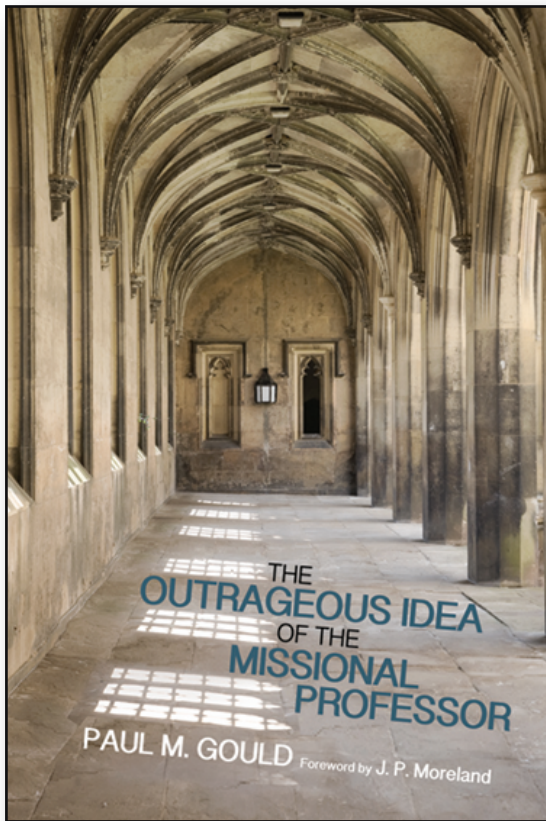




The outrageous idea of this book is that God wants to use professors *as professors* to reach others, transform the academy, and meet the needs of the world. God is on a mission to redeem and restore this fallen world, and as members of one of the most influential institutions in society, Christian professors in the university play an important role in that mission. Becoming a missional professor will require a clear vision of God's heart for the lost as well as humankind's purpose and calling under the banner of Christ, an understanding of the significance of the university as a cultural shaping institution and mission field, and a desire for Christian wholeness in a fragmented world. This idea is outrageous because many Christian professors struggle to live missionally and need a clear vision of such a life as well as role models to lead the way. Many professors already living missional lives need encouragement to "excel still more" (1 Thess 4:10). We all need God's grace and mercy as we try to faithfully follow Christ within the university.

THE OUTRAGEOUS IDEA OF THE MISSIONAL PROFESSOR

PAUL M. GOULD Foreword By J.P. Moreland



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"What does it mean to be a faithful follower of Jesus as a University professor? Paul Gould, in *The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor*, has the boldness to suggest that faithfulness involves taking up the mission of Jesus in the academy. Combining clear analysis and concrete steps, Gould motivates academics to a deeper commitment to that mission."

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—ANDREW H. TROTTER JR., Executive Director, Consortium of Christian Study Centers, Charlottesville, VA

Paul M. Gould is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Christian Apologetics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, TX. He is the editor of *Beyond the Control of God? Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects* and the co-editor of *The Two Tasks of the Christian Scholar: Redeeming the Soul, Redeeming the Mind and Loving God with Your Mind: Essays in Honor of J. P. Moreland*.

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The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor

PAUL M. GOULD

Foreword by J. P. Moreland

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THE OUTRAGEOUS IDEA OF THE MISSIONAL PROFESSOR

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To Sang and Louis,
Missional professors on the way . . .
Friends to a family in need . . .

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Foreword

I was raised in a liberal Methodist church in Kansas City, and never understood much about God and Jesus except that I came to believe that they had something to do with Midwest moral values. So I carted off to the University of Missouri in 1966 to major in chemistry with the hope of getting a PhD in the subject after my undergraduate work. But all that changed for me in 1968 when I was presented with the claims of Christ in a rational, attractive way. It was then that I became his follower in November of that year through the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. Upon graduation in 1970, I turned down a fellowship to do a doctorate in nuclear chemistry at the University of Colorado (though it would have been a noble calling; it just wasn't mine) to join the staff of Crusade. During the eighteen months of being a Christian in my undergraduate days, I had shared my faith with a number of unbelievers. And I got asked a lot of questions I couldn't answer. From 1970–75, I was on Crusade staff in Colorado and Vermont, and the questions and objections continued. I did the best I could to find answers for people, but my academic training was limited. So I left staff to pursue a ThM in theology and an MA and PhD in philosophy with the hope that I could use my training and gifts to win people to Christ, help believers grow, and to show that Christianity should be located deeply within the rational plausibility structure of our culture.

