

Introduction

Writing in 1994 from Wheaton College, evangelical historian Mark Noll made the following comment: “The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind.”¹ However one might assess the merits of his claim at the time, evangelical scholars from diverse fields and institutions rose to the challenge and responded with a number of books suggesting solutions. Following Noll’s “epistle from a wounded lover” to fellow evangelicals, a small, but significant movement of evangelical thinkers coalesced around discussion of the meaning of Christian thinking and set out to challenge fellow believers to renewed intellectual life.

Earlier in the twentieth century, however, Noll’s comment would not have received such a response. Evangelicalism, by the 1940s, was largely removed from the academic mainstream in the wake of modernist controversies over Darwinian evolution and higher criticism of the Bible.² For instance, Princeton Theological Seminary, long the bulwark of conservative Presbyterian scholarship in the United States, suffered a schism when the influential J. Machen Gresham and others left to form Westminster Theological Seminary in 1930 because of perceived shifts away from strict inerrancy towards moderate views.³ The seminary was billed as an institution on par with Princeton – a site of rigorous scholarship that would maintain the intellectual heritage of American Presbyterianism – but now with explicitly conservative evangelical commitments.⁴

¹ Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 3.

² George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Disbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 318-321.

³ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 32-33.

⁴ Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans, 2008), 12.

While conservative evangelicalism continued to flourish as a tradition relatively separate from the academic mainstream, a number of young, evangelical scholars started to move back towards engagement with secular or liberal Christian institutions. This “new evangelicalism” – a term popularized by Harold Ockenga in 1957 – understood itself to be the “self-aware intellectual movement” holding the middle ground between neo-orthodoxy, modernism, and fundamentalism.⁵ In particular, Fuller Theological Seminary, the birthplace of new evangelicalism, sought to renew a more critical intellectual attitude largely associated with conservative American Presbyterianism, but without the separatist tendencies of more hard-line evangelicals.⁶ Five years prior to Fuller’s 1947 founding, a group led by radio evangelist Charles Fuller and J. Elwin Wright met to try to bring together evangelicals from diverse denominations, regions, or even doctrines – differences that, for many evangelicals, had been irreconcilable for a number of years. In the spring of 1942, they founded the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) as a cooperative effort to unify evangelicals across lines of division.⁷

In 1947, Carl Henry, one of the new evangelical thinkers from Fuller, published his indictment of conservative evangelical abdication of social responsibility and rigorous intellectual inquiry. His *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* addressed the separatist tendencies of evangelicals in his time and lamented the growing distance between evangelicals and mainstream social movements or contemporary thought. Henry presented an answer to his own criticism of conservative evangelical anti-intellectualism that would echo down into Noll’s own work and the books that followed in the wake of *The Scandal of the*

⁵ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 3, 167; Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 48; Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 35.

Evangelical Mind. Henry writes, “[Evangelicalism] must develop a competent literature in every field of study, on every level from the grade school through the university, which adequately presents each subject with its implications from the Christian as well as non-Christian points of view... Evangelicalism must contend for a fair hearing for the Christian mind, among other minds, *in secular education*.”⁸ Henry’s vision, as Marsden puts it, was “...that the Christian’s mission involves not only evangelism but also a cultural task, both remaking the mind of an era and transforming society.”⁹

Moving into the 1950s, new evangelicalism experienced the pains attendant to such engagement with the mainstream academy and the pursuit of pluralism. Billy Graham’s own ecumenical openness towards various religious and political leaders drew the ire of conservatives who had supported him, but it also won the support of the new, intellectual evangelicals.¹⁰ A number of controversies within the faculty and supporters of Fuller demonstrated that many scholars at Fuller planned to engage directly with mainstream scholarship in theology, philosophy, psychology and other disciplines.¹¹

Similarly, in the Midwest, some scholars from Fuller, in conjunction with Billy Graham, worked to fulfill a vision of a fundamentalist-evangelical monthly journal that could raise the level of scholarly discourse.¹² Marsden writes that Billy Graham’s vision for the journal was to carefully steer it away from “fundamentalism,” the conservative trend that reigned among

⁸ Carl Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1947), 70, emphasis mine.

⁹ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 79.

¹⁰ John G. Turner, *Bill Bright & Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 83.

¹¹ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 183.

¹² *Ibid.*, 158.

evangelical thinkers in the early decades of the twentieth century: “He would not tie his ministry to a narrow view of the implications of the inerrancy of Scripture for modern science. He would not identify evangelical Christianity with only the most conservative politics. His recent stand for racially integrating his crusades exemplified this point.”¹³ This would be a journal to represent evangelical unity in discourse on contemporary cultural issues, without the strict party line of many other evangelical journals. The first issue of *Christianity Today* was published in October 1956.¹⁴ Moving into the 1960s, neo-evangelicals had a determinate, distinct intellectual agenda—to produce scholarship “so scientific that everyone would have to listen to it,” while remaining evangelical in fundamental presuppositions.¹⁵

During the 1960s, two figures connected to European intellectual life came to prominence as lighting rods for evangelical thinking. Harry Blamires, an Anglican theologian and literary critic tutored by C.S. Lewis at Oxford, leveled his own critique of the evangelical mind, *The Christian Mind: How should a Christian think?*, which continues to influence many Christian intellectuals to the present day.¹⁶ He writes, pointedly, that “there is no longer a Christian mind” and asks his fellow evangelicals, “...will the Christians of the next fifty years deepen and clarify their Christian commitment at the intellectual and social levels too, meeting and challenging... secularism's assault?”¹⁷

¹³ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 159.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁶ See references to Blamires in authors discussed in Chapter 1: Piper, *Think*, 28; Moreland, *Love the Lord Your God With All Your Mind*, 174; Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 114; Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 95; Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 11.

¹⁷ Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How should a Christian think?* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1963), 3, 179.

In the 1960s and early 1970s – years that saw the rise of the Counterculture – Francis Schaeffer rose as a model that answered Blamire’s challenge. Schaeffer’s own intellectual career paralleled the neo-evangelical move from other forms of conservative evangelicalism, as he travelled to Europe in the late 1950s to take stock of conservative evangelicals there, but found himself more and more interested in studying contemporary thought and art.¹⁸ A decade later, young people from all walks of life were passing through his community in Switzerland, L’abri, to participate in the discussions of religion and philosophy. Through word of mouth and tapes of his lunch lectures shipped across the world, Schaeffer became something of an evangelical celebrity.¹⁹ Attentive to the growing attraction of L’abri and Schaeffer’s work, Time Magazine ran an article in January of 1960 entitled “Mission to Intellectuals,” which further brought him into the spotlight and probably spurred a variety of invitations Schaeffer received to lecture in the United States. In 1965, Francis Schaeffer lectured at Harvard and MIT, as well as at Calvin College and the fledgling, neo-evangelical Wheaton College.²⁰ Though later scholars would critique the accuracy and rigor of Schaeffer’s historical and philosophical analysis, many evangelical scholars for decades would cite Schaeffer as a role model for engagement with contemporary thought.²¹ Moreover, that contemporary Christian *and even secular institutions* would receive Schaeffer so readily, suggests that evangelical engagement with mainstream scholarship was growing in prominence.

¹⁸ Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 44.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹ See Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 106 and Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 218; c.f. Tom V. Morris, *Francis Schaeffer’s Apologetics: A Critique* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Publishing, 1987).

The 1970s and 1980s saw a marked increase in initiatives, networks, and publications that promoted evangelical Christian interaction with mainstream scholarship. A growing number of evangelical scholars, as well as scientists, completed graduate studies at Harvard, Stanford, Johns Hopkins, the University of Southern California, and Oxford.²² Also, evangelical scholarly societies formed throughout the 1970s and 1980s would make contributions to particular fields that were noticed by secular or liberal Christian scholars.²³ For example, many have come to consider the Society of Christian Philosophers, founded in 1978, as one of the most influential “single interest” groups in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy.²⁴ In 1982, The Lilly Endowment underwrote the creation of an Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College, under the leadership of historians Mark Noll and Nathan Hatch.²⁵ Similarly, in 1985, after conversations with evangelical scholars of “scholarly potential and... decidedly nonfundamentalist faith,” the Pew Charitable Trusts founded the Evangelicals Scholars program. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Notre Dame-based initiative would provide mentoring for graduate students and young scholars, convene conferences, and publish research.²⁶

Though evangelicals, however, labored much since the mid-twentieth century, they would not begin to see the fruit of their intellectual tilling and institutional planting until the 1990s and 2000s. During these decades, many of the young scholars from the early period of growth came of age as professors and notable researchers. Journals and magazines either by

²² Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 83.

²³ D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 95; Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 236; see also the Association of Christian Economists (1982), Christians in the Visual Arts (1979), Christians in Political Science (1991).

²⁴ George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 102.

²⁵ Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 81.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 83; Worthen, *Apostle of Reason*, 244.

evangelicals or with significant contributions from evangelicals became legion by the 1990s, including the bi-monthly *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* (1992), *Books & Culture* (1995), styled as an evangelical *New York Review of Books*, and the ecumenical *First Things* (1990).²⁷

The above sketch of the twentieth-century development of the “evangelical mind,” however, has not yet mentioned those associated with the evangelical Left. While they did not play as central a role in early evangelical scholarship, left-leaning evangelicals have contributed an emphasis on narrative and interpretation that flows through a number of the books considered in later chapters. Many left-leaning evangelical thinkers are constituents of the “Emergent” Church movement, a movement of the 1990s distinguished by its appropriation of elements of postmodern thought and partial rejection of traditional evangelical obsession over biblical inerrancy and eschatology.²⁸ Emergent thinkers and many other evangelical philosophers in the 1990s and 2000s engaged late-twentieth century movements in critical theory – particularly philosophical hermeneutics – and postliberal theology, both of which emphasize “narrative,” “contextuality,” and the fragmentation of identity and truth claims.²⁹ Thinkers such as James K.A. Smith of Calvin College – who studied under John D. Caputo, one of Jacques Derrida’s foremost interpreters in the United States – and J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh – who studied philosophy the University of Toronto – appropriate insights from postmodern

²⁷ “Editors and Staff,” *Touchstone Magazine*, http://www.touchstonemag.com/docs/navigation_docs/masthead.php, accessed March 22, 2014; “About Us,” *Books and Culture*, <http://www.booksandculture.com/help/about.html>, accessed March 22, 2014; Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 248; Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 105.

²⁸ For more on the Emergent Church, cf. James S. Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2011).

²⁹ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 255.

hermeneutics for new perspectives in Christian thought and worship.³⁰ A number of authors in the movement considered in later chapters follow similar insights on the epistemological “situatedness” of thinking when considering the task of Christian scholarship.

Significant developments notwithstanding, Mark Noll published *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* in 1994 and sent a shockwave through the evangelical community. Rather than remaining stunned in *aporia*, however, a group of evangelical scholars spent the next twenty or so years wrestling with the “life of the mind” in books to one another and to the evangelical populace. The authors of the movement, though all evangelical, span an impressive swath of denominational territory: some come from the American Dutch-Reformed tradition (Marsden, Noll, Williams), some are Baptist neo-Calvinists (Piper), one is in the charismatic Vineyard Movement (Moreland), and some reside in larger denominations like Anglicanism (McGrath, Guinness), Lutheranism (Veith) or Churches of Christ (Hughes). Evangelical publishers such as Eerdmans and Crossway Books published many of the books, but mainstream academic publishing houses such as Oxford University Press also published and disseminated books and ideas that contributed to the conversation. Although the accounts within the movement differ from one another on a variety of questions – sometimes sharply – the *existence* of such a conversation *at all*, is a remarkable achievement broadly, especially with reference to the history of thinking in American evangelicalism. The conversation among the authors constitutes a movement whose unity in disagreement resonates with Wittgenstein’s image of “family resemblances” in which “the various resemblances between members of a family... overlap and

³⁰ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 257; for more on evangelical Christian appropriation of postmodernism, see James K.A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worldship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); *Hermeneutics at the Crossroads*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, James K.A. Smith, and Bruce Ellis Benson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

criss-cross in the same way... And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.”³¹ Such a movement of consistent examination of the character of evangelical Christian intellectual life – although often divided over the specific goals, content, and practice of intellectual life – reveals the unique power of evangelical cooperation in spite of differences and the existence of a cohort of thoughtful, critical Christian scholars, ready to address contemporary issues.

As the term is used in this paper, “evangelicalism” refers to a broad and diverse movement characterized by three “-isms”: conversionism, activism, and Biblicism. As Molly Worthen notes, “evangelical” is a hotly contested definition, but one that takes on more flesh after consulting history and relying more on a general evangelical “imagination,” rather than consulting evangelical self-descriptions.³² Conversionism refers to a broad focus on an experience of spiritual conversion as a criterion for Christian identity; activism refers particularly to a passion for sharing the evangelical faith with others; and Biblicism generally covers impulses towards *sola scriptura* – a focus on a relatively straightforward reading of the text of the Bible as the central guiding rudder for life and doctrine.³³ Certainly this list of characteristics presents many difficulties and exceptions for who counts as “evangelical” as do most definitions, but it will serve as a helpful heuristic in the following examination of developments in evangelical thinking among scholars in conversation about the “evangelical mind.”

Chapter 1 will briefly sketch the landscape of the movement in order to outline each author’s project in its own right before substantial comparative analysis. Chapter 2 will begin to

³¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), §67.

³² Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 4, 264.

³³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 3-5; Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 8.

draw comparisons between the authors to highlight particular disagreements over (1) whether intellectual life is a valuable Christian vocation, in itself, apart from any instrumental value to evangelism or cultural witness and (2) whether Christian thinking necessarily involves explicit or distinctive Christian content. Chapter 3 will examine the extent to which the movement has moved away from impulses derived from Scottish Common Sense Realism – a confident “objectivist” epistemology and focus on biblical literalism. Although the movement contains many tensions and disagreements, particular to its evangelical character, the following collection of books represents a significant instance of strengthened evangelical thinking and cooperation across diversity.

Chapter 1: Surveying the Landscape

Mark Noll

About fifteen years after *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, his clarion call, Mark Noll himself responded with *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*.³⁴ Through chronologically last in the books of the movement, Noll's own book is worth considering first for its place among those books directed to Christian scholars in the mainstream academy – books by Noll, George Marsden, Alister McGrath, Richard T. Hughes, and James Sire. Educated at Wheaton College in the stride of neo-evangelicalism in the mid-1960s, Noll has straddled the middle between secular academic research and Christian initiatives since the 1980s. Apart from his mainstream historical scholarship, Noll contributed to significant ecumenical ventures with Catholics, including a significant relocation from Wheaton College to Notre Dame in 2006, after 27 years of residence at Wheaton.³⁵ His historic move to Notre Dame, home for the Pew Younger Scholars Program for evangelical graduate students, brought Noll into the heart of burgeoning evangelical scholarship.³⁶

Writing specifically to evangelical scholars, Noll argues that Christian theology constitutes a legitimate scholarly perspective for evangelicals conducting research in a variety of fields. He writes, "...coming to know Christ provides the most basic possible motive for

³⁴ Mark A. Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011).

³⁵ Rob Moll, "Mark Noll Leaves Wheaton for Notre Dame," *Christianity Today*, February 9, 2006, accessed on March 22, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/februaryweb-only/106-43.0.html>; Mariem Quaruzzaman, "An evolving relationship: Mark Noll discusses move to Notre Dame," *Notre Dame News*, June 20, 2007, accessed on March 22, 2014, <http://news.nd.edu/news/8906-an-evolving-relationshipbrevangelical-scholar-mark-noll-discusses-move-to-notre-dame/>; see also Mark A. Noll and James Turner, *The Future of Christian Learning: An Evangelical and Catholic Dialogue*, ed. Thomas Howard (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008).

³⁶ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 245.

pursuing the tasks of human learning.”³⁷ For Noll, the theoretical commitments of orthodox Christianity, seen most fully in the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed, and definitions from the Council of Chalcedon, determine much of the pre-theoretical, epistemological *stance* of an evangelical scholar. The later chapters of his book, then, work out some possible instances in which “teaching of the creeds might make an intellectual difference... in orientations, dispositions, attitudes, or preferences in carrying out specific intellectual tasks.”³⁸ The Christian who is shaped by the creeds through worship and reflection, according to Noll, will come at his or her discipline with certain expectations, derived theologically, that affect the manner of scholarship.

