurs across multiple streams of New Testament tradition, enables power to be exercised through weakness, and influence through sacrifice. **Mark Stephens** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Public Christianity and a Fellow of the Lumen Research Institute. He was previously Director of Integrative Studies and Research at Excelsia College. His primary research areas are the Book of Revelation, the practice of Christian higher education, and the intersection of theology and popular culture. He is the author of *Annihilation and Renewal: The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation*.

“public intellectual.” Second, in view of our working within an evangelical frame, we will articulate a cruciform ethic for intellectual practice which is grounded in a synthesis of various New Testament texts. Finally, we offer some summary thoughts on how a cruciform approach makes a distinct contribution to the practice of public thinking, in which power, weakness, and influence are redefined by the Scriptural imagination.

The Evangelical Public Intellectual

Our preferred term – “evangelical public intellectual” – is by no means self-interpreting. Each of its constituent elements is subject to debate and discussion. For reasons of brevity we cannot offer a full-orbed exploration of the issues, but we can at least make clear the definitions in play. We begin by considering the last part first: what should be foremost in our minds when we think of a “public intellectual?”

Richard Posner, in his influential work from 2003, posited that [public intellectuals are] “intellectuals who opine to an educated public on questions of or inflected by a political or ideological concern.”⁴ What this definition gestures towards is that public intellectuals stand in proximate relationship to power.

Here we are working with Michael Gorman’s generic definition of power: [Power is] “understood as the ability to exercise significant control or influence, either for good or for ill, over people and/or history. Power, we might say, is the ability to form or to transform.”⁵ We define the public intellectual as a thinker who aspires to the exercise of power, authority, and public influence, through the instrumentality of ideas. Thus, the essential criteria for being a public intellectual is the substantive *impact* of one’s ideas in arenas beyond academia.⁶

Such a definition of a public intellectual in terms of proximity to power

¹Alan Jacobs, *How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds* (New York: Convergent, 2017). The British version of this work is titled *How to Think: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Profile, 2017). To what degree this reflects a broader cultural divide, where the rest of the world is perplexed, but the United States sees threat, I leave the reader to adjudicate.

²Arthur C. Brooks, *Love your Enemies: How Decent People can save America from the Culture of Contempt* (New York: Broadside, 2019); Ben Sasse, *Them: Why we Hate Each Other – and How to Heal* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2018); Tim Muehlhoff and Richard Langer, *Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a post-Christian World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2017); Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London: Penguin, 2013).

³Alan Jacobs, “The Watchmen: What became of the Christian Intellectuals?” *Harper’s Magazine* 333.1996 (November 2016): 54-60.

⁴R. A. Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.

⁵Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 269.

⁶Here I am adopting the definition attributed to the Australian historian Stuart McIntyre in P. David Marshall and Cassandra Atherton, “Situating Public Intellectuals,” *Media International Australia* 156 (2015): 76.

inevitably leads us to consider a related phenomenon—that of the public intellectual’s proximity to celebrity. Changing forms of media led to a reconfiguration and democratization of public intellectual power. It is commercial media, in its diverse forms (print, televisual, and digital), which now constitutes much of the public sphere within which intellectuals must seek their influence.

Accordingly, Marshall and Atherton point to the emerging significance of TED talks and YouTube videos as a prime location for public intellectual discourse.⁷ But the compressed forms of communication which are favored by such sites, along with the global possibility for any piece of content to go “viral,” lends itself to the association of the public intellectual with the domain of popular celebrity. Rare though it may be, public intellectuals can achieve a measure of fame and glory, from Ta Nehisi-Coates through to Jordan Peterson, from Cornel West through to Sherry Turkle.⁸

Yet such celebrity is inextricably embedded within a contemporary political context that has become more fractious and tribalized, and an ideologically segmented media environment, in which the work of the public intellectual is easily coopted for broader partisan causes. If we draw these threads together, it can be seen that our definition of a public intellectual is one which stresses the practice of thinking in public as an (attempted) exercise of power and influence, which may in turn lend itself to the reception of public honor and celebrity. The general aim is to influence the world, to change the world, through spreading ideas and strong debates.

Having defined something of the “public intellectual” in general, we now need to define what we mean by the adjective “evangelical.” In our politicized times, where “evangelical” seems more sociological than theological,⁹ it may reasonably be argued that we should jettison the label for something less aggravating, such as classical, orthodox, or even the more generic “Christian.” As an Australian, it is somewhat horrifying to have Collin Hansen open up his 2011 discussion of evangelicalism with the statement: “Americans have little trouble identifying an evangelical: someone who stayed loyal to George W. Bush before transferring allegiances to Sarah Palin.”¹⁰ The fact that this outdated remark would substitute the name “Donald Trump” brings even greater discomfort.¹¹ My point

⁷*Ibid.*, 73-75. See also Glenn D’Cruz and Niranjala Weerakkody, “Will the Real Waleed Aly Please Stand Up? Media, Celebrity and the Making of an Australian Public Intellectual,” *Media International Australia* 156 (2015): 142-151.

⁸For one such example see Kelefa Sanneh, “Jordan Peterson’s Gospel of Masculinity,” *The New Yorker*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/05/jordan-petersons-gospel-of-masculinity>.

⁹So Michael Gerson, “The Last Temptation,” *The Atlantic*, April 2018, 42-52.

¹⁰Collin Hansen, “Introduction,” in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, ed. Collin Hansen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), Kindle Locations 24-25.

¹¹“The 2016 presidential election would become the most shattering experience for evangelicals since the Scopes Trial.” (Thomas Kidd as cited in Alan Jacobs, “Evangelical has lost its Meaning,” *The Atlantic*, Sep 22, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/the-end-of-evangelical/598423/> (accessed 31/10/2019).

here is not partisan; it is the horror that a word pertaining to the gospel could be easily reduced to a political preference. However, for the purposes of the ensuing analysis, the evangelical label remains pertinent, for reasons we shall unpack in the next few paragraphs.

“Evangelical” and “evangelicalism” have always been contestable terms, and debates over the essence of the movement show no signs of abating.¹² Indeed in modern Christian discourse the term often requires additional nuance by supplying further adjectives such as “conservative,” “progressive,” “reformed,” and “charismatic.” In a generic sense, perhaps the most widely used definition of evangelicalism was developed in the 1980s by the British historian David Bebbington who articulated a quadrilateral of priorities that map the essential emphases of the movement. These include “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.”¹³

For our purposes, the utility of this quadrilateral lies primarily in its third and fourth priorities. Biblicism matters because evangelicals are to be identified by their high valuing of Scripture. Hence, our exploration of evangelicals as public intellectuals needs to focus on individuals who prioritize the resources of Scripture as the primary source of guidance for praxis. With a view to crucicentrism, we must first acknowledge that evangelicalism mostly focuses on the cross in terms of its soteriological effect.¹⁴ It might therefore be expected that to exhort an evangelical public intellectual to be crucicentric would entail that thinker prominently and regularly featuring the atoning death of Jesus in their public contributions.

However, our concern here is not primarily with the thematic content of a speaker, as important as that might be. Rather, our focus is the manner and mode of thinking in public. Accordingly, we will argue that evangelical crucicentrism should affect the shape of a thinker’s practice, such that their contribution to the common good is definably cruciform. Such “cruciformity” lies at the essence of what it means to think in and for Christ, within the public square. To a biblical consideration of what that means we now turn.

The New Testament Pattern of Cruciformity

As with salvation, so with sanctification, the New Testament’s vision of a believer’s praxis is predominantly focused on Christ. As Ben Witherington states in his recent work *Biblical Theology*: “...what needs to be stressed is the Christological shape or pattern the Christian life is supposed to take. One is called to the imitation

¹²See Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 13-18; Thomas S. Kidd, *Who is an Evangelical? The History of a Movement in Crisis* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2019).

¹³David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin & Hyman, 1989), 2-3.

¹⁴See *Ibid.*, 14-17.

of Christ, the replication of Christ's character and also his chosen behavior in the life of the believer."¹⁵ The broad rubric of "Christlikeness" effectively summarizes the substance and goal of New Testament ethics. The "Christlike" label, however, can be somewhat domesticated, whereby the vagueness of behaving "like Jesus" is reduced to a polite focus on manners, rather than revolutionary reformation of character and practice.

The general notion of Christlikeness thus needs to be clarified by a term such as "cruciformity." Cruciformity is a term made prominent by Michael Gorman as a way of describing Paul's narrative spirituality of the cross.¹⁶ Although he limits it only to Paul, Gorman's rubric proves fruitful in labeling the essential paradigm of the Christian life across the whole of the New Testament. In simple terms, the specifics of Christlikeness are that it involves conformity to the crucified Christ.¹⁷ To demonstrate this, we shall examine the dynamics of cruciformity in three separate New Testament sources: the Gospel of Mark, the letters of Paul, and the Apocalypse of John. In each instance we will see that cruciformity inevitably manifests in cruciform living, and that the Christ who is savior is inevitably the Christ who is exemplar.¹⁸ Yet, the aim here is not merely exegetical. On the contrary, our discussion is ultimately geared to our framing question: what is the manner or mode by which the evangelical public intellectual deploys their power?

Gospel of Mark

We begin where the New Testament begins—with stories of Jesus. The Gospels serve a variety of theological functions in the life of the church, primarily with regard to Christology and soteriology. However, such theological functions can never be wholly separated from the ethical functions of these narratives, for the Gospels are documents written to shape the character and praxis of the Christian community to which they are addressed.¹⁹ Nowhere is this nexus between theology and ethics more to the fore than in the Gospel of Mark, whose rich Christology is ultimately programmatic for discipleship.

The opening statement of Mark is boldly Christological: "The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God..." (Mk 1:1).²⁰ Yet the

¹⁵Ben Witherington, III, *Biblical Theology: The Convergence of the Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 434.

¹⁶Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 4.

¹⁷An alternative has been suggested by Scot McKnight, namely "Christoformity" which seeks to magnify the conformity of the believer to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ (see *Pastor Paul: Nurturing a Culture of Christoformity in the Church* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019], 4). I remain convinced that our moment calls for a continuing stress on the cruciform dimensions of Christian imitation.

¹⁸See for example 1 Peter 2:21-25.

¹⁹Note the comments of Jonathan Pennington, "...we cannot simply stop at the revelation in them but must press on to their virtue-forming (aretological) purpose and effect." (*Reading the Gospels Wisely* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 160).

²⁰All quotations are from the NIV (2011).

ensuing narrative is notable for the way human characters regularly misperceive the true messianic identity of Mark's central character.²¹ Indeed, even when Jesus' identity begins to dawn upon the disciples, Mark makes clear that they still do not understand the *meaning* of this identity (Mark 8:31-33; 10:35-45). So it is that Peter initially interprets Jesus' Messiahship in conformity with standard notions of power and glory, and entirely misses the messianic vocation of Jesus as God's suffering servant.²²

For Mark, Jesus can only be truly known as a crucified Messiah. This is best appreciated through considering the plot and structure of Mark. In the opening chapters of the Gospel we see Jesus presented as a powerful wonder-worker, through a rapid series of episodes containing the highest proportion of miracle stories among all the canonical Gospels.²³ Jesus is the inaugurator of God's kingdom (1:15), whose authority is utterly unique (1:22, 27; 2:10; 3:15), even to the point of commanding nature (4:39). Yet, in the first eight chapters, no human truly knows Jesus. As Richard Hays so eloquently states: "The juxtaposition of Jesus' mighty works with the disciples' incomprehension invites us to recognize that power is not self-attesting. Those who know Jesus only as a worker of wonders do not understand him at all..."²⁴ Indeed, it is not until chapter fifteen that a human character confesses Jesus as "Son of God," when a Roman centurion sees him die upon a cross (15:39). Mark's point is both narratively subtle and yet supremely clear: it is only by seeing Jesus as a crucified Messiah that humanity can ever understand him at all.²⁵

Crucially, Mark's presentation of Jesus as a suffering servant is not just theological, it is aretological (virtue-forming). As David A. deSilva encapsulates it, "the shape of Messiahship is also the pattern of discipleship."²⁶ Hence, the frequent episodes and teaching throughout Mark in which the disciples are called to embrace the path of suffering, humility, and status reversal, in conscious imitation of their Lord (Mk 8:34-38; 9:30-37; 10:13-16, 28-45). Here Hays is again worth quoting at length:

The narrative strategy of Mark challenges the reader to draw the conclusion, to answer the question, "Who do you say that I am?" by acknowledging Jesus as the crucified Messiah. That acknowledgement, however, carries with it a corollary of somber significance for Markan ethics: to be Jesus' disciple means to allow one's identity to be stamped by the identity of the one who died forsaken on the cross. *When we embrace Mark's answer to the question, "Who do you say I am?" we are not just making a theological affirmation about Jesus' identity; we*

²¹Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, and New Creation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 75.

²²Mark L. Strauss, *Mark* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2014), 364; Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 78.

²³B. L. Blackburn, "Miracles and Miracle Stories," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 550.

²⁴Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 76.

²⁵David E. Garland, *Mark* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 596.

²⁶David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, & Ministry Formation*, 2nd ed (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2018), 184.

All of this has crucial relevance to the way power is understood and deployed in Mark's narrative world.

As a result, divine power is not surrendered by suffering, rather God's power is made effective through the suffering and humiliation of God's royal Son.²⁸ The Suffering Servant is the one who brings the kingdom. That basic Christological fact carries with it a profound parenetic force for the exercise of power by disciples who imitate their Lord. Christian power cannot be used to oppress, dominate, or impress, it can only be used to serve (Mk 10:45). Moreover, the locus of power does not reside in the privileges of wealth and status, indeed such things might need to be surrendered in order for God's power to be shown (10:29-31).

Cruciformity in Paul's Corinthian Correspondence

We turn now from the Gospels to the epistles of Paul, whose theology of the cross is justly famous. Even more so than Mark, Paul's crucicentrism is first of all soteriological. It is in the cross that Paul boasts of his justification and reconciliation (Rom 3:25; 5:10-11). But the priority of the cross as a means of atonement should not occlude other elements in Paul's crucicentrism. For Paul, the story of Christ established a pattern of life to which believers are meant to conform. One of the dominant descriptors for the present existence of the believer is the phrase "in Christ" (for some examples see I Cor 1:30, 15:22; II Cor 5:17). This union of the believer with Christ spills over with all manner of implications, not the least of which is the motif of "inheritance" in which the blessings accorded to the Son are liberally poured out upon those who are in the Son (Eph 1:3-14).

The believer's union with Christ, however, is also manifested at the behavioral level as the disciple's personal story becomes conformed to the story of Christ. Believers are said to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, not merely in terms of enjoying salvific benefits, but through intimately imitating the same pattern of suffering, death, through to vindication via resurrection (Rom 6:4-5, 8:17; II Cor 13:4; Gal 2:19; Phil 3:10).²⁹ Lest we be misconstrued, the believer's story and Christ's story is never entirely identical. For example, there is no sense in which Paul contends that believers can recapitulate the atoning work of Christ. Nevertheless, Paul does contend that Christ's representative humanity inaugurates a new way of being human (I Cor 15:49; Eph 2:10) for which cruciformity is the basic template.³⁰

In order to demonstrate these emphases, there is no better set of exemplar texts than Paul's Corinthian correspondence. Across these two epistles Paul engages

²⁷Hays, *Moral Vision*, 79 (emphasis mine).

²⁸Which is hinted at in the various intertextual references in Mk 1:11, which draws upon both Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42.

²⁹Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 45-46.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 400.

with a congregation whose love of status, power, intellectual sophistication, and rhetorical flair are now colliding with faith in a crucified Messiah.³¹ This collision emerges early in I Corinthians. Paul's opening salvo boldly asserts the foolishness and weakness of the Christian message, insofar as Christ crucified is equally offensive to both Jews and Gentiles (I Cor 1:18-25). Yet Paul is at pains to show that this message which appears fragile and ridiculous is actually the power and wisdom of God.³²

As with the Gospel of Mark, Christ crucified is both an atoning sacrifice and a pattern by which to live. In I Corinthians 2:2 Paul speaks of his resolve to know nothing except the crucified Christ. While at first blush this may seem to only be a confession of saving faith, as the letter moves on we see Paul immediately state "I came to you in weakness..." (v.3). For Paul, Christ crucified is his portion and his pattern. This is abundantly evident throughout the remainder of the Corinthian correspondence. Therefore, in I Corinthians 4, true apostleship is described as being put on public display at the end of a triumphal procession, humiliated and condemned to die in the arena (4:9).

Note here that the Christian's public engagement is described in terms of being made a spectacle, to go through an experience of dishonor, concluding with a series of phrases deeply redolent of the teaching of Jesus: "When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment" (I Cor 4:12-13).

If I Corinthians lays down a paradigm for cruciform weakness, II Corinthians unpacks that paradigm in all its experiential intensity. II Corinthians is perhaps Paul's most gut-wrenching letter. In the inimitable words of R. P. C. Hanson, "Here, broken sharply off, with none of the jagged edges filed down, is a chunk of Paul's life – authentic, uncensored, bewilderingly complicated, but amazingly interesting."³³ Lying somewhere near the center of II Corinthians is the cruciform example of the apostle himself, whose experience is an overwhelming mixture of certainty and bewilderment. The letter opens with a reference to Paul's pressure and troubles in Asia, experiences so troubling that he "despaired of life itself" (II Cor 1:8-11). Throughout the remainder of the letter, weakness is closely associated with the way of Jesus.

For Paul, this is no accident or surprise. It is inextricably intertwined with being conformed to the image of the Son. Thus, in II Corinthians 3:18 Paul announces that, through the Spirit, believers are being transformed into the image of Christ with ever-increasing glory. But this is immediately followed by a large section demonstrating that such conformity will inevitably appear weak, for it is in weakness that the glory and power of God shine brightest. Paul's description

³¹Brian Rosner and Roy Ciampa, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 71.

³²Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 275-281.

³³R. P. C. Hanson, *II Corinthians* (London: SCM, 1954), 7.

in II Corinthians 4:7 should only ever be quoted, not paraphrased:

⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. (II Cor 4:7-12)

To be transformed into the image of the Son means to be a fragile jar of clay, experiencing vulnerability in the public arena. Addressed to a Corinthian culture of sophistry, Paul claims Christian power means nothing if it is not publicly and privately cruciform.

As with Mark, so for Paul, weakness is not powerlessness. Paul does not speak as a pathetic victim, who cries out with despair that his life and actions are ineffectual. For Paul, cruciformity is the pattern through which divine power is unleashed. Hence power discourse is a regular feature of the Corinthian correspondence (I Cor 4:20, 6:14; II Cor 6:7; 10:4). It is just that power is intimately paired together with suffering and foolishness, no more so than in II Corinthians 12 where he states that "[Christ's] power is made perfect in weakness." (II Cor 12:9). Indeed, for Paul the importance of deploying power and wisdom in a cruciform way is so vital that he baldly states that one's manner of speech can empty the cross of Christ of its power (I Cor 1:17).

Apocalyptic Discipleship: Following the Lamb Wherever He Goes

Having surveyed both Gospel and Epistle, we bring our attention to Revelation or the Apocalypse of John. Traditionally this text has served as a repository for eschatological speculation and theological debate. Yet the tragedy is that the Apocalypse was crafted in service of discipleship.³⁴ At the heart of any notion of "apocalyptic" discourse is the idea of revelation, in which an alternate map of reality is unveiled, both spatially and temporally.³⁵ But for the Apocalypse of John, this reframing of reality is intended to resource a different way of being, through encouraging its audience to live well in the present in light of the eschatological future.³⁶

³⁴Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation after Christendom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), x.

³⁵Wayne Meeks, "Apocalyptic Discourse and Strategies of Goodness," *The Journal of Religion* 80 (2000): 465; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4-5; Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7.

³⁶Note Wayne Meeks' pertinent question: "But what kind of life follows, if the reversed images and torn language of John succeed?" (Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 146).

The rhetorical situation of Revelation is that it is addressed to early Christian communities wrestling with the demands of Christian identity in a hostile culture. *Prima facie*, John's text appears to prioritize motifs of victory. Indeed, one of the chief metaphors for discipleship in this text is that of "conquering."³⁷ But what is noticeable throughout the vision narrative is how images of victorious discipleship are usually collocated with images of suffering (Rev 11:11-12; 12:10-11; 20:4-6). Here we encounter what David Barr calls "symbolic transformation."³⁸ This is where images are "transvalued" by having traditional symbols of power and conquest associated with images of suffering and weakness. As a consequence, John's imagery unveils a new perspective on what constitutes triumph, for in John's symbolic world the "sufferer is the conqueror."³⁹

Crucial to appreciating how this works for John is that his perspective is Christologically grounded and then ecclesologically manifested. In terms of Christology, the dominant image for Christ is that of the Lamb.⁴⁰ The first instance of Lamb imagery, in Revelation 5, is quite definitive for its usage throughout the whole work. Revelation 5 unveils Jesus as the key to God's kingdom plan, leading us to expect a figure of great power and glory.⁴¹ This expectation is then heightened by an audition in verse 5, which announces: "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5).

But having heard of a lion, what John sees is a lamb, and what is more, a lamb looking "as though it had been slain." Indeed, for the remainder of this episode, the Lamb is repeatedly identified as the one who was "slain" (v.6, 9, 12).⁴² The point here is not that Jesus is sometimes a lamb and other times a lion – the point is that the lion *is* the lamb, and the lamb *is* the lion. This juxtaposition of lion and lamb lead to a redefinition of both conquest and weakness. On one hand, the Lamb is clearly powerful, pictured as he is with seven horns (5:6).⁴³ On the other hand, his depiction as a *slaughtered* lamb indicates that he does not conquer according to conventional paradigms. Rather, this is a picture of conquest by means of a sacrificial death, in that Jesus is being portrayed as triumphing through self-

³⁷David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 70. See the repeated usage throughout chapters 2 and 3.

³⁸David L. Barr, "The Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation," *Interpretation* (1984): 39-50.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁰Bauckham, *Theology*, 66.

⁴¹The vocation of the Lamb is to take a scroll from the one who sits upon the throne. Following Bauckham, the scroll is best seen as a heavenly book containing God's secret purpose for establishing his kingdom on earth. See Bauckham, *Theology*, 74, 80.

⁴²From this point onwards in the vision-narrative, Jesus will be predominantly identified as the Lamb, all the way into the new heavens and earth (see Rev 21:9, 14, 22-23, 27; 22:1, 3). Gordon Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (NCCS; Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 80.

⁴³Craig Koester, *Revelation* (Anchor; Doubleday: New York, 2015), 377. For biblical examples, see Deut 33:17; Ps 18:2; 89:17, 24, 1 Sam 2:1. In later passages we find references to the Lamb's "wrath" (6:6) and his ability to "conquer" (17:14; cf. 5:5).

giving love.⁴⁴ Jesus is not a pathetic victim, instead he *conquered* through being slaughtered, and then raised (cf. 1:18).⁴⁵

In terms of ecclesiology, this presentation of Jesus has programmatic significance for the Lamb's disciples.⁴⁶ As indicated earlier, John's rhetorical goal is to form conquerors. But the way a disciple conquers is in conscious imitation of the Lamb's "curious mode of conquest."⁴⁷ Building upon his portrayal of the suffering-and-victorious Christ, John defines the vocation of Christians through a combination of military images and martyr images.⁴⁸ In some instances, the people of God are described as a messianic army. This has already been suggested by the language of "conquering." But these martial overtones are then furthered by certain images such as 7:4-8 and 14:1-4, where the people of God are pictured as 144,000 sealed from the tribes of Israel. As Richard Bauckham argued, this image alludes to a military census, leading to the conclusion that the 144,000 are an army.⁴⁹

This martial imagery, however, is counterbalanced and reframed by another recurring pattern—that of the people of God as the "martyr church" (6:9-11; 11:3-13; 12:10-12; 16:5-7; 20:4-6). Through the presence of numerous intratextual links, these martyrs are connected with the ideal descriptions of faithful believers as articulated in the seven messages of chapters two and three.⁵⁰ At this point, two comments are worth making on this martyr ecclesiology. First, it is not the case that John is saying every Christian will definitely be martyred. But such imagery vigorously asserts that the people of the Lamb are "defined by a willingness to sacrifice [their] life."⁵¹ Second, the rhetorical function of these images is not primarily to describe what is presently happening, or even to precisely predict what will happen, so much as to create a vocational image with which the audience can identify.⁵²

Therefore, we see the same broad pattern as we find in both Mark and Paul as regards the exercise of Christian power. In imitation of the Lamb they follow (Rev 14:4), the people of God are called to triumph *through* their suffering, to conquer *through* their sacrifice. What is being pictured in the Apocalypse is not

⁴⁴Mitchell Reddish, *Revelation* (SH; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 25.

⁴⁵Gordon Fee, *Revelation*, 80.

⁴⁶Stephen Pattemore, *People of God in the Apocalypse: Discourse, Structure, and Exegesis* (SNTS 128; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216.

⁴⁷J. Daryl Charles, "Imperial Pretensions and the Throne-Vision of the Lamb: Observations on the Function of Revelation 5," *Criswell Theological Review* 7.1 (1993): 94.

⁴⁸See Pattemore, *People of God in the Apocalypse*, *passim*.

⁴⁹Richard Bauckham, *Theology*, 76-80. Indeed, in Rev 15:2, the faithful are described as having "conquered" the beast. This helps to explain the reference to "non-defilement" with women (14:4), which may allude to the Israelite army's practice of sexual abstinence in contexts of holy war. However, see Koester, *Revelation*, 610, for some cautions regarding this reading.

⁵⁰Pattemore, *People of God*, 114-115. For two examples of intratextual links to the seven messages, note that Antipas is praised for his martyrdom (2:13), the white garments of 3:4-5 are echoed in 6:11; the suffering predicted for Smyrna (2:10) is seen fulfilled in the martyrs (cf. 20:4).

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 114.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 115; Hays, *Moral Vision*, 173.

despairing hope for future power to somehow make up for present powerlessness. The far more radical thing idea is that the church is pictured as *already* in possession of power to conquer and triumph (Rev 12:10-11). But that power, like the Lamb's, is exercised in cruciform love. It is hard to improve upon Bauckham's eloquent summary:

The martyrs are the real victors. To be faithful in witness to the true God even to the point of death is not to become a victim of the beast, but it is to take the field against the beast and win. But only in a vision of heaven (7:9-14; 15:2-3) or a voice from heaven (11:12; 14:2) can the martyrs be recognized as victors. The perspective of heaven must break into the earth-bound delusion of the beast's propaganda to enable a different assessment of the same empirical fact: the beast's apparent victory is the martyr's—and therefore God's—real victory.⁵³

Applying Cruciform Power as a Public Intellectual

At this juncture it is useful to review the stages of our argument. First, we argued that the public intellectual aspires to exercise power through the instrumentality of ideas, but that an evangelical public intellectual will seek to ground their vocation on the basis of Scripture and with a focus on the cross. Second, we argued that the diverse witnesses of the New Testament evince a basic template for the exercise of power. In conscious imitation of their Lord the Christian disciple is called to practice a cruciform weakness, yet such weakness is never understood as powerlessness, but rather the distinct manner and mode through which the people of God participate in the victory of God. What some desire to separate, the New Testament wants to marry: vulnerability and the reign of God go together. The crucified Messiah, the Lion who is the Lamb, has both suffered and triumphed, because it is sacrificial love that is the way of the kingdom. What, then, does this say to the contemporary public intellectual?

In his seminal 2010 volume *To Change the World*, James Davison Hunter argued the desires of American Christians to be world-changers had been a manifest failure. In a searing analysis of both the Christian Right and Left, Hunter argued all of these paradigms surrendered themselves to unChristlike models of politics.⁵⁴ This leads to the disturbing phenomenon of Christ's disciples seeking to use power for the cause of Christ in a manner opposed to the pattern of Christ. As Hunter himself says "That power will be wielded is inevitable. But the means of influence and the ends of influence must conform to the exercise of power modeled by Christ."⁵⁵

However, this can seem harder to apply in the world of the intellect. The evangelical love of truth, indeed the knowledge that we are proclaiming him who is the light of the world, seems to inherently authorize a posture of domineering

⁵³Bauckham, *Theology*, 91.

⁵⁴James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 109-110.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 254.

arrogance towards the world. The Canadian theologian John Stackhouse speaks of being raised in an evangelical tradition which taught “apologetics as martial arts,”⁵⁶ where the intended goal might be gospel victory, but the regular outcome is further estrangement from Christians because their manner of speech has become so thoroughly boorish.⁵⁷ And let it be said that there are any number of worthwhile reasons why such a posture might be adopted. Chief among these is the fact that the Christian Scriptures can include examples where martial rhetoric is applied to the cause of Christian thinking such as II Cor 10:5, where it speaks of “taking captive every thought.” But it must be remembered that this particular statement is set within a letter that mostly stresses Paul’s suffering and weakness.

Lest the above discussion be regarded as too abstract, we might cite here an example where such considerations have potential relevance. The recent debate between conservative thinkers Sohrab Ahmari and David French over the posture Christians should take towards liberal democracy is potentially illustrative of much we have discussed.⁵⁸ For Ahmari, the culture of classical liberalism is functionally dead, and Christians should no longer “fight” on the basis of liberal principles. Instead, believers should battle for the governmental power to enforce order for the common good. In reply, French maintained his belief that classical liberalism remains viable, and therefore the appropriate Christian posture is one which defends and protects a pluralist public square.

For our purposes, what is intriguing about their conflict is the way martial discourse is deployed within a broader paradigm of social and political power. For Ahmari the language of power and war necessitates a strategy in which godliness might define the goal, but it has very little to say about the means. No Scripture is cited by Ahmari. The language of self-giving is absent. Few, if any, limitations are articulated. The weapons of our warfare are obtaining sufficient political power for righteous government to intervene. That is the way Christians conquer.