But the task proved harder than I had imagined. During my days on Crusade staff, two things became evident to me. First, the university was the most powerful, influential structure in Western culture. Second, the university professor had a disproportionately large impact on people and society when compared to pastors and people in other professions. Given these two beliefs, it did not take a rocket scientist to conclude that we needed more academically robust, biblically faithful Christian colleges and universities, and we also needed more articulate, outspoken Christian professors on secular university campuses. Thus, my graduate training and

Foreword

subsequent ministry for thirty years after my PhD have centered on contributing to these aims, along with raising the bar among non-“academic” Christians to value more highly the role of the mind in the Christian life.

Well, in light of this, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that many other Christian leaders and thinkers shared my passion and, as a result, things have definitely improved low these many years. The bad news is that the improvement has not been what all of us had hoped it would be. There are several reasons for this, but I am convinced that a central factor is this: We concentrated our efforts on fostering the integration of Christian truth and knowledge claims with truth and knowledge claims in various academic disciplines (the so-called “integration of faith and learning” movement), thinking that instruction in the importance of and approaches to such integration would solve the problem. But there was something missing in our thinking, something that was prior to discussions of integration without which those discussions often remained at the level of intellectual curiosity or a faddish fascination with a new intellectual hobby.

In the book, professor Gould puts his finger on what has been missing—the priority and pervasive importance of emphasizing the centrality of being a missional professor. Indeed, the idea is so radical (though it should not be) that he calls the notion “outrageous.” I won’t spoil the reader’s fun by telling you what a missional professor is. Besides, the idea is so crucial, that there are many, many implications that flow from it, and a forward could not begin to do them justice. But, again, the key implications are drawn, explained, motivated and illustrated in this book.

I have known Paul Gould for almost two decades, and I have traced his journey as a Christian activist, philosopher, disciple of Jesus, and lover of people. And I say before the Lord that I cannot think of someone more qualified to write this book than Paul. He has lived this message for years. It is in his blood.

This is now the go-to book for Christian college presidents, provosts, deans, and faculty. The emphasis on the integration of faith and learning must take a back seat, at least briefly, to allow priority to be given to the issue of being a missional professor and, indeed, a missional institution. And Christian professors on secular campuses should gather into groups and make this the first book they read together.

So get ready to read an outrageous book, and let it fill your mind with vision and your heart with hope and courage.

J. P. Moreland
Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
Biola University
August 2014

Preface

This book has been the result of almost 20 years of campus ministry experience, the last 10 working directly with university professors. As one of the leading cultural shaping institutions in the world, I'm convinced that the university is an incredibly strategic mission field for the gospel. I believe God cares about the ideas and the people that live and work in the academy as well as the students who arrive each year to study. While I myself have now crossed the divide from campus minister to professor, my passion remains to see the resources of the whole campus leveraged and taken to the whole world under the banner of Christ. It is for this reason that I write this book. My hope and prayer is that God will use it to encourage, challenge, and inspire a new movement of professors within the university who passionately connect all that they are and do to the glorious riches of the gospel.

Paul M. Gould
Fort Worth, Texas
August 15, 2014

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This book would never have come to be without the example, as a young Christian and college student, of those older in the faith who loved, disciplined, challenged, and called me to live for something greater than self. Thanks to Rick Jones, Mark Brown, Mike Erre, Roger Hershey, and Stan Wallace. I thank those students with whom I've had the privilege, in turn, to disciple as a campus minister—Andrew Chapin, Baron Luechauer, Greg Thompson, David Clady, and many more. I'm grateful for my years as a campus minister with CRU (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) and specifically, for the ten years serving with Faculty Commons, the faculty ministry of CRU.