For Noll, theological expectations of this kind largely inform the *method* of one’s research and the *substantial analysis*. Noll seems to be trying to address two issues that he highlighted in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* – that evangelicals tend to (1) instrumentalize or deny the goodness of the world and (2) uncritically adopt an Enlightenment “trust in objectivity.”³⁹ In response, he claims that traditional Christian theology undergirds (1) the intrinsic value of knowledge of creation and (2) the importance of paradox or “doubleness” in inquiry. He writes that Christian scholarship requires “taking seriously the fact of the physical world created by God, but also the drama of redemption that relativizes all terrestrial realities in eternal perspective.”⁴⁰ The entire world, declared good at creation and being renewed by Christ’s redemption, becomes a legitimate object of study for the evangelical scholar, because

³⁷ Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, x.

³⁸ Noll, *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁹ Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 52-54, 88.

⁴⁰ Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 14.

“the salvation won by Christ and the study of ‘all things’ [are] viewed as intimately related.”⁴¹

Moreover, he writes that creation, though only existing in contingency, is elevated as a means to know God through its participation in divinity, as in the Nicene formula of the dual nature of Christ. In contrast to instrumental uses of intellect, Noll’s theological, creedal framework opens fertile ground for legitimate, intrinsically-valuable Christian scholarship.

George Marsden

George Marsden’s *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* puts forwards a similar argument for the legitimacy of a Christian perspective in scholarship, though, this time, responding to mainstream, secular critiques of Christian scholarship.⁴² A year or two prior to the date of publication, Marsden had created a stir in *First Things* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by intimating the possibility of a Christian scholarly perspective in a postscript of his *The Soul of the American University* that would come to full fruition in *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.⁴³ Marsden, a Yale-trained historian, argues that Christian faith can serve as a critical frame for scholarship on par with contemporaries such as feminism or post-colonialism.

Marsden begins by asking, “why are there in mainstream academia almost no identifiable Christian schools of thought to compare with various Marxist, feminist, gay, post-modern,

⁴¹ Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 30.

⁴² George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford, 1997).

⁴³ George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Disbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 429-445; see the exchange in *First Things: A Journal of Religion and Public Life* 60 (February, 1996): Stanley Fish, “Why Can’t We All Just Get Along,” 18-26; Richard John Neuhaus, “Why We Can Get Along,” 27-34 and in “Letters,” *First Things: A Journal of Religion and Public Life* 64 (June/July, 1996), 2-6; Stanley Fish “A Reply to Richard John Neuhaus,” 35-40; see also Carolyn J. Mooney, “Devout Professors on the Offensive,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 4, 1994, A18 and letters in response in “Religious Beliefs in Academe,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 1, 1994, B4.

African-American, conservative, or liberal schools of thought?”⁴⁴ His argument follows that of others who note that the mainstream academy has seen a disproportionate silence from explicitly Christian perspectives in public scholarship. Marsden argues that, in parallel with other kinds of “critical theory,” Christian theological commitments constitute a set of “control beliefs” that are one of many other possible, pre-theoretical perspectives of language and epistemology. Like most other critical theorists, he denies that any scholar can take a completely objective view on reality, and, therefore, leans on theology as a particular context from which to perceive the world.

Importantly, such subjectivism does not, for Marsden, constitute a retreat from the public university into a Christian subculture, or a rejection of joint ventures between Christian scholars and non-Christian scholars. Most scholarship today is conducted in a pluralistic setting on campus or in print, so pragmatic methodological cooperation can be useful to Christian scholars, as he writes, “[Christian scholars] . . . need to respect some conventions that make it possible for people to communicate and to get along when they differ as to first principles.”⁴⁵ Although he taught for many years at Calvin College, Marsden is not a stranger to the secular academy or to mainstream academic publishers. Whatever might be allowed in a Christian setting, he writes, it is not proper for one to proselytize as a professor at a secular institution.⁴⁶ Marsden, unlike most in this renewal movement, concedes the great benefits of pragmatic cooperation with the language and methods of the mainstream university. For Marsden, “such adaptability to the subordinate communities in which a Christian may operate is fully consistent with Christian

⁴⁴ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

commitment.”⁴⁷ Although Christian colleges or universities may provide greater room for explicitly Christian teaching, even secular colleges, for Marsden, can be sites of Christian scholarship.

Beyond simply being *possible*, Marsden believes that such a Christian perspective might actually *contribute* to scholarship. Such contributions come in four possible areas: (1) motivation for a scholar to do his or her work well, (2) unique applications of scholarship, (3) creation of a sub-field or specialty in one’s field, and (4) new critical views on one’s discipline as a whole.⁴⁸ He is careful to note, however, that the material difference that such a perspective makes will vary greatly depending on the kind of subject under consideration.⁴⁹ Many of the books of the movement, like Marsden, cede the limitations of applying theology to scholarship, and most authors seem to agree that there are fields in which a Christian perspective may matter only a small bit or not at all. Marsden notes that “Christian” scholarship need not reflect significant, explicit differences from scholarship done by non-Christians, for, in most cases, “the interpretive differences are not dramatic.”⁵⁰ Similarly, he provocatively suggests that scholars who grew up in Christian communities – even if they do not remain in the community of faith – may still be haunted, so to speak, by the questions and larger perspectives implicit in Christian belief and worship, and, thus, may be doing a kind of Christian scholarship, even as non-Christians.⁵¹ In a way, this is most revealing for his main project, for Marsden is not interested in “*the* Christian

⁴⁷ Marden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 55.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

view,” but, rather, in tracing the “influence” of Christian faith or identifying “Christian sources” in one’s scholarship, even if that influence is genealogical.⁵²

Alister McGrath

As another author with significant experience in mainstream scholarship, Alister McGrath is similarly committed to Christian thinking as a way of viewing the world theologically, rather than as an explicit body of Christian ideas.⁵³ Recognized as a public apologist from his debates with atheists Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, McGrath – an Oxford-trained, Anglican priest – writes for both popular and scholarly audiences, usually at the intersection of science and religion. His contribution to the intellectual renewal movement, *The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind* aims to defend the place of theology as means of viewing the world for both scholars and laity. The book is written “...as an intellectual defense of the place of theology in the Christian life... to focus on the positive role of theology in shaping, nourishing and safeguarding the Christian vision of reality, and applying it to the challenges and opportunities that Christians face today.”⁵⁴ Faith, for McGrath, provides a unique way of viewing the world under the guidance of Christian theology.

Although Noll and Marsden certainly allude to the role of theology – which, at least implicitly, supplies the content of any pre-theoretical paradigm – McGrath suggests that Christian thinking worth the name derives its content and motivation from an active, reflective practice of theology and worship. By theology, he means positive contributions to theological

⁵² Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 65.

⁵³ Alistair McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 8; published outside of North America as Alister McGrath, *Mere Theology: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind* (London: SPCK, 2010).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

ideas and language *and* also the ideas and language of Christian tradition received through historical theology. With respect to the first, he writes,

*Christian theology offers a distinct angle of gaze, a way of seeing things which both discloses the true identity of nature and mandates certain ways of behaving toward and within it... The term nature does not designate an objective reality that requires interpretation... The term nature thus really denotes a variety of ways human observers choose to see, interpret and inhabit the empirical world.*⁵⁵

McGrath here describes mitigated epistemology or “critical realism” – that it is possible to know the way that the world is, but not with clear certainty. He suggests both (1) that Christian theology has a kind of normative function for Christian perception of and conclusions about the world and (2) that constructed Christian theology cannot be an end in itself, but is to be used “as a gateway” to a vision of reality.⁵⁶ For this kind of thinking, scholars must engage in first-order historical and philosophical theology, which highlights the redemption of the created world and “the transcendent in the everyday.”⁵⁷

Although he admits some degree of “fit” between human knowledge and the world, McGrath also emphasizes the “moral and aesthetic ambiguity of nature... [in which] a fallen humanity here reflects on a fallen natural world. Neither observer nor observed are exempt from the damage of sin.”⁵⁸ Scholars use a theological frame to understand objects of perception in the world, but “the Christian vision of God” cannot be derived from empirical facts, but, rather, “...is believed to be true on other grounds.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 52-54.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79, his emphasis.

Second, then, McGrath exhorts scholars to pursue theology by working in the fertile ground of Christian *tradition*. He writes, “to take the ‘great tradition’ seriously is to anchor oneself to a community of reflection, to overhear their conversations and meditations, and thus to be enriched, nourished and above all given *stability*.”⁶⁰ Almost entirely unique among the authors under consideration in this study, McGrath suggests a high role for Christian historical theology to mitigate what he calls “local theology,” as part of his threefold method – scripture, tradition, and reason (reminiscent of the “three-legged stool” of Anglican theology often traced to Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V).⁶¹ McGrath in no way denigrates the work of mainstream scholars, *per se*, but is careful to point out that Christian tradition is to be interpreted and shared within a community of distinctive Christian mission and ministry.⁶² As he says, “[those] of us called to be theologians need to study theology with the needs of the community of faith in mind.”⁶³ McGrath navigates the difficult tension of, on the one hand, encouraging first-rate theological inquiry without, on the other, isolating scholars and their conclusions from the community of faith.

Lastly, McGrath is clear that Christian thinking is not primarily the exercise of a natural faculty on certain objects or ideas, but, rather, the cultivation of God-given habits of theological thinking in a life of worship. As he writes, “the worshipping community is the crucible in which much of the best theology is forged, even though it may be refined by academic reflection.”⁶⁴ McGrath’s Calvinist leanings seem to lead him to clarify that any properly Christian intellectual

⁶⁰ McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect*, 32, his emphasis.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38, 24.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

activity is a result of God's grace, given through the love of God and affective habits formed in worship, not "common sense" or "universal reason."

Richard T. Hughes

As noted previously, the evangelical Left speaks softly among louder voices in the intellectual renewal movement, but is, by no means, absent. The lone, left-leaning member of the movement, Richard Hughes, from the neo-Anabaptist Churches of Christ, writes frequently elsewhere in critique of civil religion in the United States and of the Christian Right.⁶⁵ Hughes says this project, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar: How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*, was largely conceived, at least in potentiality, while working on a grant from the Lilly Endowment that sought to provide "tangible assistance to church-related institutions that seek to live more fruitfully out of their historic Christian missions."⁶⁶ The first part of the endowment sought to examine "*institutions*," and this second part focuses on "*individual faculty* who want to connect Christian faith with scholarship and teaching in meaningful and effective ways" and who may not be directly connected to a Christian institution.⁶⁷ Where Marsden and Noll focus on the process of *scholarship*, Hughes, instead, turns to consider the person of the *scholar*.

Christian life of the mind, according to Hughes, involves the question of the *motivation* from which Christians work as scholars and teachers. He addresses his book to a certain

⁶⁵ See Richard T. Hughes, "Why Conservative Christians So Often Fail the Common Good (Part I)," *The Huffington Post Religion Blog*, March 5, 2010, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-t-hughes/a-riddle-of-life-and-death_b_487476.html; and Richard T. Hughes, *Christian America and the Kingdom of God* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

⁶⁶ Richard T. Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar: How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), xxxii; cf. *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Richard T. Hughes & William B. Adrian (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997).

⁶⁷ Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, xxxiii.

understanding of “Christian scholar” as a paradox – namely, that “religion is fundamentally dogmatic while the life of the mind requires openness, creativity, and imagination.”⁶⁸ Stunned by such an opinion, he argues that the Christian scholar actually works out of an epistemology of humility that spurs him or her on towards reflective self-criticism and creative inquiry, rather than “absolutistic principles, sterile legal codes, or moral imperatives that require from us no reflection, no creativity, and no imagination”.⁶⁹ Christian scholarship, as he defines it, is seeking the *meaning* of one’s Christian beliefs and any relevant connections between theology and contemporary areas of research.⁷⁰ Hughes, however, laments, “unfortunately... many Christian scholars have never learned to think theologically about the meaning of the Christian faith.”⁷¹ A Christian scholar of any field, then, must be a first-order theologian – not merely a conduit for unreflective theological opinion – in order to avoid dogmatism. Scholarship, then, is largely an open-ended vocation between theology and one’s area of study that is characterized by “intellectual creativity.”⁷²

While chasing away the specter of fundamentalism, Hughes suggests that Christian scholars, paradoxically, ought to simultaneously affirm *and* transcend the particularities of their faith in scholarship. In particular, he drives a sharp distinction between *Dinge an sich* – transcendent realities such as the Gospel, God the Father, and Jesus – and the particular theological propositions or human institutions that point to those realities. He writes, “...we refuse to view those particularities as ends in themselves, and we refuse to erect those

⁶⁸ Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 3.

particularities as brittle, dogmatic standards.”⁷³ Hughes follows his own advice in a chapter called “The Power of Christian Traditions,” where he analyzes four major traditions of liturgy and theology – Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic, and Mennonite – to see what particularities each has to offer to a Christian scholar. His conclusion embodies the principle of ‘transcending particularities,’ as he notes, “none of these traditions has a monopoly on the theological motifs we discussed.”⁷⁴ Christian scholars ought to affirm the centrality of Scripture, the knowledge of God, the Gospel, and Christian love for one’s neighbor, but he cautions against clutching to a settled interpretation of those things.

Lastly, unique to Hughes’ project is his emphasis on the distinctive power of Christian *pedagogy* to teach meaning, cultivate productive skepticism, and elicit passionate engagement with the world. He writes, “traditional values demand that we teach facts, because facts by themselves are tame and never disrupt the status quo. On the other hand, kingdom values demand that we explore the *meaning* of the facts.”⁷⁵ For him, teaching meaning rather than facts is not only a way of doing theology, but also a way to connect personally with students. In particular, he focuses his own classes on questions about good and evil, God, human finitude, and the inevitability of death – a topic that he notes is the source of many jokes about him. Hughes, however, is clear that, as a Christian professor in a pluralistic setting, one must “...[focus] on ultimate questions, not on religious answers, [so as to] preserve our students’ integrity and guarantee their freedom to make religious discoveries for themselves.”⁷⁶ By recommending a pedagogy of cultivation and curiosity, he actually is able to incorporate

⁷³ Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

Christian ideas and even references to his own faith, as he writes, “I also make it a point to let them know, somewhere along the way, that if they find my classes stimulating and provocative, they must credit the Christian faith.”⁷⁷ He hopes, as he propels students to ask questions about the world, that they will find that his own wonder derives from the Christian passion to know about the world and to describe it in beauty.

James Sire

As the chief editor for InterVarsity Press for many years, James Sire focused his intellectual work on the concept of “worldview,” producing a volume about it that would become somewhat magisterial for evangelicals, now in its 5th printing.⁷⁸ “Worldview” was picked up by neo-evangelicals through Cornelius Van Til’s Kuyperian presuppositionalism and was a translation of *Weltanschauung*, which in German philosophy and Dutch Reformed theology referred broadly to a philosophy or point of view.⁷⁹ As will be seen in Chapter 2, Sire’s focus on worldview apologetics may propel him into utilitarian conclusions about the value of thinking, but, in general, Sire is concerned with the *manner* of Christian thinking, like Hughes, more than the *product*. In his words, he is not concerned with detailing the problem, as others such as Mark Noll have done, but in “getting on with our call to love God with our minds.”⁸⁰ Although he claims to write to those specifically called to the life of the mind – those called to life of research

⁷⁷ Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, 72.

⁷⁸ See the enduring appeal to evangelicals of James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976) with its 2nd edition in 1988, 3rd edition in 1997, 4th edition in 2004, and 5th edition in 2009 and James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant in the Room: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

⁷⁹ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 26-31.

⁸⁰ James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 9.

and teaching in the academy – he ultimately cedes that each Christian is responsible for thinking according to the measure of intellect in his or her possession.⁸¹ His book intends to help Christians to think better in three ways: (1) by examining what it is to be an intellectual, (2) by describing what it is like to live as an intellectual and how to bolster one’s intellectual life, and (3) by reminding intellectuals of the responsibility of thinking.