For French, the language of war needs to be eschewed. Unlike Ahmari, he seeks the guidance of Scripture that whatever path we take cannot violate love of neighbor and love of enemy.⁵⁹ Thus, French appears ambivalent that the martial language of triumph and victory can easily be paired together with Christlikeness. In this sense, neither of these two thinkers manage to capture the paradoxical vision of the New Testament, although our sympathies lie far more with French. Within the Scriptural imagination to love one’s enemy, to practice cruciform self-

⁵⁶John Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), ix.

⁵⁷See for example Stackhouse’s anecdote concerning an unnamed apologist who swept the floor with his logical argumentation, but whose manner caused one audience member to respond: “I don’t care if the son of a bitch is right. I still hate his guts.” (*Humble Apologetics*, xvi; emphasis original)

⁵⁸Sohrab Ahmari, “Against David French-ism” *First Things*, accessed 01/11/2019, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2019/05/against-david-french-ism>; David French, “Politics is Not War: A Defense of Frenchism,” *National Review* 71.11 (June 24, 2019): 13-14.

⁵⁹French, “Politics is Not War,” 13.

giving for the common good, is the pathway of conquering.

So how might one reimagine intellectual power in the public square in a cruciform manner? Here we shall limit ourselves to three basic rubrics: humility, hospitality, and sacrifice.

First, the Christian public intellectual should be characterized by humility from start to finish. Rejecting the love of honor (*philotimia*) that is endemic within both the ancient and modern worlds,⁶⁰ the Christian intellectual seeks for the public because they love the public, rather than because they love praise. Importantly, humility is not powerlessness. Here we adopt the definition of humility advocated by John Dickson in his book *Humilitas*, where he states: "Humility is the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself. More simply, you could say the humble person is marked by a willingness to hold power in service of others."⁶¹ Throughout *Humilitas* Dickson is at pains to point out that humility is not necessarily the same thing as humiliation, even though the terms draw from the same ancient roots. It is, after all, the noble choice to lower oneself.

The story of Christ, however, is not one in which humiliation and shame are absent. The cross is an instrument of humiliation and public scorn, and the victory and vindication of Christ is only established through such a path.⁶² We should describe the cross as an action of divine humility, but we should not ignore that it involves a temporary humiliation. For the public intellectual there may be no greater fear than that of being publicly shamed.⁶³ To endure a 'public' loss seems altogether definitive and destructive. And yet the one who is our pioneer was the subject of public ridicule.

Second, the Christian public intellectual should be characterized by hospitality towards the enemy. Across the Old and New Testaments, hospitality functions as a central practice of Christian virtue.⁶⁴ In contemporary discourse, hospitality is all too often used as a cipher for dinner parties with friends.⁶⁵ But the language and examples of hospitality in Scripture prioritize a far more challenging concept: loving and welcoming the stranger, including one's enemy (Rom 12:13; I Tim 3:2;

⁶⁰For more on this see Mark B. Stephens and Georgiane Deal, "The God who Gives Generously: Honour, Praise, and the Agony of Celebrity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71 (2018): 54.

⁶¹John Dickson, *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), Kindle Location 167.

⁶²See Phil 2:5-11 for perhaps the most poignant narration of this.

⁶³On contemporary shame, although not primarily for intellectuals, see Jon Ronson, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* (London: Picador, 2016).

⁶⁴Christine D. Pohl, "Hospitality is a Way of Life Fundamental to Christian Identity," in *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), Kindle Locations 20. For a survey of the biblical evidence, together with the witness of Christian history, see Pohl, *Making Room*, Kindle Locations 215-685.

⁶⁵Pohl, *Making Room*, Kindle Location 77.

⁶⁶The standard NT noun for hospitality, *philoxenos*, together with verbs like *xenodocheo* (1 Tim 5:10) or *xenizo* (Heb 13:2) all draw attention to the *xenos* (stranger, foreigner) as the object of love and the recipient of gift.

5:9-10; Tit 1:8; Heb 13:2; I Pet 4:9; III John 8).⁶⁶

The traditional sites for hospitality have been the home, in general, and the meal table, in particular. The value of hospitality as a broader social idea or motif, however, has come to be recognized in the works of political theologians like Luke Bretherton who regards hospitality as a structuring concept which can define the posture Christians should generally adopt towards those with whom they disagree.⁶⁷ Crucial to Bretherton's project is that hospitality constitutes a far superior mode than tolerance. Tolerance works from the language of permission and acceptance, but the call to tolerance struggles to be framed in ways that can encompass generosity and blessing. On the other hand, hospitality is about welcoming the stranger and loving enemies.

The application of hospitality to the domain of public thinking involves conceiving one's opponents as image-bearers to be welcomed. The richness of hospitality lies in its capacity to both acknowledge strangeness and yet maintain generosity and welcome. Indeed, the hospitality of Christ deliberately seeks to think with those whom we disagree, just as we might eat with those whom we do not know.⁶⁸ For welcoming does not constitute affirmation, but it does constitute witness to the reign of God. It is not simply the content of our message, but the manner of our welcome, which adequately demonstrates cruciformity.

Third, cruciform praxis seeks to reframe the public intellectual encounter as an opportunity for sacrificial self-giving. Here the language we use to describe the actions of Christ matter. It is possible to describe Christ's death on the cross in terms of him being a victim. Yet the connotations of that term tend towards the domain of being helpless and powerless. Far better it is to see Christ's action in terms of voluntary sacrifice, in which the divine Son gives his life away in powerful service to others (Mark 10:45; John 10:11-18).

Hence Jesus actively brings the kingdom through being slaughtered, he triumphs through sacrificing himself. By appreciating this dynamic we can avoid two opposite, yet related errors. The fear that sacrifice leads to powerlessness prompts some Christians to seize power for Christ by any means, on the presumption that being nice simply does not cut it.⁶⁹ At the opposite extreme, the ugliness of power leads some to stress that faithful sacrifice means a kind of quiescent resignation and perpetual ineffectiveness. Within the Scriptural imagination, however, power and weakness can and do go together.

What if part of the unique contribution of an evangelical public intellectual

⁶⁷Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 123.

⁶⁸Diana Pavlac Glyer, "Intellectual Hospitality," available at <https://www.apu.edu/articles/intellectual-hospitality/>.

⁶⁹Michael Gerson, "As Jesus Said, Nice Guys Finish Last," *The Washington Post*, Oct 2 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/as-jesus-said-nice-guys-finish-last/2018/10/01/22b954ea-c599-11e8-b1ed-1d2d65b86d0c_story.html.

⁷⁰For one reflection on this in terms of recent Australian political debates, see John Dickson, 'The Art of Losing Well,' Accessed Apr 19, 2019 at <https://www.ternitynews.com.au/opinion/the-art-of-losing-well/>.

is the preparedness to lose debates as an act of sacrificial witness?⁷⁰ What if the manner with which one might endure public scorn or derision is itself a most vital contribution to the common good? For minds formed by a biblical imagination, there must be an awareness that "death" may be necessary, albeit temporary, and that suffering can be effectual. The evangelical public intellectual is not called to wait for the moment when all will be sunshine and light; rather, we are called to offer ourselves according to the shape of the cross, and in the sure hope of a vindicating resurrection.

Conclusion

Our present secular moment is characterized by a polarized public square in which ideological victory is seen as paramount. The role of the public intellectual has always been to exercise power through guiding debates and thereby influencing policies and practices. But in a polarized age the public intellectual easily becomes coopted as a combatant in a culture war, whose job is to succeed in debates, triumph in the courts, and win elections.

An evangelical who aspires to the task of public intellectual must resist these cultural traits. If the New Testament functions as the supreme compass for evangelical behavior, then the entire corpus consistently affirms that crucicentric faith necessarily leads to cruciform practice. This means the deployment of intellectual power must conform to the pattern of the crucified Christ. Embracing that pattern will involve love towards one's enemy, but it will also mean embracing a counter-cultural paradigm in which victory is achieved through sacrificial self-giving. The belief that Christian influence triumphs through seizing power, denigrating opponents, and avoiding ridicule misunderstands the subversive vision of the New Testament, where we see Christ triumph through sacrificing himself for the good of his enemies.

Seeking the Common Good by Educating for Wisdom

By Darin Davis

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It is a noble aspiration that Christian scholars contribute in more constructive ways to discussions in the public arena about the common good. Careful thinking, however, needs to be done about where and how such voices will be cultivated in the coming generations. Social media, for instance, has expanded the bounds of the public square beyond imagination. Anyone with a Twitter account can discuss the most pressing questions and issues of the day. To put it mildly, the substance and tone of reflection and debate about matters that pertain to all of us has not improved as a result of these changes. Such technological platforms cannot guarantee that their users will be honest, charitable, or even reasonable.

Where and how might Christians cultivate persons who have the virtues needed to advance public deliberation about the common good? The university has an essential and indeed imperative role in such formation, especially church-related institutions of higher learning. But is the contemporary university positioned to meaningfully cultivate the next generation of public intellectuals? Answering this question requires attention to the language that the university uses to describe its aims, purposes, and identity. If the university is to contribute to the preparation of those who can speak thoughtfully into questions about the common good, it will need to reimagine its mission as educating for a virtue now direly needed in today's world – wisdom.

It is a noble aspiration that Christian scholars contribute in more constructive ways to discussions in the public arena about the common good. Careful thinking, however, needs to be done about where and how such voices will be cultivated. The university has an essential and indeed imperative role in such formation, but it will need to reimagine its mission as educating for a virtue now direly needed in today's world—wisdom. **Darin Davis** has served as director of the Institute for Faith and Learning at Baylor University since 2008. He holds a faculty appointment in the Baylor Honors Program, serves on the graduate faculty of the Department of Philosophy, and is affiliated faculty of Baylor's George W. Truett Theological Seminary. From 2016-19, he served as Baylor's vice president for university mission. His scholarly research focuses on the history of moral philosophy, virtue ethics, and higher education, and he is the editor of *Educating for Wisdom in the 21st Century* (St. Augustine's Press, 2019).

344 The Problem of Language in the Contemporary University

Colleges and universities face formidable challenges. Among other things, schools are expected to pursue cutting-edge research, educate students for global citizenship, gain recognition in rankings and the public eye, help solve the most vexing problems of our age, ensure graduates get good jobs, raise millions upon millions of dollars, and achieve excellence in everything from the moot court to the basketball court. They must do all of this while keeping students, faculty, staff, alumni, and overseers happy. Of course, they also need to balance the books. The University of Paris did not have to worry about all these things in the twelfth century.

Because institutions seemingly want to say “yes” to almost everything they are asked to do, they are prone to mission drift. Much has been said in the last several decades about the demise of higher education and how its essential work has been neglected or ignored.¹ There is no need to rehearse those arguments here, but it is helpful to realize that many schools are currently in the midst of such unprecedented pressure that they often seem like they are suffering from something akin to cognitive dissonance, running breathlessly from one big trend or initiative to the next, often with mixed results.

Several years ago, the University of Texas at Austin attempted to launch a bold plan to revolutionize undergraduate teaching called Project 2021.² Administrators sought to overhaul degree programs, ramp up online education, enhance experiential learning, and offer short courses embedded in conventional semesters. Project 2021 was intended to change the playing field of undergraduate education, not just at UT-Austin but everywhere else; however, it failed rather miserably and publicly because of a hurried timeline and lack of faculty and staff support. In the end, Project 2021 sapped energy and resources that could have been employed elsewhere because administrators felt pressure to do something “innovative.”

The language currently used to describe the aims of education is revealing. The rhetorically soaring *The Heart of the Matter*, a 2013 report of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, was authored by a blue-ribbon collection of university administrators, scholars, public intellectuals, industry leaders, and others who hoped to articulate the future role of the humanities and the social sciences.³

¹Some notable books that lament contemporary higher education include the following: Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Harry Lewis, *Excellence Without a Soul* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007).

²Lindsay Ellis, “How UT-Austin’s Bold Plan for Reinvention Went Belly Up,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 3, 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/Project2021>.

³American Academy of Arts & Sciences, *The Heart of the Matter* (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2015), <https://www.amacad.org/publication/heart-matter>.

There is much to admire in their work. They describe the need to educate persons for “knowledge, skills, and understanding” in ways that support democracy, encourage a society that is “innovative, competitive, and strong,” and teach for leadership in an interconnected world.⁴

The Heart of the Matter, however, is interesting, both for what it says and does not say. The terms “skills,” “critical thinking,” and “communication skills” are used more than 40 times. This language is not altogether surprising, given the way that faculty and administrators of colleges and universities often appear to conceive of education in largely instrumentalist ways. What is more interesting is the absence (in a 50-plus page document) of the terms “beauty,” “virtue,” “truth,” “ethics,” “morality,” “goodness,” “religion,” “justice,” or “wisdom.” It is difficult to imagine how education that professes to serve democracy, foster a flourishing society, and form leaders can do so without eventually invoking more substantive normative language than “critical thinking.” Though even modest moral language—courage, honesty, justice, for example—now strikes many ears as controversial or archaic, the effort to educate anyone anywhere rests upon some bedrock assumptions about who is being taught (human nature), what and how they ought to be taught (knowledge and virtue), and the more general goals of teaching and learning (truth, goodness, and beauty). These considerations are unavoidable. *The Heart of the Matter* does not get close to the heart of these matters.

The absence of any rich moral vocabulary in *The Heart of the Matter* mirrors the way that many colleges and universities are depriving themselves of the language they need for the tasks before them. Language matters because it shapes the collective imagination of an institution, particularly its faculty. It casts vision, sets priorities, and, in large measure, determines what is to be done. Yet, it is not just the lack of richer moral categories that is problematic: it is the proliferation of terms that have migrated from business and industry contexts to higher education, often by way of publications like the *Harvard Business Review*.

For example, in many higher education circles, three words seem in vogue: “strategic,” “innovative,” and “transformational.” There is nothing intrinsically wrong with these three words, but without some way of making clear their respective goals—a missional true north—they can come to signify almost anything. “Strategic,” for instance, denotes tactical insight before an action. Yet being strategic can mean nothing more than being shrewd, ingenious, or cunning. Totalitarian dictators can be strategic. Likewise, being innovative is now a quasi-virtue in higher learning circles; it denotes a cutting-edge mentality that establishes new pathways for effectiveness and growth. But innovation can be oblivious to the past: it can stress novelty to the exclusion of a sensitive understanding of institutional context, leading to repeated mistakes and unnecessary risks, as UT-Austin’s Project 2021 showed.⁵ Finally, scores of colleges and universities now trumpet themselves

⁴Ibid., 10-13.

⁵For a helpful discussion of “traditioned innovation,” see L. Gregory Jones, *Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016).

as offering an education that is transformational. But transformational in what way? From what and towards what? Schools that teach their students to desire power, money, and prestige over all else are certainly transformational, but not towards what is best. Unless what counts as transformational is part of a larger, teleological account of the essential purposes of an education, the word is hollow.

Educating those who might speak thoughtfully and constructively into the most important questions of the day will require a different language than many colleges and universities currently use. Indeed, what needs to be recovered is precisely the moral vocabulary that, for centuries, was at the heart of the university. One particular notion that could serve as an orienting point for this revival is the virtue of wisdom.

Educating for Wisdom: A Modest Proposal

Wisdom resists a simple definition, but a first step is to recall how the ancient Greek tradition, particularly Plato and Aristotle, understood wisdom, and how their conception of wisdom is embedded in a larger account of what it is to be human.⁶ The Greeks understood wisdom as a virtue (*arête*), an excellence that enables one to strive for true flourishing or happiness (*eudaimonia*). Aristotle, for example, believed that humans are neither morally good nor bad by nature, and maintained that humans can become good by developing, through habituation, a “second nature” of virtue. Virtues become a stable part of one’s character not in an instant, but over time and through experience.

So, what kind of virtue is wisdom? The ancient Greek tradition conceived of wisdom in two aspects, practical and theoretical. *Practical wisdom* involves knowing what to do—as well as how and when to do it—in a way that is consistent with human flourishing.⁷ Navigating a difficult situation with a co-worker, finding the best way to offer advice to a friend in distress, or determining the best way to act courageously in a dangerous situation: all of these require practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is expressed in action. But practical wisdom depends first and foremost on one’s ability to rightly see the circumstances one faces. There is no good way of knowing what, how, and when to act unless one can sensitively appreciate the context in which one will act. But the practically wise person also deliberates about the best way to achieve a goal. For this, one needs both a conception of *what* is being pursued and an understanding of *how* best to achieve it. Accordingly, practical wisdom is aptly described as goal-directed reason and is required for any act of virtue whatsoever. The one who is truly wise has moral vision, the deliberative power to choose well, and then goes on to do what is virtuous.

⁶Some of my discussion here is adapted from Darin H. Davis, “The University in Crisis and the Ways of Wisdom,” in *Educating for Wisdom in the 21st Century*, ed. Darin H. Davis (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2019), 26-41.

⁷Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” trans. W. D. Ross and J. O. Urmson, in *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1106b36-1107a7.

However, seeing, deliberating, and doing the right thing also involve grasping a more general understanding of what is good; this is *theoretical wisdom*.⁸ The Greek insight here is that one cannot know what is best to do in a particular circumstance without knowing what is best more generally. In this way, every virtuous action involves both the particular and the general. In the Greek tradition, theoretical wisdom is described in a number of important texts, including Book VII of Plato's *Republic*. Recall that the lone cave dweller is unshackled from chains of self-imposed ignorance and begins the long, painful ascension towards the ineffable form of the Good, the source of all that is true, good, and beautiful—Being itself.⁹ Aristotle likewise describes a longing that all humans have for this more general kind of wisdom. In his *Metaphysics*, he expresses the yearning to know things at their most general level as the expression of a natural desire—a sense of wonder that all humans have. The particulars we know through the senses “do not tell us the ‘why’ of anything.”¹⁰ Yet we desire to know why; we inquire into the cause of particular things, including ourselves. We seek to understand, to unify disparate elements of experience, to find meaning. This is theoretical wisdom.

How might a university animated by the pursuit of practical and theoretical wisdom prepare the coming generation of public intellectuals who seek the common good? It is crucial that the university recover a moral vocabulary that fits its essential purposes. Simply using the word “wisdom,” of course, will not make one wise, nor will it guarantee that one's efforts to teach and learn will cultivate wisdom, the common good, or anything else. We should not simply trade in the language of the *Harvard Business Review* for the *Nicomachean Ethics* only in order to put it on banners, billboards, and other promotional material while changing very little at all.

Invoking words with philosophical and theological depth can be powerful, however, because it can encourage educators and their students to reflect upon and then use those words, with the goal of (in the case of wisdom) actually living according to them. Language and practice, in this way, are interconnected. Teaching and learning never happen without some reference to the what and the why, without some assent to an imagination about what is being pursued. If we want to educate the coming generation of persons who have a capacity to use their reason to deliberate about the world and think in broad ways about how best to achieve a shared good, there is no more apt virtue to pursue than wisdom.

A university seeking to cultivate practical wisdom, for example, should prepare persons who are careful in thought and speech. If the practically wise person is one who sees the situation before her in its complexity and then can deliberate

⁸Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” 1177a12-1178a8.

⁹Plato, *Republic, Volume II: Books 6-10*, ed. and trans. Christopher Emlyn-Jones, William Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 514a-519d.

¹⁰Aristotle, “Metaphysics,” trans. W. D. Ross, in *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 981b10-12.

before she acts, then the university needs to find ways to cultivate wisdom or at least not encourage the vices that oppose it. This is undoubtedly a complicated question, but it may be helpful to consider the ways that contemporary public discourse is infected by the vice of rashness. We speak without reflection. Our modes of communicating with one another breed this vice. Social media and the 24-hour news cycle exacerbate the problem. The quickest comeback is often judged as more valuable than the well-reasoned answer. Speed is king and pursuing a question with depth is often criticized as boring or wonky.

If colleges and universities want to cultivate practical wisdom instead of rashness, there is one thing they can do: slow down. Educators must find ways to teach students to take a deep breath and actually think before answering important questions. Likewise, they should find other ways to emphasize that care in thought and speech are attributes to be prized, and that both require significant efforts to receive the wisdom of others, whether through the written or spoken word. Too often, students are taught that style trumps content and veracity. Habits of slow, close reading need to be emphasized at every opportunity, not speed reading, or worse yet, distracted glancing from one thing to another. Teachers should encourage students to pause and reflect before answering. These kinds of practices might curb the vice of rashness.

Of course, it might appear that many colleges and universities are, in fact, educating for practical wisdom through the courses and programs in leadership studies and applied ethics that have appeared, especially in the last two decades. Some of these programs might look like the best places to educate future public intellectuals: they promise to prepare students for ethical decision making and problem solving, civic engagement, and global leadership. The language of *The Heart of the Matter* is often spoken in these programs. Is not this what practical wisdom is?

Actually these efforts can undermine practical wisdom unless they are properly conceived. One way such courses can be ill-conceived is to promise students techniques, skills, and tools that they can use to achieve success in a particular domain, especially in their role as "ethical leaders." The bare mention of techniques, skills, and tools, however, is problematic without a more general account of what such things ultimately serve. The sort of moral reflection that is part of practical wisdom is not a handy, multi-purposed tool or a five-step technique that can be applied to solve moral quandaries. Although virtues and skills are both developed through consistent practice, one can be skillful in any number of pursuits (for example, fly fishing, marathon running, or playing the stock market) and still be a crook, a liar, and a cheat. Virtues are about more than performing particular activities well. Instead, they are about being the right sort of person. Formation into virtue takes time; it is not like the assembly of a well-equipped tool kit.

Likewise, a university seeking to cultivate something akin to theoretical wisdom should prepare persons who ask why things are and seek to realize how one's individual good is necessarily tied to the good of others. In this way, educating

for wisdom involves inquiry into what is best for one's family, city, state, country, and world at literally every turn. Students need not pursue advanced degrees in philosophy to ask these questions. Rather, colleges and universities should attend to the ways that philosophical questions pervade human experience and can be found throughout a student's education.

What would it mean if more courses were taught in ways that encouraged scholars and students to think beyond their own subject matter and in ways that attempted to integrate larger concerns shared among the disciplines? How might students experience spiritual and moral growth if they understood from their very first days on campus that they would be encouraged and indeed expected to pause, look around, ask essential questions about human life, read and discuss great ideas that explore these questions among good teachers and other students—not because these endeavors would earn them an extravagant salary after graduation, but because it might orient their lives towards what is best? Such shifts in habits and mindsets would help to reorient the university's collective imagination about its most essential work. Encouraging students to slow down and ask *why* would be a start towards educating the next generation of public intellectuals.

Christian Wisdom and the Common Good

My modest proposal for educating for wisdom might be carried out in a variety of university contexts. But it is important to realize the distinctive way that the Christian faith understands wisdom and the way Christians, especially in church-related institutions, might form the next generation to contribute to public reflection about the common good.

Consider how a broadly Christian conception of human nature and virtue differs from the views of the Greeks. First, Christians hold a doctrine of creation for which the Greeks had no equivalent. Genesis recounts that humans come into existence through the intentional creative act of God, the creator of the heavens and earth. All other living creatures were created according to their kind. However, God creates human beings in His own likeness and image (*imago Dei*) and blesses them in a special way.¹¹

Second, a Christian account of human nature also has a distinctive account of the end or goal of human life. The Divine is not only the source of creation; it is also what all human beings ultimately seek as their telos, as the perfection of their nature.¹² For Christians, perfect happiness is not simply living and doing well in this life, but rather *beatitudo*, the personal union of human beings with the Divine in the eternal life to come.

The Christian account of creation and teleology has implications for the confidence that can be placed in human reason. In the very first question of his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas speaks to this precise point. It is necessary for human

¹¹Genesis 2:27-28. Scriptural citations are to the New King James Version.

¹²John 14:6; Revelation 22:13.

salvation, Aquinas explains, that there should be a knowledge that is revealed by God instead of reason.¹³ In relation to an infinite creator, humans are finite and thus our intelligence is inherently limited. About this, the ancients and Aquinas agree. Yet for the Greeks, human reason is, in the end, all that humans have. Though reason will be inevitably exhausted when it reaches the rarified air of the Divine, human beings in the end must accept that transcendence, construed as an escape from the clutches of the temporal world, is simply not to be. By contrast, Christians believe there is the hope of transcendence, not achieved by the rational capacities of the self, but rather offered as divine grace through Christ's resurrection.

Indeed, the fact of human limitation transforms a Christian understanding of virtue, and accordingly wisdom. For the Greeks, human flourishing is to be pursued through sheer human effort, through the habituation of acquired virtue. But for Christians, true happiness, envisioned as *beatitudo*, is beyond the grasp of frail human beings. Yet, the acceptance of human finitude does not lead to a fatalism regarding the human condition. Christians see divine grace as the singular means to achieve perfect happiness. Grace bridges the chasm between human nature as it is and human nature as it may become, transformed in the light of the wisdom of God. Accordingly, divine wisdom is, in Aquinas's language, an infused virtue, in which God acts through humans to move them towards the perfection of their nature.¹⁴

Christians, thus, recognize three forms of wisdom: practical, theoretical, and spiritual (or theological), with the latter surpassing the first two because it issues from God. The Christian faith is steeped, of course, in the wisdom tradition of the Old Testament. The book of Proverbs, for example, is a sustained message about the necessity of discerning and following the wisdom of God.¹⁵ Spiritual wisdom brings human beings a more distinct awareness not only of how God is manifest in all of creation, but also of the particular ways that God calls each person to faithfulness. Such wisdom can never come from intellectual effort alone because it surpasses what can be grasped through cognition. This is not to say that reason plays no role in the discernment of spiritual wisdom. Rather, grace perfects reason, revealing a transcendent source of guidance that surpasses human understanding.

So, how might a Christian university that seeks spiritual wisdom form persons who care deeply about the common good and want to contribute to public reflection about it? First and foremost, seeking and receiving spiritual wisdom as a divine gift should be marked by charity (*caritas*), the love of God and love of neighbor. The realization of unity in Christ and through Christ's love should lead directly to reflection upon the common good. In this way, wisdom and charity are bound together.

As a result, practical things might be done in the context of Christian higher

¹³Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), I., q.1, a.1, resp.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q.45.

¹⁵Proverbs 3:13.

learning to cultivate these virtues, especially by practicing charity in the exchange of ideas, reading a text so as to illuminate and not first deconstruct its meaning, learning to write in ways that take into account the strongest possible objections to one's own views, and speaking in ways that seek the good of another. To many, these practices may sound like naive aspirations, especially in the context of contemporary life that is so marked by discord. But for Christians, seeking the common good is *by definition* an expression of love for God and neighbor. Seeking wisdom, construed this way, must be done with great love. It is profoundly countercultural.

Moreover, a Christian university animated by spiritual wisdom can encourage humility in both teachers and learners. If rashness is one of the prevalent vices of much contemporary public discourse, then we might add to it intellectual arrogance. Again, our ways of communicating ideas, especially through sound bites and 280-character Tweets, encourage a lack of humility. The glib statement and the bold pronouncement dominate. One lesson that can be imparted to those who might speak publicly into matters of the common good is that by virtue of their finitude, humans are prone to all kinds of failures of perception, misunderstanding, and plain and simple error. Beyond the intellectual mistakes that abound, moral and spiritual vice can cloud even our best efforts to realize what is true and best.

For Christians, the fact of human imperfection provokes a sense of awe, understood as the remarkable mix of fear, wonder, and reverence experienced when one acknowledges something truly real, powerful, and beautiful beyond oneself.¹⁶ It is through this recognition of the Divine that awe begets humility, as one comes to realize the proper relationship between oneself, others, and God. This is precisely the place where one might best engage questions about the common good.

Why the Christian University Needs the Church Now More than Ever

I have suggested here that educating for wisdom might serve the cause of preparing the next generation of public intellectuals who speak into questions about the common good. I also have underscored that the language of contemporary higher education, which the Christian university shares, is impoverished in significant ways, and that resurrecting the language of virtue might lead to practices of teaching and learning that are necessary for developing a new generation of wise persons able to reason together about how to work towards the common good. For this important work, the Christian university needs the church, now more than ever; indeed, on this score, the university has more to learn from the church than the church does from the university. Briefly, allow me to make three observations.

First, the contemporary university—including the Christian university—will need to learn a new language, or perhaps *remember* an old language. The best source

¹⁶The connection between fear and wisdom is powerfully made in Psalm 111:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (NKJV).

for that language is not from business, industry, or even most higher education practitioners. Again, there is nothing wrong *per se* with these sources, but they do not serve the university well if the university wants to educate in *distinctively Christian* ways. Biblical, theological, and philosophically richer language will need to be recovered and employed throughout the life of the university, not for the sake of the humanities departments only, but for the entire institution. The church, especially in its preaching and discipleship efforts, is vital in this regard. A Christian university must draw upon the language of the faith to teach its students, recruit its faculty, describe its programs, and convey both inside and outside its walls who it is and what it believes. If the language of faith and its central concepts—creation, fall, redemption, restoration, among many others—are not continually retrieved, transmitted, and lived out, they will atrophy and die. With them, so will the Christian university's memory and imagination about why it even exists.¹⁷

Second, the work of educating for wisdom will require practices that mirror those of the church. These practices might include: slowing down to seek understanding instead of mere competency or "mastery," thus guarding against rashness; placing a greater emphasis on charitable reading, speaking, listening, and the like, which helps us recognize that communicating with one another is, at its best, an expression of *caritas*; and placing less emphasis on students and scholars marketing themselves for placement, promotion, and public recognition, which undermines humility and breeds vainglory.¹⁸ These kinds of countercultural practices of teaching and learning, I suggest, are most faithfully modeled in worship and prayer, when our attention is drawn towards divine wisdom.