Many thanks to *Cultural Encounters* for permission to include portions of my essay "The Consequences of (Some) Ideas: A Review Essay of James Davison Hunter's *To Change the World*" within chapter 7. Thanks also to *Christian Higher Education*, for permission to include a modified version of my "An Essay on Academic Disciplines, Faithfulness, and the Christian Scholar" as chapter 8.

Thanks to Rich McGee, Bill Hager, David Dehuff, Ceil Wilson, Steve Pogue, Corey Miller, and Brad Fulton who all read selected chapters and offered helpful feedback. I give a special thanks to Rick Wade who read and edited the entire manuscript fixing many grammatical and typographical errors. Finally, I thank my loving wife Ethel and our children—Austin, Madeleine, Travis, and Joshua. I write this with the hope that our family will be a missional family and that each of you children will live missional lives in whatever context the Lord calls you to in the future.

The Outrageous Idea

In 1997, George Marsden wrote an important book that documents how attempts to integrate one's faith with one's scholarship are perceived in the secular university (and by some Christian scholars as well) as outrageous.¹ The idea is that it is ludicrous, inappropriate, and even absurd to blend the personal/private/subjective beliefs of a religious academic with the public / openly accessible / objective truths and knowledge of the scholarly enterprise. Marsden expertly argued that there is a place for distinctively Christian views within the secular academy. I concur. Today, the idea of Christian scholarship is not as outrageous as it was when Marsden wrote. Sure, there are those, such as Richard Dawkins and his ilk, who continue to characterize religion and religious folks as delusional, but, by and large, Christianity and Christian scholarship are at least considered somewhat respectable within some, even many, of the academic disciplines.

Today, the truly outrageous idea is that of a *missional* professor. I shall use the term "missional" to describe a specific posture or identity of the Christian professor: a missional professor is one who understands and lives her life in light of God's story and God's mission (the *missio dei*). As Christopher Wright states, "God himself has a mission . . . And as part of that divine mission, God has called into existence a people to participate with God in the accomplishment of that mission. All *our* mission flows from the prior mission of God."² The God of the Bible is a God on a mission to seek and save the lost, to redeem and restore all of creation. Motivated by love, the Father sent Jesus into the world as an atoning sacrifice for sin (1 John 4:9–10). Jesus is a *sent-one*. So too are Jesus' followers: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). As Christians, we are called to be

1. George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.
2. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 24.

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witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8), pointing others to Jesus as the only hope in this sin-shattered, shalom-violated world.

The central outrageous idea of this book, encapsulated in the phrase “missional professor,” is that God wants to use Christian professors *as professors* to reach others (colleagues, administrators, students), play a role in transforming the academy, and meet the needs of the world. I’ll flesh this idea out in more detail in the pages to follow, but first a word on the notion of being a *faithful* follower of Christ as a professor.

What does faithfulness to God look like in this day and age for a Christian professor? Is it regular church attendance? Tithing? Consistent Bible reading? All of these activities are good and ought to be part of the faithful Christian life of a professor, but they don’t get to the heart of the matter. This is why the idea of a *faithful* professor doesn’t sound as outrageous to my ears as does the idea of a *missional* professor. In my mind, they are the same concept. But in my experience working with university professors, these two concepts are often seen as distinct. Most Christian professors deeply desire to be faithful to Christ in their vocation. The problem isn’t a lack of desire. Rather, the problem is a lack of understanding and vision. Many Christian professors and graduate students working in the secular academy have not discovered how to locate their lives firmly within the context of God’s great story as articulated in the Bible. And those Christian professors and graduate students who are living missional lives within the academy undoubtedly could use encouragement and a fresh challenge to “excel still more” (1 Thess 4:10, NASB).