First, in defining “intellectual,” Sire addresses popular conceptions of intellectual life and, in contradistinction, puts forward a notion of the “the perfected intellect” – the goodness of unified knowledge of the world. Apart from many of the other works under consideration, he does not begin with the virtues and value of intellectual life, but, rather, its deformed tokens – the arrogant intellectual, the ideologically-driven intellectual, or the biblical-fundamentalist intellectual. A true intellectual, says Sire, is not one who instrumentalizes knowledge for ideological, religious, or technological purposes, but, rather, one who freely and joyfully plays with ideas, as beautiful in and of themselves.⁸² For instance, as part of his extended definition of the character of an intellectual, he writes, “[an intellectual] loves ideas, is dedicated to clarifying them... stacking them atop one another, arranging them... playing with them, punning with their terminology, laughing at them, inviting them to dine and have a ball, but also suiting them for service in workaday life.”⁸³ From the rhetoric itself, if not also the substance, Sire considers intellectual life eminently attractive in and of itself. Christian intellectual life, however, is not merely a baptized version of non-Christian thinking, but is radically redefined by the fact that intellectual unity is centered on a love for and knowledge of God. Sire notes that intellectual life

⁸¹ Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 205.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

involves a dialectic of worship and thinking – a vision of reality that ignites love for God, and a love for God that enables a sharper vision of reality.

In contrast to those in the movement who see intellectual life as primarily productive and involved in practical evangelism, Sire’s vision of thinking is that of disciplined calmness. He writes, “...the best and freshest thinking often takes place when the mind is at ease, not trying to think but simply, say, paying attention or reflecting.”⁸⁴ Although his kind of thinking is dispassionate and contemplative, Sire does not identify intellect with formal, propositional logic. Sire writes, following John Henry Newman’s *A Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870), that thought is “a distinct mental faculty to be equated with neither logical inference, nor intuition.”⁸⁵ While taking in sensory data and attending to the flux of reality, the mind also presses reality into order, as he writes, “[intellect] has a formative power that brings order to the flux of facts.”⁸⁶

To bring rational order to perception, however, one must attend to the being of the world in itself and develop various virtues of mind. Following Newman again, Sire highlights the interconnection of moral life and knowledge – that justified, true belief is a passion for truth that follows a desire for holiness and can be disrupted by disorderly passions. As Sire puts it, “all intellectuals are in love with ideas; not all intellectuals are in love with truth.”⁸⁷ This passion for truth and holiness comes not – as others in the movement say – by changing what one thinks, but, rather, by developing the virtues through discipline and habit. Virtues, in his view, “are deeply embedded parts of our character that readily dispose us to feel, to think and act in morally

⁸⁴ Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 80.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

appropriate ways as our changing circumstances require.”⁸⁸ The necessary connection between knowledge and action emerges even more clearly from the number of suggestions in Chapter 7, “Perfecting the Intellect: The Intellectual Disciplines,” to create physical and mental space within one’s day: practicing silence, solitude, attentiveness, and prayer.

Lastly, Sire writes that thinking is for everyone, but in different measures and various ways. He writes, “all Christians are called to be an intellectual as befits their abilities and the work they have been called to do.”⁸⁹ The title of “Christian intellectual”, however, he reserves for those who are specifically called to be scholars. Among the qualifications for vocation of “intellectual,” he lists the “need to be fairly intelligent,” to “have access to an education,” and the “ability to communicate and access to publication.”⁹⁰ Thinking theoretically, particularly with its connection to reading, is one of many vocations for Christians, in contrast to the dominance of theoretical reflection for all Christians that can be seen in J.P. Moreland’s book.⁹¹ A scholar’s calling derives from his or her education and opportunities and fulfills a specific function in the church and in society. He sharply warns those called specifically to scholarship against putting scholarly reputation or achievement over “truth-telling” – writing with explicit Christian content and an evident Christian worldview.⁹²

Clifford Williams

⁸⁸ W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998); quoted in Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 108.

⁸⁹ Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 205.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁹¹ See especially his suggestions for particular churches at Moreland, *Love the Lord Your God With All Your Mind*, 194.

⁹² Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 281-223.

As a “hobo” for a number of years while researching for a book of “hobo” oral history, Clifford Williams appropriately begins the more populist group of authors within the intellectual renewal movement who direct their books not to scholars alone – Williams, Gene Veith, Os Guinness, J.P. Moreland, and John Piper.⁹³ Williams, a professor of philosophy at the evangelical Trinity International University, writes to those “wondering about the point of college” and those who are not wondering, as well as those who are not in college, but who are interested in the life of the mind.⁹⁴ Williams, like Hughes earlier, is setting out to defend the compatibility, if not mutuality, of faith and learning against those who see a tension between the determinate form of Christian orthodoxy and an academic disposition of openness and curiosity. His two primary goals are to show that (1) thinking is good in and of itself, apart from its effects, and that (2) thinking is useful as a means to shape one’s character.

First, Williams critiques what he sees as an overemphasis on contemporary education as pragmatic job-training and productivity. He writes, “the point of an education, the culture declares, is to better oneself by gaining skills and knowledge that will be useful in the marketplace,” and that Christians, moreover, are drawn into this way of thinking by using the language of “being enabled and equipped” for one’s vocation.⁹⁵ In contrast, he writes that our contemplation and enjoyment of the world needs no further human use for justification as a good, just as it is good to derive enjoyment from the beauty of the natural world without turning it to use (e.g. flowers, sunsets, *etc.*).⁹⁶ He writes that enjoyment of the world with our minds is

⁹³ cf. Clifford (Oats) Williams, *One More Train to Ride: The Underground World of Modern American Hoboes* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

⁹⁴ Clifford Williams, *The Life of the Mind: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 12-13.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28, 31.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28, 37.

actually one of the ways that we love God, though, unlike Piper, loving is implicated in thinking without subordinating thinking to an affective disposition. He writes, “to love God with our minds does not mean that it is our minds that actually do the loving. Rather we love God by using our minds.”⁹⁷ The pleasure of using our minds is the pleasure of fulfillment – the kind of fullness that comes from being fully human and using one’s capacities to their full extent, rather than not thinking and, therefore, living in a “constricted way.”⁹⁸ Although being human is to share in the life of the mind, to a certain extent, immersion in thought is not for everyone, as he writes, “even though exercise is good, it does not follow that everyone should be an athlete or participate in a sport.”⁹⁹ Just so, he says, with the mind.

Beyond its intrinsic goodness, he says that there are three good results from Christian thinking: “promotion of human flourishing, support of faith, and training in goodness.”¹⁰⁰ First, good learning is truly liberal, in the sense that Williams believes study of the world lends impartiality and imaginativeness that can contextualize a student’s particular thoughts. Learning plays a prophetic role “so that our concept of biblical values is not bent by our own psychological traits or distorted by the specific faith tradition or culture of which we are a part.”¹⁰¹ Moreover, thinking allows students to be more aware of the wounds of others in their historical, psychological, and cultural aspects in order to elicit empathy and motivation to improve integral human flourishing.¹⁰² Second, learning provides a kind of comprehensiveness

⁹⁷ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 37.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 48.

to faith, so that, like McGrath says, one can judge to what degree an “idea or theory can make sense of an extensive array of facts and experiences.”¹⁰³ Learning constitutes a kind of existential apologetics that highlights difficult facts about the world and presents non-Christians with questions about human purpose.¹⁰⁴ Third, the practice of scholarship is a practice of listening and understanding others – living or dead – and, therefore, is a perfect laboratory for learning to love one’s neighbor as one’s self.¹⁰⁵ As one reads, discusses, or debates, according to Williams, the practice of good study teaches one to be charitable and attentive to others, even in disagreement.

Gene Veith

As provost over “Academic Affairs and Student Life” at Patrick Henry College, Gene Veith has devoted much of his vocation to bridging popular and academic life. Since 1996, Veith has written on literature, politics, and theology as a “cultural” columnist for WORLD Magazine – an evangelical, alternative news source.¹⁰⁶ Veith’s project springs from his larger work on “postmodernism,” in which he attempts to provide Christians with resources to think about postmodernism critically and to see its effects on contemporary life and thought.¹⁰⁷ Like Williams, Veith writes to Christian students, broadly, saying, “I wanted to write a book that would encourage Christian students in the universities, showing them not only how to withstand the attacks on their faith that would come, but, more positively, to show them how the life of the

¹⁰³ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 49.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁰⁶ “Patrick Henry College Names New Academic Dean,” *Patrick Henry College News*, May 10, 2006, accessed March 24, 2014, http://www.phc.edu/PHCNews_2006_05_10.php.

¹⁰⁷ cf. Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Turning Point Christian Worldview Series 15, gen. ed. Marvin Olasky (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

mind, in whatever discipline they are called to, is worth pursuing for God's sake."¹⁰⁸ One already can see that Veith's portrait of academic life is more agonistic and defensive than others above, particularly Williams.

Throughout the book, Veith uses the Biblical account of Daniel in Babylon as a model for contemporary engagement with and resistance to aspects of contemporary academic life. In particular, Veith makes it very clear that, just as Daniel did not compromise his faith in his Babylonian education, students today can likewise enter secular Universities with confidence, so long as, like Daniel, they recognize and do not compromise the essential markers that distinguish Christian students as the "people of God."¹⁰⁹ In particular, Veith models the resolution of potential conflicts with secular educational programs after Daniel 1, saying that Christians should distinguish between the good sought in a particular idea, project, or relationship and the particular means offered which the Christian cannot accept.¹¹⁰ Veith's suggestion, more concretely, is for Christians to find ways to fulfill, and even exceed, what is asked of them – to seek to follow the standards of classrooms, towns, and countries – but to find ways to do so that do not violate conscience or moral commands.¹¹¹ In many cases, he suggests that conflict or antagonism with non-Christians actually stems from misunderstandings or caricatures of Christianity that can be addressed by offering proper information.¹¹² This, he says, is possible in

¹⁰⁸ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Loving God With All Your Mind: Thinking As a Christian in the Postmodern World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 45-46, 51.

every setting, for it is “simply explaining objectively what these [theological] terms mean,” rather than offering belligerent apologetic debate in an inappropriate setting.¹¹³

On the other hand, there are instances where a defense of faith is necessary *via* criticism of another system of thought. One feels the battle lines being drawn and troops suiting up as he writes, “in classrooms, dormitories, libraries, living rooms, wherever such things are discussed, souls can be destroyed or saved.”¹¹⁴ On the one hand, he offers a reading of modernism and postmodernism, or traditionalism and progressivism, where Christianity is a kind of middle way. On the other hand, he is clear that all systems of thought that do not derive directly from Scripture are subject to criticism, *de facto*, and that most apologetics – *per* “St. Paul’s method of argument” – are negative critiques of fallacies or undesirable implications of other “worldviews.”¹¹⁵ Thinking, then, involves both a deft competency in theology and, also, cultural and philosophical fluency with contemporary thought.

His proposal for defense also relies on the manifold resources of Christian intellectual tradition. In warning to Christians, he writes that, “if they do not [understand the resources of Christian theology], it will be difficult for them to stand against those onslaughts of the unbelieving mind.”¹¹⁶ In particular, he, like many others, encourages Christians to think and worship together in communities, rather than in isolation.¹¹⁷ He suggests that Christian colleges, attentive to the importance of theoretical conflicts in the academy, will become “enclaves of the

¹¹³ Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind*, 51.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

liberal arts, while the public colleges have all become sophisticated trade schools.”¹¹⁸ Moreover, theological study actually benefits those in the humanities and those in the sciences, as he writes that Christians could be “ten times better” than those wallowing in materialism or scientism.¹¹⁹ Christian theology not only provides proper defenses in attack, but even provides a *better* foundation for study and understanding of the world.

Os Guinness

Oxford-trained Os Guinness and his pithy *Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What To Do About It* emerge from an incredible confluence of characteristically-evangelical experiences of the twentieth century. After he was expelled from China with his missionary parents during the 1949 revolution, Guinness began graduate work in the social sciences at Oxford. Like many other significant public Christians in the late twentieth century, Guinness spent time during the 1960s and 1970s as a worker at Francis Schaeffer's L'Abri, about which he says, “Schaeffer was the first Christian I met who was concerned to, and capable of connecting the dots and making sense of the extraordinary times that puzzled and dismayed most people.”¹²⁰ After time working as a reporter for the BBC in England and as a fellow at the Wilson Center in the United States, Guinness founded the Trinity Forum in 1991 as a network to “cultivate networks of leaders whose integrity and vision will renew culture and promote human

¹¹⁸ Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind*, 155.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹²⁰ Justin Taylor, “An Interview with Os Guinness on the 25th Anniversary of Francis Schaeffer's Death,” *The Gospel Coalition Blog*, May 7, 2009, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2009/05/07/interview-with-os-guinness-on-25th/>; Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 106.

freedom and flourishing.”¹²¹ Diverse pools of cultural leaders in government and business feed into the Trinity Forum’s gatherings, which connect them with significant Christian scholars in their field of work.¹²²

From his diverse experience straddling the academy and contemporary popular culture, it is not surprising that Guinness’ own work, full of his characteristic wit, focuses on the role of evangelical thinking on the more popular, cultural level. Guinness writes, “At root, evangelical anti-intellectualism is both a scandal and a sin. It is a scandal in the sense of being an offense and a stumbling block that needlessly hinders serious people from considering the Christian faith and coming to Christ. It is a sin because it is a refusal, contrary to the first of Jesus’ two great commandments, to love the Lord our God with our minds.”¹²³ Evangelical abdication of the public sphere, in his view, did affect the atmosphere of American popular and political life, but he emphasizes the consequences of anti-intellectualism, rather than the impotence of evangelical cultural influence. “Part 1: A Ghost Mind,” then, surveys some of the consequences for evangelical thinking attendant to features of American evangelicalism (revivalism and pietism, among others). “Part 2: An Idiot Culture,” focuses on the intellectual effects of changes in 20th century popular culture – particularly television, commercial marketing, and an increased focus on image and immediacy.

Through much of the book, Guinness digs up the roots of the problem, as he views it, but his last section, “Let My People Think,” provides the substance of his recommendations for evangelical intellectual renewal. Although evangelicals should consider the cultural factors

¹²¹ “About Us,” *Trinity Forum*, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.ttf.org/about-us>.

¹²² Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 102-3; “Senior Fellows,” *Trinity Forum*, accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.ttf.org/senior-fellows>.

¹²³ Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don’t Think and What to Do About It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 10-11.

influencing evangelical thinking, he does not believe that political or programmatic changes are the most important reasons for pursuing a Christian mind at the early stage.¹²⁴ He, first, suggests a negative change – clarifying what does not count as a Christian mind: “thinking by Christians,” “thinking about Christian topics,” or “adopting a ‘Christian line’ on every issue”.¹²⁵ Along lines similar to Marsden and Noll, Guinness clarifies that thinking as a Christian is more about disposition and manner than particular conclusions or content. Second, Guinness exhorts evangelicals to devote themselves to a *practice* of thinking, an “active obedience” – that is, to cultivate a habit of reflective criticism directed towards everything that one hears, reads, or thinks.¹²⁶ In particular, “active obedience” includes criticism of ideas with reference to nationality, time period, political inclination, style, and professional conventions.¹²⁷ For Guinness, thinking often involves finding that “we are always more worldly and more culturally shortsighted than we realize”.¹²⁸

Lastly, he warns that evangelical thinking must be done in a community that can offer moral or theological criticism and correction, but which is also characterized by diversity. He emphasizes the dangers of a kind of “particularism” that wields ideas as tests of communal good standing or as evidence for one’s salvation. He writes, “there is no one Christian form of politics any more than there is one Christian form of poetry, raising a family, or planning a retirement.”¹²⁹ In closing, Guinness echoes a theme common to many in the movement – that

¹²⁴ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 133.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

serious evangelical thinking must include serious attempts at practicing Christian apologetics to “persuade,” rather than to “proclaim” or advertise faith as a fulfillment of demonstrated need.¹³⁰

J.P. Moreland

While sitting in a fraternity house at the University of Missouri in 1968, long before he was known as a philosopher, J.P. Moreland underwent a radical conversion from drugs and alcohol to Christian faith. As he describes it, “...some Campus Crusade for Christ speakers came to my fraternity house and shared an intellectual case for the divinity of Christ, along with a presentation of the gospel. I was simply shocked. Here were attractive, intelligent people talking about Jesus outside the church walls.”¹³¹ Moreland prayed the “sinner’s prayer” and, after graduating, joined Campus Crusade for Christ, where he evangelized according to Bill Bright’s business-marketing model of ministry.¹³² Such passion for popular evangelism continued to burn through his study of theology at dispensationalist Dallas Theological Seminary and in his teaching at Biola University, an institution also with significant ties to dispensationalist premillennialism.¹³³ Beyond his professional philosophical work, Moreland has planted two churches, pastored two other congregations, collaborated recently with popular apologist William Lane Craig, and published popularized versions of his own philosophical work on

¹³⁰ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 147.