Third, we should cultivate a shared imagination between the church and the university. Without trespassing on the special missions of each, we do well to see how both are, at their best, seeking to grow in understanding and obedience to God, to realize and then follow what God intends for each and all of us. The church and the university, so conceived, are special ways through which Christians express faithfulness to God's calling. In this way, educating for Christian wisdom depends upon *both* the university and the church. Fostering this shared vision is difficult, especially when both Christian universities and the church face so many challenges. I have no silver bullet in mind, but two recently commenced programs at Baylor University are attempting to bring the language and practices of the church in closer connection to the university.

The first is a faculty formation program called "Character Across the Curriculum." Inspired by the conviction that faculty across the disciplines should be

¹⁷One also cannot overlook the importance of church music, especially for some traditions, in teaching the language of the faith. The hymns of the faith certainly teach a language; in my own Baptist tradition, the hymns of Fanny Crosby have shaped the imaginations of countless followers.

¹⁸Paul J. Griffiths, "From Curiosity to Studiousness: Catechizing the Appetite for Learning," in *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*, eds. David I. Smith and James K. A. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 102-122.

equipped and encouraged to contribute to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual formation of students, the program is an intensive one-year experience in which instructors build or reconstruct a course they want to teach with an eye towards a particular virtue. Colleagues from fields such as engineering, music, social work, education, and political science have explored the richness of the Christian virtue tradition, which invariably has led them to recover, in ways appropriate to their disciplines, virtue language found in classical and Biblical texts. Through the classes taught by these professors, future schoolteachers are learning about hospitality in the classroom, engineers are learning about how faith undergirds the projects they design, and students in political science are learning about charity in the public square. Students (and their teachers) are not just learning the language of the virtues; they are being immersed in a variety of practices, both in and out of the classroom and the laboratory, that form them *in* the virtues. This modest program is doing something significant: helping students and faculty across the university to envision teaching and learning as educating for Christian wisdom. Perhaps students in these courses will contribute wisely to discussion about the common good in the days ahead.

Another new effort that more directly seeks to foster a shared imagination between the church and the university is the Soundings Project. With the help of a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., this initiative seeks to help 15 diverse congregations across Texas to discern how they are being called to *be* the church. For many congregations, this process may lead to new models of ministry outreach or approaches to formation and discipleship. As part of the Soundings Project, Baylor's role is, first and foremost, to encourage and enable these congregations, much as Barnabas did for Paul and the early church. Faculty and staff with special expertise will be positioned to help congregations develop their ministries. At the same time, leaders of the Soundings Project also will be listening to and learning from the congregations as their work proceeds. How might the university shape its curriculum and programs to serve the church more effectively in the days ahead? How might the considerable wisdom of the church (again, including its language and practices) shape the university's vision about its own mission and identity? Perhaps this effort, too, will shape the imagination of future faculty and students in ways that will inform deliberation and practice that seeks the common good.

These two programs are new, and it will take years to see whether they will make a lasting difference. But even now, they should help remind us how the pursuit of wisdom is at the heart of the university's work and how it might animate the relationship between the academy and the church. Thoughtful and charitable voices need to be prepared to take up the most pressing challenges we face, and Christians need to think anew about how such voices might be prepared for the task. Educating for wisdom, along the lines I have described, might be among the most strategic, innovative, and transformational things that we can do.

Shaping Prophetic Voices for the Public Sphere

By **Abson Prédèstin Joseph**

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A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Isaiah 40:3-5¹

What is the role of the church in the formation of the Christian intellectual's concern for the common good? This article seeks to contribute to this issue's overall goal by providing examples of relevant practices that can help evangelical scholars expand their vocational understanding to include that of the public intellectual. Further, it seeks to contribute in helping evangelical scholars cultivate a sense of need for their work in relation to the broader context of the common good. This article uses narrative to discuss the power of stories to shape behavior. It surveys several prophetic narratives to identify key elements that contributed in shaping the vocation of those who have played a vital role in the life of Israel as a nation. In this way, this paper puts forth the biblical mandate and theological rationale that undergird the need for the Christian intellectual to live out her call in community and for the sake of the community. Appropriating these stories provides a foundation for the way today's Christian intellectuals should understand their vocation as truth tellers and good news [*gospel*] bearers for the common good.

"Shaping Prophetic Voices for the Public Sphere" discusses the role of the church in the formation of the Christian intellectual's concern for the common good. It draws on examples from Scripture and formulates the biblical mandate and theological rationale that undergird the need for Christian intellectuals to live out their call in community and for the sake of the community. It highlights some of the characteristics evangelical scholars need to emulate in fulfilling their vocation. **Abson Prédèstin Joseph** is academic dean and professor of New Testament at Wesley Seminary. He is the author of *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter* (T&T Clark, 2012); co-editor of *Shaping Theological Education in the Caribbean: A Community Approach* (CETA, 2011); and has published several book chapters and articles. He is an ordained minister from the Wesleyan Church of Haïti. He has read papers and taught in the USA, Haïti, Jamaica, Russia, Belgium, Kenya, and New Zealand, among other places.

356 Narrative and Identity Formation

Narrative plays an important role in identity formation.² Stephen Cornell explains the significance of narrative in creating ethnic identity³ by suggesting that in situations of breakdown, people tend to turn to narrative in order to create a sense of order.⁴ Members of a group intentionally or unintentionally claim a certain narrative as their story. Juha Ridanpää argues that ethnic minorities tend to create and use literary counter-narratives as “a means through which hegemonic discourse can be contested, collective memories embodied and sociocultural self-identities established and performed.”⁵ James K. A. Smith, for example, rightly argues for the development of a “social imaginary,”⁶ which is an affective understanding of the world that is fueled by the imagination. It is comprised of, and embedded in, stories and narratives that provide the frameworks of meaning by which individuals make sense of the world.⁷ We encounter this process in Scripture. For example, at the core of Israel’s identity as a nation is the memory of their alienness:

A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deut. 26.7-9)

This was part of the liturgy that the children of Israel would recite each year during the feast of the First Fruits. This story highlights God’s faithfulness toward them, and reminds them of the need to live in obedience to God and be merciful to the strangers in their midst. It is a story/memory that forms their identity, shapes

¹Unless otherwise noted, citations in English are from the New Revised Standard Version.

²See Kay Young and Jeffrey Shaver, “The Neurology of Narrative,” *Substance* 30 (2001): 72–84.

³Stephen Cornell, “That’s the Story of our Life,” in *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, eds. Paul Spickard and Jeffrey Burroughs (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 41–53. See, for example, Lilia Abadia et al., “Interwoven Migration Narratives: Identity and Social Representation in the Lusophone World,” *Identities* 25 (2018): 339-357.

⁴Cornell, “That’s the Story of our Life,” 45. See also Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 39–43; William L. Dunlop, Jen Guo, and Dan P. McAdams, “The Autobiographical Author Through Time: Examining the Degree of Stability and Change in Redemptive and Contaminated Personal Narratives,” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 7 (2016): 428-436. This research demonstrates the correlations between change in life circumstances and narrative identity.

⁵Juha Ridanpää, “Politics of Literary Humor and Contested Narrative Identity (of a Region with no Identity),” *Cultural Geographies* 21 (2014): 711-726.

⁶James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 68.

⁷Ibid., 68.

their behavior, and guides their actions.⁸

Paul Griffiths helpfully states, "Narrative discourse is extremely important for theology: it has cognitive powers and transformative capacities not available to religious communities in any other way."⁹ If it is true that the community's true identity is rooted in God, the appropriation and interpretation of stories by the Christian community is a theological task. In his epistle to the suffering and persecuted church, the Apostle Peter writes, "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your sojourn" (1 Pet. 1:15-17).

When we understand ourselves and our place within the larger story of who God is and what God is doing in the world, then we can learn how to live in a way that represents God faithfully. Gabriel Fackre proposes, "A Christian story worth telling is an encompassing one that rises out of Scripture's intentions as interpreted and lived out by a faithful church and personally appropriated by the believer."¹⁰ The Church needs to fulfill her role as a storytelling community that appropriates the biblical narratives and interprets them with the theological sensitivity that underscores the communal, counter-cultural, and ethical nature of public theology. This would empower evangelical scholars to embrace their vocation as public intellectuals for the common good.

The Church as a Storytelling Community

A storytelling community is a community that is gathered and unified around a shared experience. This is a dialogical process. The stories appropriated shape the community, and the community's rehearsal of the stories perpetuates their relevance and underscores their normative characteristics. There exists a potential danger, however, whereby a community may use this process to create exclusion and raise boundaries that keep outsiders on the margins. The church should be diligent and intentional in claiming and rehearsing the stories that highlight the threads that bind us together. The church needs to use its privileged role as interpreter of these stories to recount and live them out in ways that render them comprehensible and accessible to outsiders.¹¹

A concern for the common good then evokes the need to live as family and to treat outsiders as such. Public intellectuals need to become immersed in the

⁸This concept still plays a very central role in Jewish/Israeli society. See Deborah Golden, "Storytelling the Future: Israelis, Immigrants and the Imagining Community," *Anthropological Quarterly* 75 (2001): 7-35.

⁹Paul Griffiths, "The Limits of Narrative Theology," in *Faith and Narrative*, ed. Keith E. Yandell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 217-236.

¹⁰See Gabriel Fackre, "Narrative Theology from an Evangelical Perspective," in *Faith and Narrative*, ed. Keith E. Yandell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 199.

¹¹See Amanda Beckenstein Mbuvi, *Belonging in Genesis: Biblical Israel and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Waco, TX.: Baylor University Press, 2016), 30-42.

biblical narratives in order to form an appropriate understanding of family and kinship identity that is hospitable. They need to become aware of the importance of crossing, and be willing to cross, boundaries in order to understand the lived realities of the other. Emmanuel Lévinas expresses this responsibility toward the other as a way of finding self, and of expressing what is *Good*.

[It is] in the responsibility for the Other, for another freedom, the negativity of this anarchy, this refusal of the present, of appearing, of the immemorial, commands me and ordains me to the other, to the first one on the scene, and makes me approach him, makes me his neighbor...Despite-me, for-another, is signification par excellence...it is the very fact of finding oneself while losing oneself.¹²

A storytelling community is a community that remembers. Miroslav Volf discusses the importance and centrality of remembering to identity formation when he states, "To be human is to be able to remember. It is as simple as that: no memory, no human identity."¹³ Remembering goes beyond the mental process of committing stories to mind. It carries theological and ethical connotations. The *Shema*, which plays a normative role in teaching Israel about God's nature and about their responsibility toward YHWH, contains the exhortation to remember and to be a storytelling community.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. (Deut. 6:4-7)

Israel is encouraged to remember and recount stories of God's kindness and goodness towards them (Exod. 13:3, 8). Remembering the Exodus will play a central role in their life and in shaping their identity. This event will serve as reminder of God's ability to perform similar acts of deliverance in the future. It is also an impetus to live in accordance to the covenant and in loyalty to God.¹⁴ To remember is an act of gratitude that leads to obedience and right actions.¹⁵ Forgetfulness leads to disobedience, the disregard and breaking of the covenant. The act of remembering creates space for penitence regarding past sins against God and provides opportunities for repentance and restoration (Ezek. 16:59-63).

Remembering also impacts interpersonal relationships. Israel's memory of its slavery in Egypt serves as impetus for the call to be hospitable to the immigrant aliens in their midst (Deut. 24:14-15, 17-22).¹⁶ The church needs to create and be a space where stories of God's actions on behalf of his people are recounted in ways

¹²Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006), 9-15.

¹³Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 147.

¹⁴Leslie C. Allen, "רָכַד," *NIDOTTE*, 1:1100-1106.

¹⁵Ibid., 1:1102-1103.

¹⁶Ibid., 1:1103.

that incite right actions and ethical conduct. The church needs to demonstrate a capacity to learn from past mistakes, to be penitent and repentant. The church needs to be aware of its own story of marginalization and develop the empathy necessary to care for those who are presently on the margins.

A storytelling community is an interpretive community. The interpretive task plays a crucial role in the community's identity formation. It permeates the entire process. The community's selection of the stories that shape its identity is in itself an interpretive endeavor. Of utmost importance is the lens, or the lenses, through which members of the community interpret these stories. In *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*, J. P. Fokkelman discusses the reader's responsibility in interpreting a text. In particular, he proposes, "As the meaning of a text is only realized through the mediation of the reader, our responsibility for its meaning is greater than the text's own."¹⁷ He challenges interpretive approaches that highlight the distances between the text and the reader because they create a sense of alienation from the text. He warns against the temptation to impose one's pre-formed convictions on the text. He invites the reader to allow the text to speak from within. The competent reader, he argues, is one who is aware of her subjectivity and is able to control it. This is crucial because only from a dialogue between reader and text can one arrive at the meaning of a story.¹⁸ I would add that this dialogue between the text and the community is crucial not only for the sake of finding the meaning of the text, but also for the formation of the community.

The interpretive community then needs to be open and vulnerable to the text's influence on its existence. As the community reads and interprets these stories, the stories read and challenge the community in return. For this to be possible, there needs to be a shift in methodology and posture. Community members should not approach the stories in search of propositional truths that can be applied to contemporary settings. Rather, they should immerse themselves in these stories; enter their world to embody their message and be transformed.¹⁹ Gerard Loughlin explains that "Christian faith is sustained through and as a commitment to a story ... The story is simply told, and faith is a certain way of telling it, a way of living and embodying it, a habit of the heart."²⁰ Therefore, the community needs to shift from asking, "How does this text apply to our context?" to inquiring, "What kinds of people do we need to become for this text to be actualized within our community?" Further, the community needs to submit to the influence and work of the Holy Spirit in their midst. Only a Spirit-led community can resist the temptation to produce interpretations that are self-serving. Only a Spirit-led community can nurture its members to grow from competent readers to becoming good people who are reading these texts.

¹⁷J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 21.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 25-29.

¹⁹See Abson Joseph, *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 29.

²⁰Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 33.

The church needs to appropriate, interpret, and embody prophetic narratives that can shape theologians and guide their engagement in the public sphere. This will empower evangelical scholars to embrace their vocation as truth-tellers and good-news-bearers in today's world. A look at selected prophetic narratives can help inform what behaviors, sensitivities, and postures evangelical scholars need to emulate.

A Sacred Vocation

The church needs to form evangelical scholars who view their role, public intellectuals for the common good, as a sacred vocation. It is sacred in a moral and holistic sense. Scripture conveys that messengers who speak on God's behalf need to display holiness of heart and mind. When Moses encountered YHWH on Mount Horeb, the LORD instructed him to "Remove the sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). The exhortation to remove his sandals is an invitation to come into direct contact with the holiness of God, which has transforming powers. The narrative of Isaiah's appointment underscores this truth (Isa. 6). Isaiah's vision of God creates an awareness of God's holiness and of Isaiah's own shortcomings. The response to his cry of desperation constitutes a similar act of coming into direct contact with the Holy. "The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out'" (Isa. 6:7).²¹

Jeremiah's call contains similar motifs. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5).²² Jeremiah expresses his inadequacy as well. This prompts God to respond with both an affirmation and a personal touch. "Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant'" (Jer. 1:9-10).

In addition, the connection between holiness and the appointment to prophetic office is expressed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Like Jeremiah, both John and Jesus experience their consecration before birth. John is said to be, "filled with the Holy Spirit" even before his birth (Luke 1:15). The angel tells Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God"

²¹There are several parallels between these prophetic call stories: the vision of God, encountering (touching or being touched by) the Holy, and the appointment. Whereas Isaiah expresses his inadequacy immediately and prior to God's call, Moses and Jeremiah express their inadequacy after God initiates the call.

²²The Hebrew root קָרַע and its derivatives are present in all three narrative descriptions.

(Luke 1:35). At the start of his ministry, Jesus' appropriation of the words of the prophet Isaiah for his own life and ministry underscores this reality. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19 ; cf. Isa. 61:1-3).

In his sermon to the audience gathered at Pentecost, Peter appropriates the words of the prophet Joel to explain the implication of outpouring of the Holy Spirit the crowd has just witnessed:

In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18 ; cf. Joel 2:28-29)

The fulfillment of this promise at Pentecost points to God's desire to inhabit and empower those who would avail themselves to experience his transforming touch and respond to his call to become his herald in the world. The church needs to play her role as a holy, Spirit-filled community where evangelical scholars are nurtured, transformed, and empowered in order to live out their prophetic vocation.

It is a sacred vocation in a holistic sense because it pushes against the tendency to separate matters of life into sacred and secular areas. Embracing one's vocation requires the development of a vision that acknowledges and promotes God's lordship over all areas of life. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isa. 52:7). The good news about God's reign, the proclamation of salvation has far-reaching implications for every area of life: spiritual, physical, political, and emotional (Isa. 61; Jer. 33; Luke 1:67-79). The church needs to form scholars who espouse a holistic view of life, scholars who view their work as a sacred endeavor bestowed by God for the benefit of the world. The church needs to create space to invite conversation about the ways the work of evangelical scholars can contribute to the wellbeing of persons. Evangelical scholars need to posture themselves as good news bearers in the public sphere.

A Counter-Cultural Philosophy

Prophetic voices within Israel embody a counter-cultural philosophy. More often than not, prophets speak during times of crisis. As a result, their role often requires that they demonstrate their concern for the common good in counter-cultural ways. While their message is counter-cultural, they speak as insiders who identify with the promised deliverance, the plight, sufferings, and even sins of the people they are representing or/and challenging. They face opposition, yet show resilience by trusting and depending on YHWH.

The stories of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Nehemiah, and Esther provide examples of how thoroughly immersed they were in the life of their communities. Their status as insiders provided them the authority to speak truth to the situations their community was facing and to challenge their oppressors. In fact, it is likely that Moses expressed his worry and hesitation to God about bearing his message to the Israelites because he was relatively an outsider at that point. At least, he was worried they would perceive him that way (Exod. 4:1-18). Yet, in due time, Moses placed himself between God and the Israelites, and interceded to God on their behalf, and was willing to offer his own life for them (Exod. 32:7-14, 32-33). Isaiah identified with the shortcomings of Israel "I am man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). Further, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea obediently submitted to God's decision to use their lives as object lessons, to demonstrate the embodied realities of the message they were proclaiming (Isa. 7:10-8:10; Jeremiah 27-28; Ezekiel 4:1-5:4; Hosea 1:2-2:1; 3:1-5).

While Nehemiah and Esther do not fit the prophetic genre per se, they are prime examples of heralds chosen by God to speak truth to powers-that-be. They identified with the plight of their communities, joined them on the margins, and used their privilege and influence for the common good. Nehemiah's prayer embodies this reality. He offered this prayer when words came to him that those who had returned from exile were suffering disgrace, shame, and that the wall of Jerusalem was broken.

O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned. We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses. (Neh. 1:5-7)

After Nehemiah identified with the plight of the remnant and the sins of Israel, his concern for the good of the people of the city spurred him to action. It gave him the courage to request that the king send him to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. Similarly, Esther made the decision to face the king and intercede on behalf of her people only after Mordecai helped her to realize that her fate was intrinsically bound with that of Jewish community (Esth. 4:1-17; 7:1-4).

Evangelical scholars need to position themselves within the community, immerse themselves in its culture, understand, and empathize with its realities. The church needs to help evangelical scholars develop the kind of empathy that is characteristic of the actors listed in the stories above.

A counter-cultural philosophy not only requires one to speak from within the community; it calls for a level of discomfort with, and a willingness to challenge, the status quo. The discomfort can be internal, external, and/or relational. Esther wanted to remain silent because, for a time, she did not feel the discomfort associated with, and felt by, the larger community (Esth. 4:9-14). In contrast, Jeremiah

voices the discomfort that he experiences when he tries to stay silent: "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jer. 20:9).

Discomfort can also come in the form of trials, external pressure, and opposition. The church needs to shape intellectuals who exhibit resilience in the face of trials. If they are to engage the public sphere while embodying a counter-cultural philosophy, they need to expect opposition, emotional and even physical attack. They need to learn how to live with the risk of being misunderstood and marginalized. Elijah, Jeremiah, Jesus, and Paul are examples of people who challenged the status quo and suffered as a result. Yet, in the face of opposition and suffering they showed resilience and steadfastness characterized by trust and dependence on YHWH (1 Kings 19; Jer. 38; 1 Pet. 2:21-252; Cor. 11:23-33).

Being an insider does not mean one needs to accept the community's *modus operandi*. One needs the courage to challenge inter and intra communal realities that threaten the common good. It requires strength to bring words of comfort in times of despair, words of caution when complacency and false hope have settled in, and wisdom and discernment to know the difference.

A Hope-filled Message

The concern for the common good has at its core a message of hope. Prophetic voices rise from within the community to point people's hearts to YHWH, to prepare the community to see and experience YHWH's faithfulness. The church needs to shape intellectuals who promote and live out the universal message of hope that is central to the gospel.

A concern for the common good also captures the message of hope embedded in YHWH's desire to bring deliverance to his people and level the playing field.

A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (Isa. 40:3-5)²³

At the core of the message of hope is YHWH's redemptive work on behalf of his people. It is the recognition that his lordship and reign are demonstrated through his loving care. See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. "See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart" (Isa. 40:10-11, NIV).

Christian intellectuals who nurture a concern for the common good champion the message of hope in which God brings his people together as a reconciled

²³The text contains a parallelism that underscores the meaning.

community. They work diligently to make it come to pass. "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them... In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious" (Isa. 11: 6, 10, NIV; cf. 56:1-8).

Christian intellectuals who cultivate a concern for the common good resist oppression, fight against injustice in all of its forms, and embody and promote righteousness.

Is this not the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. (Isa 58:6-9, NIV)

Christian intellectuals need to be heralds of the message of hope which YHWH wants the world to hear. To be effective, they should not only proclaim that message, but they need to embody it and live it out. They need to engage the community to bring about the common good that God desires for all to experience. "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:8)

Echoing the Voice of a Modern Prophet

The church's endeavor to shape prophetic voices for the public sphere can also benefit from rehearsing the story of a person whose life was driven by his concern for the common good. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a modern day embodiment of the behavior, way of life, and posture discussed in this article. King reveals that he was concerned about racial injustice since his youth.²⁴ "I grew up abhorring segregation, considering it both rationally inexplicable and morally unjustifiable."²⁵ King would embark on a search for a method to eliminate social evil since the days of his seminary career. Yet, it will take his involvement in the Montgomery Improvement Association to experience what could be termed his call to the prophetic office that he held during his short lifespan.²⁶ Initially, King

²⁴Martin Luther King Jr., "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperOne, 1986), 35-40.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 37.

²⁶Troy Jackson, *Becoming King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Making of a National Leader* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2008), 50-51.

²⁷Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, From the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 23-25.

was reluctant.²⁷ The turning point in his fight against segregation and inequality took place following a threatening phone call he received in late January 1956.²⁸ After the threatening phone conversation, King was unable to fall asleep. He had reached the broken point when he confessed his fears and inadequacy to God:

Lord, I'm down here trying to do what's right. I think I'm right. I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But Lord, I must confess that I'm weak now, I'm faltering. I'm losing my courage. Now, I am afraid...The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone.²⁹

King testifies of hearing an inner assuring voice telling him, "Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo, I will be with you. Even until the end of the world."³⁰ King appropriates Jesus' promise to his disciple as part of the narration of his own prophetic call. He acknowledges experiencing the presence of God in an unprecedented way. This provided him the boldness to engage in the struggle for equality. He states, "Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything."³¹ In his life, struggles, ministry and death, he has demonstrated the ways immersion in the narratives of God's people can shape a Christian intellectual's concern for the common good.

King was at home in his community. He empathized with the plight, sufferings and struggles of the African American population. He also viewed the United States as a nation, and in a way the world at large, as his community. In his argument for the right to vote, he explains,

When the full power of the ballot is available to my people, it will not be exercised to advance our cause alone. We have learned in the course of our freedom struggle that the needs of twenty million Negroes [sic] are not truly separable from those of the nearly two hundred million whites and Negroes [sic] in America, all of whom will benefit from a color-blind land of plenty that provides the nourishment of each man's body, mind, and spirit.³²

King was concerned not only with the sufferings and disenfranchisement inflicted on his African American brothers and sisters, but with a society and political system that made this possible. He made it clear that the non-violent resistance was aimed at destroying the system, not the members of the community who are caught in it.³³ Using Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount as a point of departure, and love as the primary focus, King sought to cast a vision for a beloved community where love reigns. He was convinced that, because of love,

²⁸Martin Luther King Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1998).

²⁹*Ibid.*, 77.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 77-78.

³¹*Ibid.*, 78.

³²Martin Luther King Jr., "Civil Right No. 1: The Right to Vote," in *A Testament of Hope*, 182-188.

³³Martin Luther King Jr., "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience," in *Ibid.*, 43-53.

³⁴Martin Luther King Jr., "An Experiment in Love," in *Ibid.*, 16-20.

"all humanity is involved in a single process, and all men are brothers."³⁴ Therefore, one cannot harm a brother, without causing harm to oneself.³⁵ He challenged and sought to bring change to both African American and white communities. In the end, he became not only a prominent face and voice for the Civil Rights movement, but the face and voice for peace and reconciliation because his promotion of non-violence would transcend the immediate societal ills he was speaking against. Charles Marsh rightly states, "King did not so much strike a balance between prophetic religion and the American dream as he imagined democratic possibilities from the perspective of Biblical hope."³⁶ The story of the community was his story. Because he was a participant in the struggle, his message resonated with power and authenticity crossing beyond the boundaries of his immediate audience through time and space. He demonstrated awareness of the risk he was taking by speaking truth to power, but was unwavering and steadfast in leading the fight against injustice, oppression, and segregation.³⁷

King exhibited uncommon bravery as he challenged the status quo. His call to non-violence faced opposition from within, while his call to equality, freedom and justice for all faced pressures from larger society. He had the ability to talk objectively about the issues his community was dealing with, and parsed with a critical eye the challenges they faced. His sermons and speeches were filled with empathy. In a sermon preached in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1956, King urges the congregants,

In your struggle for justice, let your oppressor know that you are not attempting to defeat or humiliate him, or even pay him back for injustices that he has heaped on you. Let him know that you are merely seeking justice for him as well as yourself. Let him know that the festering sore of segregation debilitates the white man as well as the Negro [sic]. With this attitude you will be able to keep your struggle on high Christian standards.³⁸

He challenged the church against apathy in the face of the plight of the African Americans.³⁹

The churches are called upon to recognize the urgent necessity of taking a forthright stand on this crucial issue. If we are to remain true to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we cannot rest until segregation and discrimination are banished from every area of American life...All too many ministers are still silent. It may well be that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition is not the glaring noisiness of the so-called bad people, but the appalling silence of the so-called good people.⁴⁰

King's vision for a reconciled community was shaped by his interpretation and appropriation of the story of Israel, and the teachings and life of Jesus.⁴¹ This

³⁵Ibid., 20.

³⁶Marsh, *The Beloved Community*, 49.

³⁷Martin Luther King Jr., "Suffering and Faith," in *A Testament of Hope*, 41-42.

³⁸Martin Luther King Jr., "The Most Durable Power," in Ibid., 10-11.

³⁹Martin Luther King Jr., "The Current Crisis in Race Relations," in Ibid., 85-90.

⁴⁰Ibid., 89.

⁴¹Jackson, *Becoming King*, 44-45.

appropriation shapes a theological anthropology that undergirded King's message.⁴² Wills rightly notes that King's ideological center was not socio-political, but theological.⁴³ It is evident that he immersed himself in the biblical narrative. His speeches and sermon are replete with allusions and quotations from Israel's story of oppression, exile, suffering, and deliverance gleaned from the prophets of old and from the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.⁴⁴ He approached these stories as if they were his, and invited the community to see themselves through the same lens. From his voice resonated a message of hope that continues to guide and inspire a community, a nation, and even the world.

King's prophetic voice and vision were shaped in the church and by the church.⁴⁵ His parents also instilled in him a concern for the poor and the unconditional love of the neighbor.⁴⁶ His father and grandfather were both ministers who embodied the gospel message and emulated before him not only a concern for the marginalized and the disenfranchised, but the willingness to speak out and act on their behalf. Jackson notes, "The lessons King internalized during his formative years at Ebenezer provided the roots for much of what he would endeavor to accomplish as a pastor and civil rights leader."⁴⁷ The church was also the locus from which King's prophetic voice rang out. King was convinced that the church had to play a significant role in bringing about change and transformation in the public sphere.⁴⁸ He demonstrated this by the way he fulfilled his calling.

Conclusion

In this article I discussed the role of the church in the formation of the Christian intellectual's concern for the common good. I have used narrative as a springboard to demonstrate the power of stories to shape behavior. I have proposed that the church needs to fulfill her role as a storytelling community by appropriating and interpreting biblical prophetic narratives with the theological sensitivity that will empower evangelical scholars to embrace their vocation as public intellectuals who develop a concern for the common good. I have addressed the nature of the church community, what it needs to become, in order to be effective in shaping the behaviors of evangelical scholars. In order to fulfill her role, the church needs to be a storytelling community gathered and unified around a shared experience, a community that remembers, and an interpretive community that takes seriously its dialogue with the biblical text. It is a community that is willing to submit to the

⁴²Richard Wayne Wills Sr., *Martin Luther King Jr. and the Image of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 87-136.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁴Jackson, *Becoming King*, 35-51.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 37-40; Lewis V. Baldwin, *The Voice of Conscience: The Church in the Mind of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 101-140.

⁴⁶King, *Autobiography*, 1-12.

⁴⁷Jackson, *Becoming King*, 39.