The problem isn’t entirely internal to the Christian scholar. Consider Stanley Fish. In his book *Save the World on Your Own Time*, he argues that the idea of a missional professor is ludicrous and inappropriate:

Remember always what a university is for—the transmission of knowledge and the conferring of analytical skills—and resist the temptation to inflate the importance of what goes on in its precincts . . . Of course one is free to prefer other purposes to the purposes appropriate to the academy, but one is not free to employ the academy’s machinery and resources in the service of those other purposes. If what you really want to do is preach, or organize political rallies, or work for world peace, or minister to the poor and homeless, or counsel troubled youths, you should either engage in those activities after hours and on weekends, or, if part-time is not enough time, you should resign from the academy.³

3. Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time*, 79, 81.

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In Fish's view, the only legitimate role for the professor within the secular university is one of teaching and research, devoid of any moral, religious, or political values or ideologies. But the illusion that a professor leaves her everyday life behind when entering the pristine halls of academia is wrong-headed. There is no such thing as "value neutral" scholarship. Everyone, whether they like it or not, approaches the academic enterprise with a host of presuppositions, values, and religious commitments that are applied—some consciously and explicitly, others unconsciously and implicitly—in the process of teaching and research.

In this book, however, I am not trying to convince the Fishes of the world. Instead, my intended audience is Christian professors (and future professors) working within the secular academy (some who may be inclined to agree with Fish). A secondary audience is those Christian professors working within Christian universities and colleges, all of whom interact with their broader academic discipline and find occasion to interact with their Christian and non-Christian colleagues within the secular university. I shall write with an eye toward my primary audience, but if you find yourself working within a Christian university or college setting, the necessary adjustments to the discussion should be easy enough to make, and I leave it to you, the reader, to do so.

To be a missional professor in the secular university, great *courage* is required. Such a professor is courageous in light of the subtle or not so subtle pressure within the academic community toward conformity in terms of norms, practices, foundational assumptions, and lifestyle. The call to be self-consciously "on mission" within the university requires a boldness to be different—to engage in the scholarly enterprise with one eye toward the gospel and the other toward a lost and needy world.

Moreover, the presence of a missional professor within the secular academy is *startling*. A missional professor draws people to herself, and through herself to Christ. The subtext of her life is not, "Look how great I am," or, "Look how impressive my CV is." Instead it is, "Look how great Christ is." Such a life lived in the secular academy is truly startling and refreshing. The presence of one missional professor within the secular university causes eyebrows to lift, heads to turn, hearts to awaken, consciences to become convicted, and lives to be challenged.

I fear, however, that such a professor is *unusual*, even rare. I'll justify this fear a bit more in a moment. But, if I am right, then the Christian voice and witness within the secular university is weak. If only a scattering of

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missional professors exist within the secular university, genuine transformation of academic cultures and the culture at large will not take place. Those Christian professors who are missional can be written off as an anomaly and largely ignored. Sure, we will win skirmishes. Debates and articles against the latest claims of Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking can satisfy the already convinced. Perhaps we will see a few new converts. But institutional change, where Christianity is seen (once again) as a viable option and the Christian voice within the academy is clear and articulate, will not take place and the Christian witness will be stifled. The idea as well as the embodiment of the idea of a missional professor is outrageous.

I long for a day when the idea of a missional professor is no longer outrageous. What would the secular university look like if missional professors were commonplace? Instead of being an anomaly, easily explained away, the presence of a movement of missional professors both locally (wherever the university can be found) and across academic disciplines (wherever learning can be found) would truly be revolutionary. I write this book as an invitation and challenge for Christian professors to join the revolution.

ISN'T IT ENOUGH JUST TO BE A CHRISTIAN AND A PROFESSOR?