¹³¹ J.P. Moreland, *The God Question, An Invitation to a Life of Meaning* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 133-134.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 134-136; “About J.P. Moreland,” *J.P. Moreland Website*, accessed March 24, 2014, <http://www.jpmoreland.com/about/bio>; cf. Turner, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade*, 61.

¹³³ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 99-100, 103, 228-229.

apologetics and the soul.¹³⁴ His contribution to the movement, *Love Your God With All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*, fits quite well within this larger project of popular, philosophical apologetics.

Moreland spends the beginning of his book detailing his own view of the ways in which poor evangelical thinking led to negative effects on evangelism and cultural witness. He writes that there has been a “loss of boldness in confronting the idea structures in our culture with effective Christian witness.”¹³⁵ The culprit of his critique is “need-based evangelism,” which, in his view, grew out of an overemphasis on “personal conversion” in nineteenth century revivalism and the “intellectually shallow, theologically illiterate form of Christianity that came to be a part of the populist Christian religion that emerged.”¹³⁶ As their intellect weakened, Christians abdicated the public, intellectual sphere, into which, on his account, rushed Scottish realism, historical-critical study of the Bible, evolutionary biology, therapeutic emotionalism, and more.¹³⁷ In the backdrop of this argument, Moreland relies on the implicit premise that good thinking is primarily, if not entirely, for the sake of effective evangelism.

His argument includes a view of human nature as constituted by a number of rational faculties through which we know about the world and, in particular, about God. He writes, “[reason is comprised by] all our faculties relevant to [1] gaining knowledge and [2] justifying our beliefs about different things.”¹³⁸ As all humans have these faculties, in his view, everyone has the responsibility to think well. Moreover, this means that evangelism, for him, largely

¹³⁴ J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado, CO: NavPress, 1997), 188.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-33.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

consists in logical argumentation and giving rational demonstrations, “offering positive arguments for and responding to negative arguments against your position,” just as the Crusade evangelists offered to him.¹³⁹ While he is clear that the Holy Spirit is a necessary part of evangelism and conversion, Moreland notes, tellingly, in his exegesis of Romans 12:1-2, that Paul does not talk about “developing close feelings” toward God, or “exercising [one’s] will” or “intensifying [one’s] desires,” but instead about renewing one’s mind – “the intellect, reason, or the faculty of understanding.”¹⁴⁰ Such a strictly rational view of evangelism and apologetics emerges most vividly in his practical advice in Chapters 4, 5, and 7, where one can see that apologetics involves, mostly, a lesson in propositional logic and rehearsing arguments – strengthening one’s powers of mind like a “muscle.”¹⁴¹

For Christians to carry out effective, rational apologetics, Moreland says that Christian communities must teach their members to think well. For instance, he suggests that, in contrast to the shallow emotionalism that he finds in contemporary sermons and worship, churches should “capitalize on the time before the service starts by engaging peoples minds, feelings, and wills to warm them up for corporate worship and prepare them to think about the topic for the morning.”¹⁴² Moreover, he suggests that Christians should “overhaul [their] understanding of the sermon... as a popular message that ought to be grasped easily by all who attend.”¹⁴³ Instead, he suggests “a detailed handout of two or three pages... a set of study exercises... and a

¹³⁹ Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, 51; cf. Moreland, *The God Question*, 133.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 192.

bibliography.”¹⁴⁴ From these practical suggestions, it is hard to miss the specific sense in which he explains thinking, and how he views Christian life and worship primarily as mental exercise.

John Piper

As a well-known pastor and writer, neo-Calvinist John Piper occupies a unique position with respect to the other authors of the movement. As a young boy, Piper travelled extensively to camp meetings with his father, a revivalist preacher, and listened to him over the radio during the mid-twentieth century. During the heyday of neo-evangelicalism at Wheaton – when Clyde Kilby was teaching literature and Francis Schaeffer visited in 1965 – Piper was studying there alongside hallmate Mark Noll and Nathan Hatch.¹⁴⁵ Further, Piper recalls that, during his time in graduate studies at Fuller, “[he] was watching the agony and the ecstasy of the new evangelicalism struggling to break free from the anti-intellectualism and cultural distance of fundamentalism into an intellectual and cultural engagement that would be respected in the guild.”¹⁴⁶ Over the past twenty years, as a part of the neo-Calvinist renaissance, Piper’s preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church gained popularity, helped, surely, through his relentless publishing – approximately 75 books since 1990.¹⁴⁷ Piper’s own exhortation to better evangelical thinking, *Think*, then, is just as pastoral as it is didactic.

¹⁴⁴ Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, 193.

¹⁴⁵ John Piper, “The Pastor as Scholar: A Personal Journey and the Joyful Place of Scholarship,” *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry*, ed. Owen Strachan & David Mathis (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011), 31-32; Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*, 76; Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 188-119, 212.

¹⁴⁶ Piper, “The Pastor as Scholar: A Personal Journey and the Joyful Place of Scholarship,” 37.

¹⁴⁷ David Van Biema, “10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now: The New Calvinism,” *TIME*, March 12, 2009, accessed March 24, 2014, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1884779_1884782_1884760,00.html; Desiring God, “John Piper - Bibliography,” *Desiring God*, <http://www.desiringgod.org/about/john-piper/bibliography> (accessed March 6, 2014); Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 238-9.

Piper argues that Christians must use their minds fully, for the life of the mind is a central instrument for the love of God. He writes, “[thinking is] about using the means God has given us to know him, love him, and serve people.”¹⁴⁸ Piper’s concern then, is not the dignity of thinking, *per se*, but how that faculty may be used for the more central pursuit of loving God. Piper’s driving project, from his *Desiring God*, is a kind of eudemonistic conception of Christian salvation and life: “God is most glorified in me, when I am most satisfied in him.”¹⁴⁹ In the same way, his account of the mind is concerned not with what thinking is for, but how it contributes to the glory of God through our satisfaction in him. As he writes, “I will suggest that loving God with the mind means that *our thinking is wholly engaged to do all it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things.*”¹⁵⁰ Piper’s book seems to reverse Anselm’s famous insight (*credo ut intelligam*): *intelligo ut amem*.

In this way, Piper puts thinking in the service of loving, spending a significant part of the book trying to address the apparent tension between thought and affection. He first demonstrates that thinking is a necessary element of loving. For him, loving God means that “*our thinking should be wholly engaged to do all it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things.*”¹⁵¹ He defines “heart,” as the “center of our volitional and emotional life,” and this kind of “heartfelt fullness” comes only as a gift of grace from God, particularly through “the use of the mind to learn and explain and defend the facts of the

¹⁴⁸ John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 17.

¹⁴⁹ John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2003), 10.

¹⁵⁰ Piper, *Think*, 19, his emphasis.

¹⁵¹ Piper, *Think*, 83, his emphasis.

gospel.”¹⁵² Second, he argues that right love, as opposed to empty idolatry, must be directed by the definite content of God’s identity – content supplied by good, Biblical study.¹⁵³

Scholarship, then, is only helpful or good insofar as it makes explicit reference to God and his glory. He writes provocatively, “It is an abdication of scholarship when Christians do academic work with little reference to God... to treat any subject without reference to God’s glory is not scholarship but insurrection.”¹⁵⁴ As will be discussed further in Chapter 2, Piper’s project, though in support of a kind of thinking, is not friendly to mainstream scholarship, but only to the kind of study that directly highlights God and his revelation in the world. In particular, scholars must not depart too far from the straightforward words of Scripture, no matter the subject, as he writes that good scholarship must be done with an embrace of a “careful doctrine of inerrancy,” and that the “Bible gives us the decisive meaning of all things.”¹⁵⁵ In the end, it seems that Piper, after his devastating critique of formal education and the mainstream academy, is mainly left with ‘thinking’ as study of the Bible, or study of the world with reference to God as revealed in the plain text of Scripture.

Conclusion

The extent of overlap and mutual engagement in the evangelical intellectual movement suggests incredible development in the number and presence of evangelical thinkers, in spite of significant diversity. After this chapter’s treatment of each author’s project, individually, the next chapter will draw comparisons between authors of the movement to highlight two particular tensions: (1) disagreement over whether knowledge and inquiry constitute an intrinsically

¹⁵² Piper, *Think*, 85, 74.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 174, 190.

valuable vocation for a Christian, apart from usefulness to evangelism and (2) differences in how explicitly Christian the content or conclusions of thinking must be to count as “Christian” thinking.

Chapter 2: What is Thinking For?

To quote Molly Worthen:

*The anti-intellectual inclinations in evangelical culture stem not from wholehearted and confident obedience to scripture, or the assurance that God will eventually corral all nonbelievers, but from deep disagreement over what the Bible means, a sincere desire to uphold the standards of modern reason alongside God's word—and the defensive reflexes that outsiders' skepticism provokes.*¹⁵⁶

When early to mid-twentieth century struggles over inerrancy aggravated the increasingly tenuous evangelical relationship to mainstream scholarship, evangelicals scrambled for rallying points to vindicate Christian belief over liberalism and secularism on the terms of modern thought. From the 1970s onwards, some professional, Reformed philosophers – led by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff – started what would become “Reformed epistemology,” a new way of talking about the “myth” of neutrality in the classroom that could provide a “modest defense of theism” without the polemic force of presuppositionalism.¹⁵⁷ Others, however, continued to use a form of Cornelius Van Til’s presuppositionalism, especially in the language of “worldview,” to maintain a sharp distinction between the premises and proofs of Christian faith, and the reasoning of their secular interlocutors.¹⁵⁸

Authors within the intellectual renewal movement maintain this kind disagreement over (1) the extent to which a Christian can accommodate mainstream academic methods and institutions and (2) the degree to which Christian thinking must evidence distinct Christian principles or conclusions. Piper and Moreland, in particular, do not view academic life as a legitimate Christian vocation – that is, a part of “integral human fulfillment” (to borrow a phrase from John Finnis) – apart from its benefits to evangelism, apologetics, and the “culture war.”

¹⁵⁶ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 261.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 221-222.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 223ff.

Others, however, find a place for legitimate academic vocation in the intrinsic goodness of thinking or in the pragmatic value of the mainstream academy. Second, although all writers in the movement are interested in proclaiming their Christian faith, a number specify that this can only be done by explicit use of Christian content and conclusions, where others are more interested in discussing the role of Christian theology in their interpretive framework and the substance of scholarship.

Thinking as Evangelism

Almost all evangelical thinkers find some value in cooperation with the mainstream academy, even if eventually using it for other ends. Two authors, however – J.P. Moreland and John Piper – make no pretense of support for the vocation of a scholar in the mainstream academy.

Moreland, the starkest example of evangelical pragmatism, says that Christian thinking entirely serves the ends of personal change and evangelical impact. Spiritual transformation – sanctification – consists, for him, in changes in conscious, rational thought. Interpreting Romans 12:1-2, Moreland writes that “according to Paul, the key to change is the formation of a new perspective, the development of fresh insights about our lives and the world around us, the gathering of knowledge and skill required to know what to do and how to do it.”¹⁵⁹ This new perspective is primarily composed of intentional propositions about objects in the world – his way of defining thoughts, which constitute beliefs.¹⁶⁰ Beliefs, then, for Moreland, are “a person’s

¹⁵⁹ Moreland, *Love the Lord With All Your Mind*, 66.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

view... of how things really are.”¹⁶¹ One’s character, habits, and actions are governed by the variety of beliefs that subsist in one’s mind, as he writes, “beliefs are the rails upon which our lives run. We almost always act according to what we really believe.”¹⁶² To change habits, spiritual priorities, and goals requires regular, conscious reflection on the thought content of one’s beliefs – “by choosing to undertake a course of study, meditation, and reflection, I can put myself in a position to undergo a change in the content, strength, and centrality of my beliefs.”¹⁶³

According to this picture – that beliefs, rather than affective dispositions, are the primary motivators for action – thinking is integral to spiritual development and transformation. The book, itself, is part of a series edited by Moreland’s mentor, Dallas Willard, called “The Spiritual Formation Line,” which exhorts Christians to “become constant testimony of the reality of God,” *acting* as “full-time” Christians in any vocation.¹⁶⁴ The issue for the series, and clearly also for Moreland, is not thinking *qua* thinking, but, rather, thinking as constituent of action.

Moreland, then, using action as explanatorily basic, identifies the “scandal” of poor Christian thinking primarily as the loss of effective evangelism and public Christian witness. A dearth of good thinking, according to Moreland, “has softened [evangelicals’] impact for Christ” through a “loss of boldness.”¹⁶⁵ He places the first horn of the problem on evangelicals at colleges and universities who have not done the proper intellectual work to reach positions of cultural impact in private and public life. In his view, from the fact that “cream rises to the top” and that there are few to no evangelical Christians in positions of prominence in politics, culture,

¹⁶¹ Moreland, *Love the Lord With All Your Mind*, 70.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

or business, Christians have failed in the public sphere.¹⁶⁶ By only seeing college as job training and schoolwork as secular, rather than “identify[ing] a field of study in and through which [one] can serve Christ as... Lord,” Moreland concludes that Christians have abdicated their responsibility of public witness.¹⁶⁷

The second horn of the problem, then, is the effect of weak Christian apologetics on weakened world missions and evangelism. He repeatedly denounces the pragmatic gospel of “addressing felt needs” – which, for him, is an “irrelevant gospel.”¹⁶⁸ Moreland says that evangelism, in contrast to objective, rational argument, does not work if non-Christians do not feel particular needs – and thus opens evangelicals to the critique of irrelevancy.¹⁶⁹ Instead, he advocates for a more radical rationalism in bringing others to faith, writing, “apologetics is the primary form through which the Christian Mind expresses itself in the task of evangelism.”¹⁷⁰ In fact, he defines apologetics entirely as a “ministry which seeks to provide rational grounds for believing Christianity in whole or in part and to respond to objections raised against Christianity in whole or in part.”¹⁷¹

In general terms, Moreland’s method of apologetics is rationalist, but it is also agonistic and characterized by military metaphors such as “struggle,” “warfare,” or “destroying.”¹⁷² Given the manifold non-Christian ways of thinking and the dangers of the secular university, Moreland warns that “we must develop intelligent Christians... who have the mental training to see issues

¹⁶⁶ Moreland, *Love the Lord With All Your Mind*, 30.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 131.

clearly, make important distinctions, and weigh various factors appropriately,” so as “to meet the crises of the age.”¹⁷³ In his description of learning, however, he writes that “none of this [Christian thinking] means you need a PhD.”¹⁷⁴ A vocation of such professional, dedicated study of the world, for him, only has instrumental value when evangelizing to a certain kind of person. An educated Christian, he writes, “has intellectual categories to make natural connections between Christianity and a host of other regular conversation topics.”¹⁷⁵ Moreland here suggests that more learning primarily provides a broader selection of informal conversation topics from which to move into explicit talk about Christianity and the gospel. If one is to follow Moreland’s proposal for thinking, it is either to develop and check the thought content of one’s own governing behaviors, or to have the mental deftness and resources to appropriately converse with non-Christians and defend the faith.

Like Moreland, John Piper also values thinking for its use, but he finds that thinking is a part of human fulfillment in the human *telos* of enjoying God. Piper’s account in one sense, sees Christian thinking as a valuable aspect of the service of love of God, but, in another, it is a subordinate faculty, primarily meant for biblical studies and for apologetics. Piper writes that the apex of glorifying God is “...enjoying him with the heart. But this is an empty emotionalism where... not... sustained by true views of God for who he really is.”¹⁷⁶ The direction of one’s love, on Piper’s account, much like Moreland’s, relies on the specific content of one’s beliefs. Piper, though focusing more on reason’s relationship with the affections, uses a correspondence rationalism similar to Moreland where thinking relies on the premise that “ideas... inside another

¹⁷³ Moreland, *Love the Lord With All Your Mind*, 48, 39.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

person's mind can be transferred through words into your mind" and that words "signify objects and persons and actions and descriptions and ideas and feelings" – that "thousands of these words correspond to realities."¹⁷⁷ Thinking, for Piper, then, is primarily concerned with extracting the intended meaning of an author that is enmeshed in a text.¹⁷⁸

For Piper, any valuable thinking in scholarship and teaching must be in the service of the heart and must be biblical in character. Piper writes, "thinking is not just entertainment on the stage of life where nothing is real. It is really useful in knowing what God has revealed about himself and about this world and how we should live in it."¹⁷⁹ Thinking comes, then, in two characteristic forms – biblical study and apologetics.