⁴⁸Baldwin, *The Voice of Conscience*, 51-100.

formative power and influence of the text. Further, I have discussed the posture one needs to adopt in order to develop a vision for the common good. Evangelical scholars who embrace their vocation as truth-tellers and good-news-bearers in today's world need to view their role as a sacred vocation. They need to espouse a counter-cultural philosophy, and herald a hope-filled message. Finally, I offered a brief treatment of the life of a modern-day prophet whose voice still resonates in our minds and heart, and whose approach to life and concern for the common good is worth emulating. In his life, struggles, ministry and death, Martin Luther King, Jr. has demonstrated the positive ways the church can influence, shape and transform a Christian intellectual's concern for the common good.

From “Stranger” to “Neighbor”: Neurodiversity’s Visionary Opportunities as Public Intellectuals Promote the Common Good

By Mark Eckel

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Temple Grandin devised stockyards, corrals, conveyors, and loading ramps for stockyard cattle because she was attuned to animals’ perceptions. Scenes from the HBO movie *Temple Grandin* convey Grandin’s personal experience, as evidenced in her 2010 TED Talk¹ regarding how different minds process information. Grandin’s mental acuity, her vision, and imagination are different than others; by her own account Grandin is on the autistic spectrum. She is accustomed to visual stimuli, connections that standard verbal processing may miss. Grandin has authored books describing her intellect, among them, *Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism*.² Her way of thinking is considerably distinctive.

Grandin’s mindset intrigues me. I teach a course at Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis, a public university, entitled “Reading, Writing & Inquiry” where students are trained how to reason, then, to communicate their thinking. An essay in *Harvard Business Review* on military establishments around the world that hire neurodiverse individuals piqued my interest.³ I then made the essay required reading toward a written reflection assignment for my students. The article described “John” whose mathematical abilities made him a prime candidate for military digital research. John’s autism taught him to see what others could not. Prompts toward reflective writing forming an individual response to the article included, (1) Describe a person you know who is like “John.” How do you view people and how do people view themselves? (2) Define and

“Neurodiversity’s Visionary Opportunities” creates caring definitions, establishes philosophical principles supporting the common good, offers transcendent ethics of conduct, and proposes biblical, practical life applications. Social science and neuroscience research, understood through a Scriptural lens, is joined to vocational possibilities for neurodiverse individuals. Evangelical scholars have both the legacy of forward thinking and the responsibility to serve their communities for the good. Christian thinkers are well positioned to help future generations to transform “stranger” into “neighbor.” **Mark Eckel** is President of The Comenius Institute, a Christian study center on the campus of Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI). He teaches in the school of liberal arts at IUPUI as well as masters and doctoral classes for various institutions. For over 35 years Mark has served the education community as a high school teacher, college professor, grad school lecturer, curriculum writer, and international speaker. He is the author of multiple books, articles, encyclopedia entries, and writes weekly online.

explain the word “neurodiversity” in your own words. (3) Why is it important to understand *autism*? (4) Should we use the word “different” when describing a person? Why or why not? (5) How did you respond to the phrase “*differently abled*” used by neurodiverse people? (6) Comment on this statement, “Perhaps the most surprising benefit is that managers have begun thinking more deeply about leveraging the talents of *all* employees through greater sensitivity to individual needs.” (7) Why is “innovation” a concern in business? How can differently abled persons help? (8) Choose one approach for “inclusive workplaces” and give an example or tell a story of how business, civic, social, educational, religious, and community leaders can work together.

Ahead of the reflective writing assignment, we watched video clips from the movie *Temple Grandin*. Often in the reflective papers students referenced Grandin as an example of what the world would miss if Grandin’s story were not heard. Responses to the prompts—fully one half of the class—told story after story of family and friends on the spectrum of autism. One individual suggested that the concept of “social setting” has shifted the discussion from people in physical presence to people in digital presence. Another said, the imposition of face-to-face meetings may unnerve a person on the spectrum whereas the ability to interact within the digital windows of virtual reality and interactive conferencing may create opportunities heretofore unavailable. Some referenced playing video games against neurologically diverse individuals suggesting the persons were some of the smartest people they knew. Even more students referenced their parents who had the forethought to introduce their own children to classes full of uniquely minded persons. In the view of one student “different” should not mean “less.” The following is an empathic, storied response of genuine care by one student:

The tic of a boy’s pen is heard in the back of the room – tic, tic, tic. Your palms are sweating, and it is becoming harder to breathe. Every tic is counted and clocked in your brain – thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-nine. Outside of the classroom are rowdy football players shouting back and forth about last night’s game, and your head begins to hurt. You cover your ears so the sounds dissipate, but they slip through your fingers. Your urge to get up, move, and scream increases as the sounds get louder. Where is your safe place? Submerging yourself into a fetal position, the eyes of others turn and burn into you. You begin to rock back and forth to settle the overwhelming feelings of anxiety. This is autism.

The amount and quality of student feedback radiated sensitivity, authenticity, and generosity toward others. Students summarily viewed any interaction about neurodiversity as a “gift” to the world.

Temple Grandin’s life, the *Harvard Business Review* article, the reflective writing assignment, as well as a myriad of other influences, fostered a desire in me to pursue a brief study of neurodiversity’s visionary opportunities. For the public

¹Temple Grandin, “The World Needs All Kinds of Minds, TED Talk, 2010.

²Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2006).

³Robert D. Austin and Gary P. Pisano, “Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage,” *Harvard Business Review* (May–June 2017): 96-103.

good, the Christian scholar should strive to understand neurodiversity through a biblical-theological lens, seeking incarnational connections in people’s lives, expanding society’s spectrum of visionary, vocational knowledge in order to adapt to situations it will face. This article creates caring definitions, establishes theological principles supporting the common good, offers transcendent ethics of conduct, and purposeful practical life applications under a biblicalegis. The layered work of social science and neuroscience research are applied to show the sustenance of future possibilities for those whose intellectual talents may have heretofore been ignored. Stories of neurodivergent people who are on an autistic spectrum are be introduced. Examples of occupations for which neurodiverse people are gifted will be anticipated, moving “stranger” to “neighbor.”

Definitions

Exploration in neurodiversity is expansive and expanding. The perspective of this paper is contextualized within the views of this social-science-minded theologian. Further, my perspectives are those of an application-driven practitioner, an active educator, a pastorally-minded scholar, and interdisciplinary thinker.⁴ To begin, the Christian thinker must consider the biblical definition⁵ of *humanness*. The application of a Christian view of humanity must insist on acknowledging the tension between human dignity and the effects of human depravity.⁶ Though difficult, it is important to say concurrently about neurodiversity that the fall of Adam twisted all creation⁷; and yet the intact, undamaged structure of God’s image in humans still exists. Passages such as Genesis 9:6, Psalm 8, Matthew 22:15-22, Romans 8:29, and James 3:9 clearly articulate the theological truth that every individual still bears the *perfect* stamp of God’s image on them.⁸

The imperative of this truth is essential to make the point that God’s image in neurodiverse people is *undamaged*. Christian educational institutions could lead the way in producing clarity for understanding and care because of the dual Scriptural teaching—that humans are both dignified and depraved—within the

⁴Mark D. Eckel, “Interdisciplinarity within Biblical Theology,” *Christian Education Journal* 12.2 (2015): 384-396.

⁵Words such as “definitions” or “semantics” can conjure concern. Christopher Mole, “Autism and ‘Disease’: The Semantics of an Ill-Posed Question,” *Philosophical Psychology* 30.8 (2017): 1126-1140.

⁶Pier Jaarsma and Stellan Welin conclude their research with a both-and response in “Autism as a Natural Human Variation: Reflections on the Claims of the Neurodiversity Movement,” *Health Care Analysis* 20 (2012): 20-30.

⁷Genesis 3:7-19; 5:3; Jeremiah 12:4, 11; Romans 8:22-23; 2 Corinthians 5:2. Not only does the creation “groan” but so do “we ourselves.”

⁸See the strong argument made by John F. Kilner, “Humanity in God’s Image: Is the Image Really Damaged?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53.3 (2010): 601-617. Find other theological perspectives and explanations from Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau, *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016).

scope of discussions on neurodiversity. Biblical thinking can encourage a broad, human vision of interconnected, cross-disciplinary opportunities in the academe that both truths teach.

Others-centered⁹ definitions create structural guidelines for a Hebraic-Christian¹⁰ academic discussion. Definitions provide formation for examination. *Neurodiversity* identifies someone who is “differently abled,”¹¹ a term coined based on “a unique set of abilities and intense interests”¹² which is a collective expression difficult to diagnose fully or label definitively.¹³ *Autism* “is not a single unified entity but a cluster of underlying conditions [that] produce a distinctive constellation of behavior and needs that manifests in different ways at various stages of an individual’s development”¹⁴ – autism can be said to be “a different way of being human.”¹⁵ *Tension* about humanness is the proposition that God’s image is maintained in the human person¹⁶ but that the person is now distorted in various ways because of the sinful, generational imprint¹⁷ the fallen, fallible, finite, fragile results of which humans continue to endure.¹⁸ *Visionary* marks “leaders [who] are pioneers ... people who venture into unexplored territory”¹⁹ who select and articulate a “powerful idea.”²⁰ *Opportunities* indicates a Providential plan of God discovered by His people for the betterment of all around which includes both

⁹Practicing the love of neighbor includes language modification; adjustments in how a person speaks about another person should show receptivity to what that person would like to be called.

¹⁰The hyphenated words are meant to suggest a unity, cohesion, and interconnectedness between the First and Second Testaments showing the foundation for all Christian thought begins in Hebraic thought.

¹¹Austin and Pisano, “Neurodiversity,” *Harvard Business Review* 97. It must be acknowledged that the term “neurodiversity” (and its accompanied definitions) is not universally accepted. It is not the purview of this paper to parse the variant viewpoints. It is also important to acknowledge not all individuals on the spectrum will have the social and genetic disposition of a Dr. Temple Grandin. See Marion Quirici, “Geniuses without Imagination: Discourses of Autism, Ability, and Achievement,” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 9.1 (2015): 71-88.

¹²Steve Silberman, *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* (New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2016), 405. The definition is intentionally broad for this brief paper. A full set of characteristics or traits along the spectrum of neurodiverse individuals is best accessed in Silberman’s book.

¹³Temple Grandin, *The Autistic Brain: Helping Different Kinds of Minds Succeed* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2014), 101-116.

¹⁴Silberman, *NeuroTribes*, 469.

¹⁵Barry M. Prizant, *Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 4, 9. See also Des Fitzgerald, *Tracing Autism: Uncertainty, Ambiguity, and the Affective Labor of Neuroscience* (University of Washington Press, 2017); Andrezej Kicinski, “Autism,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*. vol 1, eds. George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 106-107.

¹⁶Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1; Psalm 8:5-8; Matthew 22:20-21; Hebrews 2:8.

¹⁷Genesis 5:3; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 5:12.

¹⁸Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Ephesians 4:17-19; Titus 1:15-16.

¹⁹James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 32.

²⁰Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 16.

"risk"²¹ and futuristic, "anticipatory leadership."²² *Stranger, neighbor* metaphors articulate the imperative beginning in Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 10 which declares God's same covenantal love²³ for the stranger as is given to His people, reminding them that they know what it means to be an outsider.²⁴

Definitions must not become labels.²⁵ How we talk about people—our nomenclature used within any given neurodiverse group—is an intentional, conscious statement of belief. A purely rational approach²⁶ depends upon "proper balance of difference and discrimination to update our labeling routines using scientific or clinical knowledge."²⁷ Coons and Brennan further argue that human equality apart from a transcendent ethic must maintain that "All rational persons share uniformly the capacity to be morally good" based on a universal ability to correctly struggle "towards a person's moral self-perfection."²⁸ The results of such naturalistic viewpoints leave the imprint of discriminatory terminology impacting personal and economic concerns.²⁹

Labels without a transcendent source acknowledging any person's worth, value, and dignity leave identification purely up to human definitions. Perhaps instead of "disability"—extracting the "dis" or "de" prefixes—we could put forward the concept of *probability*, a positive portrayal of a person. Jaarsma and Welin contend, "High-functioning autists should not be stigmatize[d]" referencing "these persons as being disabled, or as having a disorder or use some other deficit based language."³⁰ Or, should it be necessary to focus on the person's uniqueness, we might offer *differability* as a way to suggest diversity. Classifying or categorizing can either stigmatize or esteem others in conversation when moving from "stranger" to "neighbor."

Christian intellectuals should lead the way with respect to our respect of oth-

²¹Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 71-86.

²²My personal definition of "anticipatory leadership" is seeing what is around the next corner; leadership sees the future through people (Acts 13:1-3). Leaders set the future. Pioneers generate plans to discover uncharted territory, creating new paths, while adjusting to ever-changing horizons. Next generations Christian leaders are trailblazers (Romans 15:14-25).

²³The Hebrew word used for covenantal love for Israel is the same word God uses to explain His love for the alien and stranger demanding the same affective commitment from His people (Deuteronomy 10:18-19).

²⁴"For you were sojourners in the land of Egypt," Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34.

²⁵C. D. Herrera, Alexandra Perry eds., "Introduction," in *Ethics and Neurodiversity* (Newcastle, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 2-3.

²⁶One book among many makes the point in its title, *Science's Blind Spot: The Unseen Religion of Scientific Naturalism* by Cornelius G. Hunter (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007).

²⁷Herrera and Perry, *Ethics*, 14.

²⁸J. E. Coons and P. M. Brennan, *By Nature Equal: The Anatomy of a Western Insight* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 121.

²⁹Tyler Cowen, "An Economic and Rational Choice Approach to the Autism Spectrum and Human Neurodiversity," George Mason University, Department of Economics, Paper No. 11-58, 2011.

³⁰Jaarsma and Welin. "Autism," *Health Care Analysis*, 28.

ers. A series of application questions could be a first step in how a stranger might become a neighbor. (1) If you talk about neurodiverse individuals to others, do you show care in word choice and tone of voice, specific evidence from a personal encounter or exchange? (2) When you share your remembered encounter, do you make sure definitions or explanations show sensitivity, using the terms most comfortable to the neurodiverse individual? (3) When you present your explanation of a neurodiverse individual, do you ask yourself, Do I know the person, have I had long, extended, far-reaching conversations to know a bit of who that person is? (4) When you spend time with an autistic person do you add that experience to your knowledge of their personhood? (5) When you experience time with a neurodiverse individual do you tell others about your time in a way that is honest and fair to the encounter, dropping preconceptions and reordering your original thinking? Christian scholars can set an example: people deserve to be more than labels, more than “strangers.”

The evangelical scholar has a unique opportunity to help set the foundation of thought for neurodiversity. Naturalistic, materialistic mindsets may view people as simply “producers” whose pragmatic placement in an organization may support only profit motive. A Christian theological perspective offers personhood and beneficence as the reason for neurodiversity’s societal embrace. How Christians interact with anyone necessitates a careful, nuanced perspective. Following Grandin’s lead, if “social impairments are the very core of autism,”³¹ then the believing scholar must consider changes about how persons are spoken of and treated as persons in the culture as a whole. Each person should be appreciated for their individuality. Romans 16 is an example of various individuals who contributed to the church.

As Francis Schaeffer well said in a book title *There Are No Little People*,³² little people do not exist, because God’s image exists in all people. An evangelical theology should set the stage for our collective humanness, a commitment to the shift from stranger to neighbor³³ by assuming five biblical, philosophical pillars. First, the creation was created and is sustained by God, therefore all that exists is sacred, belonging to God.³⁴ Second, “common grace”³⁵ can be discovered and enjoyed by anyone, anywhere, recipients of God’s beneficence.³⁶ Third, knowing anything from a Hebraic-Christian perspective begins with “fearing the Lord,”³⁷ the “fear” itself being accessible to all image-bearers.³⁸ Culture and context may

³¹Grandin, *Autistic Brain*, 110.

³²Francis Schaeffer, *No Little People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2003).

³³Loving one’s neighbor because one loves God is the essence of what it means to be a Christian (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; John 13:34; Galatians 5:14).

³⁴1 Chronicles 29:10-16; Psalms 24:1; 50:9-12; 89:11.

³⁵God gives good gifts through creation to everyone; Common Grace—the goodness of all creation benefits all people (Genesis 39:5; Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 145:9, 15-16; Matthew 5:44-45; Luke 6:35-36; John 1:9; Acts 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 7:12-14).

³⁶Job 26; 28:1-11; Psalms 104; 111:2; Proverbs 25:2.

³⁷Proverbs 1:7; 9:10.

³⁸Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8; Psalms 64:9; 65:8; 66:1-5; 67.

condition how knowledge is viewed, but the common nature of reality is true for all people in all places at all times in all cultures.³⁹ Fourth, the Hebraic-Christian Scriptures are education’s organizing core⁴⁰ for purpose, process, interpretation, evaluation, and affective change. Fifth, public intellectuals bear responsibility for pursuing and teaching truth for cognitive, affective, and behavioral response.⁴¹

The five pillars uphold five obligations of Hebraic-Christian thinkers in a fallen world whether neurodiversity or any concern. First, a righteous, revelatory standard founded in the Bible sustains support and wellbeing for all humans.⁴² Second, a transformed spirit, affecting the being, the interiority of the believer, embodies care for all people.⁴³ Third, Christian leaders who submit themselves to God’s standard in word, attitude, and deed⁴⁴ guide the Christian church toward the practice of Christian ethics in every sphere of influence.⁴⁵ Fourth, Christians who practice Christian ethics in the society where they live create opportunities for wholeness in any community.⁴⁶ Fifth, the benefit for a whole society when the group is influenced by Hebraic-Christian ethics is esteemed as “good” even by those who denigrate these obligations.⁴⁷

Humanness transcends cultural differences, including neurodiverse cultures. Tradition or lifestyle differences do not matter as much as accepting others for who they are, treating all as equals.⁴⁸ Everyone is made in God’s image coming from His “family.”⁴⁹ Scripture honors differences while exhorting unity.⁵⁰ Unity breaks down diversity, misunderstandings, stereotypes, prejudice, and bias.⁵¹ Unity creates mutual goals.⁵² Believers should be anxious to learn, slow to speak, humbly acknowledging that someone may understand more.⁵³ Christians should watch for ways to help and not hurt others, eager to be taught.⁵⁴ Learning another’s native speech, for instance, demonstrates charity, devotion, beneficence, generosity, prompting aid.⁵⁵ The Christian source for charity is unconditional sacrifice for others demonstrated through Jesus.⁵⁶ Charity breaks down cultural

³⁹Psalms 107, 117.

⁴⁰Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25; 30:11-15; 2 Timothy 1:14; 2:15; 3:14-17.

⁴¹2 Chronicles 17:7-9; Proverbs 2:1-6; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Galatians 5:22-25; 2 Peter 1:5-9.

⁴²Psalms 119:89; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 1:20-21.

⁴³Psalms 19:13-14; Romans 8:5-9.

⁴⁴2 Kings 23:24-25; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1.

⁴⁵Psalms 15; Hebrews 10:24; 13:1-7, 17.

⁴⁶Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Jeremiah 29:4-7; Titus 2:1-10.

⁴⁷1 Peter 2:11-17, 20; 3:13-17; 4:19.

⁴⁸Proverbs 14:31; 22:2.

⁴⁹Genesis 1:26; Ephesians 3:14.

⁵⁰Ephesians 4:1-6.

⁵¹Deuteronomy 10:17; Romans 2:11.

⁵²John 17:11, 20-23; Romans 12:4-5.

⁵³Ephesians 4:24-32; James 3.

⁵⁴Proverbs 3:27-31; 12:15; 13:10.

⁵⁵David I. Smith and Barbara Carvill, *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000).

⁵⁶John 1:12-18; 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13.

distance and nationalism. Charity through hospitality creates opportunities to save cultures, languages, and people groups. Others are attracted by a person who moves to their level.⁵⁷ Humility breaks down cultural arrogance. Humility creates unassuming, meek servants. The practice of beneficence toward others is what it means to practice one's Christian faith by "doing good."⁵⁸

The practice of goodness is especially important as the Christian holds in tension what is known and what is unknown about neurodiversity.⁵⁹ The German theologian Karl Barth explained:

If we are to think about life, we must penetrate its hidden corners, and steadily refuse to treat anything—however trivial or disgusting it may seem to be—as irrelevant. To be sincere, our thought must share in the tension of human life, in its criss-cross lines, and in its kaleidoscopic movements. And life is neither simple, nor straightforward, nor obvious.⁶⁰

Humans do well to consider their place in life as fallen, fragile, finite, and fallible. Creation itself sets the rhythm of response – its every activity is seen as praise, adulation, and adoration.⁶¹ If creation knows its place, it comes as no surprise humans should too. Human attempts to comprehend the complexity of the human person must remember Job's amazement at what little could be known about creation saying, "These are but the outskirts of His works."⁶²

Questions

Seeking to understand complex problems leads the Christian scholar to ponder possibilities, the need to apprehend varied cognitive functions of neurodiverse people. Consider the questions that might be offered. How are neurotypical⁶³ and neurodiverse individuals different from each other? What if the need for change began with the neurotypical instead of a neurodiverse individual? What if we asked, "What can I learn from others?" instead of "How can I help others learn?" What if we begin to think that autism, Asperger's, neurodiversity, as a whole has much more to do with latent, innate connections to God's image, the multiplicity of attributes, and gifts through the ineffable, incomprehensible nature of God? What if the person with autism became the person who supported the abled community, not vice versa? Questions such as these could lead to visionary thinking and then visionary opportunities in the fields of education, writing, and ethnography.

Visionary, neurodiverse principles can be applied in educational theory. Ross

⁵⁷Philippians 2:1-11.

⁵⁸Titus 3:1, 8, 14.

⁵⁹Deuteronomy 29:29; Job 40:1-6; 42:1-6.

⁶⁰Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*. 6th ed (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1960), 425.

⁶¹For instance, Psalm 114:3-7; 148:1-13.

⁶²Job 26:14.

⁶³"Neurotypical" denotes a person or persons who are considered to be outside the spectrum of autism.

Cooper believes everyone is “neurodiverse” and therefore education as a social construct needs to consider how it might accommodate all learners eschewing the nomenclature of “learning difficulties.”⁶⁴ The Bagatelle model, outlining how numerous neurodiverse categories can be understood, is especially helpful to identify the multiplicity of fields within the educational system.⁶⁵ Toward that end, living with the complexity of neurodiversity, ten universal principles leading to ten ideal questions for the classroom could move the next generation from stranger to neighbor:

1. Moral. The “should” of education sets the assumed worth, value, and dignity of every life. The class is then led to ask, “What are the reasons anyone gives for doing good?”
2. Listening. Investment in understanding necessitates a commitment to appreciate others’ point of view. The class is then led to ask, “How do I hear what people are saying and what they are not saying?”
3. Deference. Respect does not infer absolute agreement, but an agreement to disagree constructively, to support the voice of other perspectives. The class is then led to ask, “How do we get along with people who do not think like us?”
4. Exclusivity. Authority structures are necessary for any context including the vocabulary chosen for any conversation. The class is then led to ask, “What are the proper word choices to perpetuate and promote kindness for others?”
5. Inclusivity. Proactive, intentional motivations for educational processes can protect others. The class is then led to ask, “How do we respond to bigotry against those who have unique thinking processes?”
6. Empathy. Unselfish focus on others with special opportunity for emotional support by way of learning about others who have had similar experiences forms a social consciousness. The class is then led to ask, “How do we show compassion to others with unique cognition?”
7. Connection. Inviting and involving others prompts the “diversity” in “neurodiversity.” The class is then led to ask, “When we meet others how do I learn the backgrounds and backstories of their thinking?”
8. Community. Support across constituencies encourages the search for commonality amid diversity. The class is then led to ask, “How do we celebrate differences that make our neighbors feel accepted?”
9. Research. Educational study links past with present anticipating future opportunities. The class is then led to ask, “How do I evaluate and implement resources for future contexts?”
10. Heterodoxy. Celebrating differences, cultivating collaborations in all forms brings neurotypical and neurodiverse individuals together. The class is then led to ask, “How can we practice belonging over bias to encourage hearing of all voices in any community?”

⁶⁴Ross Cooper, “Neurodiversity and Dyslexia; Challenging the Social Construction of Specific Learning Difficulties,” n.d. 1-12.

⁶⁵Cooper, 6.

Classroom contexts in the twenty-first century can be promoted by opening neurodiverse worlds through film. Movies like *Temple Grandin* can spur public understanding and empathy for characters on screen that viewers see in everyday life. In addition, *The Accountant* is an action-thriller in which the main character, played by Ben Affleck, is diagnosed with a form of high functioning autism. The portrayal of a life lived behind the veil of numbers and stoicism enlightens an audience, exposing them to a world they may know through the lives of others. *Please Stand By* sensitizes viewers to a young autistic woman (Dakota Fanning is the female lead) whose life revolves around *Star Trek* and her compulsion to submit an episode to the series. Mannerisms of social awkwardness juxtaposed with her brilliant memory and visualization of futuristic worlds seen on screen are reminiscent of characteristics, which may be seen in members of a neurodiverse population today. *Life Animated* radiates warmth showing what it's like to live with a son on the spectrum.

Rain Man, the movie that broke open the discussion of intellectual savants, remains an example of neurotypicals coming to terms with their own shortcomings. The movies *My Name is Khan* and *Adam* portray young men with Asperger's both in pursuit of a noble cause, each displaying social awkwardness with gentle sweetness, affective traits important to both storyline and everyday life. And, *The Peanut Butter Falcon* brings Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn to life as a Down syndrome teenager (played by Zack Gottsagen who lives with Down syndrome) pursues an inauspicious wrestling dream. The heartwarming nature of the movie moves audiences, making a powerful statement both for life and a life well lived, no matter one's mental acuity. Christian educators should accommodate to the usefulness of film to communicate effectively in popular culture with a decidedly Christian point of view.

Visionary, neurodiverse principles can be applied in composition studies.⁶⁶ Writers David Sousa and Maryanne Wolf demonstrate the importance of understanding neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to change, to reshape its neural circuitry over time—for digital and print media.⁶⁷ Sousa explains, "Whatever stimuli children experience during the first three years of their lives will profoundly influence the way their brain develops."⁶⁸ For her part, Wolf wonders if continued screen usage will "atrophy" teenage minds for "critical analysis, empathy, and reflection."⁶⁹ Pondering "cognition" in a different way, what if neuroplasticity

⁶⁶Elizabeth Tomlinson and Sara Newman, "Valuing Writers from a Neurodiversity Perspective: Integrating New Research on Autism Spectrum Disorder into Composition Pedagogy," *Composition Studies* 45.2 (2017): 91-112.

⁶⁷David A. Sousa, *Engaging the Rewired Brain* (West Palm Beach, FL: Learning Sciences International, 2016); Maryanne Wolf, *Reader Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2019).

⁶⁸Sousa, *Engaging*, 27.

⁶⁹Wolf, *Reader*, 203-4.

plays a key role in creating new neural connections via variant compositional practices which will value neurodiverse writers?⁷⁰ If so, what if students who are autistic, begin in failure mode only because their approach to composition is wholly other than neurotypicals? And further, what if compositional strategies are reconsidered to begin where are near neighbors—those on the autism spectrum—already find themselves? Could it be that neurotypicals are the “failures” for not seeing where they are, not invested in the construction of writing bridges across the neurodiverse chasm? Approaches to teaching writing would to change in order “to hear our students’ voices.”⁷¹ Tomlinson and Newman suggest the classical concept of *mētis* for construction of strategies helpful for students who think differently.⁷² The crablike creature (*mētis*) moving sideways, embodied a cunning and allowed success where other humans failed. The visual metaphor could shift curricular thinking allowing the neurodiverse student to write about what they care about, translating ideas into their own language while embracing writing methods that work for them.

Indeed, the opposite could also be beneficial: the study of autistic stories in neurological medicine. Michael Whelan, an academic and father of an autistic child, encourages “the roles of biomedical and pathographic texts in telling the stories of autism.”⁷³ If nothing else, the human derivative of empathy in medical students after a humanities course⁷⁴ accedes to the need for narratives of neurodiverse people be included in any ongoing understanding of neurodiversity. What if medical schools incorporated “curricula in history, literature and poetry, narrative medicine, and the visual and performing arts?”⁷⁵ For instance, Columbia University has a program in “Narrative Medicine” whose mission statement includes, “The intersection between narrative and medicine [to] improve the effectiveness of care by developing these skills with patients and colleagues.”⁷⁶ Lillian Campbell’s research connects rhetoricians with doctors so as to improve pedagogy.⁷⁷ Even graphic novels are being used to better understand autism’s

⁷⁰Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2015), 73.

⁷¹Tomlinson and Newman, “Valuing,” 92.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 96.

⁷³Michael Whelan, “Inspiration is Power: Voices of Information and Advocacy for the Reader of Autism Narratives,” *Social Alternatives* Vol. 36.4 (2017): 44-48.

⁷⁴P. Ravi Shankar and Rano M. Piriyani, “Changes in Empathy Among First Year Medical Students Before and After a Medical Humanities Module,” *Education in Medicine Journal* 5.1 (2013): e35-e42. DOI:10.5959/eimj.v5i1.36.

⁷⁵Sarah Mann, “Focusing on Arts, Humanities to Develop Well-Rounded Physicians,” *Association of American Medical Colleges News* 15 (August 2017): <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/focusing-arts-humanities-develop-well-rounded-physicians>.

⁷⁶“About Narrative Medicine,” <https://www.narrativemedicine.org/about-narrative-medicine/>.