Imagine the apostle Paul visiting America in the twenty-first century. Further, imagine that he has been commissioned by the church to examine the status of Christianity within the American professoriate. What would he find? Perhaps he would write something like the following letter:

Paul, a “sent-one”—sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father. To the church, the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15) in America:

The spirit of the Greek academy is alive and well, just as it was in my day. The amount of knowledge that the university has amassed is amazing. What an incredible God we serve. The God of the molecule! The God of Augustine, Dante, Lewis! The God of trains, planes, and automobiles! Wherever the gospel has taken root, learning has followed. Many of the great discoveries over the centuries were made by Christian scholars who were guided by the conviction that God has created an orderly world. Christians now teach and lead and serve within the many great institutions of learning in the land. Praise be to God! Not surprisingly, I've also found idols within the university and the hearts of those who

The Outrageous Idea

work there, just as I did in Athens (see Acts 17:16). They are not as obvious (not carved in stone at any rate), but they are still present. I shall now summarize my findings (forgive the staleness of my writing style, I've been out of practice for a couple thousand years and am still learning some of the new language).

It is an empirical fact that there are Christian professors in the secular academy. To be sure, there may be fewer at more elite universities, a few more at so-called research universities, more still at liberal arts colleges, and so on. But Christian professors are present in the secular university—teaching undergraduate and graduate courses, conducting high-quality research and serving on committees in their departments and within the university at large. Moreover, Christian professors are not confined to religion and theology departments. They can be found in every academic discipline—from the theoretical to the practical, the sciences to the humanities. Wherever learning is taking place, Christians and Christianity can be found. This brings my heart great joy as I recall my speech in the Areopagus in which I stated, “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). I was quoting a Greek poet to make the point that God is the answer to life's fundamental questions. So, it makes sense to me that Christianity and Christians would be found in each academic discipline, since all knowledge somehow points to our great God.

I have found that many Christian professors in the secular academy view themselves as distinctively and self-consciously Christian. They desire to bring honor to God. They faithfully attend church and raise their families to know Christ. They serve in the church choir and in their children's Sunday school classroom, and participate in a small group within their church. At work, they desire, and often succeed, in being a respected and competent practitioner of their guild. They teach well and make time for students (or at least faithfully hold office hours). They read and sometimes write articles or books that draw connections between their faith and their own academic discipline. They participate in scholarly conferences as members of good standing, and many participate in distinctively Christian scholarly societies as well. They are men and women of character, Christ-like to be sure in moral conviction and practice. There is much to rejoice in as we consider the presence and conviction of many Christian professors within the secular academy.

But why does the church, “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15) not commission Christian professors into service? The university is an incredibly important mission field. Ideas

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are discussed and advanced by professors, and these ideas are often hostile toward Christianity (see my second letter to the Corinthians chapter 10 for more on the importance of ideas). Millions of students and fellow professors study and work at the university each year; many are lost and in need of the Savior. Technologies are being developed in the university that could be used to meet the many needs of the world. Christian professors are strategically placed in one of the most important institutions in your society to be a witness for Christ. But, sadly, there seems to be this great divide between the “secular” and the “sacred”—a divide unfamiliar in my day and age. The result is that often Christian professors have disconnected their jobs (or large parts of their jobs) from their Christianity, no longer measuring their lives in terms of the *progress of the gospel*. And the church supports this split when they don’t affirm and intrinsically value the calling of Christian professors *as professors*. My heart breaks.

May Christian professors have the heart of Jesus, who, after looking at the harassed and helpless crowds, had compassion on them and prayed for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest field (Matt 9:36–38). I end this report with my last words to the church in Rome: “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen (Rom 16:25–27).

What can we learn from this imaginative exercise? If the findings of this imaginary letter are at all close to the actual state of affairs with respect to Christian professors (and graduate students) within the secular academy, and I submit that it is, then there is much to rejoice over and some challenges to consider. The main challenge before us is to live “a joined up life” where work and play, church and family, head and heart and hands all work together to serve God and man under the banner of the gospel. In short, Christian professors ought to be missional professors.

I offer three reasons to justify my claim that we are falling short in this area.⁴ First, *many twenty-first century Christians scarcely see the world from a distinctively Christian perspective*. Instead, our natural patterns of thought, imbibed since we were born and shaped in secular undergraduate

4. Thanks to Nicholas Wolterstorff for helpful comments regarding the first and third reason. See Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 107–8.