First, Piper laments that most attempts by scholars at thinking neglect "Christ and his Word."¹⁸⁰ Piper writes, "the Bible gives us the decisive meaning of all things," and is "the key that unlocks the deepest meaning of everything else."¹⁸¹ All learning, for him, must derive from and relate to biblical studies, and any scholarship done apart from the Bible or that does not specifically reference Christ is worthless, if not dangerous. As he noted in an interview with *Christianity Today*, "when I say 'thinking,' I mean people can open this book (picking up his Bible) and read with understanding. What do the words mean; what do the clauses mean; how are they connected; how does the paragraph work? That's my main concern."¹⁸² Even more specifically, he writes that good scholarship must be done with an embrace of a "careful doctrine

¹⁷⁷ Piper, *Think*, 43-44.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁸² "Q&A: John Piper on *Think*," *Christianity Today*, October 4, 2010, accessed on March 24, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/octoberweb-only/50-11.0.html?start=2>.

of inerrancy” – a point that he echoes from Noll.¹⁸³ Learning for Piper, then, is not ultimately for the sake of knowledge or creative inquiry, at all, but rather for cultivating one’s faith. Education is to “build into the student habits of mind and heart” from the experience of Christ through the Bible, and not to confer degrees, communicate important facts, or develop important skills.¹⁸⁴ From this perspective, he has no regard for mainstream academic work, except that done in Christian settings for the sake of biblical study.

Like Moreland, Piper holds that apologetics, following biblical studies, is the highest form of Christian thought. He defines apologetics that uses human reason as “the use of the mind to learn and explain and defend the facts of the gospel.”¹⁸⁵ More specifically, rational apologetics points to the *objective content* of the biblical story, as he writes, “we must hear the story and get the gospel facts and the doctrine right.”¹⁸⁶ Fighting against those who would reject strict inerrancy, Piper grounds his apologetics on the plain, objective gospel that he finds in Scripture, which, in his view, should be clear to anyone who can listen or read. Although not quite as confident as Moreland in the power of philosophical proof, Piper certainly thinks reasoning can yield a good degree of probability and confidence. Faith, as he puts it is “founded on real evidence, good reason, the ground of conviction.”¹⁸⁷ One can learn proper logical argumentation to give a proper defense of the Christian faith based on the objectivity of the gospel contained in Scripture and its propositional structure.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

As a short aside, one cannot help but wonder if both authors' subordination of thinking to instrumental purposes relates to Moreland's, and possibly Piper's, specific view of "thinking" as conscious reflection on the objective, rational structures of the world. Moreland, particularly, when writing about what it is to think, spends all of Chapter 5, "Clearing the Cobwebs from My Mental Attic," giving a lesson in propositional logic. As he sees it, thinking is like exercise; the "mind is like a muscle," that requires proper exercise, nourishment, and stretching.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, according to Moreland, Christian worship should be a mental marathon – pre-service mental warm-ups, historical introductions to hymns, and sermon outlines that look like lecture notes.¹⁸⁹ For sermons, in particular, he recommends that pastors give required reading for each teaching series – commentaries or other books – weekly readings, and more. One sees the dominance of rationality in his theological anthropology in the following paragraph, worth quoting in full:

*...from time to time a minister should intentionally pitch a message to the upper one-third of the congregation, intellectually speaking. This may leave some people feeling a bit left out and confused during the sermon, which is unfortunate, but the alternative (which we follow almost all the time) is to dumb down our sermons so often that the upper one-third get bored and have to look elsewhere for spiritual and intellectual food. The intellectual level of our messages ought to be varied to provide more of a balance for all of the congregation. Furthermore, such an approach may motivate those in the lower two-thirds to catch up!*¹⁹⁰

From such a radically rationalist view of the human being – one where intellectual ability is closely connected to one's spiritual development – it is not surprising to find that reason is primarily instrumental.

The Middle Ground – The Good and the Useful

¹⁸⁸ Moreland, *Love the Lord With All Your Mind*, 87.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 192-200.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

Leaving behind the thin air of Moreland and Piper's rationalism, a number of authors strike a moderate position with respect to the vocation of thinking. Though thinking may have a role in integral human fulfillment for these authors, as an intrinsically self-sufficient good, many still primarily *emphasize* the usefulness of thinking. Two in particular – Gene Veith and Os Guinness, both well-known participants in public reasoning – predominately identify thinking with cultural and spiritual usefulness, though still giving it a place in its own right.

Culture warrior Gene Veith hopes to show that (1) good Christian thinking can help Christians “withstand the attacks on their faith that would come,” and also that (2) “the life of the mind is worth pursuing for God’s sake.”¹⁹¹ Already, at the outset of his work, Veith places greater intrinsic value on the life of scholarship and thinking than either Piper or Moreland. He writes, “[Christians] also need to know the positive side [of thinking], how Christian truth genuinely opens up the mind, providing a framework that embraces all knowledge and that gives a basis for curiosity, creativity, and all the energy of learning.”¹⁹² From there, the first section of the book includes an extensive derivation of the value of “secular subjects,” moving from the value of the Bible and the derivative need to study other subjects in order to understand the Bible. He finds further biblical warrant for secular education, implicitly, in the lives of Paul and Apollos, as well as the central example around which the book circles – the story of Daniel at “The University of Babylon.”¹⁹³

Apart from his Biblical derivation of the value of thinking, Veith argues that Christian faith is actually, philosophically, a *better* foundation for most subjects than either materialism or other religious frames. When saying this, he specifically seems to refer to the liberal arts – those

¹⁹¹ Veith, *Loving God With Your All Mind*, 7.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 17-18, 27.

studies of the world that, in his reading, do not promise immediate technological benefits. He writes that Christians are ‘ten times better’ than other worldviews, especially in the liberal arts, arguing,

*Materialists have problems justifying art. They have little basis for concepts such as beauty, objective form, and creation for its own sake... Christians in the humanities, with their concept of the image of God, and Christians in the sciences, with their concept of God’s creation, should be ‘ten times better’ than those in the humanities and the sciences today who are floundering for a ground to stand on. The doctrine of creation unites both an interest in the objective world of nature and an interest in the subjective world of human beings, exalting both the creation as it is and the whole principle of creativity.*¹⁹⁴

He critiques the instrumentalization of learning that characterizes “secular academia” for him, and, instead, encourages Christians to focus their intellectual response in the liberal arts. He writes, “I picture the Christian colleges—I have not said enough about them as alternatives to secular academia—as enclaves of the liberal arts, while the public colleges have all become sophisticated trade schools.”¹⁹⁵ His critique of non-Christian science relies on premises derived not from science itself, but rather the liberal arts, which then help to illuminate the intrinsic goodness of creation. Veith is not merely concerned with the *salutary effects* of good thinking, but also the place for thinking as a legitimate, Christian vocation, in its own right.

Os Guinness, likewise, writes that Christian thinking has a non-instrumental role in the life of a Christian, and that it also serves a good cultural purpose. His own thesis holds this tension of the practical and the good, as he writes, “evangelical anti-intellectualism is both a scandal [harmful effects on public and church life] and a sin [disobedience to Christ’s commands for Christian life].”¹⁹⁶ At the outset of his work, Guinness distinguishes himself as one who does not believe that thinking is merely necessary for Christian cultural witness – an important

¹⁹⁴ Veith, *Loving God With Your All Mind*, 35-36.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁹⁶ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 10-11.

distinction given his own prominent role in public thinking.¹⁹⁷ He writes, “people who might never act against anti-intellectualism simply on the grounds that it is a sin are now being prodded into action because it is a scandal and a severe cultural handicap. Far better to think Christianly as a direct act of love for God.”¹⁹⁸

Following his initial critique of Evangelical pragmatic thinking, his extensive historical and cultural diagnosis of the problem circles back to this issue of pragmatism at many points. First, he critiques the “evangelical bias towards the simplistic” — that those who spurned extended reflection on non-practical questions such as theology pushed the evangelical tradition into naïveté. Such a trend, on his view, led to “an impatience with the difficult, an intolerance of complexity, and a poor appreciation of the long-term and disciplined.”¹⁹⁹ Second, he critiques the effects of pre-millennial dispensationalist strains in evangelicalism — in particular prominence during the 1990s, when the book was published — on extended engagement with culture. The urgency of time and the sharp distinction between the current and future worlds, for Guinness, seems to encourage “general indifference to serious engagement with culture” and causes evangelicals to “turn their backs on the world in which they live.”²⁰⁰ Third, he critiques the “seeker-friendly” church model characteristic of post-Counterculture evangelicalism.²⁰¹ Philosophically, he decries the denigration of the “Word” in favor of the “Triumphant Image”

¹⁹⁷ See above, p. 31-32.

¹⁹⁸ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 18.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 42, 47.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 66, 67.

²⁰¹ cf. Chapter 3: “Campus Ministry at America’s ‘Trojan Horse’” in John G. Turner, *Bill Bright & Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) or Donald Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

that began a trend towards consumer-oriented Christian worship, where marketing creates a “bias against understanding” and prioritizes “association, not analysis.”²⁰²

Guinness abhors various trends – popular and theoretical – that have pushed evangelicals away from extended engagement with the world in thinking and cheapened Christian presence in the world, but he and Gene Veith both soft-pedal the value of academic research that does not offer evident popular application.

Although Veith fights for scholarship as a vocation, he frequently describes thinking as a necessary means of defense against secularism. It is worth noting, again, that he is writing specifically to *Christian students at colleges and universities*, so his proposal focuses also on the necessary defenses involved in intellectual life. “Christians need to be aware, though, of the contours of contemporary thought. They need to know what to expect and how to deal with some of the challenges to Christian faith that they *will* encounter,” he writes.²⁰³ Thinking, for him, is good – in and of itself – but not necessarily in mainstream academic venues. He writes, “many Christians are not opposed to knowledge as such. They notice, however, that certain fields today make claims that do not always accord with what the Bible teaches.”²⁰⁴ He spends the bulk of the book suggesting ways in which Christians must be careful not to “compromise God’s word” in the face of the imminent threats against Christian faith at educational institutions.²⁰⁵

In particular, taking his cues from the book of Daniel, Veith focuses on distinct theoretical commitments involved in Christian identity that, if denied, would compromise a Christian’s place in the community. Trading extensively on his distinction between “secular” and

²⁰² Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 96, 99, 123.

²⁰³ Veith, *Loving God With Your All Mind*, 12, emphasis mine.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

“religious” knowledge, he writes, “there is a sense in which purely secular knowledge, that which involves no religious claims, may be the least problematic for a Christian.”²⁰⁶ If a Christian sorts through the metaphysical, theological, or ethical implications of certain professors or ideas, Veith thinks that a Christian could then accept some knowledge, but not all of it. In this way, he defines Christian thinking in “academia” as primarily a “negative method” of “critical analysis” – to “unveil the logical contradictions, the contrary evidence, the manifest silliness” of views opposed to Christianity.²⁰⁷ Christians armed with the right arguments need not fear the attacks of the secular academy, but, rather, can “raz[e] the walls of Jericho through the power of the Word of God.”²⁰⁸ One ought not to miss the agonistic character of his description: Christians in the secular academy will be embroiled in theoretical conflict and debate, rather than joining in a common pursuit of truth. As he puts it, “it is much more fun to be on the offensive.”²⁰⁹

Guinness, though, is not so focused on the problems of secular or public education, as much as he is critical of thinking and research with no particular application at the popular level. He writes, “with the Christian high-brow more abstruse and irrelevant than ever and the Christian lowbrow lower and more vulgar and adolescent than ever, the body of Christ often gives the appearance of the uncontrolled movements of a paraplegic.”²¹⁰ More specifically, “Christian thinkers who have taken the high road mostly disqualify themselves from helping out on the low road because of two things: their secularization and their specialization.”²¹¹ Although

²⁰⁶ Veith, *Loving God With Your All Mind*, 42.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

²¹⁰ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 72.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

this critique of irresponsible or irrelevant academic elitism also constitutes a laudable focus on intellectual responsibility, his shot at high-level research suggests that even he cannot get away from the pragmatic impulse, himself. If Guinness, on one hand, promotes rigorous thinking as obedience to Christ, can he, on the other, compel “highbrow” thinking to make “deep truth to be practicable to all God’s people in a whole and healthy way”?²¹²

The above group of thinkers, though holding the vocation of thinking and scholarship in higher regard, still seems somewhat wedded to the necessary usefulness of knowledge. Another group of writers, however, distinguish themselves by a wide degree of cooperation with mainstream academic institutions or scholarly methods.

Thinking as Proper Human Vocation

For the following authors, intellectual life – either as student or as scholar – is primarily good in itself, apart from its good effects. Clifford Williams, James Sire, and Richard Hughes all write, in different ways, that the good use of thinking – fulfilling a God-given capacity – is a central aspect of living well as a human and as a Christian.

Williams is the only author who directly and explicitly argues for the intrinsic goodness of thinking for humans. Much like Guinness, he distinguishes his own view from others in the movement, as he writes, “[my view] differs from most Christian defenses of involvement in higher education, which focus largely on fulfilling more practical needs.”²¹³ In particular, he quotes David S. Dockery – then the president of Southern Baptist Union University, now the president of William’s own Trinity International University – who writes that education ought to

²¹² Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 74.

²¹³ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 12.

produce Christians “enabled and equipped with the competencies necessary to think Christianly and to perform skillfully in the world.”²¹⁴

In contrast, Williams highlights the goodness of knowing the aspects of God’s intrinsically-good creation, writing, “delighting in knowing the way things are is like delighting in the beauty of a landscape—we do it for its own sake, without thought of what we will get from it.”²¹⁵ Human knowledge of the world is a participation in intrinsic goodness that leads to a fuller life for a human, apart from its good effects.²¹⁶ His eudemonistic framework rests on a fairly straightforward syllogism:

- P1: Knowledge of God and of the beauty and structure of creation is intrinsically good
- P2: “a larger life has more intrinsic good in it”²¹⁷
- C: A larger life involves the pursuit of knowledge: thinking and learning

As he puts it, “if what is said in this chapter is correct, attending school is not just a means of preparing for a good life. It is a good life... It is an end in itself. Studying and learning enlarge our lives independently of what they enable us to do later on.”²¹⁸

Less explicitly than William’s direct argument, James Sire also emphasizes the intrinsic goodness of intellectual life by appropriating Catholic John Henry Cardinal Newman’s idea of the “perfected intellect.” Early in the book, Sire approvingly cites Richard Hofstadter’s distinction between ‘intelligence’ and ‘intellect’ to define intellectual life as “an almost religious dedication to ideas as such” rather than intelligent “knowledge for the sake of something other

²¹⁴ David S. Dockery, “The Great Commandment as a Paradigm for Christian Higher Education,” in *The Future of Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery and David P. Gushee (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 9.; quoted in Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 31.

²¹⁵ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 31.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

than knowledge itself.”²¹⁹ Someone truly devoted to the life of the mind does not merely use ideas to produce a living wage, but truly is in love with ideas. Thinking should be enjoyable, as he writes, “true intellectuals have fun with ideas... There is a spontaneity about the intellectual life.”²²⁰ This kind of pleasure with ideas, for Sire, is the natural perfection of the intellect that thrives like a well-working machine, as he writes, “when the mind hums... when it is really working well, how else shall we give a sense of how thinking feels? It does seem ‘intimate with the music of the spheres’.”²²¹

Even though he does not explicitly argue that thinking and scholarship is intrinsically good, Sire suggests as much in his critique of reductive, evangelical methods of Biblical study. He writes, “...rich as it is in emphasis on techniques of reading that enhance understanding, the heritage of Protestantism and InterVarsity is almost exclusively rational and pragmatic.”²²² In contrast, he lauds the medieval discipline of *lectio divina* – a form of reading that combines conscious, rational analysis with non-rational attentiveness to the text – a focus on harmonizing one’s own being to the order of spiritual reality.

Although, like Sire, Richard Hughes does not address the issue directly, he assumes that thinking and learning are “fundamentally human” activities.²²³ In fact, he suggests that being a scholar at any college or university is entirely compatible with Christian faith, as he posits, “many of the values that are central to good scholarship and sound teaching are values that also

²¹⁹ Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 26.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

²²² *Ibid.*, 152.