⁷⁷Lillian Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Health and Medicine as a “Teaching Subject”: Lessons from the Medical Humanities and Simulation Pedagogy,” *Technical Communication Quarterly* 27.1 (2018): 1, 7–20.

differences, subverting prejudices, leading to alterity.⁷⁸

Further, could it be that autism is beneficial for focused language study? At least in the life of Steven Kunkel such a suggestion is true. Beset by communication problems as a child, Kunkel's autism actually prompted a response no one in the medical community anticipated. Missionaries to Uruguay, Steven's parents decided to stay on the field keeping their son with them after doctors suggested a return to the United States. "Kunkel's experience as a missionary kid inspired him to become a missionary himself," reports Andrew Smith. Living in Japan ahead of college, Steven felt God's call to serve in that country. But Japanese is a hard language to learn. Steven explains, "My autism is a benefit and a blessing. It requires me to focus on one or two things at a time. That part of autism made me very passionate about learning Japanese, and it's easy for me to spend hours and hours developing my language skills."⁷⁹

Steven Kunkel's narrative could be retold in story form following the pattern of books such as *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures*⁸⁰ and *A Boy Called Bat*,⁸¹ books for children about children with autism. *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures* is based on the life of Temple Grandin. *A Boy Called Bat* is fictional about Bixby Alexander Tam (nicknamed "Bat"), a boy on the autism spectrum in need of structure. The stories are replete with genuine connective care, an important addition to literature and the opportunity for inclusiveness with the neurodiverse community. Gabe Lyons in *The Next Christians* communicates the necessary concern Christian public intellectuals have for the common good, putting first things first:

Too often we confuse first and second things. If I want my children to have beautiful imaginations (a second thing), I must first turn off the television, read them descriptive, fantastical books, and give them experiences that let their minds wander and dream (a first thing). I can't tell them to practice "imagination." I have to create an environment that first encourages it.⁸²

Creating imaginative environments is exactly the need in training young people to think counter-culturally about anything, including neurodiversity. The next generation of Christian thought leaders can be helped by this generation of public intellectuals who manifest care in all arenas of life, helping everyone to accept the stranger as neighbor.

Visionary, neurodiverse principles can be applied in ethnographic studies.⁸³ Bustion's position is that self-reporting from Christians with autism should be

⁷⁸Agatha Mohring, "Therapeutic Journeys in Contemporary Spanish Graphic Novels," *European Comic Art* 11.2 (Autumn 2018): 98–117. doi:10.3167/eca.2018.110206

⁷⁹Andrew J. W. Smith, "Autism is a Ministry 'Benefit' for Japan Missionary Steven Kunkel," *Southern Seminary* (Spring 2019): 50.

⁸⁰Julia Finley Mosca, *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin* (Seattle, WA: The Innovation Press, 2017).

⁸¹Elana K. Arnold, *A Boy Called Bat* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2017).

⁸²Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010), 206.

⁸³Olivia Bustion, "Autism and Christianity: An Ethnographic Intervention," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 85.3 (2017): 653–681.

an integral component leading to ethnographic studies. Heuristics is "a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences."⁸⁴ "Transcendental Phenomenological Theory" includes ethnography as a key component of study focused on (1) grouping, collecting data, (2) clustering individuals, grouped within themes, (3) validation of participants and interviews, (4) construction of experiences, and (5) meaning derives from a description of the experiences.⁸⁵ Naoki Higashida's *The Reason I Jump* is perfectly explained in the ethnographic subtitle *The Inner Voice of a Thirteen Year-Old Boy with Autism*.⁸⁶

Phenomenological research such as ethnography depends upon individual experience but should be adjudicated by a researcher who must acknowledge her own cultural context which could shape interpretations: in the case of neurodiversity, neurotypicals must take note. Researchers should "explicitly identify their biases, values and personal backgrounds, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status that may shape the interpretations formed during the study."⁸⁷ Communicating the social actions of others begets another struggle: once an ethnographic study is released, the work is then conformed to media, restated by editorialists, truncated for length, then interpreted by a public which may or may not understand the nuances of the original study.⁸⁸ However, an ethnography can come to be seen as "an authoritative source of moral deliberation...a richer and more contextually appropriate ethical discourse."⁸⁹ Bustion's concluding comment about autistic self-reporting is worth reading in its entirety:

Better assumptions (autistic self-understanding is in fact self-understanding) lead to better methodologies (ethnography). Better methodologies lead to better findings (a more fine-grained picture of the self-understandings of autistic Christians). And better findings lead to better theologies (ones attentive to the empowering contextual theologies that actually autistic Christians improvise in the face of disabling stories told about them by social and behavioral scientists, academic theologians, and philosophers of religion alike).⁹⁰

Neurodiversity ethnography could be a change agent for the neurotypicals community, moving from stranger to neighbor.

⁸⁴Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing, 1994), 18.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 120-121.

⁸⁶Naoki Higashida, *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-Old Boy with Autism* (New York, NY: Random House, 2017).

⁸⁷John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2014), 183.

⁸⁸Didier Fassin, "Why Ethnography Matters: Anthropology and its Publics," *Cultural Anthropology* 28.4 (2013): 621-646.

⁸⁹Michal S. Raucher, "Ethnography and Jewish Ethics: Lessons from a Case Study in Reproductive Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44.4 (2016): 636-658.

⁹⁰Bustion, "Autism," 677.

A spate of “brain books” have introduced Christian audiences to public intellectuals who are communicating their neurological research in ways accessible for the common good. In *Am I Just My Brain?* Sharon Dirckx explains her studies in brain imaging that address apologetic issues such as “a God gene,” free will, and the “hard wiring” of belief. Interacting with studies in neurotheology, for example, Dirckx contends that religious experiences “cannot be reduced to brain activity,” passing off neurons firing in the brain as simply a physiological reaction to external stimuli.

In particular, Dirckx tells the story of a young man, Luke, in her church who is physically and mentally disabled. Her descriptions of Luke’s rhythmic movements and noises during a sermon exactly mirror others in the neurodiverse spectrum. The moving description of Luke expressing his faith in Jesus as his savior comes “without inhibition.” According to Dirckx’s informed physician’s analysis, she contends “God is greater than the human brain, and does relate to anyone and everyone, regardless of their cognitive capacity. No one is beyond his reach.”⁹¹

In *The God-Shaped Brain* Timothy Jennings examines how theological truths from Scripture connect with neurological truths from science. Interacting with biblical teaching about love, fear, truth, sin, judgment, goodness, and forgiveness, Jennings makes immediate, convincing arguments as a Christian public intellectual who explains the natural, neurological world in synthesis with the supernatural world.⁹²

In *Rare Leadership* authors Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder intersect brain science with leadership principles. In one instance, they relate what they call “the mutual mind” to the sharing of “gestures, facial expressions, voice tones, synchronized energy levels, and mirrored feelings” within personal interactions.⁹³ Christian public intellectuals could build on furthering research to see what kind of connections can be made between neurotypicals and neurodiverse groups.

In *What Your Body Knows About God* Rob Moll examines neuro-transformation, brain plasticity, and how some physicians know there is a strong connection between one’s mental state and spiritual life. Recounting a myriad of stories Moll contends there is an interconnection between the Maker of the human mind because He created the neurological connections.⁹⁴

⁹¹Sharon Dirckx, *Am I Just My Brain?* (Denmark: The Good Book Company, 2019), 106-107, 117-118.

⁹²Timothy R. Jennings, *The God-Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

⁹³Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder, *Rare Leadership: 4 Uncommon Habits for Increasing Trust, Joy, and Engagement in the People You Lead* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishing, 2016), 101-102.

⁹⁴Rob Moll, *What Your Body Knows About God: How We are Designed to Connect, Serve and Thrive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 155-189.

Consider Christian missions as an ethnographic study and imagine you are an Old Testament scholar. You study shards from archaeological digs and know more than a dozen languages. You write, speak, and teach about the ancient Near Eastern world. Now imagine you are also the parent of a Down syndrome child. How would you carry on your scholarly work given your circumstances?

Imagine as a child you stopped breathing for some time. You developed a mild form of cerebral palsy. You live with the difficulties of your condition all your life. Now imagine you are called to serve on the mission field. How could you properly share the gospel of Christ with noticeable mental deficiencies?

Imagine you, as a young girl, suffered a tragic diving accident spend the rest of your life as a quadriplegic. You need assistance in every physical process. Yet, you develop the ability to draw using your mouth, you write books, speak on behalf of the differently abled, and God uses you to be the progenitor of a worldwide ministry on behalf of the disabled. You do not have to imagine anything.

You can read these and many other stories in the volume *Disability in Mission: The Church’s Hidden Treasure*. The principle stated and restated throughout the book is that “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.”⁹⁵ Not only is the book brimming with stories of people working in ministry around the world but over and over again the reader is struck with the idea that so-called “disabilities” may well be gifts to the world. Public intellectuals bear responsibility to consider the broad reach of God’s Providence through His people for His purposes.

Conclusion

The parents had built a room in their home with windows so they could watch their children *inside* the room. Both children are severely autistic, unable to communicate in the world most of us call “home.” Dad and mom sought help, something, and someone to intervene, to find a way to communicate with their own children. My son Tyler has mental difficulties of his own. A connection was made between Tyler and the family. The parents invited Tyler to their home, wondering, since he had unique mental challenges, if he could find a way into the children’s world. I watched the two-hour video of my son and his interplay with two primary aged little ones. What I saw, I did not understand; but the moments were full of wonder, pondering the opportunity and ability to enter another person’s world. In Tyler’s recounting, he met other minds in that room, offering an invitation to his world. The effort was one that created a bond, a thoughtful relationship with the parents and children, offering them care and a possibility of hope.

I have thought of that event often. Within the world of neurodiversity, my mind has asked the question again and again, “Will the future generations see the need for *translators* between neurological worlds?” Tyler and I have discussed what such an endeavor would look like, what would be necessary to see the effort come to fruition. We both agree that the first step in the process must be the ac-

⁹⁵1 Corinthians 1:27.

ceptance of neurological *translation* as a bridge between worlds. If we know that mental differences exist and perhaps future therapists, counsellors, psychologists, and scientists can map an intellectual GPS to create the path.⁹⁶

From a Christian point of view there should be no surprise to find human sciences connect to Christian theology. Discoveries in the scientific community are verifiable by researchers around the world who collect data, apply information, explore, and observe. What is true in one place is true in another. All people, consciously or unconsciously, are taking note of God's interaction in the world and will "ponder what He has done."⁹⁷ Christian scholars bear responsibility to enact a creational mindset within the sphere of neurodiversity discussions discovering more and more of God's creational intricacies.⁹⁸ Diligent probing can disclose new information. If the universe is as infinitely great as the thoughts of God and if the universe will endure then Christians can explore, study, and locate universal mysteries without exhausting them.⁹⁹

God created humans with senses they could use to study, investigate, and care for creation.¹⁰⁰ God cares and provides for the needs of His creation. All life is dependent on God.¹⁰¹ God has spoken both in His Word and in creation to help humanity in this life.¹⁰² Discussions about human uniqueness and difference are suffused throughout Scripture, the principles applied through visionary opportunities enlightened in education, writing, and ethnography. Scripture is full of stories communicating human response to difficult situations; so too, Christians apply the transcendent principles from Scripture through stories found in varied cultures and contexts. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon the Christian scholar to practice her academic craft to pursue the following ideals:

- The Christian scholar acknowledges the difficulties of any endeavor, while trying to offer solutions and instill practices benefiting people, demonstrating Jesus' command to love others.
- The Christian scholar sees the limitation of human endeavor knowing that superhuman energy is available through the Spirit for her work.
- The Christian scholar studies all who contribute—Christian or not—agreeing with Scripture that not only is all truth God's, but He unifies all truth.
- The Christian scholar exegetes the past—encountering Christian forebears—whose work in the past makes possible our work in the present.
- The Christian scholar weaves the creational world with glimpses of The Creator's mind so as to see the interconnection, Heaven with earth.
- The Christian scholar buttresses her clarion call to use her God-given gifts for

⁹⁶It was Des Fitzgerald's section "The Throbbing Emotion of the Past" from his book that compelled me to enter my own personal story. *Tracing Autism*, 47-59.

⁹⁷Job 37:7, 14; Psalm 64:9; 65:8; 66:5.

⁹⁸Job 28:3, 11, "Man searches and brings hidden things to light."

⁹⁹Isaiah 55:9; Psalm 148:1-6; Ecclesiastes 3:14; Daniel 12:3.

¹⁰⁰Genesis 1:28; Proverbs 30:24-28; 1 Kings 4:29-34.

¹⁰¹Genesis 8:22; Psalm 147:7-9; Matthew 6:25-34.

¹⁰²Deuteronomy 30:11-15.

- the good of fellow earth-dwellers, serving, giving, sacrificing, committing.
- The Christian scholar stewards the academic-intellectual gifts given knowing the Source, giving credence to The Scriptures for interpretation.
 - The Christian scholar asks questions to prompt answers, expanding opportunities for other scholars to follow her work, a collaborative juggernaut, knowing God has created us for relationship.
 - The Christian scholar displays examples for the encouragement and edification of those who suffer and for those constrained to relieve suffering who are compelled by Christ’s suffering.
 - The Christian scholar cares that her work never be for self-promotion but for doxological celebration of the One on whose behalf she labors.

The scholarship of Christian public intellectuals is the necessary foundation and permeation of every subject of study, including neurodiversity. Hebraic-Christian thought synthesizes creational definitions with Scriptural direction. Caring for all people, no matter the divergence of intellectual abilities, is the mark of a Christian thinker. Graciousness leads to asking questions which may prompt thoughtful shifts in approaches to neurodiversity. Multiple examples from life in the classroom to research in the laboratory opens new redemptive vistas. Perhaps most important is The Church’s collective response and responsibility providing cognitive, affective, and behavioral shifts to foster new approaches to neurodiversity.

What began by watching *Temple Grandin*, reading a *Harvard Business Review* article, applying the principles in a classroom, and becoming convicted by the need to broaden my own engagement with neurodiverse people became what I hope to be a small contribution for the broadening of insights in the church and the world. It is imperative for evangelical scholars to read outside their dominant fields of study since “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it”¹⁰³; by so doing, we will not be surprised to find intersections of thinking, typical or diverse.

¹⁰³Psalm 24:1.

The Public Theology of all Baptized Believers: Wisdom from Don Davis, Robert Romero, and Paige Cunningham

By Hank Voss

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. (Philippians 3:20, NLT)

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The local church should identify the most grievous injustices—local, regional, and national—and strive to rectify them, in concert with all who seek to right the wrong.

—Carl F. H. Henry¹

Recent works by Kevin Vanhoozer, Daniel Treier, and James K. A. Smith illustrate a growing concern among North American evangelical theological educators to engage the public square with wisdom.² Public theology is concerned with how Christian scholars and churches can serve as winsome witnesses to the good, as revealed through Jesus of Nazareth, within the public square. Wise engagement with various publics begins with intentional exegesis of one's cultural context, develops through a deep commitment to the local congregation as "hermeneutic of the gospel," and flourishes through partnerships focused on kingdom mission.³ This essay builds on previous work on the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in order to explore how an emphasis on the witness of all baptized believers might contribute to a more robust understanding of public theology within the North American evangelical context.⁴

Historically the church has found models for an engaged public theology in figures such as Basil of Caesarea, Augustine, John of Damascus, John Calvin,

North American evangelicals display a growing concern to engage the public square with wisdom. This essay explores how the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers might contribute to a more robust understanding of public theology. It makes an argument in three movements: 1) it clarifies terms; 2) explores three public theologians as exemplars (Drs. Don Davis, Robert Romero and Paige Cunningham); and 3) suggests specific applications for ecclesial-minded public theologians. **Hank Voss** is assistant professor of Christian Ministry at Taylor University. He has authored, co-authored, or edited twelve books including *The Priesthood of All Believers and the Missio Dei* (2016), the forthcoming *Introduction to Evangelical Theology* (T&T Clark, 2021) and the *T&T Clark Reader in Global Evangelical Theology* (2022). He serves as Senior National Staff with The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI), and he directs the Lilly funded Sacred Roots Thriving in Ministry Project for which he is currently editing Aelred of Rievaulx's (d. 1167) classic, *Spiritual Friendship*.

John Wesley, Catherine Booth, Elizabeth Fry, William Wilberforce, and many others. Yet as Howard Thurman noted, just as Greek conceptions of citizenship excluded important voices, so the North American public (and ecclesial) square has often consciously or unconsciously excluded participation from women, Native Americans, African Americans, and others.⁵ This paper attends to this gap, and makes an argument in three movements: 1) it clarifies terms; 2) explores three public theologians as exemplars; and 3) suggests specific applications for ecclesial-minded public theologians.⁶

Clarifying the Terms of Engagement

Before discussing evangelical engagement in public theology, it is important to clarify terms. This task includes defining what is meant by “evangelicals,” differentiating public theology from both civil religion and political theology, and clarifying which groups are included or excluded by the term “public.” In this essay, my use of the term “evangelical” is best understood from within the context of the Lausanne Movement with its Covenant, Manifesto, and Confession.⁷ Thus, even though this essay is targeted at North American evangelicals, it is aware and accountable to the perspective of sisters and brothers from a wider context.

¹Cited from a 2009 Christianity Today interview by Ronald P. Hesselgrave, “Foreword,” in *Social Justice: What Evangelicals Need to Know about the World*, eds. William Moulder and Michael Cooper (N. P.: Timothy Center, 2011), x; Carl Henry’s prophetic witness on the need for evangelicals to address issues of social justice spanned his entire adult life, and began famously with the publication of *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).

²Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015); James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). On the importance of wisdom see especially Daniel J. Treier, “The Gift of Finitude: Wisdom from Ecclesiastes for a Theology of Education,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 48.4 (2019): 371–390.

³For a discussion of the local congregation as a “hermeneutic of the gospel” see Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 222–233.

⁴Hank Voss, *The Priesthood of All Believers and the Missio Dei: A Canonical, Catholic, and Contextual Perspective*, Princeton Theological Monographs (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016); Uche Anizor and Hank Voss, *Representing Christ: A Vision for the Priesthood of All Believers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

⁵Howard Thurman, *The Search for the Common Good* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), xiii; Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America’s Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 53.

⁶I especially have in mind theologians working at schools within the CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) network, but I hope others will find it helpful as well.

⁷See Todd Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Christopher J. Devers, eds., *The State of the Evangelical Mind: Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the Future* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018); Michael Hammond, “Christian Higher Education in the United States: The Crisis of Evangelical Identity,” *Christian Higher Education* 18.1–2 (2019): 3–15. For a proposal building on the Lausanne Covenant and suggesting that the core evangelical doctrinal pillars are a high commitment to Scripture and to mission, see Uche Anizor, Rob Price, and Hank Voss, *Evangelical Theology*, Doing Theology Series (London: T&T Clark, forthcoming, 2020).

Max Stackhouse on Civil Religion, Political Theology, and Public Theology 389

In a number of works, Max Stackhouse clarified distinctions between civil religion, political theology, and public theology.⁸ Civil religion is “often a form of patriotic self-celebration.”⁹ It finds its intellectual roots in writers like Cicero, Eusebius, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and more recently Will Herberg.¹⁰ It tends to unconsciously place religion in service to nationalism, and can be symbolically illustrated by churches which fly the American flag above the Christian flag on the same flagpole. In contrast, Christian political theology explores the tensions often present in the practice of civil religion. It consciously reflects on the relationship between church and state, and seeks wise and faithful practices for believers under various types of governments.

The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Reformed, and Orthodox traditions have all developed frameworks for relating church and state with differing views of how a Christian can faithfully engage (or disengage) with the political process.¹¹ While political theology tends to focus more narrowly on the corporate relations between church and state or the individual’s relation of faith to politics, public theology looks more broadly at the role individual Christians (think “vocation”) and the church (think “mission”) play in the world.¹²

The term was introduced to North American discourse relatively recently through the writings of Martin Marty. Marty’s historical reflection on figures like Jonathan Edwards, Abraham Lincoln, and Reinhold Niebuhr convinced him that “we have not given enough attention to the meaning of ‘public.’”¹³ According to Marty, public theology asks Christians “to care for the good ordering of people who are not saved and may never be.”¹⁴ It is concerned about more than the church’s relationship to the state, and looks at how the body of Christ bears witness to Christ in every public sphere. This witness includes, but is not limited to, the neighborhood, the marketplace, the arts and sciences, the university, the voluntary society, and the government. In short, public theology is concerned

⁸See Deirdre King Haninsworth and Scott R. Paeth, eds., *Public Theology for a Global Society: Essays in Honor of Max L. Stackhouse* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

⁹Max Stackhouse, “Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What’s the Difference,” *Political Theology* 5.3 (2004): 275.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 279–280.

¹¹See Amy Black, *Beyond Left and Right: Helping Christians Make Sense of American Politics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 139–155. Black does not discuss the Orthodox tradition. Given that Orthodox theology has largely developed in a post-Christendom context, there may be helpful resources in this direction.

¹²On the distinction between church and state vs. faith and politics see *Ibid.*, 154.

¹³Martin Marty, “Forward,” in Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America’s Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 14.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

with Christian witness within every sphere of life, within the "community of communities."¹⁵

Three Types of Ecclesial Public Theologians: PT_{CM}, PT_{CL}, PT_{CD}

An additional question needs to be addressed before this essay moves to three evangelical exemplars: Who is the "public" in public theology? Many have used David Tracy's identification of three publics—the society as a whole, the church, and the academy—as a road map for exploring the world of public theology.¹⁶ Tracy suggests a corresponding type of theology appropriate to each of these three publics. The theologian of the academy focuses on fundamental theology, the theologian in the church focuses on systematic theology, and the theologian to the broader society on practical theology.¹⁷ One challenge this model faces is what Kevin Vanhoozer called the "ecclesial amnesia of the academy."¹⁸ Others have told the story of how theology lost its ecclesial way.¹⁹ Suffice to say that I am convinced by James K. A. Smith; "Christian scholarship must be ecclesial scholarship."²⁰ In this essay, I place an ecclesial lens on Tracy's model to identify three types of public theologians within the church.

An ecclesial lens can clarify at least three points about an evangelical public theology. First, the vast majority of evangelical public theologians are engaged in practical theology as church members.²¹ The church's first type of public theologian is thus the baptized church member, hereafter referred to as PT_{CM} (Public Theologian as Church Member).²² The primacy of the PT_{CM} explains why Stackhouse

¹⁵Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology," 291.

¹⁶David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 3–31; Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology," 287.

¹⁷Alternatively, the typology of three publics identified by Walter Principe could have been used. While defining Christian spirituality he identifies three publics: 1) the community of lived practice; 2) the community of dynamics, by which he means those who teach about spiritual practices; and 3) the community of academics who systematically reflect on either spiritual experiences or the relevant teachings of the church. See Walter Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," *Studies in Religion* 12.2 (1983): 127–141; and especially the discussion of Principe's definition in Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 15–17.

¹⁸Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 6.

¹⁹For a narrative that includes a constructive proposal, see 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: IVP Academic, 2017).

²⁰James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 230. As he notes elsewhere, this does not mean one supports bulldozing the physics labs to expand the chapel or build another prayer room.

²¹This is not a new claim; for example, "...all Christians are by their baptism devoted to God, and made professors of holiness..." William Law, *The Works of the Reverend William Law, M.A.* (New Forest, Hampshire: Privately Published for G. Moreton, 1893 [Orig. 1762]), 32.

²²A high view of the agency of "lay" church members as public theologians is not unique to Protestants. For sample Roman Catholic and Orthodox perspectives see Yves Congar, *Lay*

believes seminaries must prioritize equipping pastors who can equip their church members to be “lay public theologians.”²³ The litmus test of a successful seminary is not simply whether it produces skilled public theologians, but rather whether its graduates are able to equip and inspire the members of the local congregation to engage their circles of influence, webs of relationships, and personal and professional networks with skill as public theologians.²⁴

Recall that public theology deals with a community of communities. Don Davis uses the Greek term “*oikos*” to describe the diverse publics each church member uniquely engages.²⁵ For example, imagine a congregational member named Alberto who participates in a neighborhood association, is active in local politics, participates in his county’s soccer club, serves on his daughter’s PTA, works as a medical professional at a local hospital, participates in a national professional development society, and is involved with a large and diverse extended family of *tíos, tías, and primos*. These seven webs of relationships represent Alberto’s “*oikos* publics”—the community of communities he is called to steward (Matthew 24:45) and for which he will one day give account (Matthew 25:31–46).²⁶ Alberto will most often have opportunity to serve as a public theologian within these networks.

The second type of public theologian is a leader in a specific congregation, hereafter referred to as PT_{CL} (Public Theologian as Congregational Leader). According to Vanhoozer, a congregational leader becomes a public theologian when he or she serves as their congregation’s “organic intellectual.”²⁷ Vanhoozer borrows the concept of organic intellectual from Antonio Gramsci (d. 1937), who is not thinking of an ivory tower “academic.” Rather, an organic intellectual possesses a familial type connection to the group for which they speak; they are “in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, ‘permanent persuader,’ and not just a simple orator.”²⁸ Vanhoozer’s appropriation of “organic intellectual” helps reinforce the importance of a congregational leader knowing the unique

People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity, trans. Donald Attwater, rev. ed. (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1967); Nicholas Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Michael Plekon, trans. Vitaly Permiakov (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

²³Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 19.

²⁴For a related proposal, see Gordon Graham, “The Philosophy of the Seminary,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 27.3 (2006): 185–192.

²⁵Don L. Davis, *Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare*, vol. 8, Capstone Curriculum (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2005), 87–93, 156–158.

²⁶Many North Americans tend to read the New Testament individualistically, interpreting *oikos* (household) as referring primarily to a “nuclear” family. *Oikos*, in the LXX and the New Testament, possesses a much more communal emphasis, including clan and tribe—what North Americans might refer to as “extended family.” First century usage could also include slaves, servants, and those in significant commercial relationships with a family. My use of “*oikos* publics” should be read in this broader, more communal sense. See Jürgen Goetzmann, “House,” in *NIDNTT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 2:247–253.

²⁷Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 24.

²⁸Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Newman Smith (New York: International, 1971), 10.

context and community they are called to serve.

The third and final type of ecclesial public theologian is the teacher or doctor. Within the Roman Catholic tradition, a “doctor” is an authoritative teacher who has proven to be a reliable guide for the church’s congregational leaders. Within Protestant evangelicalism, the public theologian as doctor, hereafter, PT_{CD} (Public Theologian as Church Doctor) is one who equips congregational leaders to serve as public theologians. Their primary audiences are current and future church leaders, although they will occasionally address secondary audiences as needed. Examples of the PT_{CD} would include seminary professors and ministry institute mentors. Table 1 lists the three types of ecclesial public theologian (PT_{CM}, PT_{CL}, and PT_{CD}) with exemplars for comparison.

Table 1: Three Types of Ecclesial Public Theologians

Type	Exemplars of Public Theologian as:	Primary Audience	Secondary Audience/s
#1 PT _{CM}	Congregational Members Elizabeth Fry, C. S. Lewis, Jacques Ellul, Philip Yancey, Joni Erickson Tada, Paul Brand, Wendell Berry, Marilynne Robinson	<i>Oikos</i> Public/s	Fellow Church Members ²⁹
#2 PT _{CL}	Congregational Leaders Henrietta Mears (First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood), Tim Keller (Redeemer Presbyterian Church), Heather Larson (Willow Creek Community Church), Jeremy Treat (Reality LA), Oscar Owens (West Angeles, COGIC), Enrique Santis (Ministerios Manantial de Amor), Ikki Soma (City of Refuge), Sandra Maria Van Opstal (Grace and Peace Community Church)	As organic intellectual, the leader speaks to and for their congregation	<i>Oikos</i> Public/s
#3 PT _{CD}	Church Doctors Lesslie Newbigin, Paige Cunningham, Don Davis, Robert Romero, Kevin Vanhoozer	Current and future leaders of the church	<i>Oikos</i> Public/s

Three Exemplars of the Evangelical Public Theologian as Church Doctor (PT_{CD})

Ideally, we could explore each of the three types of ecclesial public theologians identified in the previous section. Restraints of space and time restrict us to a brief identification and *ad hoc* sketch of a collection of principles related to theologians serving as doctors of the evangelical church (PT_{CD}). As noted in the introduction, we focus on public theologians from three under-represented evangelical communities. Each theologian has responded to a particular call to invest in a particular community (an *oikos* public), serving as a model for the development of organic intellectuals within that community.

First, Rev. Dr. Don Davis’ commitment to equipping congregational leaders among the urban poor is examined. His fruitful work at The Urban Ministry Insti-

²⁹In some cases, a type one public theologian would find the church as a primary audience. This may be more the case for a Philip Yancey than a Marilynne Robinson.

tute (TUMI) provides principles for engaging publics often ignored (the incarcerated, illiterate, and so on). Second, Rev. Dr. Robert Romero's engagement with regional networks of churches is explored, especially his work with the "Brown Church."³⁰ Finally, Dr. Paige Cunningham's work with The Center for Bioethics is probed as an example of preparing a priesthood for the world. Together, Davis, Romero, and Cunningham provide principles that can aid those in pursuit of a public theology for the common good.

Rev. Dr. Don Davis and The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI)

Rev. Dr. Don Davis joined World Impact, an evangelical church-planting mission, in 1975. Davis had grown up in inner-city Wichita (KS), and had not attended college prior to beginning full-time ministry on staff with World Impact. In 1986, Davis, his wife and three children moved to Wheaton, IL where in three years he completed a BA and an MA at Wheaton College *summa cum laude*. As a non-traditional student, and the only African American in Wheaton's graduate school, Davis built strong friendships with members of Wheaton faculty including Mark Noll, Robert Webber, and Andrew Hill. In 1989 Davis began his PhD at the University of Iowa, and after completing coursework, he and his family returned to World Impact to found TUMI in 1995. Davis turned down a number of invitations to teach in academia, including an invitation to join Cornel West at Princeton.³¹ Davis' focus on the global poor led to his rejection of participation in an academy which he believed largely ignored the needs of the poor.³² Over 20,000 congregational leaders who serve the poor have participated in formal theological education through TUMI over the past 25 years.³³ Further discussion is not possible here, but at least two implications for public theologians (PT_{CD}) are relevant.