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and graduate schools, are those informed by the scientific and/or post-modern worldviews. Hence, we need to constantly remind ourselves of the biblical worldview. It is not second nature.

Second, *the human heart is rebellious and deceitful*. From personal experience, it seems that the propensity of the human heart is to turn toward self. Good intentions, over time, and if we are not careful, turn into ways to advance self-serving agendas; the desire to live faithfully for Christ, over time, and if we are not careful, wanes and needs to constantly be fed or it will be replaced with a desire for self-aggrandizement or self-fulfillment, and so on.

Finally, *while experts within their own particular fields of study, Christian professors often possess a Sunday school level of education when it comes to matters theological and philosophical*. A missional professor, however, must be competent, even well versed, in such matters. Sadly, this is rarely the case, and the result is a patchwork attempt to integrate one's faith with one's scholarly work and an inability to fit the pieces of one's life into God's larger story. Christian professors who are seeking to be faithful witnesses for Christ within the secular academy face immense challenges.

Faithfulness to Christ in this day and age requires savvy, humility, intention, and the community of believers both within and outside the academy. It requires that we live our lives pursuing God's purposes. That task is difficult for most Christians and doubly so for academics who live and breathe within an academic structure that encourages self-promotion and personal accomplishment. May we together seek to live our lives for the glory of God and the love of man as Christian scholars. The result will be revolutionary.

A SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,⁵ Thomas Kuhn describes the history of science in terms of eras of relatively normal science and scientific activities punctuated by paradigm-changing episodes of scientific revolution. A scientific paradigm is "overthrown" when it no longer is able to best accommodate anomalies. Scientific discovery and the uncovering of new phenomena lead to shifts in the way the world is understood: the Ptolemaic paradigm of the universe is overthrown by the heliocentric paradigm; phlogiston theory is abandoned with the discovery of oxygen; caloric

5. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

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theories of heat are replaced with kinetic theories; and so on. As a result, our world (and our view of the world) changes.

Our world has witnessed many revolutions—political, ideological, and religious—over its history. Some revolutions have brought on lasting change while others were short-lived. Some revolutions have had only a local impact while others have been truly global. There is, however, a revolution afoot today that is both global in scope and has the power to change both individual lives as well as society. It is the revolution of the human heart brought on by faith in Jesus. The bent of the human heart is toward self and idolatry. And the only cure for this human condition is Christ. Our world is a world of violence, injustice, and strife. And the only hope for this world is a Savior who redeems and restores. Jesus has called his followers to join with him as agents of change. Imagine a movement of missional professors within every academic discipline and on every secular college and university in the world.

Such a state of affairs would cause, in Kuhn's terminology, a "crisis" of belief with respect to the two dominant stories within the academy and culture at large: scientific naturalism and postmodernism. Evolutionary explanations for religious belief would appear as they are: ad hoc attempts to avoid a godly explanation for any aspect of reality. Postmodernism (in its most extreme articulation) would be revealed as an unlivable and desperate attempt to find meaning in a world that is meaningless apart from God.

The presence of so many anomalies (in the form of missional professors) would cause non-believing professors and students (and society in general) to examine their own beliefs and hearts in light of the gospel of Christ. Listen to the story told by C. S. Lewis of how God moved into his life:

No sooner had I entered the English School than I went to George Gordon's discussion class. And there I made a new friend. The very first words he spoke marked him out from the ten or twelve others who were present; a man after my own heart . . . His name was Nevill Coghill. I soon had the shock of discovering that he—clearly the most intelligent and best-informed man in that class—was a Christian and a thoroughgoing supernaturalist . . . Barfield was beginning to overthrow my chronological snobbery; Coghill gave it another blow . . .

These disturbing factors in Coghill ranged themselves with a wider disturbance which was now threatening my whole earlier outlook.