²²³ Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, 2.

lie at the heart of the Christian faith.”²²⁴ Further, Hughes does not intend, necessarily, to distinguish his work from secular scholars, so long as his fundamental presuppositions are not compromised, as he notes, “if... my work finally resembles that of other academicians.... who are generally regarded as serious scholars and teachers, then I can only rejoice that, at least in some measure, I have successfully integrated my Christian faith with my life work.”²²⁵ Hughes affirms that one can, fairly easily, live a life that integrates faith and mainstream scholarship and, therefore, does not ask, in such explicit terms, whether or not the life of a scholar is a good life for a Christian.

The Silence of the Scholars

Mark Noll, George Marsden, and Alister McGrath do not even stop to consider whether scholarship and thinking might not be a legitimate vocation. Their own critiques of evangelical anti-intellectualism, in fact, hinge on a critique of evangelicals who treat thinking as a instrumental means of proselytizing. Each argues that Christian faith serves primarily as a scholarly stance – a critical frame – through which all of reality, without exception, is illuminated and viewed as an area of possible study. As a foundational aspect of their epistemology, Christian faith does not contradict, but, rather, undergirds the vocation of a scholar.

Noll in particular, in both *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* and *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, decries the limitations of evangelical pragmatism. He writes:

These barriers [to productive thinking] include an immediatism that insists on action, decision, and even perfection right now; a populism that confuses winning supporters with mastering actually existing situations... We also much prefer to put our money into

²²⁴ Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, 104.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

*programs offering immediate relief, whether evangelistic or humanitarian, instead of into institutions promoting intellectual development over the long term.*²²⁶

Instead, he argues that, since, theologically, all creation holds together in and is ordered by Christ, knowledge of Christ connects intrinsically with study and learning. He writes, "...both the salvation won by Christ and the study of 'all things' would be viewed as intimately related to each other because both are dependent upon Jesus Christ."²²⁷ Quoting B.B. Warfield, Noll is astounded by those who separate Christian life and serious study, as he asks, "Why should you turn from God when you turn to your books, or feel that you must turn from your books in order to turn to God?"²²⁸

Marsden, likewise, sees a wide, almost all-encompassing, area of overlap between the methods of Christian scholars and the mainstream academy. In fact, he writes, "in the corridors of the pragmatic academy Christians and non-Christians can readily share basic standards of evidence and argument."²²⁹ Moreover, he decries those who would engage in "simple" proselytizing in the mainstream academy, where "preaching and overt proselytizing would be inappropriate exercises of professorial power in a setting defined by the state's commitment to pluralism."²³⁰ Instead, Christians are to play by the same rules as other academics, but are to do so from a self-conscious, critical perspective informed by Christian tradition.

Lastly, although there is not much in *The Passionate Intellect* about the intrinsic goodness of intellectual life, as such, Alister McGrath critiques any form of apologetics that

²²⁶ Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 152.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

²²⁸ B.B. Warfield, "The Religious Life of Theological Students," (an address at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1911), quoted in *Selected Shorter Writings of B.B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter, 2 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970) 412; quoted in Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 28.

²²⁹ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 47.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

works as “a technique for winning arguments” (*a la* Moreland).²³¹ He writes, “arguments do not convert. They may remove obstacles to conversion and support the faith of believers, but... they do not possess the capacity to transform humanity.”²³² Instead, he argues that anyone defending the intellectual credibility of the Christian faith must show, rather, how Christian faith illuminates all of human life and reality.²³³ Like Williams, McGrath writes that, insofar as God’s creation reflects his glory and being, the study of all things resonates with the central Christian pursuit of knowing God.

“Christanus sum!” Distinctiveness and Proclamation in Christian Thinking

Although not all of the authors consider evangelism to be the only purpose for thinking, all of them, as evangelicals, create some sort of space for proclamation of the gospel in Christian thinking. Sharing the gospel, however, seems to come in a variety of forms, as the books vary greatly on whether Christian thinking necessarily involves explicit Christian content. Piper and Moreland, who consider thinking predominately to be an instrumental function in the subordinate service of evangelism or love of God, also hold that any Christian thinking ought to be concerned with reading and applying the Bible. On the other hand, those who consider intellectual life to be a vocation in its own right do not associate Christian thinking with explicitly Christian *content* or *conclusions* of thinking, but with explicit Christian *motivation* or *influence*.

“I Am Not Ashamed”: Clear Content and Proclamation

²³¹ McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect*, 87.

²³² *Ibid.*, 88.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 94.

As Piper and Moreland argue that all thinking is for the sake of biblical evangelism and greater love of the God found in the Bible, it is not surprising, then, that both argue that thinking ought always to deal with explicitly Christian – biblical – content and should reach conclusions that proclaim Christ to the world.

Rather starkly, Piper writes that any scholarship that does not directly deal with and refer to God constitutes religious treason. He writes, “it is an abdication of scholarship... [to] do academic work with little reference to God... to treat any subject without reference to God’s glory is not scholarship but *insurrection*.”²³⁴ He does not promote scholarship done *in accordance* with Biblical teachings, or *in harmony* with divine teaching, but, rather, only that which makes “*reference to God*” in order to proclaim his glory. According to Piper, one gains the “clearest and most authoritative knowledge of [God]... through... the Bible.”²³⁵ Moreover, in his explicit definition of “thinking,” Piper writes, “mainly I am referring to the activity of the mind in reading and understanding what others have written, especially the Bible.”²³⁶

Piper goes on to widen his frame and highlight the value of creation, as a manifestation of God’s glory, but the Bible remains the central “key” to unlock even knowledge about creation. All Christian scholarship worth the name, for him, deals with explicitly Christian content – either the Bible in isolation or the Bible with reference to an aspect of the world. He writes, “[the] task of all Christian scholarship... is to study reality as a manifestation of God’s glory, to speak and write about it with accuracy, and to savor the beauty of God in it, and to make it serve the good

²³⁴ Piper, *Think*, 21.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

of man.”²³⁷ This can only be done with explicit reference to God with explicitly Christian content.

In a way analogous to Piper’s view of the Bible as the interpretive key to creation, Moreland affirms the usefulness of “extra-biblical material” in biblical study or evangelism. He writes, “Holy Scripture is the central object of study in loving God with the mind. However, it is not the only object of such study. God has revealed Himself and various truths on a number of topics outside the Bible.”²³⁸ These truths from other disciplines, however, are merely functional for two purposes.

First, study of the world apart from scripture, according to Moreland, sharpens one’s mind and mental categories to better understand biblical interpretation. He writes that Wesley was an example of such a scholar, as he says, “for Wesley, study in these [extra-biblical] areas... helped train the mind to think precisely, a habit of incredible value, he asserted, when it comes to thinking as a Christian about theological themes or scriptural texts.”²³⁹

Second, one must study extra-biblical material in order to be properly qualified to serve in culturally influential positions for the sake of Christian witness. In his view, scripture teaches that Christian influence often requires obtaining the knowledge, training, and excellence through which to reach positions of cultural power and influence. Specifically in relation to the purpose of education, he writes,

A Christian goes to college to discover his vocation... and to develop the skills necessary to occupy a section of the cultural, intellectual domain in a manner worthy of the kingdom of God. A believer also goes to college to gain general information and the habits of thought necessary for developing a well-structured soul suitable for a well-informed, good citizen of both earthly and heavenly kingdoms. If the public square is

²³⁷ Piper, *Think*, 168.

²³⁸ Moreland, *Love the Lord With All Your Mind*, 53.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

*naked, it may be because Christians have abandoned the humanities due to a sub-biblical appreciation for extrabiblical knowledge.*²⁴⁰

In this passage, he evaluates an individual Christian's *influence* on the particular culture or arena in which he or she lives and works, rather than the intrinsic goodness of the subjects. Moreland goes on to note that, depending on one's particular field's and its relation to questions about "ultimate reality," Christian biblical thinking may look quite different, as he says, "not all fields of study are equally in need of thinking Christianity."²⁴¹ Potential conflicts could spark from differences in ethics, ontology, epistemology, methodology, or specific virtues involved in the practice of one's work, depending on how theology relates to one's field. In any case, theology – more specifically, biblical study – ought to triumph when there is any sort of conflict.

Although James Sire describes the intrinsic goodness of the perfected intellect, he is also quite clear on the need for distinctive Christian content and conclusions. He writes, "...beyond the fields of philosophy, religion, and biblical studies, the presence of Christians reading papers with distinctive Christian content is minimal" – a problem that he hopes can be addressed.²⁴² Importantly, what Sire means by "distinctive Christian content" does not mean 'an explicit Christian worldview' – as in Noll, Marsden, *et al.*²⁴³ In fact, he critiques papers that merely "reflect a Christian worldview" but do "not bring [explicit Christian beliefs] into the picture," saying that this even "constitutes 'living a lie'."²⁴⁴ It is not enough to practice scholarship from a Christian perspective; one must make explicit Christian statements. For example, he writes, "the

²⁴⁰ Moreland, *Love the Lord With All Your Mind*, 57.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁴² Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 218.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 218-219.

most important fact about us is that we are made *in the image of God*... Yet what scholarly paper or research program... even mentions the idea?”²⁴⁵

Veith, although much more sanguine about study that does not include explicitly Christian conclusions, shares a focus on Christian content by emphasizing the conflict between Christian and non-Christian thinking and the value of specifically Christian institutions. On the one hand, he notes that there is no limit to the objects of Christian study, as he writes, “...because of this doctrine of creation, St. Paul points out, ‘nothing is to be rejected’. Nothing... Biology, physics, astronomy, linguistics, and all other sciences simply explore and bear testimony to what God has made.”²⁴⁶ On the other hand, he reminds Christians of their responsibility to draw on the resources of Christian ideas in order to fight the contrary ideas of the academy. He writes, “the intellectual resources of Christianity are vast and rich. Christians, though, must learn to draw on those resources; if they do not, it will be difficult for them to stand against those onslaughts of the unbelieving mind.”²⁴⁷ Here, he suggests that Christian scholars ought to be familiar with Christian theology and philosophy, even in connection to non-theological subjects. Moreover, he talks frequently of the value of the specifically Christian college as a bastion of the liberal arts – of specifically Christian ideas. One seems to hear a note of preference for explicitly Christian education and scholarship in his lament of the questionable rigor and orthodoxy of Christian publishing: “Having praised the Christian publishers, periodicals, and schools... I must say that sometimes they are not nearly as sophisticated or

²⁴⁵ Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 219.

²⁴⁶ Veith, *Loving God With Your All Mind*, 132.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

orthodox as they need to be.’²⁴⁸ The presence or absence of particular Christian ideas in relation to general topics, at different points, provides the fuel for Veith’s critiques and suggestions.

Self-Aware Scholarship as Proclamation

Christian witness, however, is not limited to content. A number of scholars either discourage or downplay the need for explicitly Christian content in thinking, but they encourage Christian scholars not to be afraid to highlight Christian influences on their hermeneutic. Christian scholarship does not, for them, need to be drastically – or even at all – different from mainstream non-Christian scholars.

In particular, the five scholars who describe Christian thinking as a “way of seeing things” rather than explicit content or conclusions – Noll, Marsden, Hughes, Williams, and McGrath – all consider the role of theological commitments in categories of thought or analysis. For Noll, it is atonement theology and Christology; for Marsden, it is Creation, the Incarnation, the spiritual dimensions of reality, and “the human condition”; for Hughes, it is ‘justification by grace through faith’, paradox, and the elevation of the poor and marginalized; for Williams, it is ‘Fall’ and ‘Redemption’; for McGrath, it is the ambivalence of the goodness in the physical world and humans. Each finds rich resources in Christian theology for structural influences on scholarly analysis and description, on the methods of study, and subjects of study chosen for research.

Noll, in particular, is largely concerned with Christian influence on scholarly method and analysis. As a historian, himself, he distinguishes four kinds of history available to a Christian scholar: interpretation of Christian or general history using elements of Christian revelation; and

²⁴⁸ Veith, *Loving God With Your All Mind*, 111.

interpretation of Christian or general history using general, mainstream categories of analysis.²⁴⁹ Depending on one's project and where one is teaching, Noll allows that there may be different appropriate historical methods. Moreover, his discussion of the application of the atonement to scholarship mostly notes general implications of theology for interpretive categories (i.e., environmental explanations of human behavior will always be only partially descriptive, diachronic narration must always supplement synchronic analysis, etc.).²⁵⁰ When Noll talks about what it is to be a Christian scholar, it is primarily to describe how "doctrine may *frame* scholarship," without reference, necessarily to the conclusions of that scholarship.²⁵¹ As he says, "the point is not to recruit scholars for particular programs or a specific set of conclusions about their disciplines," but instead to urge creative reflections on points of contact between theology and disciplines of scholarship.²⁵²

This project, then, is strikingly similar to McGrath, in that both see Christian scholarship as using theology to illuminate other aspects of reality, rather than seeking particularly Christian content. In a chapter on George Herbert's poem, "Elixir," McGrath writes, "Herbert offers us a vision of theology as a lens or window through which we look to discern the transcendent in the everyday, heaven in the ordinary."²⁵³ Although Christian theology primarily serves the life and worship of Christians, he adds that it can be a "way of looking at things" which provides a distinctive view on the world that holds real value in proclaiming the Christian faith.²⁵⁴ In

²⁴⁹ Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 90.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 71-73.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁵³ McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect*, 55.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

contrast to Noll and Marsden, McGrath is more concerned with the apologetic value of Christian thinking – though, importantly, he does not reduce thinking to apologetics. He writes, “if Christian faith cannot make possible a vision of reality that exceeds those offered by its secular and religious alternatives in its truth, beauty and goodness, Christianity cannot hope to prosper.”²⁵⁵ For McGrath, anyone who is to think seriously about Christian faith needs both to study theology and also to engage in cultural reflection, all the while being shaped by Christian liturgy. Worship and theological thinking form a Christian thinker’s dispositions and categories of thought and, then, provide an interpretive frame for contemporary cultural practices and beliefs.²⁵⁶ In particular, he advocates explicitly considering the “different ways of thinking, different core values and beliefs, different criteria of evidence and rationality, and different aspirations” of one’s time.²⁵⁷ Although McGrath advocates thinking for the sake of apologetics, he suggests that theology should shape one’s categories of cultural analysis, rather than one’s explicit conclusions.

Whereas McGrath is more interested in evangelism than Noll, Marsden’s proposal hopes to suppress *any* kind of apologetic scholarship, at least for Christians in the mainstream academy. Even more than Noll, Marsden urges Christian scholars to conform to the conventions of a particular field as much as possible. He distinguishes “distinctive” Christian scholarship from “uniquely” Christian scholarship – that is, “commitment... to some distinct set of Christian teachings, including doctrines like the Trinity, the Incarnation, or Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, as opposed to a general religious moralism.”²⁵⁸ For him, such determinate theological

²⁵⁵ McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect*, 93.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁵⁸ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 68.

commitments do not entail a significant difference in content or even in conclusions of scholarship. Distinctive Christian scholarship, rather, involves acknowledging Christian influences that could affect subtle differences in analysis or the direction and shape of one's academic interests.²⁵⁹

Marsden wants both to allow a place for identifying Christian perspectives in scholarship, and also to ward off any specter of dogmatism or proselytizing in public institutions. Using Robert Wuthnow's phrase, he chastises those Christian scholars who would "flaunt" a Christian perspective, or who purport to express "the Christian view."²⁶⁰ Rather, he suggests the following:

These legitimate issues suggest that the question of identifying one's work as 'Christian should be handled with discretion. In many pluralistic settings it would not be something to which one would call attention. When one does... it might be best to refer to one's scholarship with the more modest 'faith-informed,' while readily identifying oneself as a Christian. Graduate students, for instance, are usually best advised to master their disciplines and the art of communicating with diverse audiences before parading their 'Christian' critiques which are supposed to revolutionize the field. On the other hand, a Christian perspective should not be treated as a dark secret to be suppressed. Rather, one ought to be cultivating it and reflecting upon it as part of one's scholarly identity, and it should be a proper part of occasional scholarly self-disclosure.²⁶¹

To be a Christian scholar, for Marsden, is not to relinquish the possibility of identifying Christian influence on one's work, but he advises that distinctive proclamation should always fall within the particular conventions and behaviors appropriate to a pluralistic setting.