First, public theologians must be clear on the particular public they are called to serve. Davis' decision to serve the church of the global poor determined the type of organic intellectual he would become, and the locus of his energy and intellectual activities. Clarity on calling to a particular community leads the public theologian into a continual exercise of community and cultural exegesis. As cultural exegete, the public theologian is thus one who has ears to hear and eyes to see where the Spirit is at work in both a specific community and in that community's world.

³⁰For an explanation and rationale behind the terminology "Brown" church, see the discussion in chapter one of Robert Romero's *The Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020).

³¹A conversation between Davis and West is available at Don L. Davis, "An Interview with Cornel West," *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 12 (1993): 8–17.

³²See further Terry Cornett, "Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis: A Theological Appreciation," in *Black and Human: Rediscovering King as a Resource for Black Theology and Ethics* (Wichita, KS: TUMI Press, 2015), 289.

³³Over 3,000 students were taking classes at TUMI satellites in July of 2019. See "TUMI Stats as of July 2019," *The TUMI Network* (blog), n.d., <https://tuminetnetwork.com/stats> (retrieved August 30, 2019).

Second, the public theologian must serve as a community bard for his or her *oikos* public. Davis is known throughout the TUMI network as a champion of the “Most Amazing Story Ever Told.”³⁴ Rowan Williams has described the biggest problem facing the church today as a “lack of the big picture” which is why “theological teachers must paint a landscape.”³⁵ Davis has heavily invested in developing type-two public theologians (PT_{CL}) for the church among the poor who know the story of God and can triangulate their congregation with God’s kingdom and the needs of their community.

Davis’ work with TUMI is illustrative of the opportunity type-three public theologians (PT_{CD}) have to equip type-one and type-two public theologians through church-based methods. The extensive adaption of the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) model into the Church Based Seminary (CBS) model has equipped thousands of type-two public theologians (PT_{CL}) with practical resources to equip tens of thousands of type-one public theologians (PT_{CM}).³⁶

Rev. Dr. Robert Romero, Jesus for Revolutionaries, and the Matthew 25 Network

Our second exemplar, Rev. Robert Romero, is a pastor, scholar, church planter, and evangelist. Like the vast majority of Latino ecclesial leaders in North America, he is bi-vocational.³⁷ Romero self-identifies as an evangelical organic intellectual, and he has been a professor of Chicana/o Studies and Asian American Studies at UCLA since 2005 (Ph.D., UCLA, JD, Berkeley). He also leads a ministry called “Jesus for Revolutionaries” and is co-chair of the “Matthew 25 Movement.” Together these ministries are serving hundreds of churches connected or concerned with North American Latino/as. After recounting the story of one of his students, Rosa, whose mother was recently wrongfully arrested and held four days by US immigration even though she had legal status, simply because she was Latina, Romero notes, “a five-alarm fire is raging through the Latino community. Relatively few outside our community—and very few within the evangelical community—seem to care.”³⁸

³⁴Don L. Davis, *The Most Amazing Story Ever Told* (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2011).

³⁵Rowan Williams & Marilynne Robinson (2018 Wheaton College Theology Conference, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B1Kft0OprI> (retrieved August 30, 2019).

³⁶For further discussion of the Church Based Seminary (CBS) model of theological education, see Don Davis, *Multiplying Laborers for the Urban Harvest: Shifting the Paradigm for Servant Leadership Education*, 15th ed. (Wichita, KS: TUMI Press, 2013).

³⁷See further Hank Voss, “Latin American Theology,” in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*, eds. Mark A. Lamport and George Thomas Kurian (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

³⁸Robert Romero, “Immigration and the Latino/a Community,” in *Still Evangelical? Insiders Reconsider Political, Social, and Theological Meaning*, ed. Mark Labberton (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), 66.

Romero's work suggests at least two implications for type-three public theologians (PT_{CD}). First, public theologians attend to the urgent issues in their community by asking questions and responding with resources from Scripture and the church's great tradition. Wise public theologians, as organic intellectuals, speak to the heart of their community's issues by listening well, articulating their community's questions, and addressing them with biblical faithfulness and theological nuance. Romero speaks to a Latino audience in North America, many of whom would agree with Jose Flores' statement that "for years I felt that social justice and a belief in God could not co-exist."³⁹ Romero's public wants to know, "Is it possible for a Brown person to be a Christian?" At CCCU schools, Latino/a students often ask a similar question, "is it possible to be a Brown evangelical in North America?"⁴⁰

A second implication from Romero's example is the need for PT_{CD} to seriously engage the church. Public theologians who are not also ecclesial theologians are in grave danger—danger to their own and others' souls. Romero's love and passion for Christ's beloved community guide his research, writing, and community activism. The beauty of the gospel is best seen through the eyes of those who love the church, and Romero's passion for the church is especially seen in the Matthew 25 Movement he co-leads. Since 2016, the Matthew 25 Movement has drawn over 200 churches from around the country together to serve immigrant communities traumatized by US immigration policy.⁴¹ Romero is deeply committed to the task of equipping public theologians for the church from the church who can speak to publics in desperate need of the hope, grace, and the *shalom* of the Kingdom.

Dr. Paige Cunningham and the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity

Our final exemplar, Dr. Paige Cunningham (PhD, TEDS, JD, Northwestern), is currently on leave from her role as Executive Director of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity at Trinity International University to serve as interim president at Taylor University. She previously served as President of Americans United for Life, published over fifty articles and essays, and edited six books on bioethics, public policy, and Christianity. Cunningham's work is illustrative of two emphases vital for type-three public theologians (PT_{CD}). First, in contrast to first-century Christians, mission in North America is often seen as the responsibility of a specialized caste within the church rather than the shared duty of the entire cast of God's people (actors).⁴² Today, some church leaders continue to view the world through clergy-centric lenses, teaching an error we might call, "gospel

³⁹Robert Chao Romero, *Jesus for Revolutionaries: An Introduction to Race, Social Justice, and Christianity* (Los Angeles: Christian Ethnic Studies, 2013), 1.

⁴⁰See Romero's *The Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

⁴¹"Matthew 25/ Mateo 25 of Southern California (Del Sur de California)," accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.matthew25social.org/whatwedo>.

⁴²Voss, *The Priesthood of All Believers and the Missio Dei*, 8, 31, 37, 48–50.

clericalism."⁴³ In what may be his most important book, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, Lesslie Newbigin describes six marks of a gospel-centered congregation. The fourth mark is "a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in *the exercise of the priesthood in the world*."⁴⁴ Church leaders are called to equip the saints to proclaim the gospel in the whole of life.

Newbigin saw the need for type-three public theologians to equip baptized members of the church to exercise their "priesthood in the world." As a missionary bishop in India, one way he practically pursued this aim was by organizing conferences for professionals in various fields so that they could come together to discuss the unique opportunities and challenges the gospel encountered in their respective disciplines. In a 1952 article, he noted that he had helped organize five such conferences that year, including conferences specifically for Christian lawyers, for Christian engineers, and for Christians in business.⁴⁵

Returning to Cunningham as a contemporary exemplar of public theology, we discover a similar emphasis. Next summer, the Center for Bioethics will hold its 27th conference for medical professionals, bioethicists, and church leaders on questions related to bioethics and Christian faithfulness. The center's programs and publications model the equipping of a particular priesthood to serve and steward the common good within a particular *oikos* public (medical and health related fields).

Second, the center's location within the wider community at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School reveals a strategic prioritization of the next generation of type-two public theologians (PT_{CL}). Recognizing the significance of at least three distinct waves of bioethical questions facing the church (ending life, making life, faking life), the Center for Bioethics is preparing congregational leaders to serve as organic intellectuals within the congregations they will soon be leading.⁴⁶ The Christian medical community desperately needs this intentional equipping from its type-two public theologians.⁴⁷

⁴³For an explanation of what I mean by "gospel clericalism" see, Hank Voss, "The Holy Spirit, the Missio Dei, and the Mission of Every Believer in a North American Context" (Paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, November 14, 2018).

⁴⁴Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 229; emphasis added.

⁴⁵Lesslie Newbigin, "The Christian Layman in the World and in the Church," *National Christian Council Review* 72 (1952): 189.

⁴⁶Paige Comstock Cunningham, "Learning from Our Mistakes: The Pro-Life Cause and the New Bioethics," in *Human Dignity in the Biotech Century*, eds. Charles Colson and Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 137.

⁴⁷See John F. Kilner, *Why the Church Needs Bioethics: A Guide to Wise Engagement with Life's Challenges* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); Paige Comstock Cunningham and Michael J. Sleasman, "Exploitation in the Global Medical Enterprise: Bioethics and Social Injustice," in *Social Injustice: What Evangelicals Need to Know about the World*, eds. William Moulder and Michael Cooper (N.P.: Timothy Center, 2011), 91–117.

The priesthood of believers is foundational to all Protestant ecclesiologies.⁴⁸ It provides warrant for a philosophy of education aimed at equipping public theologians who will represent Christ within their respective vocations with winsome words and thoughtful deeds (1 Pet. 2:9). This public theology of all believers is rooted in the believer's baptismal ordination and an intentional choice to remain faithful to one's baptismal vows within a particular vocation.⁴⁹ It is a call for believers to recognize their call to be actors and agents in God's kingdom work. Christian colleges and universities are uniquely situated to equip the next generation of Christian leaders in every field with a vision for baptismal faithfulness and vocational stewardship in their roles as representatives of Jesus Christ to particular public/s. James K. A. Smith is correct; we "cannot be content to produce thinkers;" we must "aim to produce agents."⁵⁰

The examples of Davis, Romero, and Cunningham suggest at least six principles to guide type-three public theologians. These can be summed up as: 1) Become clear on the particular public/s you are called to serve (Davis); 2) Always guard the big picture—the kingdom perspective on what God is doing in Christ through the Spirit in the world your community indwells (Davis); 3) Identify and address the pressing questions faced by your *oikos* public/s (Romero); 4) Love the local church or risk losing the beloved community (Romero); 5) Prepare a "priesthood to the world" to serve and steward particular *oikos* publics (Cunningham); and 6) Strategically invest in pastor-theologians (PT_{CL}) as that investment will multiply through the members (PT_{CM}) they serve (Cunningham).

In sum, the North American church needs public theologians like Don Davis, Robert Romero, and Paige Cunningham. Our communities have questions that need to be addressed by a range of disciplines, and we need to listen to these questions. Christians need to ask and address difficult questions related to faith and origins, Christ and culture, and the specific questions raised by their *oikos* public/s—questions like Romero's, "Can a Brown person be an evangelical?" Three related questions requiring reflection at contemporary North American CCCU schools include: "Can a White person be saved?"⁵¹ "Are Black people human?⁵²" and, "Do unborn children have human rights?⁵³" Christian colleges are

⁴⁸Hans Martin Barth writes, "Evangelische Kirche ist Kirche des allgemeinen Priestertums—oder sie ist nicht." (*Einander Priester Sein: Allgemeines Priestertum in Ökumenischer Perspektive*, KVKV [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990], 103).

⁴⁹See especially Peter Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003); Voss, *The Priesthood of All Believers and the Missio Dei*.

⁵⁰James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 12.

⁵¹See Willie Jennings, et al., *Can "White" People Be Saved?: Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission*, ed. Love L. Sechrest (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018).

⁵²Stephen Charnock (d. 1680) used "practical atheist" to describe those who cognitively believe in God but live otherwise (*The Existence and Attributes of God* [Grand Rapids: Baker, Reprint, 1996] 89–175). Perhaps we now need to recognize "practical racists"—those who

in a unique position to ask and address these types of questions. Dr. Jerry Root, Director of the Evangelism Initiative at Wheaton College, noted during more than 50 CCCU college campus visits that the CCCU network has an opportunity to equip some 1,000,000 Christian college students as winsome witnesses (read “public theologians”) during the next decade.⁵⁴ It is my hope and prayer that we will embrace this challenge with the wisdom, creativity, and passion of a Davis, Romero, and Cunningham.

cognitively reject racism but consciously or unconsciously embrace racist practices. The difficulty many White evangelicals have had with understanding the Black Lives Matter movement is rooted in a failure to recognize that Americanism has denied the full humanity of African Americans for centuries. See Don Davis, *Black and Human: Rediscovering King as a Resource for Black Theology and Ethics*, [Orig. 2000] (Wichita, KS: TUMI Press, 2015). At a more popular level, see Wayne Gordan and John Perkins, *Do All Lives Matter?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).⁵³ Lesslie Newbigin’s final question to the ecumenical community at the WCC World Conference in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil is worth repeating here, “When we stood in the old slave market on Saturday morning on those rough stones which had felt the bare and bruised and shackled feet of countless of our fellow human beings, when we stood in that place so heavy with human sin and suffering and we were asked to spend two minutes in silence waiting for what the Spirit might say to us, I thought first how unbelievable that Christians could have connived in that inhuman trade; and then there came to my mind the question: Will it not be the case that perhaps our great-grandchildren will be equally astonished at the way in which our generation, in our so-called modern Western, rich, developed culture, connive at the wholesale slaughter of unborn children in the name of that central idol of our culture—freedom of choice? I know...that to raise it is exceedingly painful, as painful as was the struggle against the slave trade, as painful as was the World Council’s program to combat racism” (*Signs Amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 118).

⁵⁴The Evangelism Initiative seeks to “deploy 100,000 CCCU students a year—1,000,000 in 10 years—making Christ known wherever they go.” Jerry Root, “Evangelism Initiative,” Billy Graham Center, <https://www.billygrahamcenter.com/ei/> (Retrieved October 1, 2019).

Black Theology for Christian Higher Education—An Extended Review

By Joshua R. Canada

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James H. Cone. *Black Theology and Black Power, 50th Anniversary Edition.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019. xxxiv + 174 pp. \$25.00, ISBN 9781626983083.

James H. Cone. *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody: The Making of a Black Theologian.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. xiii + 156 pp. \$28.00, ISBN 9781626983779.

On April 28, 2018, society lost one of its premier scholars. At age 79, James Cone, a central figure in the development of Black liberation theology, went on to glory. Cone's 1969 book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, became a seminal text in religious studies, theological studies, and ethnic studies, as well as for scholars seeking to look seriously at the impacts of racism on society and religion. This dual book review will hone in on the racial Blackness¹ of Cone's theology in *Black Theology and Black Power* and in Cone's posthumously published memoir, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody: The Making of a Black Theologian*. This focus on racial Blackness is not to negate other usages of Blackness as a proxy for marginalized peoples, but to reinforce that Cone's contextualized theology has relevance to the welfare of contemporary Black people. After providing an overview of both books, I will provide a short challenge to Cone's work and a discussion of how Black liberation theology and Black power should transform Christian Higher Education.

Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody

In chapter 1 of *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody*, Cone is introduced as a professor at Adrian College, a predominately White college in Detroit. It was 1967, and Detroit was embroiled in its rebellion known as the 12th Street Riot. The faculty and administration of Adrian were virtually silent about what was occurring in the Black community, and Cone became disillusioned with their indifference. Cone states he began to publicly use the phrase "Black theology" in an address

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at Colgate College in 1968. Later that year, Cone found himself angered at White liberal passivity after Martin Luther King Jr's assassination. King's assassination catalyzed Cone to flee the White academic establishment. He moved home to Arkansas, took physical solace in the Black community of his childhood, and immersed himself in Black music as a consolation. In this milieu, Cone was galvanized by Black culture and the historic and revolutionary ideals of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) tradition and its founders Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, who opposed racial subjugation within the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC). The Black habitus² of his home community nurtured *Black Theology and Black Power* into existence.

Cone followed this volume with *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Lippincott, 1970), which furthered his new theological perspective toward a systematic theology that was intentionally Black and drew more deeply from the works of Malcom X and an alignment with the liberative message of the Christian scriptures. While writing, Cone often retreated to his "blue room" (65) and meditated on the blues, jazz, spirituals, and other works elevating the "spirit of Blackness" (65). Cone's doggedness in his explicit Blackness intended to make the point that White theologians implicitly drew from their culture and norms, but in not making that influence explicit they normalized their theology and thus retained power and control over a theological metanarrative that subjugated Black people.

Chapters 4 and 5 of *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* highlight Cone's response to criticisms of his work by those in the Black intellectual community, particularly Black religion scholars, Black humanists, and Womanist theologians. Cone's commitment to both Christianity and Black power is clear in his willingness to expand his perspective and defend the Christian faith. Chapter 6 focuses on the development of *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Orbis, 2011), the magnum opus of Cone's work. Cone's exegesis of the Black experience highlighted the psychological importance of Black people's having a savior, from the perspective of a systemically oppressed group who overcame an instrument of oppression as spiritual fodder to fight against White supremacy.

Cone closes the book with a poignant reflection on James Baldwin. Baldwin provided Cone a marriage of the "fire of blackness like Malcom and the passion of love like Martin" (149). Baldwin did not acquiesce to White supremacy, yet his doggedness was done with an overwhelming compassion for society and a deep desire to live an authentically Christian life. This equipoise is what Cone valued about the melancholy of jazz, the blues, and the entire Black aesthetic. It is the paradox of the cross that is central to Cone's theological work.

¹Cone did not use "racial" as a preface before Blackness, but for clarity in this review I will use "racial Blackness" when discussing Black identity and "Blackness" when speaking to the oppressed status that Black people operate under but that is proxy for marginalization of any group.

²Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

With the context of Cone's personal journey as a Black scholar that is provided in *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody*, *Black Theology and Black Power* reads as a much more intimate theology. Cone views society as holistically and comprehensively active in the oppression of Black people, and thus articulations of Black power and Black theology are ways to stand in opposition to that oppression. Cone posits, "The task of theology [is] to show what the changeless gospel means in each new situation" (35). To Cone, the gospel is about liberation. Jesus identifies with and seeks to liberate the oppressed from principalities and powers, which in the context of the United States means liberating Black people from White supremacy.

In chapters 3 and 4, Cone delves more deeply into the relationship between the church (both Black and White) and Black power. Cone understands the relationship of the church as defined by the functions of "proclaiming the message of the gospel (*kerygma*) by rendering services of liberation (*diakonia*), and being itself a manifestation of the nature of the new society (*koinonia*)" (80). To Cone, the White church fails in all of these areas and is complicit with systems and structures that work in opposition to the gospel.

Cone is more sympathetic toward the Black church, but he is critical of their passivity toward Black oppression. He delineates between the pre- and post-Civil War Black church. While the pre-Civil War Black church had a teleology aimed toward liberation, the post-Civil War Black church developed performances, structures, and systems that were mimetic of White counterparts and thus lacking a theology of liberation for Black peoples.

Cone concludes *Black Theology and Black Power* by presenting the eschatological perspective of Black theology, which "mean[s] joining the world and making it what it ought to be. It means that the Christian man looks to the future not for reward or possible punishment of evildoers, but as a means of making him dissatisfied with the present" (142). While Cone believed White people may be sympathetic to the plight of Black people, he ultimately concluded that White people believed their plight was more important and therefore that their love of neighbor and willingness to change were limited by their desire to maintain power and the status quo. Cone's eschatological vision for Black theology is a restoration of wholeness for Black peoples on their own terms and not according to the will or wishes of White people and Whiteness.

Critiquing Cone

While reading his memoir, it is easy to forget that you are not having a verbal conversation with Cone. The ease of his language and honesty in his expressions evokes a grandfatherly feel. *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* is not attempting to prove anything about Cone's theology—if you are staunchly opposed to Black liberation theology you will probably remain so, but you will hopefully better

understand its relevance. *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* provides personal, and at times vulnerable, insight into the scholar whose life work, beginning with *Black Theology and Black Power*, was to engage in theology "as faith seeking understanding"³ within the context of Black dehumanization in the United States.

Throughout both texts, Cone posits that it is impossible to have a reconciled relationship with someone who believes you to be only partly human, even if that belief is unconscious. However, Cone's position leaves one with the questions: *When is reconciliation allowed to begin? Moreover, can reconciliation only begin after one is liberated?* The Christian scriptures mention that God is "reconciling" God's self to the world (II Corinthians 5:19). This does not suggest that creation is currently *in* right relationship with God, but that God is working to move the relationship in that direction. J. Deotis Roberts's articulation of Black Liberation theology is more robust in this way.⁴ To Roberts, reconciliation occurs alongside liberation, not apart from it or afterward. Where Roberts, Cone, and I agree is that reconciliation between humans must occur among parties that are equal. Reconciliation cannot occur within a perpetually unjust milieu.

Cone's theology does not advocate violence, but he is careful to not condemn Black uprisings. Cone argues that violence is and has been a reality for Black people throughout their history in the United States. Any response of violence from Black people must be understood in this preexisting context. Cone's point is important to take seriously. As women and men who have not been fully part of the state (that is, chattel, 3/5 a person, subordinate, terrorists, and perpetual threats), racial Blackness has constantly been in a war against the state. During warfare, most (though not all) Christians justify violence as a method of preventing more violence or gaining freedom from oppression (for example, for White colonists, the Revolutionary War was considered an act of liberation from British oppression). In the context of a war against racial Blackness, there is credence in understanding Black violence as a method of just war (at least for those Christians who do not fully subscribe to non-violence).

At times, Cone's reliance on German intellectual thought makes *Black Theology and Black Power* too theologically myopic. By contrast, Major Jones's expression of Black liberation theology utilizes Christ Victor to support his arguments.⁵ Contextualized to Blackness, Jones interprets Christ Victor as Black victory over White supremacy. Cone's lack of engagement with Christ Victor (apart from a quick reference to Gustaf Aulén) is unfortunate, because the defeat of sin via defeating the cross correlates with the defeat of White supremacy via defeating the lynching tree. An engagement with other Black liberation theologies that

³Anselm of Canterbury, "Proslogion," trans. M. J. Charlesworth, in *The Major Works*, eds. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 87.

⁴See James Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971).

⁵Major J. Jones, *Christian Ethics for Black Theology: The Politics of Liberation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974).

emerged alongside his would have made *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* and Cone's theology more dynamic and complete.

A Black Power Challenge to the White Theology of Christian Higher Education

Cone's works do not directly address higher education; however, he viewed religious colleges and universities as extensions of the church and therefore complicit with White supremacy. Cone's articulation of Black theology and advocacy for Black power should serve as a contemporary challenge to the status of Christian Higher Education (CHE). Cone argues that to be Christian is to be anti-racist, because racism seeks to denigrate the worth of persons. I contextualize this perspective to contemporary CHE by arguing that CHE must be actively anti-racist and not simply honor diversity or have statements about diversity. CHE colleges and universities must excavate their cultures to expose the tacit White normativity and White supremacy, what Diane Lynn Gusa names as the White Institutional Presence that shapes them.⁶

Cone's Black Theology is about Black people, but his framework is applicable to all marginalized persons. That said, while my comments about CHE will focus on Black peoples, I do not discount the experiences of other peoples of color as they relate to CHE. Rather, I am intentionally honing in on the particular relationship between CHE and Black students, faculty, staff, and the Black church.

Cone does not suggest either that the answer to racism is individual kindness or that justice for Black people requires injustice for White people. Rather, because White supremacy is sin and because the White church and White Christianity are rooted in White supremacy, Black dignity is liberating for Black people, White people, and society at large. Therefore, to be anti-racist, Christian higher education should intentionally and sacrificially create culturally relevant climates for Black students, staff, and faculty and commit resources to do so.

For CHE institutions, this can mean focused and strategic hiring practices that are race-conscious. It also means evaluating positive bias toward White-dominant journals and conferences and negative bias toward more racially diverse or racially-focused academic outlets in the tenure and promotion process. Curricularly, this means funding Black and Ethnic Studies programs with the same fervor that institutions fund Honors Programs, which are generally White-dominant and Eurocentric in student and faculty composition and content. Research in student success shows that empowering cultural relevance, including Blackness, has positive repercussions for all students.⁷

⁶Diane Lynn Gusa, "White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate," *Harvard Educational Review* 80 (2010): 464–490.

⁷See Laurie A. Schreiner, "The 'Thriving Quotient': A New Vision for Student Success," *About Campus* 15 (2010): 2–10; Kristin Paredes-Collins, "The Intersection of Race and Spirituality at Faith-based Colleges: Campus Climate as a Predictor of Spiritual Development," Ph.D.

This intentional Blackness also means pointed efforts to add Black women and men on the boards of institutions. This cannot be symbolic. These board members need to know and use their influence to change and shape the future of CHE. Changes cannot be superficial, they must deeply affect the practices, policies, and culture of the institution. Moreover, it means examining the relationships which the institution sees as formative for their values and identity and making efforts to engage in equitable relationships and partnerships with predominately Black organizations such as expressions of the Black church. These relationships cannot be oriented toward student enrollment; they should seek to deepen the value of Blackness within the institution's culture.

Key questions still remain, supported by Cone's own scholarly development through the Black church tradition, the Black cultural aesthetic, and his relationships with Black academic mentors such as C. Eric Lincoln. First, *can there be substantial Black habitus—spaces that bolster Black identity—in the midst of the White institutional presence expressed by CHE institutions?* In regard to the composition, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) institutions, for example, are abysmally unequipped to cultivate a Black habitus. In 2015, 3.57% of CCCCU faculty identified as Black or African American. In contrast, 11.37% of students identified as Black or African American.⁸ Second, *what milieu is CCCCU higher education bringing Black students into? Are Black students truly able to thrive and experience a robust community without a critical mass of Black scholars?* As the numbers stand, at some CCCCU institutions a Black undergraduate student will likely graduate without having class with a Black professor. Dominantly White institutions take for granted that a community of White scholars that constantly reinforces the community of White students.⁹ It is not that race does not matter for White students or White faculty members, it is that their privilege allows them to not consider why and how it matters. While CHE is broader than the CCCCU, as an example these numbers should be disturbing.

Another key question: *Is CHE necessarily White?* Leaders in CHE look to Nicholas Wolterstorff, Mark Noll, George Marsden, Arthur Holmes, and other White male scholars to define and shape the meaning and purpose of CHE, but rarely does CHE explore Black scholars and higher education leaders such as Benjamin Mays, Charles Godwin Carter, Cornel West, or Cain Hope Felder.¹⁰ There is nothing substantively wrong about the former group of White male scholars, but their framework and subject matter is contextualized to White Christianity and historically White higher education. Their voices are important and should

diss., Azusa Pacific University, 2011; Samuel D. Museus, Varaxy Yi, and Natasha Saelua, "The Impact of Culturally Engaging Campus Environments on Sense of Belonging," *The Review of Higher Education* 40 (2017): 187–215; and Daryl G. Smith, *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education: Making It Work*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

⁸Nita Stemmler, personal communication and unpublished raw data, March 24, 2018.

⁹Christopher S. Collins and Alexander Jun, *White Out: Understanding White Privilege and Dominance in the Modern Age* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017).

¹⁰I recognize my own limitation in that these are all male references.

remain influential, but not in absence of Black scholars (and other scholars of color, both women and men) who have insight into the mission and purpose of CHE.

Finally, organizations that gather religious higher education institutions rarely include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). While the small Lutheran college in rural mid-America is considered an important expression of religious higher education, tacitly the small AME college in rural South Carolina is not. We must reflexively ask *if the current understanding of CHE is only inclusive of historically and contemporarily White colleges and universities*.¹¹ I hope many would shudder at that suggestion, but unfortunately the status of CHE institutions and the conversations among them lend evidence that this suggestion is true. Some CHE institutions have the desire to be more diverse and inclusive, but I question whether they have made the effort to expand their network or explore the elements of their culture that are exclusive. To be anti-racist academic communities, CHE institutions (and the collectives to which they belong) must deconstruct the existing power structures, change their faculty and leadership composition, reassess cultural norms, and expand ideologies to be unashamedly pro-Black.

James H. Cone was, is, and will remain a towering figure in academic theology. Even those who do not fully subscribe to his Black theological perspective have been shaped by his ushering in a deeper level of contextual theology. *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* is a testimony to why this theology is important. Cone was not participating in intellectual intrigue. His academic work intended to open new paradigms of hope for Christians and Christian theology. Racism and White supremacy are utterly incompatible with the Christian faith, yet racism is deeply interwoven in the fabric of the United States. Cone's Black liberation theology is not exultant or an easily digestible theology, yet it is hopeful because it is an attempt to deracinate racism and White supremacy from the roots of Christianity in the United States. For Christian Higher Education, this liberation must be of paramount concern.

¹¹By "CHE" I do not only mean members or affiliates of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, but rather that larger group of institutions that hold to a Christian identity.

Learning about God's World for the Common Good —An Extended Review

By William Boerman-Cornell

Nicholas Wolterstorff. *In This World of Wonders: Memoir of a Life in Learning.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2019. iv + 318 pp. \$15.26, ISBN 9780802976799.

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Nicholas Wolterstorff. *Religion in the University.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019. v + 172 pp. \$25.00, ISBN 9780300243703.

In Europe, and to a lesser extent North America, colleges and universities are being asked to justify student tuition expenditures in terms of direct monetary payoffs in post-graduation salaries. The value of philosophy departments in small private colleges and large universities alike has come under question by parents and sometimes administration and faculty of their own institutions. The criticisms tend to fall into two camps. First, that while philosophers address some admittedly important topics such as justice, education, art, and religion, they do so in an idealistic, abstract, ivory tower manner so that what they are saying, while admirable and perhaps true, has little value in the regular world where real people live. Second, that while philosophers, and particularly Christian philosophers, are saying these good and thoughtful things, they are speaking to an audience largely of themselves—a small community of philosophers, or an even smaller community of Christian philosophers.

Nicholas Wolterstorff has recently published two books that, while dramatically different from each other in format, content, purpose, and audience, somehow both manage to lay out a vision for doing philosophy which addresses both these criticisms. Wolterstorff consistently affirms both the importance of grounding philosophy in vitally relevant questions and expanding the scope of the communities with whom philosophers (especially Christian philosophers) enter into dialogue. More than that, Wolterstorff extends this vision to Christian scholars in all disciplines.