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All the books were beginning to turn against me . . . George MacDonald had done more to me than any other writer; of course it was a pity he had that bee in his bonnet about Christianity . . . Chesterton had more sense than all the other moderns put together; bating, of course, his Christianity. Johnson was one of the few authors whom I felt I could trust utterly; curiously enough, he had the same kink . . . On the other hand, those writers who did not suffer from religion and with whom in theory my sympathy ought to have been complete—Shaw and Wells and Mill and Gibbon and Voltaire—all seemed a little thin; what as boys we called “tinny” . . . There seemed to be no depth in them. They were too simple. The roughness and density of life did not appear in their books.⁶

Lewis goes on to describe how everywhere he turned God was pursuing, even haunting, him. The most riveting books were written by Christians or those not beholden to atheism. The Christians he met were not unlearned; rather they were fellow students and professors at prestigious institutions of learning such as Oxford and Cambridge.

Eventually, there were too many anomalies to his naturalistic atheism, and Lewis was forced into a crisis of belief:

All over the board my pieces were in the most disadvantageous positions. Soon I could no longer cherish even the illusion that the initiative lay with me. My Adversary began to make His final moves.⁷

Finally, in the quiet of his own room at Magdalen College, in 1929, Lewis bent his knee and surrendered his will to God.

It is instructive that Lewis’s own crisis of belief was brought to a head as he was confronted (and confounded) at every turn by faithful Christians and the profundity of the Christian worldview. Christians had a depth and settledness that caused him to question his own sense of security. Christianity had the ring of truth to it in a way that revealed the “tinniness” of his atheism. Lewis’s life was forever changed and the world is different because of it.

The university is one of the most important and influential institutions in our world. As professors, you play an important role in shaping the lives and thoughts of the world’s future business leaders, educators, entertainers, and writers. As a Christian professor, God has called you to be a witness for

6. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 212–14.

7. *Ibid.*, 216.

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Christ, bringing your expertise to bear on the needs of the world, pointing students, administrators and colleagues to Christ, and involving others in the only revolution that will truly transform a person and society, the revolution of the human heart brought on by Jesus Christ. Some of you are already living missional lives as professors and need encouragement to “excel still more” (1 Thess 4:10, NASB). Many aren’t living missionally and need a clear vision of such a life and role models to lead the way. We all need God’s grace and mercy as we try to faithfully follow Christ. Will you join with God and others in this spiritual revolution of Jesus? On the pages to follow, we’ll consider what such a life looks like.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Do you agree or disagree with Gould that the idea of a missional professor is outrageous—startling and unusual—within the secular university? Why or why not?
2. Discuss the central outrageous idea of this book: God wants to use professors *as professors* to reach others, play a role in transforming the academy, and meet the needs of the world. What aspect of this central idea is the most challenging to you? Which is most exciting to you?
3. Consider Stanley Fish’s quote. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
4. Gould states that being a missional professor requires great courage. Why? He also states that the presence of missional professors in the university is rare. Do you agree or disagree? Can you point to any examples of missional professors that have been a source of encouragement to you?
5. Discuss the fictional letter from the apostle Paul. Do you think this letter is at all close to the truth with respect to Christian professors, the university, and the contemporary church? Why or why not?
6. Gould argues that the main challenge for Christian professors today is to live a “joined up life.” Do you struggle with living such a life as a Christian professor? How so? What has been helpful to you?
7. How is the revolution of Jesus different than other revolutions?

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8. Share your story of how you came to Christ. What was the role of Christians in your journey? What was the role of Christian academics in your journey?

Locating Your Story Within God's Story

“Once upon a time there was an ant. The ant walked onto the road. The ant got run over by a car. The end.”¹

“Ivan Illich was once asked what is the most revolutionary way to change society. Is it violent revolution or is it gradual reform? He gave a careful answer. Neither. If you want to change society, then you must tell an alternative story.”²

I’ve been telling the same story to my kids for years. It always begins with the grand words, “Once upon a time, there were four kids”—I then point to each one—“Austin, Maddy, Travis, and Joshua. They were the Gould kids. One day . . .” And then I launch into my story. The basic structure is composed of four parts. In act 1, the kids are on some adventure—riding horses, exploring a cave, swimming under a waterfall, traveling through a spacetime hole into a parallel universe or hiking in another world (favorites include Narnia, Middle Earth and Perelandra). But then, Billy Bob Thornton and the Bad Guys sneak up on our kids (I don’t know where or how I thought up the name of the bad guys; my apologies to the real Billy Bob Thornton) and try to capture them.