Hughes, similarly, devotes a specific section to answering the anticipated objection of "...where's the proclamation?"²⁶² Like Marsden, he concludes that, although one can talk about being a Christian and describe one's motivation for teaching, a professor should not proselytize. As he writes, "...if I had wished to make that honor [of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ] a

²⁵⁹ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 70.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁶² Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, 96.

fundamental dimension of my vocation, I should have become a preacher, not a teacher.”²⁶³ For him, as teaching constitutes a valid Christian vocation, apart from its contribution to evangelism, one need not augment it with explicit proclamation, but one may acknowledge the origin of one’s motivation, when appropriate. He writes that one can teach from Christian motivations, but “[this] does not provide us with an excuse for propagandizing in the classroom... While I avoid propagandizing in the classroom, I am quick to let my students know that I am a Christian.”²⁶⁴ For him, as well as Marsden, the pragmatic value of the pluralistic university or college is such that it ought to be protected, even though it allows some space to freely identify as a Christian.

Williams, similarly, leans on the intrinsic value of thinking and scholarship to distance it from direct evangelism. Like others above, he locates Christian distinctiveness in the theological categories of scholarly analysis. What effect theology might have, however, he does not specify, as he writes, “the specific questions [scholars] ask about the relationship of God to their topic of study are as technical and complex as the subject they are studying.”²⁶⁵ Like Noll, he leaves it largely up to scholars in particular disciplines to work out specific Christian influences on the content of scholarship, but he does suggest that theology largely affects one’s vocation at the level of structure and shape. When writing about what might count as Christian art, he says, “[Christian artists] will want their art to display the divine in some way or at least be consistent with Christian values... The Christian life is... a result of structure and aim... and imaginative shaping.”²⁶⁶ On the other hand, he is clear that teaching and research is independent from

²⁶³ Hughes, *The Vocation of a Christian Scholar*, 102.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁶⁵ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 58.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

evangelism, for he writes, “...we can do evangelism and perform acts of compassion and justice when we are not studying and learning.”²⁶⁷

Os Guinness, though he does not fit firmly into the category of Christian scholarship as the above four define it, also locates the distinctiveness of Christian scholarship in the structure of thought, rather than its specific content or conclusions. Christian thinking, for him, is *not* “thinking by Christians,” “thinking about Christian topics,” or “adopting a ‘Christian line’ on every issue.”²⁶⁸ Instead, he writes, “thinking Christianly is thinking by Christians about anything and everything in a consistently Christian *way*—in a *manner* that is shaped, directed, and restrained by the truth of God’s Word and God’s Spirit.”²⁶⁹ Guinness does not offer much more on the substance of distinctively Christian scholarship, but spends time working out the virtues of the practice of scholarship, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Evangelical Christians distinguish themselves from other Christian groups by, among other things, a particularly strong emphasis on the need for *evangelism* – proclamation of the gospel to lead others to faith in Christ. Although Noll endorses the importance of “evangelistic zeal,” he argues in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* that evangelicals labor under a “false disjunction” between the importance of evangelism and the need for careful thinking. He writes, “the cultivation of the mind for Christian reasons does not deny the appropriateness of activism [evangelism]... but it does require activism to make room for study.”²⁷⁰ The authors of the movement responding to Noll all circle around the question of the role of evangelism in

²⁶⁷ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 68.

²⁶⁸ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 135.

²⁶⁹ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 136.

²⁷⁰ Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 249, 245.

Christian thinking, whether or not they agree on the intrinsic goodness of thinking, apart from evangelism. Some of the thinkers – Piper and Moreland – believe that thinking clearly involves evangelism, insofar as learning merely serves as an instrumental means for proclaiming the gospel. Even those, however, who argue for the value of non-instrumental evangelical thinking – Marsden, McGrath, Noll, and others – focus on the importance of recognizing and identifying Christian features of one’s scholarly hermeneutic. Although this second group of scholars continues to emphasize a kind of Christian proclamation, its denial of the need for explicitly Christian content in scholarship constitutes a significant move towards cooperation with mainstream academic scholarly conventions and development towards the kind of “evangelical” thinking that Noll has in mind.

The next chapter will consider a second traditional evangelical distinctive – biblical literalism – to examine each author’s relation to Scottish Common Sense Realism and remaining tendencies of self-confidence from earlier conservative evangelicalism.

Chapter 3: The Style of Evangelical Thinking

In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Mark Noll writes, “for evangelicals who wanted to preserve traditional forms of Christianity without having to appeal to traditional religious authorities, the common sense reasoning of the Scottish Enlightenment... was the answer.”²⁷¹ Although Noll is writing about the eighteenth century, aspects of Scottish Common Sense Realism persisted into twentieth-century evangelicalism in “a particular kind of commitment to objective truth and a particular ‘scientific’ approach to the Bible,” particularly in presuppositionalism.²⁷² Using the “artful dodge” of claiming the incommensurability of “different worldviews,” evangelicals fought contemporary issues ranging from Darwinian evolution to global warming.²⁷³ Echoes of the Enlightenment trust in “common sense” reason, then, continue to rebound down to the present day, as Worthen writes, “[evangelicals] insist upon their own worldview as the only clear window on reality: a worldview in which the faithful Christian can revere the Enlightenment without compromising the authority of the Bible.”²⁷⁴

One of the highest virtues of contemporary scholarship is critical thinking. Given twentieth-century developments in hermeneutics and “critical theory,” more broadly, a community or movement is said to reach a kind of maturity when it can reflect critically on its own contextuality. To the degree that the *scandalon* of evangelical anti-intellectualism has faded, evangelical scholars would presumably demonstrate greater self-awareness and diversity – charity towards difference and also awareness of the necessity of interpretation.

²⁷¹ Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 87.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 83; Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 21.

²⁷³ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 110, 252.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 252.

With this as the picture, the movement responding to the “scandal” seems to constitute a significant development in evangelical thinking. Christian scholarship, as it figures in many of the books, seems to be characterized by an increased tolerance for diversity and humility in thinking and more aware of limits to the perspicacity of knowledge. As Christian thinking takes form in hermeneutics, descriptions of the world may have a kind of ‘fit’ with the being of the world, but do not entail direct correlation of thought or language to reality. A humble hermeneutic leads these thinkers to emphasize the need for both *diversity* and *humility* among thinking Christians, as well as a posture of humility towards alternate accounts of the world that involve non-Christian interpretation.

There remain, however, a few authors, who continue to exhibit what Noll describes as “Enlightenment” tendencies – reliance on an objectivist view of thinking and language in which thought and language directly correlate to the being of the world. As these thinkers – John Piper, J.P. Moreland, and potentially Gene Veith – view thinking as an instrumental constituent of evangelism or spiritual development, reason must be a suitable instrument to help anyone who has access to the “facts” of the Biblical text to understand the gospel. While there are certainly thinkers who retain the self-assurance and defensiveness characteristic of conservative evangelicalism, the vast majority of the authors of the movement encourages humility and pluralism *as distinctively Christian principles* and, therefore, embodies significant development towards mainstream critical scholarship.

“Obviously...”: Christian Thinking as Certainty and Objectivism

As one of those retaining the tendencies of Common Sense Realism, J.P. Moreland echoes the rhetoric of an earlier generation of conservative evangelicals and decries the decline

of confident, clear Christian apologetics that has “drained the church of its boldness.”²⁷⁵ As a philosopher, Moreland’s work includes a direct statement of his answer to the problem of skepticism. He writes,

*Common sense assures us that we all know and have justified beliefs about many things: the external world, morality, the past, mathematics, our own mental life, and the existence of other minds. And while Scripture places an important emphasis on faith, it places an equally important emphasis on things we can, should and do know. Thus Scripture unites with common sense to affirm that there are many examples of knowledge and justified belief for human beings.*²⁷⁶

Many times, as in this passage, Moreland appeals to the “common sense” of various conclusions and criticizes those who view faith as non-rational.²⁷⁷ In his view, the structure of the mind is such that, by nature, it directly correlates to the rational structure of the world, as he writes, “in thought, the mind’s structure conforms to the order of the object of thought.”²⁷⁸

For Moreland, then, the immediacy and clarity of knowledge provides Christians with confident certainty in biblical interpretation and sharing the gospel. In step with the tradition of evangelical “inductive” Bible study, Moreland believes that the content of the gospel is clear to all, so long as one adequately understands the scientific method by which, as in the physical sciences, one can draw veritable theoretical conclusions from the objective facts of the biblical text.²⁷⁹ He says, straightforwardly, “in my view the Holy Spirit does not help the believer understand the meaning of Scripture,” which is “God’s propositional revelation to us.”²⁸⁰ The so-

²⁷⁵ Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, 31.

²⁷⁶ J.P. Moreland & William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 91.

²⁷⁷ Moreland, *Love the Lord Your God With All Your Mind*, 25.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 44-5, 67.

²⁷⁹ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 110.

²⁸⁰ Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 47, 58.

called ‘dark’ passages of Scripture and need for proper theological formation bring him to qualify his correspondence view of knowledge with the presuppositionalist point that disagreement over interpretation simply reveals non-Christian presuppositions at work, as “...the Bible is easily distorted by “untaught (that is, uneducated in Christian theology) and unstable people.”²⁸¹ Moreland puts his own advice to work in the 2012 revised edition of *Love the Lord Your God With All Your Mind* in which he replaces the previous chapters 7, 8, and 9 – thinking in worldview, worship, and vocation, respectively – with three chapters of strict apologetics for the existence of God and “the evidence for Jesus.”²⁸² Moreland makes these changes towards his large goal of helping Christians to “become bold in their witness and attractive in the way they engage others in debate or dialogue.”²⁸³

In more explicit terms, John Piper argues for a common sense epistemology that assumes the direct correlation of language and reality. As he argues, God is unchangeable truth, so “he is a firm, universal never-changing foundation for truth about man and the world and life,” a fact which “creates the possibility of truth,” in that “what he says [the content of the Bible] is the external, objective standard for measuring all things.”²⁸⁴ Piper’s culprit, “relativism,” corrupts God’s intentions by denying the proper correlation of language with reality. He writes, therefore, “... when objective truth vanishes in the fog of relativism, the role of language changes dramatically... It doesn’t submit to objective, external reality; it creates its own reality. It no longer serves to display truth.”²⁸⁵ Thinking in reading is like eating or drinking for Piper – taking

²⁸¹ Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, 45.

²⁸² Moreland, “Preface to the Revised Edition,” *Love the Lord Your God With All Your Mind*, rev. ed., 9.

²⁸³ Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, 31.

²⁸⁴ Piper, *Think*, 96, 105.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

the resources of an external source into oneself – an objective, direct transfer: “Ideas... inside another person’s mind can be transferred through words into your mind.”²⁸⁶ Although such explicit description of knowledge acquisition sounds somewhat mystical, he denies that interpretation involves “mystical experience or creative reconstruction,” and rather affirms that reading is “that astonishing act of recognizing symbols and making connections that enable you to construe meaning.”²⁸⁷

From his emphasis on the clarity and common sense access to the objective truth of the Bible, it follows that certain, direct knowledge of the gospel then can be turned into rational apologetics. He writes confidently, “we are meant to know that the gospel is true and that we are saved, not cross our fingers.”²⁸⁸ In particular, he argues that philosophical relativism – the view, according to Piper, that words do not serve as direct correlates to the being of the world – leads to theology that no longer reflects God’s nature. “Relativism corrupts the high calling of language and turns it into a conspirator in covering up doctrinal defection,” he writes.²⁸⁹ Christians should be careful not to “separate ‘the divine glory’ of Christ from the objective events and facts of the gospel,” the determinate content of biblical revelation.²⁹⁰ Because he believes that “...the Bible gives us the decisive meaning of all things,” and we have direct access to the author’s intention, apologetics that draws the “glory of Christ” from Scripture has a firm, rational foundation clear to anyone.²⁹¹

Like Piper and Moreland, Gene Veith shares a penchant for objectivism and Common Sense Realism, but he also shows more signs of development in tolerance for and promotion of

²⁸⁶ Piper, *Think*, 44.

²⁸⁷ Piper, *Think*, 44.

²⁸⁸ Piper, *Think*, 78.

²⁸⁹ Piper, *Think*, 110.

²⁹⁰ Piper, *Think*, 74-5.

²⁹¹ Piper, *Think*, 190.

diversity in Christian thinking. As noted in the previous chapter, Veith largely answers the problem of difference with an intellectual posture of “defensive against.”²⁹² He writes, “modern Christians too [like Daniel], armed with Scripture, have [his] same power to uphold the truth against all attacks.”²⁹³ In formal classrooms or social settings on University campuses, in his view, the truth is vying for the minds of students who fight not for “prizes that are given men for their running,” as Homer says, but, rather for their very souls.²⁹⁴ Veith argues that Christian defensive tactics primarily involve negative critiques of secular thought, but he also suggests, implicitly, that students ought not to be afraid to make explicit, direct defenses of Christian doctrine. He suggests the following hypothetical: “a college freshman stuttering out the doctrine of the Incarnation in an Ivy League philosophy class may lose the verbal swordplay against a sophisticated and quick-witted professor. But the effectiveness of the testimony does not depend on the skill of its presentation, but only upon the Holy Spirit...”²⁹⁵ At the same time that Veith leans on the mystical power of the Holy Spirit, he also suggests that critiques of non-Christian thought can use “secular” reasoning, and that “it is not always necessary to attack them from an explicitly religious perspective. It may be more effective if religion is left out of it. One can simply unveil the logical contradictions, the contrary evidence, the manifest silliness that these views will usually involve.”²⁹⁶

While Veith’s apologetics reveals the lingering remnants of confident Common Sense Realism, he also argues that Christian thinking is the very ground of intellectual diversity. He

²⁹² cf. James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 214-5.

²⁹³ Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind*, 53.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92-3.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

writes, “I suggest that only Christianity can account for the complexity and open-endedness required for true learning.”²⁹⁷ In Chapter 6, “Traditionalists and Progressives,” Veith makes the claim, provocative for orthodox evangelicals, that Christians can advocate for both the “traditionalist” and “progressive” function of the University – that they can play both a preservative role and a questioning or challenging role.²⁹⁸ A Lutheran himself, he aligns with the substantial steps towards *rapprochement* with Catholicism of the 1990s and 2000s, by conceding that “...traditionalists [Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, *et al.*] will often be the evangelicals’ closest allies” in the academy.²⁹⁹ Christians can see the false premises of many forms of secular knowledge and, therefore, are also well suited for the academic posture of criticism. For him, Christian students and scholars will often have a kind of Socratic presence, being “intellectual gadflies” on the great steed of the modern research University.³⁰⁰ With respect to diversity in the academy, he continues to hold that the Christian way of thinking is “ten times” better than “...than secular relativism as a framework for being open to new ideas.”³⁰¹ Generally, Veith concludes that a “Christian habit of mind combines openness to truth with skepticism. As such, it is an excellent mind-set for the pursuit of knowledge.”³⁰²

²⁹⁷ Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind*, 13.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 69; Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 167-173; and Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, 94-101.

³⁰⁰ Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind*, 74, 145.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 138, 144.

Love Your Enemies

Veith's kind of defensiveness towards non-Christian thought, however, is the exact peril in scholarship that Williams and others consider to be antithetical to Christian thought. Williams writes that, when a group takes on a defensive posture,

*...the group begins to see itself as an outpost of truth in a wilderness of rampant falsehood. The principal activity of such a group is to defend itself against such attacks, and therefore, most of its energy goes into fighting secular culture. The trouble with this defensive mentality is that the love of knowledge for its own sake tends to get lost in the conflict with the enemy... [A Christian community also] can squelch open inquiry... by prizing conformity more than imaginativeness.*³⁰³

In answer, Williams identifies a key virtue of Christian scholarship – genuine care for the “Other,” by which one carefully responds to ideas in their phenomenological integrity, without immediately moving to judgment.³⁰⁴ He writes, “when we read, study, or listen to a talk, our aim is genuinely to understand the other person’s ideas and attempt to see the other’s perspective. If the ego intrudes, no real understanding takes place.”³⁰⁵

To accomplish such a posture of scholarly charity, Williams suggests a number of methods, largely derived from insights in late twentieth century critical theory. While thinking lends a certain degree of “comprehensiveness” of explanation that allows for confidence in one’s faith, the insights of “postmodernism” help Christian scholars to “tolerate diversity” within Christian circles and in the academy, broadly.³⁰⁶ First, Williams suggests that Christian scholars should practice the habit of leaving the huddle and associating “with people outside [their] usual

³⁰³ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 84.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 49, 80.

circle,” who can help to illuminate the blind spots of Christian thought.³⁰⁷ Moreover, he encourages a kind of “prophetic,” “practice-oriented scholarship,” in which Christians use the friction between varied communities to illuminate the need for justice and greater love of others. He writes, “our aims include both the theoretical one of critiquing these social structures in light of the biblical vision of what God desires for us, and the practical one of enunciating particular means by which this vision can become a reality,” all for the sake of “justice.”³⁰⁸

Progressive evangelical Richard Hughes echoes the same value of diversity, and advocates for moving towards the ‘Other’ in love, not defensiveness. Hughes directs his criticisms of and suggestions for Christian thought through the practice of ‘transcending particularities.’ He writes, “we can only *point* to the Reality that is God... we refuse to view those particularities as ends in themselves, and we refuse to erect those particularities as brittle, dogmatic standards.”³⁰⁹ Although scholarship must be ostensive, Hughes does not want Christians to rest from self-critical inquiry, comfortable in their express formulations of theological conclusions. He writes, in resonance with mainstream methods, “...good scholarship is skeptical scholarship. It raises questions and doubts the legitimacy of easy answers.”³¹⁰ Hughes urges evangelical scholars to consider theology and scholarship, broadly, as an “open-ended” pursuit, insofar as finite human minds cannot contain the fullness of God’s being and wisdom in language or thought.