Like Wolterstorff, I am a Kuyperian Christian, and I also hold degrees from two Reformed colleges, taught English at a Christian high school, and now teach at

a college in the Reformed tradition. So while I am not a philosopher, I have swum in the same waters that Wolterstorff has and have felt the effects of his teaching and writing. My own discipline is literacy studies, and I practice that discipline in a department of education. There is much in *In This World of Wonders: Memoir of a Life in Learning* and *Religion in the University* about how learning works, how we acquire knowledge, what education ought to look like, and what dispositional stance we ought to take in approaching learning about God's world. It is such themes that frame this review.

In This World of Wonders

The first of these books I'll discuss, *In This World of Wonders: A Memoir of a Life of Learning*, takes the form of an autobiography. It is not meant to be an argument for or against anything, but rather a narrative of Wolterstorff's life from his boyhood in Minnesota through his early education, college, and graduate school years, his learning to teach and do philosophy, his careers at Calvin College and Yale University, and finally his post-retirement writings.

In This World of Wonders contains far too many aspects of Wolterstorff's life to effectively summarize. I will instead focus on some thematic strands that surface again and again in the book: the importance of community in education; the aesthetic value of craftsmanship; how education is, at its heart, learning to see and read new things in new ways; how education is a window into a wider world; how there is so much that any given person does not know; and the recent history of Christian philosophy as Wolterstorff experienced it. These recurring themes often circle back to the two criticisms of philosophers noted above and ask: How should philosophy be grounded in content and purpose? And what audience should philosophers—particularly Christian philosophers—address?

The Importance of Community in Education

Almost from the start of *In This World of Wonders*, Wolterstorff highlights the centrality of communities in his narrative. He explains in the preface:

Mine has not been the life of a solitary individual in an alien world, discovering his true self. Mine has been a life in community...shaped by these communities, by movements and developments within them, by their traditions. (xiv)

Wolterstorff refers here first of all to the small town in Minnesota in which he grew up, speaking of extended family conversations about theology, politics, agriculture, and everything else. They were conversations into which everyone present was welcomed: "women, men, teenagers, grandfather" (31). He describes such conversations as sometimes becoming intense, but says that, when the meal or evening was over, those who disagreed deeply with each other "embraced and went their way" (31).

Through such discussions and other interactions, Wolterstorff received not only a set of foundational beliefs and an awareness of contrasting opinions about issues, but also what he calls “an expansive opening-out from the community of the small village in which I was reared” (xiv). Later in the book we see his communities expand to include Grand Rapids, Michigan; New Haven, Connecticut; Amsterdam, Netherlands; South Africa; and other contexts. He states that though he left his original community and moved to larger communities far from where he began, he did not leave “behind the ways [he] was shaped by that community” (xv).

However, his is not simply a story of being shaped by a village in the heartland, one with small-town values and Norman Rockwell characters, before moving on to the big city. This was a community actively engaged with its own Christian tradition. As Wolterstorff puts it:

I learned to live with integrity within the tradition: how to discern and embrace its fundamental contours while treating its details as matters of indifference; how to appropriate what in the tradition is capable of nourishing one's own day while leaving the rest behind, how to criticize the tradition from within, expand its scope, celebrate its accomplishments, empathize with its anxieties and its memories of suffering. (52)

The thread of religious community that emerged from his early years loops through the rest of Wolterstorff's life through participation in liturgy, fellowship, and the life of the church, right down to being involved in the design of the church building in which he still worships. And far from viewing his own Reformed religious tradition as confining, he describes himself as “a member of a community, spread across time and space, whose ways of thinking and acting have, over the years, grounded, nurtured, instructed, guided, and disciplined me” (28).

The thread of community likewise loops through Wolterstorff's educational experiences. He speaks fondly of attending Plato Club as an undergraduate at Calvin College, a club in which students and a faculty member would discuss a book or two in meetings that commonly lasted three hours. Similar experiences in graduate school, and in each of the faculties he served in, include the joy of collegial discussion of topics that matter and often connect to shared traditions and contexts.

The Aesthetic Value of Craftsmanship

Wolterstorff's father derived great joy from drawing and from working with wood, and an appreciation for the aesthetic of both traditional art and craftsmanship runs throughout *In This World of Wonders*. Wolterstorff compares his father's woodworking with his own work, writing, “In a good philosophy paper, there is both intellectual imagination and craftsmanship” (30). This high regard for craft (art woven together with practicality, purpose, or work) led him to an important reaction when he first encountered modern aesthetics. From that time, Wolterstorff states that he has

resented and opposed the put-down of so-called crafts, no doubt because as a child I was inducted into both the fine arts tradition and the crafts tradition. The pen-and-ink drawings my father made were fine art, art made for contemplation; the cabinets and other items of wood that he made were craft. He never indicated that he thought of the former as superior to the latter. (22)

This was not only an idea from Wolterstorff's childhood, however. In chapter 4, "Beyond Teaching," he tells of designing the house that he and his wife built in the late 1960s, and then of buying a piece of land and designing and building a cottage with two other couples in the 1970s. He further tells of working with a committee to shape the liturgy of the Christian Reformed Church and of serving on a study commission concerning the Canons of Dordt, a foundational document for his denomination. He also speaks of helping to found the Society of Christian Philosophers. In other chapters, he tells of serving on the committee that worked with an architect to design a new building for his church, and of designing and redesigning his garden. And each of these tasks involves as much or more practical craftsmanship as it does a fine arts aesthetic.

Perhaps there is a parallel here to the way that Wolterstorff does philosophy, or perhaps more generally it is a call for Christian scholars to approach their work differently. Rather than only preferring thought and research written for an insular group of other scholars in the same field or sub-field, Wolterstorff implies that a second type of scholarship—one that anchors theory and specialized ways of thinking and understanding to grounded issues in applied ways—is of at least equal value.

Education: Seeing New Things in New Ways

Another persistent theme throughout *In This World of Wonders* is how Wolterstorff sees education as a way of opening up the world to the learner. He traces this back to a time when he was growing up and walked into his Aunt Trena's house when the Metropolitan Opera was playing on the radio. When he asked in a snarky tone, "Why are you listening to *that*?", his aunt replied: "Nick, this is my window onto the world. Sit down and let me explain it to you." Wolterstorff reflects, "What is education but a window onto the world? Sit down and let me explain it to you" (24). Wolterstorff describes his Christian high school education similarly, as "vistas being opened up, rather than material being covered." In his literature classes, he writes that he had the sense of being able to see "the vast landscape of American and English Literature." He attributes this in part to his teachers assigning works that were not in the textbook and states that it led him to having a sense of there being much more out there in the world.

Wolterstorff applies this way of teaching to philosophy, as well:

In philosophy, it makes no sense to think in terms of covering the material. What would it be to cover the material in a course in modern philosophy or a course in ethics? There is always more. One opens up a vista, hoping that some students will find that vista sufficiently

When Wolterstorff got to college, professors like Henry Stob and Henry Zylstra helped him to see that the vista of culture was something that Christians could and should engage in. He speaks of philosophy professor Harry Jellema introducing Augustine's notion of the two cities, *civitas dei* and *civitas mundi*, and telling his students that their calling was "to share in building the *civitas dei*" (53). Wolterstorff learned this as a characteristic of the Reformed tradition (and maybe more specifically as a legacy of Abraham Kuypers), to view the world as a "dialectic of yes and no. Yes to God's creation. No to the ravages of God's creation by that force that resists—in the form of deprivation, suffering, and untimely death—God's desire for the flourishing of every human creature. And both Yes and No to the deeds and works of human beings" (55).

He came to see this as a calling to "think, feel, speak, and act as Christians" within a community and its institutions. The idea was not that Christians should go off somewhere to set up their own country, economy, art world, or academic world, but that Christians are to participate in the wider world in which they live.

Wolterstorff sees a need to renew a sense of education as opening up vistas rather than closing them off. Students need to have the opportunity to experience awe and wonder, to love understanding for its own sake, and to engage education with both the mind and the heart. He worries:

Today that love of understanding is under threat, both in Europe and in the United States. Colleges are being asked to justify what they teach by reference to its benefit to the economy. Are we to be reduced to cogs in the economic machine? Reality is mysterious—deeply and endlessly mysterious. Are we to renounce that longing to penetrate some of its mystery? (106)

The Limits of Learning: On Not Knowing

Another persistent theme throughout the book is Wolterstorff's quickness to acknowledge that which he does not know, that which cannot be known, or that which he wishes he knew. If the theme of education being mainly about opening up new vistas is about the expansiveness inherent in learning things, one might expect that this theme might be primarily about disappointment. It doesn't come across that way though. It seems more a matter-of-factness, with maybe a hint of wistfulness.

Much of that which Wolterstorff does not know centers around his family growing up. When writing of his father's being fired from his job after being wrongfully accused of embezzlement, Wolterstorff asks, "Was it a mistake for Dad and mother to protect us children from the shame by not telling us what happened? I do not know" (14). After describing a May Day tradition in which the children of his hometown would deliver homemade baskets of candy to each other, Wolterstorff writes, "I have no idea where this tradition came from or what it meant" (16). Regarding his grandfather, a carpenter who died the year before he

was born, Wolterstorff states, "Nobody talked about him, so I have no idea what he was like as a person" (17). He wonders if his father ever regretted that he did not finish college and become a graphic artist, continuing, "If he did indeed live with these disappointments, he never mentioned them to me" (20).

In chapter 7, "Living with Grief," Wolterstorff describes his family's journey after his son Eric died in a climbing accident. Here what Wolterstorff does not know has less to do with content and more to do with understanding. He describes writing *Lament for a Son* (William B. Eerdmans, 1987) and discovering that "I understood nothing about grief other than that I would not be grieving over Eric's death had I not loved him. Grief was the price I was paying for love. More than that I did not understand—nor did I try to understand. Now I understand more" (202). At the time, Wolterstorff could not bring himself to tackle the mystery any more than he had to: "I did not shy away from taking note of the gaping void in me that his death caused. I did not shy away from voicing my lament over his death. But I could not bring myself to try to figure out what God was up to in Eric's death" (209). He writes further of how things have gone awry in God's creation, stating that he does not understand why, "nor do I understand why God puts up with it for so long. Rather than Eric's death evoking in me an interest in theology, it had the effect of making God more mysterious. I live with the mystery" (210). Both the intense interest in an opening up of new areas in which to learn and an acknowledgement of the divine mysteries we live with are integral parts of Wolterstorff's conceptualization of what it means to learn and to move toward understanding.

Mapping the Philosophical Terrain

One value of a scholarly memoir is the way it can serve as an apprenticeship for those who come later: it encodes practices and dispositions that, while helpful for other scholars to read and think on, would not regularly be recorded as part of a person's scholarly output. Such is the case with Wolterstorff's historical perspective on the discipline of philosophy in *In This World of Wonders*. As Wolterstorff describes his own trajectory of scholarly focus, he also describes the philosophical terrain of the Christian philosophical world in general, and the Reformed tradition in particular, from the 1950s to the present. The volume likewise presents Wolterstorff's perspective on philosophy as "a social practice, an ongoing activity of thinking philosophically, of writing philosophical texts and of teaching and discussing philosophy" (105).

Wolterstorff explains the two major movements in modern philosophy: "In the philosophy of the past seventy-five years or so, there are two main traditions, commonly called the *analytic* and the *continental*. Not all twentieth-century philosophers fit into either of these two traditions....But most do." Wolterstorff further explains: "Philosophers in the analytic tradition typically prize argumentative rigor and rhetorical precision and clarity....Analytic philosophers are typically

sparing in their use of figures of speech... theirs is a dry, literal style devoid of suggestion and allusion" (85). Wolterstorff aligns himself with this tradition, more or less, but states that he engages major figures in the continental tradition, as well.

Wolterstorff describes himself as being called to be "not just a good philosopher, but a Christian philosopher" (101). In chapter 4, he maps out the major divisions in Reformed Christian philosophy in the latter half of the twentieth century. He sees all Reformed philosophers as descending from Abraham Kuyper's contention that Christians have a responsibility to engage all of human culture. From that common point of origin, Wolterstorff divides Reformed philosophers into two groups. On the one side are those philosophers who were trying to construct a comprehensive, systematic way of applying Kuyper's call to engage all of culture. This included Herman Dooyeweerd, who developed a comprehensive approach he called the Philosophy of the Law-Idea, and Dirk Vollenhoven, whose own systematic work led him into a sustained engagement with the history of philosophy. On the other side were Hendrick Stoker of the University of Potchefstroom in South Africa and Harry Jellema of Calvin College. As Wolterstorff explains, Jellema had little use for constructing a systematic approach to philosophy. His own interest was in considering the ways that the ancient, medieval, and modern philosophers had shaped the worldviews of their times. Jellema found those who followed the systematic tradition to be triumphalist in their claim that the Philosophy of the Law-Idea was the first true Christian philosophy and too dismissive of the Christian medieval philosophers he saw as modern Christian philosophers' forbears. He thought that the historical philosophers should be studied seriously and not merely acknowledged and then dismissed because of their non-Christian thinking.

Wolterstorff himself had no interest in developing, as he puts it, "a twelve-volume system" (156), a long work trying to be comprehensive. He preferred to write "provoked by something that befell me" (156). From early on, Wolterstorff felt strongly that God was calling him to focus his work on justice, especially for oppressed people. Chapter 6, "Awakenings," describes how, while serving with a team of consultants to help executives at Herman Miller Corporation (a modern furniture manufacturer) reflect on whether there is a moral imperative in design and whether growth is compatible with intimacy, Wolterstorff attended a conference in South Africa that changed his life and made justice a central focus of his work. Chapter 9, "Return to Yale," and 10, "Still Vistas," detail some lectures and writings that grew out of this focus, including the books *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (William B. Eerdmans, 1987), *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton University Press, 2010), *Hearing the Call: Liturgy, Justice, Church, and World* (William B. Eerdmans, 2011), and *Understanding Liberal Democracy: Essays in Political Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Wolterstorff acknowledges that some people contend that the fascination with justice issues is a fad among young people today, but states that he personally knows many young people for whom justice is not a fad but a reason for

deep commitment and action. And perhaps at this time in educational history, the prospect of Christian philosophy addressing questions of justice may be an excellent way of making clear not only its relevance to the world our students are living in, but also, by extension, to all disciplines in the academy. This may also be one of the easiest ways for Christian philosophy in particular to have a voice in public institutions. And that is the focus of Wolterstorff's second book.

Religion in the University

Memoirs may have themes and a narrative flow, but by their nature, they seldom move in a linear or even a predictable pattern. While Wolterstorff brings order to the way he sees his life in his memoir, the writing is very different from the sustained, clear argument that he puts forth in his book *Religion in the University*. In this book, Wolterstorff addresses the current dominant societal stance of the minimal place religion ought to have in the university. He considers this in a broader historical context, considers recent developments in the epistemology of religious belief, and suggests how we might reconceive the proper role of religion in the contemporary university.

Paul A. Macdonald Jr. addressed this topic in his *Christian Theology and the Secular University* (Routledge, 2017). While MacDonald's argument is cogent and well structured, it is also shaggy, with enough sub-arguments and digressions that it is easy to lose the thread of his overall points. Wolterstorff's approach to the same topic is stripped down to its most basic form, and consequently reads as more streamlined, persuasive, and conclusive. It is also a book that has some echoes of *In This World of Wonders*.

Consider the way Wolterstorff initially frames the question the book seeks to answer: "[Is] there a place in the contemporary university for a voice such as this...a religious voice of one who spies behind the beautiful snowflake and gorgeous earth a craftsman—their craftsman, master of insight and beauty. Is there a place for a voice such as that?" (3). Wolterstorff's choice of the word *craftsman*, apart from its unintentional gender focus, certainly connects back to the passages examined earlier, connecting God's creation of the earth not only to fine arts, but also to practical arts like carpentry and gardening, seeing that such arts have just as much claim to insight and beauty.

Wolterstorff begins by looking at the argument articulated by German sociologist Max Weber that each sphere within society defines that value of its own area and that value shapes the actions within that sphere. For example, a businessperson, acting within the affordances and constraints of the business world, must naturally submit to the notion that decisions must take into account the bottom line, and those who don't will likely end up out of business. Weber then argues that in most fields, one's faith is at best irrelevant and at worst an obstruction to success—mostly because it introduces a set of rules separate from the ones which govern each sphere. A scholar guided by faith, Weber argues, would be kicked

out of the scholarly conversation (and maybe the university itself) because he or she is guided by a different set of rules. Wolterstorff summarizes Weber thus: "Whenever 'the man of science' allows some additional value to shape his activity, whenever he 'introduces his personal value judgment, a full understanding of the facts ceases'" (19).

In chapter 2, Wolterstorff makes it clear that he thinks Weber got it wrong. He argues that when religious voices get squeezed out of academic conversations, it has less to do with those voices not functioning within the rules of particular spheres, and more to do with "all too human reasons [like] misunderstanding, resentment, bias, hostility and the like—these sometimes evoked by a religious voice that is itself resentful and hostile" (33). Wolterstorff argues that while evidence plays a part in our understanding, we construct, test, accept, and reject theories more based on experience than on evidence alone. Further, the contemporary academy seems open and interested in accepting a variety of different stances and perspectives. Wolterstorff states that 50 years ago, the influx of racial, cultural, and gender diversity into the academy would have been considered subjective or biased. Now we take it as a given that all academic positions are influenced by race, culture, and gender, leading to an acceptance and "legitimization of pluralism in our universities" (31).

This means, Wolterstorff argues, that the scholar must "be entitled to those particularist values and beliefs that shape her scholarship—as indeed she must be entitled to her non-particularist values and beliefs." But if this scholar is, for example, a political scientist specializing in twenty-first-century American politics, she is "not entitled to base her views exclusively on what she hears on her favorite news channel. She is obligated to read and listen carefully" (51).

Chapter 3 addresses the argument that religious thought exists outside of that which is rational. When a person claims to have a religious experience, the argument goes, that experience is inaccessible to all but the recipient of that experience; therefore, it cannot be verified by others; therefore, it is irrational. Further, critics argue, religious people do not hold their belief in God based on arguments but on faith, which is also separate from rationality. Wolterstorff states that there are two ways to respond to this argument. The first is to point out that many people do base their faith upon solid arguments and then develop those arguments to demonstrate the rationality of belief. The second is to challenge the criticism by arguing that "the criteria for rationality of religious belief that the critic employs is mistaken" (74).

It is this second approach that Wolterstorff embraces. He makes a distinction between perceptual evidence and experiential evidence, but points out that in spite of 300 years of philosophers trying to prove the existence of an external world, the bottom line is that all beliefs and all evidence for anything are ultimately perceptual. Wolterstorff then points to religious experience and testimony as not necessarily different from other examples of perceptual evidence.

In the final chapter, two of Wolterstorff's concluding arguments particularly

stood out to me. The first is that religion can make an important contribution in the context of a pluralistic university. Wolterstorff writes,

For it is in such a University—where else—that living proponents of all significant positions are brought together in one grand dialogue, each gleaning from the other what she thinks worth gleaning, each contributing what she thinks worth contributing, with the result that more of ourselves and our world is uncovered, explained, and hermeneutically understood than any party in the dialogue could have achieved by itself. (146)

The second is that the whole notion that it is possible to have a university without faith, is itself flawed. Faith is, in fact, a part of everything that every person thinks, whether they understand this to be the case or not:

The main burden of what I have to say in this book is that choice is misconceived. Reasoning is fundamental to our existence; to be human is to reason. But though reason may often appear king in the realm of learning, close scrutiny shows that in scholarship and teaching, our capacity for reasoning is always functioning in the service of some particular faith or love, or in the service of some intuition or interpretation of how things are. (118)

Religion in the University is a strong book and would be useful to any Christian scholar submitting work to the larger public academy. It would also be valuable to any scholar considering teaching in the public sphere, as well as for scholars working in public universities to consider what people of faith could bring to the academy. *Religion in the University* might be most helpful to Christian scholars considering their own Christian institutions and work. As we read about why Christian voices should be valued in the public sphere, we also consider why our voices should be valued in our own institutions and what messages, learning, and understandings we should be concentrating on. In my own field of education, for example, it is easy for professors working in a deeply Christian context to get distracted by state standards, requirements, and assessments, so much that we minimize the value of wisdom and understanding drawn from our faith and the ways these inform our concepts of what education is. In setting forth arguments why Christian voices have a place in the public university, Wolterstorff also challenges scholars in Christian colleges and universities to consider what wisdom they have for a world beyond the edges of their campuses and what that means for how they teach their students and prepare them to fully engage God's world.

Wolterstorff gives us two books, one that helps us see what Christian scholarship over a full academic life looks like, the other that argues for bringing that life of Christian scholarship to the public sphere. Both books would be enriching for Christian scholars in any academic discipline.

Scripture and the English Poetic Imagination—An Extended Review

By Deborah C. Bowen

David Lyle Jeffrey. *Scripture and the English Poetic Imagination*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. xii + 224 pp. \$35.00, hardcover, ISBN 9780801099625.

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David Lyle Jeffrey's voice has been loud and clear now for upwards of 40 years, telling the story of what he describes as "the magnificent fruitfulness of Holy Scripture in the work of English poets" (vii). His related concern to counter a growing lack of biblical literacy in contemporary culture has propelled his scholarship at least since his magisterial *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (William B. Eerdmans, 1992) and subsequent monograph *People of the Book: Christian Identity and Literary Culture* (William B. Eerdmans, 1996). In his latest collection of essays, *Scripture and the English Poetic Imagination*, which covers poetic texts from Caedmon in the eighth century to Richard Wilbur in the twenty-first, Jeffrey reiterates that concern, warning that "without intellectually accountable access to the Greater Book, very many lesser, yet still very great, expressions of truth may go without understanding—unread and unreprinted" (218). He makes the argument not only that Scripture in both story and idiom has powerfully fired the English poetic imagination for centuries, even "independently of prevalent religious authority" (vii), but also that a turn from this Book could irredeemably diminish "the residual authority of our fragile discipline [of English] and indeed our wider culture" (218).

Jeffrey brings together here 12 of his essays on English poetry, some new to this collection, others revised from previous publications dating as far back as 1975. Readers will be grateful to have collected in one place essays from a variety of books (*'Lighting Up the Terrain': The Poetry of Margaret Avison* [edited by David A. Kent, ECW Press, 1987]; *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II* [edited by Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, Brazos Press, 2007]; *Translation That Openeth the Window: Reflections on the History and Legacy of the King James Bible* [Society of Biblical Literature, 2009]) and journals (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Franciscan*

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Studies, Christianity and Literature, First Things), and to find included a couple of previously unpublished essays. Those in Part I of the collection focus on medieval poetry: Bonaventure's helpful theorizing for medieval theatre; Dante and Chaucer contrasted in their relationship to Scripture; Chaucer's reframing of Ovid in *The Canterbury Tales*; and the misunderstood concept of courtly love. The chapters of Part II turn to the relationship of Scripture to poetic imagination from the Reformation to the present: Donne and Herbert; the King James Bible; (a speedy chronological skate to) form in modern poetry; Margaret Avison's conversion poems; Richard Wilbur's call to wonder; and fatherly love in poems by Anthony Hecht and Gjertrud Schnackenberg.

This grand sweep of 13 centuries offers Jeffrey's hallmark corrective to any Protestant prejudice that Scripture becomes important for literature—and indeed for the wider culture—only after the Reformation. Of course collecting together essays that originally appeared in quite different contexts is always a risky process, since any attempt to find a unified thesis may falter over different foci. There are points in this collection where the avowed purpose of the volume, to explore “an attunement of the vernacular English poetic imagination to biblical poetics as a wellspring of inspiration” (xii), and so to create a “brief anthology of English-speaking poets responding to the music of divine speech in Holy Writ” (14), may appear to take rather a back seat to the more immediate concerns of individual chapters. But the trees in these chapters are so verdant that it is easy to forgive an occasional loss of sight of the all-encompassing wood.

For my money, one of the most valuable chapters here is the first, a new one, entitled “Poetry and the Voice of God.” Jeffrey argues in his Preface that “the collective ‘voice’ of our poetic tradition in English discloses a mode of imagination and creativity either inadvertently or advertently in dialogue with a precedent Voice” (xii). In this first chapter, he presents a powerful argument for poetry in Scripture as the voice of God when God is speaking to the weightiest of issues, proposing that God is best understood as “the originary Poet—the One who writes the world” (10), so that “*how* he speaks, not just *what* he says, becomes an important measure of who he is” (2). Initially looking at examples from Isaiah, Jeffrey sets out to show how in Biblical poetry “something of the divine nature itself [is] projected by the divine Voice” (5), in “rhetorical sublimity” (3), in majesty and authority, and even in anger. Jesus in the New Testament, too, speaks “poetic discourse in discussing theological truth,” knowing that “poetic imagination breaks through the barrier of unreflective thinking” (7); sometimes the only way Jesus can teach deeper truth is through poetry. It is vintage Jeffrey to lament the way in which, in contemporary Christianity, “the fashionable imposition of culturally chic paraphrases has deadened many an ear to the actual rhetorical manner of divine self-disclosure, which is seldom colloquial” (11). Challenging particularly the theologians among his readers, Jeffrey declares that “one of the most appropriate routes to a competent biblical theology may require us to get out of our prosy habits of mind and, at least occasionally, rise up and into the poetry

of God" (12). He alerts us to expect a subsequent volume from him that will more closely consider divine poetry by means of literary analysis, but prepares us in this volume for a series of reflections on the way English poets have offered a response to Scripture's poetry in an "ongoing antiphonal" (14).

Part I, then, opens with a reflection on medieval poetry and the Bible, from Caedmon's Anglo-Saxon creation hymn (in which one of the names for God is "scop," or "poet") through a subsequently "vigorous tradition of poetic paraphrase" of Scripture to salvation stories presented in the fourteenth century as theatre—though in these folk-plays, Jeffrey nicely concedes, there was "considerable risk to theological precision" alongside their accessibility in giving insight into theological truth (17-18). It is perhaps surprising that, in looking at St Francis's nativity play as a first expression of this kind of theatre, Jeffrey speaks so positively about the medieval Franciscans' "passionate determination to harness popular culture as a medium for communicating the gospel" (24), given how negative he seems to be about twentieth- and twenty-first-century Christians trying to do the same sort of thing. Be that as it may, Jeffrey goes on to offer an illuminating comparison of Dante and Chaucer, "two of the greatest exemplars of the poetic imagination in all of Western culture" (18), in their drawing on the Sermon on the Mount. His argument may be for some readers contentious: that whereas Chaucer in England looks directly to Scripture for his authority and the formation of his literary imagination in the pursuit of personal and social action, Dante a century earlier in mainland Europe is more concerned for mystical askesis, and rather than quoting from Scripture itself is more often drawing on church liturgy and the scholastic theology he would have acquired through patristic reading.

In the following chapter, Jeffrey turns to Chaucer again to show how he uses the Bible as a lens through which to read other texts, including pagan texts like those of Ovid, to whose "inadequate" conclusions the English author offers biblical remedies in the narrative of his Parson. Having given many examples of the way Chaucer also uses the misreading of Scripture ironically, Jeffrey in the next chapter offers an enlightening excursus into irony and misreading more broadly. Pointing out that the adultery of a knight with the wife of his lord was in the Middle Ages seen as a form of treason, he contends that the "courtly love" trope has only since the nineteenth century been understood as a romantic notion, whereas in fact it was largely a medieval literary convention and "a vehicle for social satire" (86). Jeffrey compares this misreading with Henry VIII's relationship to the Bible, which led Henry as a deliberate misreader of Scripture to attempt to edit out passages that might convict him of sin: "Living like Henry VIII (or Hugh Hefner) has become a kind of archetypal modernist fantasy that has eclipsed in our social discourse most of the spiritual capital by which marriage was understood by our Christian forebears to be integral to our pursuit of the common good" (100).

In Part II, Jeffrey turns to English poetic texts since the Reformation. He makes two key points in his introductory pages here. First,

What the classical humanist strove for in his students was a fresh encounter with an ancient text, classical or biblical. But we should not fail to recognize that the revolutionary literary encounters with texts of the Bible that mark the Reformers' break with the paradigms of their time owe greatly to their rigorous philological training and close reading of the classical texts, chiefly poetry. (103)

And second, in tracing a path from the Reformation humanists to contemporary modernity, we also trace "the emergence of the self as authority and arbiter of moral obligation," and thus we see the Bible become "an aesthetic rather than a spiritual touchstone" (106). The pace of this shift was, however, slowed by "the enormous appeal of the KJV Bible, the most influential translation of Scripture into any European vernacular" (107), so much so that by the nineteenth century "its cadences were habitual not only among poets but in the work of novelists, playwrights, and politicians" (108).

The first main chapter in this section is a lovely comparison of the poetry of John Donne and George Herbert, Donne flamboyant and extroverted, Herbert initially aloof and then marked by a profound humility, but both men "deeply Augustinian, catholic rather than Catholic or Protestant," and offering necessary and complementary expressions of Christian spiritual life (130). The new chapter on the King James Bible and its influence on English poets briefly considers the poetry of Richard Wilbur (Episcopalian) and Anthony Hecht (Jewish) in the twentieth century, and then takes us on a speedy pilgrimage through many of the best-known writers, Christian or not, in the intervening centuries. Jeffrey considers the power of the KJV, particularly for poets, to reside in large part in the fact that it was intended to be read aloud: "there is nothing yet like unto the KJV for a translation that *sounds* like the voice of God" (146). This is indeed the confession of a true believer.

At this point, a nudge. It is true that in his consideration of the cultural authority of the KJV, Jeffrey gives a paragraph rather than just a sentence or two to Swift, Blake, and Coleridge, and in the following chapter a page-and-a-half to Hopkins; it is also true that he has written about several nineteenth-century poets elsewhere (for instance, Coleridge and Arnold in *People of the Book*). And of course he must be granted both limits and preferences, particularly given the constraints of a collected volume. Nevertheless, in an ideal world we might have wished somewhere in this collection for a fuller treatment of at least a couple of poets of the nineteenth century—nary a mention here of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Rossetti, Barrett Browning, or Hardy, to name just a few in whose poetry the influence of the Bible is surely complex and profound. But in this collection we move on from the "habitual music" of the KJV to the formal conclusions of modern poetry with less than we might hope for in between.

However, what Jeffrey proposes in his brief chapter on formal conclusions (an updated extract from a longer essay published in 1975) is typically bold: that a biblical *telos* enables poetry with significant endings, whereas a turn away from any sense of *telos* disables poetic meaning. Of course this proposition must be read in

relation to Frank Kermode's thesis in his now-canonical book *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), where he argued that we impose a coherent pattern upon our own stories as we aim to make sense of life, and that this patterning, inevitably evident in all of our literature, is structural rather than ontological. Jeffrey's implicit response is that it is only when the personal is ontologically understood as relational rather than solipsistic and individualistic that the possibility for a "viable public vision" (155) is also communicable; as words within the Word, a good poem "provokes not merely private experience but also shared memory" (157).

Jeffrey's three subsequent chapters on contemporary poetry all focus on North American poets. The chapter on the spiritual wisdom of the too-little-known Canadian poet Margaret Avison is evidence of what he has just described in poetry as "a means of discovery, restoring words to form" (157), as Avison herself moves from the isolation of solipsism to a community of understanding through her conversion experience in reading John's gospel. Describing Avison's post-conversion poetry as "a species of prayer" (176), Jeffrey aligns her with Herbert and Hopkins in the English meditative tradition. What he writes in his lovely chapter about Richard Wilbur is similarly encomiastic: Jeffrey considers this gentle New Englander in his wisdom to be comparable to poets like T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden. Jeffrey describes Wilbur as uniquely characterized by "a deep contentment" (181), a poet of "whimsical self-effacement and gratitude" (184), whose "wonder, crafted into art, is a kind of worship, often a hymn of thanksgiving" (182). He turns in his final chapter to look at contemporary literature through the particular lens of fatherhood, proposing that "Scripture provides us poetry and poetic imagination whereby we can envision something so culturally counterintuitive as a positive view of fathers" (197). He enlists two poems here, by Anthony Hecht and Gjertrud Schnackenberg, as evidence that "in such an ugly time the true protest is beauty" (a quote from the liner notes of Phil Ochs's 1967 album, *Pleasures of the Harbor*), and that good art can point us to "the deep echo in beauty...of the love of our heavenly Father" (203). In this final section of the book, I would also have liked to see at least mention of the poetry of such giants as Seamus Heaney and Geoffrey Hill, and perhaps some further exploration of the echoes of Scripture in a few obviously "secular" poets, but the limits of a collection of this kind are inevitable.

In any case, by the time we reach the Epilogue, it is abundantly clear why Jeffrey is anxious as he considers the "fragile future of our common Book." As he has written elsewhere, he fears that "formal literary study, in its pretensions to be a substitute for religion, has lost sight of the common good and become incoherent" (214), and he sees this as parallel to the history of institutional Christianity itself, in its "loss of any authority sufficiently transcendent to command a common allegiance" (215). Believing as he does in "the power of literature to enable our will to truth" (218), it is significant for the readership of this journal that Jeffrey argues that confessional schools have a particular cultural responsibility to "teach premodern literature in such a way as to preserve its intelligibility" (216), and to locate literature in an appreciation of a Christian community across time. After

all, argues Jeffrey, "People of the Book...are obliged to embrace their responsibility to community more readily than others" (218); consequently, we must work to preserve not only the literature of the past but also an understanding of its history and, above all, intelligent access to the Greater Book itself, on whose stories, idioms, and styles our Western culture has so long depended. In this collection, Jeffrey's writing is everywhere incisive, often profound, and sometimes wickedly humorous. As a result, *Scripture and the English Poetic Imagination* will be of interest not only to literary scholars and to medievalists in particular, but also to those in theology, philosophy, and cultural studies, as well as to general Christian readers who want to be reminded afresh of the power and significance of their scriptural heritage.

Reviews

Miguel A. De La Torre. *Burying White Privilege: Resurrecting a Badass Christianity.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2019. 153 pp. \$22.00, ISBN 9780802876881.

Reviewed by Nicole Saint-Victor, Director of Multicultural Engagement, Trinity Christian College

To the brown body, fear is gifted like a birthright, poured generationally onward, originating from the stench of the transatlantic. The non-white body composes reformulated versions of “I’ll Fly Away,” joining Albert E. Brumley’s (1929) stuttered tribal emblems we long to reach the by and by. “O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest” (Psalm 55:6, NRSV). Recognizing these realities, *Burying White Privilege: Resurrecting a Badass Christianity*, by Miguel A. De La Torre, needs to be used as a contemporary and multifaceted resource for institutions of higher education. This is particularly true for institutions who externally embrace the name of Jesus Christ, but are complicit in supporting the melodic bloodshed producing red ink, dripping through the broken brown body, attempting to meet the white 4/4 time signature, and hoping for wings to escape the cinderblocks holding them to earth’s foundation. I think it is important for higher education because De La Torre is creating a strategic argument for diversity and inclusion alongside passive racial systems that we still endorse in higher education. And as I hear in music, and my framework comes from an artistic place, De La Torre’s metaphors and imagery connect to my work and experience in a powerful way.

In terms of higher education today, I believe the landscape is changing and that the majority of folks populating our Christian campuses will soon be of color. At the same time, many of our structural systems that are in place, systems that apologize for racism or try to put a band-aid on how we interact with our brothers and sisters of color, are no longer sustainable. Administrators, staff, and faculty need to take a risk for the sake of another. De La Torre starts the book by expressing this necessary vulnerability: “If I were to undertake this project, I wanted to engage in a difficult conversation based on my pain, my delusions, and my hopelessness—a prevailing mood I detect in our society, especially among communities of color” (x). This risk will underscore institutional commitment for both those who are employed by the institution and those who are willing to make that institution their home, their family, and their community for the college years in which they are being formed. If Christianity includes the whole person, it requires a redefinition of itself that is not rooted in a white nationalism, and this will require us to find ways to probe

our academic, social, and economic structures to name the “haves” and the “have nots.” This process, as described by De La Torre, is one that goes against “These Jesus-creators, and their cosmic fight against whomever they have designated to be the enemies of Christ, implement oppressive structures that politically protect their accumulated privileges” (6).

De La Torre lays out *Burying White Privilege* under four descriptive chapter headings, each weaving together issues of a Eurocentric Christianity into the current social, religious, and political landscape. In chapter 1, “Let the Dead Bury the Dead,” he exposes the privilege of Eurocentric thinking in connection to present-day culture through relevant statistical documentation. In doing this, he provides what feels like a bridge toward intentional change by noting the interconnectedness of religion, spirituality, social justice, atheism, and apathy in our culture. This also introduces an avenue within higher education through which to push the margins of candid conversations around race and privilege. Chapter 2, “The Fallacy of Whiteness,” is where De La Torre brings in more of a historical component by naming contemporary participants in white privilege and connecting them to the Eurocentric historical landscape. He provides a definition that does not focus only on current white privilege, but places this cloak of privilege on a broader Eurocentric definition of Christianity as a whole. Chapter 3, “Maintaining and Sustaining Self-Deception,” is an indictment of what De La Torre defines as Christian nationalists in the United States and Christians’ complicity in selecting governing officials who continue to practice overt racism and motivate through fear by placing stereotypes on minority cultures (such as the image of Latinx persons swarming over the borders into the U.S.). De La Torre’s condemnation of American Christians who have chosen to deceive themselves about the realities of political racism coming out of the White House is encapsulated by his statement that “the mask has been ripped off to show the hatred and racism beneath the Trump façade. Our nation is divided. Our nation has a history of promoting hatred for the other.” He argues that this American self-deception continues despite incident after incident coming from Washington, D.C., that negate any of the arguments that were made for why voting against the opponent in 2016 was the better choice.

After three chapters of outlining the problems, De La Torre underscores the possibilities of hope for the future rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ in chapter 4, “Badass Christianity.” His warning that “whenever patriotism replaces justice, we’re in mortal danger of idolatry” is a mirror of Habakkuk 2:4, “Look at that man, bloated by self-importance—full of himself but soul-empty” (*The Message*). This chapter asks readers to go beyond the Eurocentric culture that we have taken on and to rewrite the narrative, to make the truth of the gospel the center point of how we deal with Christianity, life, structural systems, and social justice issues in the United States.

A resource like this one, similar to a complex musical composition, can be foundational to recognizing that in living into our collective Eurocentric Christianity as a church, as institutions, and as people of God, we have actually lived into the system of exclusion, rather than living out Micah 6:8: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (*NRSV*). If this is our true biblical response to injustice, is it possible that our institutions and their foundational roots are starting to erode, exposing a “good ol’ boy” system? Is that why we are not bearing fruit like John 15 calls us to? Is that why individualism trumps our communal call? Put simply, “As long as Jesus remains a merely personal savior, Christianity can be tamed, demanding no action to implement Jesus’ public teachings on how to live justly” (26).

This makes it clear that Miguel De La Torre is saying what needs to be said in an

academic environment in which we appreciate poetic metaphors and yet Judas still lives among us. The divisive systems that he highlights keep brown bodies pigeonholed to some areas of success connected with artistic and athletic abilities, which counters the hymn, "My friends, may you grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior." There is a kind of twisted piece of art being put together here. In this way, those maintaining these power structures are distant from God's character and acting as pretenders, in both naming who they are and what they bring to the table. De La Torre tracks a positional authority that is in step with white Christianity by highlighting a biblical backing that keeps people of color hoping for the second coming because they are forced to be spectators today, excluded from any sense of shared belonging. Or, as De La Torre puts it, "The White Jesus is damning to the disenfranchised" (13).

We have all these resources that talk about diversity and inclusion and who gets to be in the inner circle and who stands on the outside to look in, and De La Torre highlights the disproportionate resources for people of color across varied contexts. Our Christian institutions feel that same pulse of disingenuous honor, but if we're willing to risk our social strata of power, then maybe we can hear this call from the brown bodies named by Ta-Nehisi Coates in *Between the World and Me*: "perhaps being named 'black' had nothing to do with any of this; perhaps being named 'black' was just someone's name for being at the bottom, a human turned to object, object turned to pariah."¹ I appreciate that De La Torre, like Coates, also deals very particularly with bringing a whole body into his writing, and so there are terms of healthy bodies and broken bodies, neurological references, questions of whose body is up for offer, and recognition of how fear is given as a gift against a particular culture. De La Torre helps us to hold out this Eurocentric posture, operating under a divine stupidity, as responsible for these broken bodies. Where is the lie? Where is the ownership? De La Torre takes this head on:

To save Jesus from those claiming to be his heirs, we must wrench him from the hands of White Christians who forged a nationalist Christianity, constipated with hate and fear—fear of Muslims, fear of the undocumented, fear of blacks, and fear of everything queer. Hate of course is a strong word implying severe loathing to the point of desiring or instigating extreme harm to the object hated...but willful praxis. (27)

As I continued to enter into *Burying White Privilege*, I started to ask myself questions: What actually matters? And who's invited to the table? And why does political agenda and reverence create a kind of a partnership, but at the same time celebrate things like slavery and refuse to recognize generational structural systems put in place to reduce the brown body? In that way, I started to connect with Matthew 6:24 and what it means to have a split mind. Of course, De La Torre is countercultural, but not necessarily in a "nice" way. Rather, he deals with racism, classism, economic constraints, and feminism. He cuts deep by stating that "since the foundation of the republic, White Christians have reigned supreme in North America by using invasion, genocide, and slavery as instruments of political control" (12). He continues by demonstrating how there has been created this kind of Western justice that excludes minorities, but also defines being a minority as inclusive of the white population that is at the bottom of the class structure. His condemnation addresses the issue that

¹Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 55.

White Christians elect and support politicians who are detrimental to their own wellbeing. Bought and swapped like baseball trading cards by wealthier whites, these politicians may give the impression when they campaign that all white lives matter, but their actions reveal that certain white lives matter more than others. (56)

Throughout this book, De La Torre ably interacts with a biblical narrative and with the social concepts that we are dealing with today, such as Trump's slogan "Make American Great Again," which disguises itself as WWJD (6). And in this mindset, rather than making all bodies of all colors great again, "Instead, they pass the blame downward, accusing those who are marginalized of stealing their jobs and depressing wages and thus preventing the true heirs of the American dream from achieving their rightful place in society" (58).

In the end, De La Torre makes it clear that to encounter bearing white privilege is to experience layers of juxtapositions. He does this with an in-depth, yet quick, historical timeline of injustice, and the image of death as the anchor is repetitive and sings throughout the text. He reminds those of us in Christian higher education that in our institutions, we often live out a narrative in which all are mentioned, but in the narrative of white Christianity, all are not named. And this to me, a brown person working in this space, for whom fear is woven into the fabric of my DNA in a way that feels like a praying-without-ceasing suffocation for my brown son, my family, my brown brothers and sisters, resonates my cry of "How long, O Lord?" De La Torre enters that space with me, telling the truth of who we are as Christian institutions, helping us uncover and heal, and teaching us to learn to use the voice of privilege to help restore brown brothers and sisters in academic and student engagement contexts. And De La Torre's gift is a witness, a *shema*, that we need to keep moving forward toward a world of justice and mercy for all bodies.

Monique M. Ingalls. *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 272 pp. \$35.00, ISBN 9780190499648.

Reviewed by Adam Perez, Liturgical Studies, Duke Divinity School²

To the outsider, North American evangelical Christianity can seem rather opaque. Self-described evangelicals themselves often disagree on what constitutes the term. Monique M. Ingalls's *Singing the Congregation* shines a light into the definitional disarray with clarity and ingenuity, describing evangelical Christianity in North America as a "discursive network that is articulated through concrete, embodied practices—in this case, the musical practices within the activity marked as 'worship'" (17). Ingalls is a church music professor at Baylor University whose work as an ethnomusicologist in contemporary worship contexts has been foundational for the emerging field of Congregational Music Studies. To that end, *Singing the Congregation* is a landmark volume that provides an academic, ethnographic deep-dive into the socio-musical practices of contemporary worship music (CWM) while it weaves a theoretical web for understanding the construction(s) of evangelical Christianity in North America.

²Adam Perez is currently writing his Th.D. dissertation in Liturgical Studies at Duke University, and Monique Ingalls recently joined his dissertation committee. However, the current review was commissioned and drafted before that professional relationship was established.

In the introduction, Ingalls explains the organizing principle for the project: a retooled and applied use of the language of “congregations” and “modes of congregating.” Ingalls uses these terms to describe how in each of her case studies, performing shared practices of CWM participates in constructing a performative North American evangelical Christian identity. Rather than treat evangelicalism as a “specific set of institutions or normative beliefs,” Ingalls argues that “contemporary worship music [is] a contingent social practice that both shapes and reflects the religious collectivities that create, circulate, perform, and critique it” (11). Because these social practices of music-making are contingent, it makes sense that Ingalls addresses each of the five case studies discretely in chapter-long treatments. In reappropriating the language of “congregation,” Ingalls expands, renews, and links the notion across CWM performance spaces and opens up the conversation for scholars across disciplinary boundaries.

The introduction does a lot of heavy lifting for detailing the scope of the project. Helpfully, Ingalls makes some important contributions here on the “state of the question” of perpetually contested terms like “contemporary worship music,” “praise and worship music,” and “modern worship.” Along with the book’s conclusion, the introduction constructs a framework for holding together Ingalls’s five case studies conducted over more than a decade. Each of the chapter-length ethnographies examines a different mode of congregating through worship gatherings: concerts, conferences, local churches, public events, and online sites. In addition to highlighting the range of “modes of congregating” across which evangelicals participate, Ingalls demonstrates keenly that each site itself is not monolithic in the way it shapes worshippers. Rather, each site is a shared space where participants engage in a range of practices and modes of sociality. Because CWM draws heavily on popular music styles and performance practices, one type of negotiation that is shared across sites is that participants (congregants) “actively negotiate the boundaries between participatory worship and popular music performance” (29).

Chapter 1 focuses on the worship concert congregation, highlighting how performers use opportunities for congregational singing to “differentiate it from a ‘mere’ concert” (30). At worship concerts, evangelicals negotiate (and potentially conflate) their dual identities as fans and worshippers as the concert influences their aesthetic ideals for local worship gatherings, impacts their practices of consuming CWM commodities, and are thus formed by the Christian recording industry. It is appropriate that the book opens with this case study, as the work of the Christian recording industry in producing recordings of CWM sits behind or beside each of the following case studies. Chapter 2 explores the large evangelical (youth) conference congregation through ethnographies at the Passion conference in Atlanta and the Urbana conference in St. Louis. By comparing and contrasting these ethnographies, Ingalls develops a framework for understanding them as pilgrimage sites and eschatology communities, even as each conference has its own brand of worship music. Ingalls highlights how conference attendees are invited to imagine themselves in these mega-gatherings as a foretaste of the eschatological community. In so doing, conference leaders create a strong link between, or blueprint for, the music-making practices of the conference and the ethics of social relations inscribed on heavenly worship. Chapter 3 looks at the music repertory, style, and performance practices of CWM that enable one local church to navigate relationships with charismatic and evangelical church networks while remaining part of the Episcopal Church. By making choices about how to effectively use CWM, this church carves out a niche for its own style and identity distinct from other local churches.

Chapter 4 highlights two successive iterations of public praise marches in the city of

Toronto. This mode of congregating is multi-faceted in its use and effects. At once, it displays spiritual and political power, negotiates the relationships among religious and other identities, rallies the evangelical community, emphasizes the diversity of its constituency, and promotes receptiveness to evangelical messages. Chapter 5 addresses the diffusion and extension of CWM into digital space through online live-streaming, user-generated YouTube videos, or pre-recorded audiovisual materials for use in "live" worship. Together, these various ways of engaging with CWM constitute their own networked mode of congregating that blurs boundaries between worship in public and in private and between the visual and aural dimensions of CWM. The conclusion provides a cogent summary of the themes of each chapter and points to further avenues of research. What is somewhat unexpected (and good) is that Ingalls identifies various sites from throughout the book that present potential concerns for CWM, particularly regarding negotiations with the mainstream of CWM. Among them are how CWM is a platform on which disagreements in politics and society are played out, how diversity is represented in performance practices, and how the mainstream of CWM "reflect(s) the beliefs, values, and practices of a North American middle-class white conservative bloc" (215).

In the field of ethnomusicology that is often somewhat opaque due to technical and self-referential prose, Ingalls maintains an uncommon and uncanny level of readability. I suspect this is in part a product of the years of honing this research for presentations and publications—significant portions of chapters 2, 4, and 5 have appeared in print elsewhere over the last 11 years since her Ph.D. dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 2008). The writing is clear and readable even while it indexes discourses across an impressive breadth of research on contemporary worship, popular Christian worship music, congregational studies, American evangelicalism, and ecclesiology. Because the chapters originated as standalone ethnographies, they can be read apart from the larger frame of the book and retain a level of coherence. The number of discrete theoretical conversation partners that are invoked within each chapter can dizzy the reader. The use of other theorists never feels forced or gratuitous, but the reader is presented with the challenge of following the overarching argument across independent and discrete blocks of theoretical analysis in varying lengths.

The overall frame of the book provides a generative and creative way of thinking about the present state of evangelicalism in North America. Other recent attempts are helpful partners for thinking about the significance of Ingalls's work. Melanie Ross, for example, following Martin Marty, describes "evangelical" as a term by highlighting that it unites people across denominational lines while at the same time dividing those within denominations—a distinction that has been important since the conservative vs. liberal controversies in the early twentieth century.³ Ingalls might agree with Ross that evangelical music-making is quintessentially "evangelical" and is thus capable of this dual move (uniting and dividing) that has been true since the eighteenth century, especially characteristic of Whitefieldian ecumenical evangelicalism in America. Shared piety, expressed and encoded musically, is akin to the kind of ecumenism (for Ross) that is most important to constituting the evangelical community across boundaries. Held together, we get a broader picture of the history of what evangelicalism is and has been, because pan-evangelical practices associated with contemporary worship music (such as singing) are not new. However, they are being newly articulated, in new spaces, and with new centers of power and authority. This is just one example of how Ingalls's work expands and updates centuries-old identity questions and

³Melanie C. Ross, *Evangelical versus Liturgical? Defying a Dichotomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 26.

shows that “music studies has much to say about twenty-first-century evangelical Christianity” (Jeffers Englehardt, back cover).

Singing the Congregation offers an unprecedented generosity and patient attention to evangelicals at worship in music. Unfortunately, the field of scholarship on CWM, particularly in liturgical studies conversations, has been shaped by loud (and often shallow) critiques from prominent figures like Bryan Spinks, Gordon Lathrop, and Marva Dawn in advance of detailed scholarly treatments of the phenomenon. Ingalls’s work is not aimed at liturgical studies in particular, though it offers an engagement with the “primary theology” of contemporary worship music-making that is almost entirely absent from liturgical studies scholars (the work of Swee Hong Lim, Lester Ruth, and Melanie Ross are noteworthy here, though they largely do not employ ethnographies of CWM). Beyond liturgical studies, this volume intersects with practical theology, ecclesiology, ethnomusicology, and sociology of religion (especially American Christianity). Like Ingalls’s research subjects, her research itself is a major node in a network of scholars and publications that is actively constructing the new interdisciplinary field of Christian Congregational Music Studies. Routledge’s new CCMS book series (of which Ingalls is an editor) now has five volumes: two monographs and three edited volumes that have emerged out of the biennial Christian Congregational Music Conference at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxford, UK.

This volume is critical for making sense of contemporary worship music as more than a popular musical style or repertory. Ingalls describes CWM as “a set of distinct social constellations that participants often experience as being integrally connected” and that form contemporary worshippers far beyond the bounds of the weekly worship gatherings of local churches. This form of worship continues to grow in prominence and influence globally, unveiling the interconnectedness of evangelical “modes of congregating”—and thus modes of articulation and formation. Because this book sheds light so clearly on these multiple layers of concerns around CWM, *Singing the Congregation* is a landmark resource for students of ecclesiology, church music, and worship. As a nearly picture-perfect snapshot of North American evangelical worship at the beginning of the twenty-first century, I trust the book will become an important resource central to understanding the state of music and worship today.

Beth Barton Schweiger. *A Literate South: Reading before Emancipation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. xxiii + 258 pp. \$35.00, ISBN 9780300112535.

Reviewed by David Brodnax Sr., History, Trinity Christian College

Alex Gorman of Raleigh, North Carolina, owned both the *Spirit of the Age* newspaper and the enslaved persons who produced it, and any of them caught reading the text that they helped create were beaten. Among his subscribers may have been Amanda and Betsy Cooley, two sisters in the Blue Ridge region of rural Virginia who allowed their slave girl Jincy to read but also beat her for disobedience. They described this in their daily journals, along with their own reading habits, religious practices, and other activities that were possible because they had more freedom than Jincy. Only a few miles away in North Carolina, another set of sisters named Jennie and Ann Speer shared the Cooleys’ love of reading and writing but were strongly opposed to slavery. These and other apparent contradictions, both in the lives of rural antebellum Southerners and in how people have often viewed those lives, are

the subject of Beth Barton Schweiger's remarkable new book. The author, a former history professor and now independent scholar on religion below the Mason-Dixon Line, argues in *A Literate South* that "print permeated the rural South, co-existing with oral tradition in a rich give-and-take in which printed texts reflected speech and speech incorporated texts" (x-xi).

Using the toolsets of history, anthropology, bibliography, literary studies, and musicology, Schweiger challenges the common conception that the antebellum South was a largely illiterate society and that literacy naturally goes hand in hand with progress, antislavery, and modernity. This is explored through four themes. First, print was available to Southern readers even when they lived far from the sites of production, although they largely read pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, and other inexpensive, non-extant ephemera. Second, how and why Southerners read is directly connected to how they were taught in schools and at home. Third, rural people used print to "create and circulate ordinary culture," both by reading and by passing on what they had learned, especially with regard to the Bible (xvii). Finally, the book challenges "the nineteenth-century perspective that literacy and slavery were incompatible" (xvii).

Schweiger begins by showing how in the early 1800s lowered postal rates, geographic expansion, local publishers, and traveling salesmen greatly increased rural southern access to print. She then turns to the connection among education, reading, and writing. Not surprisingly, this was highly influenced by attitudes about race, class, and gender. Some slaveholders allowed slave literacy because they thought that enslaved persons were only capable of passively receiving information; meanwhile, the enslaved persons themselves sought literacy as a means of uplift and of writing to relatives who had been sold away. As the upper class came to believe that in a democratic society even the poor could and should master the ability to write, the teaching of grammar moved to primary education, an "important, if overlooked, step in democratizing knowledge in the early United States" (71). At the same time, American culture both mocked and celebrated common people with limited grammatical skills. The third and highest level of education, rhetoric, was considered essential to lower middle-class women like the Speers, who wanted to write expressively rather than just descriptively and to "think and feel in refined ways" by reading poetry (95, 105). Despite the class and intellectual differences between the pairs of siblings, all of them died young, and as their lives faded, their writing became part of the "rhetoric of death" that was common for women in a time and place when they and their children often died young.

A Literate South next shifts its attention to the ways that print inspired the creation of new songs, poems, and stories and to embrace new religious doctrines. Schweiger gives particular attention to the sacred music that was created and spread in part through the camp revival movement that swept through the South in the early 1800s, although this movement itself was also made possible because people created "an oral tradition that was codified in print," with the most popular songs put on paper (137). This became another source of division, with some churches rejecting the new songs as uncouth and many denominations "policing doctrinal boundaries" through their hymnals (143). Outside the explicitly religious realm, magazines, almanacs, and other texts "reshaped readers' sensibilities of past, present, and future" through reports on new inventions, far-away places, historical figures, and other aspects of life (124, 152). Tales of the frontier era were popular in the Blue Ridge in part because the region was changing through western migration, but in addition to this, "American heroes and English paupers, medieval queens and imaginary Indians combined to become their canon, inspiring a sense of possibility that was nurtured by knowledge of things beyond their experience (176)." Finally, Schweiger shows how print

impacted Christianity by encouraging conversion, new doctrines, and new practices such as the temperance movement.

The Speers and Cooleys are the most important individuals in this book, in part because their journals were unusually detailed, but *A Literate South* is not simply a biographical study. Information about their contemporaries is used to show how reading impacted other Americans who were similar and dissimilar to them; for instance, Frederick Douglass's remembrances about learning to read, the writings of Jennie Speer's fellow Mount Holyoke alumna Emily Dickinson about their college exams, and both Mark Twain's and his character Tom Sawyer's admiration for proper grammar. In other cases, information about broader cultural patterns is applied to the four women and to Southerners in general. For example, nostalgia for the War of Independence generation is described through stories that were printed in almanacs and through the Speers' journaling about their aunt who had often shared her own accounts during their childhood, while Amanda Cooley's remembrance of hearing slave rebels sing "When I Hear That Trumpet Sound" as they were about to be executed is analyzed by looking at how that song and other sacred music spread through black communities. This helps to illustrate Schweiger's argument that "Print did not destroy tradition in the rural places it came to. On the contrary, it offered readers perspective, ideas, and language that built on tradition" (17-18). Schweiger also carefully describes the process of how influential texts like hymnals, Daniel Webster's dictionary, and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, were originally created and disseminated, including information on how many copies they sold, who brought them to the South, and the reflections of more prominent Americans on their content. The connection between economic forces and reading is evident in all of this. For instance, many works that today would be published as books were then disseminated in serial format through periodicals because the U.S. postal service charged much higher rates for books.

A Literate South does an exceptional job of showing what Southerners read, that they read, why they read what they read, and how this both shaped and was shaped by broader societal forces. That being said, there are some minor concerns, several of these stemming from the focus on the Speers and Cooleys as typical rural Southern women. Things that they did not read or write about, such as the Bible, patriotic songs, folk music, and political campaign songs and writings, are excluded. Schweiger convincingly shows that Biblical knowledge was often disseminated by reading or hearing references to it rather than by reading the Bible itself, but it remains true that the actual scriptures were widely read. It would have been fascinating to read Schweiger's thoughtful analysis applied to texts like "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," or the New Testament. Additionally, her discussion of slave literacy greatly contributes to our understanding of white attitudes about the intellectual activities of their bondpersons, but more could be said about white Southerners who opposed it. On a related note, the African Methodist Episcopal Church's hymnal is carefully researched and analyzed like every other publication mentioned in the book, but because this publication was created by African Americans, one wonders if slaveholders regarded it with more suspicion than other texts that were created by Northerners, especially as antislavery writing came under increased attack in the South. Finally, there is a certain timelessness to the discussions of slavery and sectional tension that does not fully account for how the growing conflict may have impacted what people read or how they felt about it. The description of how a Southerner edited Webster's dictionary in the 1860s by including scriptures that he saw as proslavery, for instance, raises questions about the prevalence of other such activity. These issues aside though, *A Literate South* is an essential

read for a variety of audiences. Its short length and lucid writing style make it accessible even to advanced high school students but without sacrificing intellectual rigor. Its subject matter will be of interest to anyone at that level or beyond who studies the history of religion, education, and the publishing industry in America, as well as women's history and, to a lesser extent, scholars of African American history. Just as the texts of the early 1800s shaped Americans' understanding of their past, this text will shape our understanding of those Americans.

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