Critical deconstruction must happen, Hughes writes, because of the radical urgency of the gospel mandate to love others. “The plain truth is that Christians are called to take other human

³⁰⁷ Williams, *The Life of the Mind*, 60.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁰⁹ Hughes, *The Vocation of the Christian Scholar*, 24, his emphasis.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

beings seriously... we must listen carefully to their points of view, always asking what we might learn from those who come from... traditions that are different from our own. Listening does not necessarily mean agreement. But listen we must.”³¹¹ The “defensive against” paradigm is nowhere to be found in Hughes, and he, rather, calls Christians to take up the “servant God” paradox, and learn from “other ethnic traditions or people in other parts of the world.”³¹² In theological terms, one can research and teach in humility because of Luther’s insight of “*simul justus et peccator*” by which Christians may seek truth with confidence, but, in doing so, also recognize the limitations of their accounts and interpretations.³¹³ In the classroom, then, a Christian teacher is not the purveyor of a static orthodoxy, but, instead, a Socratic interlocutor focused on “ultimate questions, not on religious answers.”³¹⁴

Sire is something of a puzzle because he, at one turn, seems to lean on the clarity of objective knowledge, and, at another, suggests the need for lightness, courage, and humility in inquiry. He writes, “true intellectuals have a clear view of the panorama of worldviews; this allows them a breadth of perspective and enables them to see every idea in the larger context of new twenty-first-century alternatives. They will understand what the presuppositions of their own ideas really are and grasp as well those of others with whom they engage.”³¹⁵ Importantly, Sire is not suggesting that one’s own ideas are necessarily criticized *via* contextualization, but, rather, he assumes the precondition of specific Christian “presuppositions” and then considers how Christians ought to relate to alternate worldviews. He also, however, celebrates the lightness

³¹¹ Hughes, *The Vocation of the Christian Scholar*, 31.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 38.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

³¹⁵ Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 85

and tentative character of thinking, citing Newman to say that a critical mind “knows and thinks while it knows.”³¹⁶ Like Hughes, Sire holds that the truth only fully subsists in God, so any conclusions must be reached “...with deliberate humility and caution.”³¹⁷

Although retaining traces of stronger objectivism, Sire develops a thorough account of the virtues of courage and humility – virtues that, for him, are antithetical to conservative evangelical self-confidence. Courage for Sire is the strength to be subject to criticism and to wade in pursuit of truth into inquiry that may prove to be wrong.³¹⁸ As he writes, “if our cherished beliefs are false, we do well to get rid of them,” but that process necessarily involves the “pain of change.”³¹⁹ A Christian scholar must not be afraid to, like Socrates, be shown to be wrong, while also maintaining the courage to speak truth without arrogance. Second, Christian scholars ought to work from a posture of humility – a virtue without which “every [other intellectual] virtue becomes a vice.”³²⁰ He writes, “our very assurance that we as Christians are in possession of the truth has been and continues to be a barrier to others’ learning the truth we claim to know.”³²¹ Sire suggests that Christian intellectuals ought to hold in tension the determinate certainty of faith *and* the humble openness of scholarship.

Weary of culture wars, Os Guinness unleashes a sharp critique of the bellicose impulses of evangelical public discourse. In a chapter with subtitles including “Tabloid Truth” and “Truth as Power Play”, he indicts his fellow evangelicals together with the popular media, saying:

³¹⁶ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 100, quoted in Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 54.

³¹⁷ Sire, *Habits of the Mind*, 82, 84.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

*....we have our own Christian forms of the truth-as-power-play... Christian conservatives tend to resort to crusades... In the Bible military metaphors are mostly used in connection with supernatural warfare.... Legal metaphors, by contrast, more commonly refer to people—hearts and minds to be won rather than an enemy to be annihilated... But many Christians have obliterated that distinction. The military has overpowered the legal. Persuasion based on truth is irrelevant; no-hostages-taken, power-play communications is now the name of the game... Christian television is frequently more violent in its rhetoric than its secular counterpart.*³²²

Part of the problem is that Christians, in his view, have downplayed the value of pluralism in Christian thought and the public square. He notes that it is wrong to believe that, “if we think Christianly, we will all think in the same way.”³²³ Instead, Guinness quotes economist John Maynard Keynes’ famous maxim, “Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist,” and expands it to suggest that evangelicals are often hopelessly unaware of lingering historical influences on their thinking. As he writes, “...alien assumptions, old or new, are like a Trojan horse in the city of the believer’s mind,” and Christians must humbly recognize that they cannot identify and remove all such external, non-Christian influences.³²⁴

Guinness, then, like Marsden, endorses the great value of pluralism in thinking and inquiry. At the same time that many of his evangelical colleagues were concerned about the dangers of “relativism,” he writes, “pluralism is not in itself relativism and need not entail it,” and, rather, “...culturally speaking [as opposed to the “technical philosophical doctrine”], pluralism tends to reinforce particularism... just as much as relativism.”³²⁵ Though Guinness does not neglect the difficult struggles with religious freedom in American politics, he notes that evangelicals have benefitted from pluralism and concurrent religious freedom in the United

³²² Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 116-117.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 143.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

States and, therefore, should reconsider impulsive aversion to pluralism. He specifically warns Christian thinkers, however, that pluralism can lead to heresy, though he primarily emphasizes “...many ways are definitely *not* Christian, but no *one* way alone is.”³²⁶

Among the authors who demonstrate significant developments in evangelical tolerance for intellectual diversity, the foremost are the three who consider Christian scholarship to be a *hermeneutic* – McGrath, Marsden, and Noll. First, as McGrath argues that the certainty of Christian faith consists in a general “empirical fit” with reality, rather than a strict correlation, he allows for considerable diversity in Christian conclusions. He writes, “any theory—whether religious, scientific or secular – has a limited capacity to represent the totality of things and will thus find itself in tension with what is experienced of the world.”³²⁷ McGrath’s wider project on science and theology critiques forms of “natural theology” or “natural law” which – like Common Sense Realism – claim to induct direct, necessary conclusions about theology or ethics from empirical knowledge about the world.³²⁸ His version of critical realism focuses, instead, on the “moral and aesthetic ambiguity of nature,” where “a fallen humanity here reflects on a fallen natural world.”³²⁹ He urges Christians practicing apologetics not to fall into the same assumption – once his own – that “our experience of reality can be expressed using ‘clear and distinct’ language.”³³⁰ Instead, apologetics consists in demonstrating a “highly satisfactory degree of

³²⁶ Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 53, 145, emphasis his.

³²⁷ McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect*, 63.

³²⁸ cf. Alister McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) or Alister McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology* (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); for more on evangelical fascination with natural law, cf. Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 246-247.

³²⁹ McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect*, 75.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

consonance” between Christian theological interpretation and experience in the world.³³¹

Christians, he argues, should not offer rational proofs for the propositional content of Christian belief – such as the existence of God – but, instead, should use the light of theology like a lamp to illuminate all of reality.

Marsden, also a full supporter of scholarly pluralism, repeatedly emphasizes the need for humility and self-critical reflection in Christian thinking. He writes, “Christian partisanship and polemic should also be tempered by Christian virtues... our scholarship should be marked not only by firm defenses of the insights we believe we have seen revealed by God, but also by a willingness to be critical of ourselves and our own traditions.”³³² Marsden inveighs against classroom evangelism and, rather, suggests that Christian witness involves “identifying Christian sources in one’s thought.”³³³ Like Marxism, feminism, or other critical methods, Christian scholarship offers a view of the world that does not, necessarily, disclose the full valence of reality. He draws a sharp distinction between scholars who might occasionally identify Christian influences and those who claim “that [their thought] represents *the* Christian view and hence by virtue of divine sanction trumps all other views.”³³⁴ Christians, in his view, ought to participate wholeheartedly in mainstream academic life, and, therefore, must accommodate its pragmatic secularism as much as possible.

As the last book chronologically, Noll’s answer to his own dilemma constitutes an optimistic bookend for significant development in evangelical humility and self-criticism. First and foremost, Noll straightforwardly argues that pride opposes itself to Christian virtue, as he

³³¹ McGrath, *The Passionate Intellect*, 80.

³³² Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 109.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 67.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

says, “the tasks of scholarship are tied so closely to the unearned gift of salvation, [that] there can be no genuine Christian learning that is arrogant, self-justifying, imperious, or callous to the human needs of colleagues, students, and the broader public.”³³⁵ Writing specifically about Christian historical scholarship, Noll argues that it should exhibit “a self-consciously Christian form of chastened realism, with the chastening every bit as serious as the commitment to realism” – realism that both listens carefully to “postmodernist critics” and retains the “potential for grasping actual historical fact.”³³⁶ Reminiscent of the Christian “both/and” in Veith, Noll argues for “doubleness” in Christian analysis that allows Christians “confronting at least some dichotomous intellectual problems, to seek the harmonious acceptance of the dichotomy” more readily than secular scholars, who reject the “doubleness” in theological concepts such as the Incarnation.³³⁷ Noll answers his own earlier criticism by highlighting the dangers of evangelical pride, and, more importantly, showing the important theological basis for diversity in Christian thinking.

In the conclusion of *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Noll writes, “to the extent that the distinctives of evangelicalism are subordinated to the essentials of Christianity, to that extent the chances are greater for the development of Christian intellectual life.”³³⁸ He includes among those distinctives “a literal hermeneutic... [that is,] a ‘scientific’ approach to the verses of Scripture that was molded by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.”³³⁹ If Noll’s proposal is

³³⁵ Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 30.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

³³⁷ Cf. Veith, *Loving God With All Your Mind*, 138; Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 49.

³³⁸ Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 243.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 243.

right – that creative, self-critical evangelical thinking would have to move away from self-confident Common Sense Realism – the movement he incited seems largely to have succeeded. Although John Piper, J.P. Moreland, and possibly Gene Veith, retain vestiges of strict objectivist tendencies, the vast majority of these authors seem to have moved to some form of “critical realism,” where Christian thinking includes a spectrum of diversity and has great potential for charitable interactions with non-Christian thinking.

Conclusion

Now twenty years after the first publication of *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, the “evangelical mind” has changed quite a bit. As with the renewal movement, the general state of evangelical thinking retains vestiges of the separatist tendencies of conservative evangelicalism, but it also evidences significant developments. Evangelicals are participating wholeheartedly in mainstream scholarship in a variety of disciplines at myriad institutions – evangelical, liberal Christian, and secular. Among the many areas of development, new work in epistemology, particularly, should be a source of optimism for those seeking more nuanced or critical theoretical foundations of evangelical intellectual life.³⁴⁰

Evangelical scholars, broadly, are moving beyond traditional objectivist Common Sense Realism and forms of separatist presuppositionalism by incorporating postliberal and postmodern hermeneutical insights. In the public square, however, discourse from evangelicals continues to follow “natural law” reasoning lifted from the Catholic philosophical tradition through the “new natural law theory” of Oxford-trained legal philosopher Robert P. George. Natural law appeals to a similar impulse as that of biblical literalism in earlier debates about inerrancy or in “evidentialist” apologetics – the desire to draw clear conclusions from facts about the “nature” of the world. One can see “natural law” at work, for instance, in the 2009 Manhattan Declaration signed by Evangelicals, Catholics, Orthodox, and others that promoted aspects of conservative social morality.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ For Worthen and Noll’s own assessments of other areas of development in evangelical thinking, cf. Worthen, “The Paradox of the Evangelical Imagination,” *Apostles of Reason*, 241-265 and Noll, “Postscript: How Fares the Evangelical Mind?,” *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, 151-167.

³⁴¹ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 248; “The Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience,” *Manhattan Declaration, Inc.* (public declaration, November 20, 2009), accessed November 25, 2013, http://manhattandeclaration.org/man_dec_resources/Manhattan_Declaration_full_text.pdf; for discussion of evangelicals and natural law, cf. *Natural Law and Evangelical Political Thought*, ed. Jesse Covington, Bryan McGraw and Micah Watson (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013).

The bulk of contemporary evangelical exegetes and philosophers, however, are moving towards some form of “critical realism” or other postmodern hermeneutical frameworks. Former Bishop of Durham, N.T. Wright, an evangelical known for his work in New Testament criticism and early Christianity, writes history through the lens of critical realism first set out in his 1992 *The New Testament and the People of God*.³⁴² Critical realism balances a commitment to both the importance of the subject in the act of interpretation and also the belief that a subject can have actual historical or literary knowledge. Kevin Vanhoozer, a philosopher at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, likewise endorses a form of critical realism – “hermeneutic realism” – as an answer to the hermeneutic challenge of deconstructionism *via* J.L. Austin’s “speech-act” theory.³⁴³

Others, such as James K.A. Smith from Calvin College and Merold Westphal of Fordham University rely on post-Heideggerian hermeneutics, especially from philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, to illustrate a more complicated relationship between pretheoretical “imagination” and explicit, rational thought. Smith is critical of traditional evangelical use of “worldview” thinking, insofar as he thinks that it denies the “affective,” bodily dimension of non-propositional knowledge, and he, in answer, argues for an expanded philosophical anthropology.³⁴⁴ Moreover, Smith serves as the editor for a Church and Postmodern Culture series intended to broaden the audience of scholarly conversations between theology and continental philosophy. Merold Westphal, one of the authors contributing to the series, argues for the centrality of one’s community in the act of interpretation, using extensive hermeneutical tools from Gadamer’s

³⁴² N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 52-53.

³⁴³ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There A Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 31.

³⁴⁴ James K.A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (London, UK: Routledge, 2002), 67-82; see also James K.A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

Truth and Method (1960).³⁴⁵ Although neither Smith nor Westphal directly address their Common Sense Realism evangelical predecessors, each of their epistemological frameworks scales back the degree of realism to be expected in inquiry and emphasizes the role of the subject. Although it is hard to predict the influence of theory on practice, such “chastened” realism, to use Noll’s phrase, provides evangelicals with the kind of humble, theoretical underpinnings that can combat earlier, self-confident epistemologies and is likely to encourage greater cooperation with mainstream scholarship moving forward.

As tendencies associated with separatist conservative evangelicalism fade from prominence, evangelicals continue to engage more fully and self-consciously with contemporary mainstream scholarship. Marsden comments, “although there are a number of rich traditions of Christian thought, interest in self-consciously Christian scholarship has been generated within the evangelical community, which is often assumed to be anti-intellectual.”³⁴⁶

The existence of this movement, however, is somewhat ironic, as one of Mark Noll’s suggestions in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* was that “books with titles like *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* should not preoccupy the time of evangelical authors or readers, except on rare occasions when it might be helpful momentarily to step back and survey the landscape.”³⁴⁷ While his sentiment is understandable, the number and diversity of responses to his thesis indicates, rather, that evangelical thinkers have taken many of his suggestions. Noll’s book impelled a conversation between diverse scholars who advocate for the role of evangelical distinctives in intellectual life, and at the same time engage their tradition critically to suggest

³⁴⁵ Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation?: Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

³⁴⁶ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 114.

³⁴⁷ Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 247.

areas of development in pluralism and cooperation with the mainstream academy. Although these authors, against Noll's advice, continue to focus on the "scandal," their robust conversation largely overcomes the evangelical history of self-confidence and "objectivism," by practicing unity within disagreement and advocating greater engagement with the academic mainstream. Deep disagreements over the intrinsic goodness and distinctive character of Christian thinking remain, but this conversation demonstrates the existence of numerous evangelical scholars seriously examining how to thrive as evangelicals in the academy in the late modern world.

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