For years now, Billy Bob Thornton and the Bad Guys have been after my kids. A chase ensues (let’s call this part of the story act 2). Then a fight. But always, the Gould kids prevail against the scoundrels. In almost all of my stories, my kids have a few super hero-like powers—they ride horses like the wind, they shoot special cables from their arms (or cable guns) or

1. The very short story I tell my children when they beg for “just one more story” before bedtime.

2. Quote from Costello, *Streets of Hope: finding God in St. Kilda*, 145.

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swinging up among the trees like Tarzan. They are expert fighters and always smarter than their opponents. The story at this point often involves things like mud bombs, slimy maple syrup, and the eventual tying up of Billy Bob Thornton and the Bad Guys. Call the flight and fight scenes act 3.

The final act, act 4, involves Billy Bob Thorton and the Bad Guys being dragged to the police station and put in jail. Usually there is a discovery of some great treasure (Revolutionary War guns stashed in a chest behind a waterfall, gold in another world, an ancient relic of some kind) and, on a few fortunate occasions, the parents (Ethel and I) arrive on the family jet (of course) and see the kids' handiwork.

This is the basic structure of the story I have been telling our kids for years. They love to hear Billy Bob stories. Whenever we visit a new place or meet some new friends, I'll work the scene or people into the story. It doesn't matter where we are—sitting around a campfire on a beautiful summer night or snuggling in bed on a lazy Saturday morning—the kids are always up for a Billy Bob story. Our kids love stories. Even more, they love to be part of the story—the heroes, the good guys, the main actors—in a world of drama, intrigue, real violence, and real hope where the good guys always win (my kids!) and the bad guys always lose.

Have you ever wondered why we are so drawn to stories? Not just kids, but young and old alike? One reason is that stories invite participation. We are created for drama. I believe God made us to live a dramatic—a significant and storied—life. This is why we are drawn to story. Stories pull us out of ourselves and into a larger universe—stretching our imagination and awakening within us a desire for greatness.

Another reason we are drawn to stories is that they reveal. Stories help us get to know each other. They reveal something about the storyteller. Think about it: when two people go on a first date, they don't pull out a list of facts (or CV's) and begin to share them with each other, do they? No, they tell stories to get to know each other. Stories reveal things to us and about us in a way that nothing else can.³

Stories are important. I suggest that we think about the Bible as a story as well. The greatest story ever told. In fact, it is *the* story, the one true story about the world. And like any good story, it invites us to participation and it reveals. The Bible invites us to locate our lives and find meaning

3. Thanks to my friend Mike Erre for these two points about the importance of story. See his *Why the Bible Matters*.

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and purpose within its over-arching story. And the Bible reveals a loving, powerful, good God and a God-bathed world.

Act 1 in the biblical story begins with God and his creative activity. He creates a habitat and then he inhabits the habitat with creatures small and great including one being—man—created in the image of God himself. Act 2 is the fall of man. Man tries to live life apart from God and the results are truly catastrophic. In acts 3 and 4 we learn of God's rescue mission to redeem and restore all of creation. This is the great story of God: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

But the biblical story isn't the only story competing for your allegiance and inviting your participation. There are also the dominant stories of Western culture, what the philosopher Alvin Plantinga calls *perennial naturalism* and *creative anti-realism*.⁴ Perennial naturalism is the grand story of the scientific worldview. In this story, there is no non-natural reality, the fundamental problem in life is one of ignorance, and the way to "salvation," usually understood as mastery over nature, is through progress, a progress made possible by means of technology and science.⁵ All of reality can be understood, and will one day be unified, through science (M-theory, according to the latest suggestion), and our lives (even though determined) need to somehow be made meaningful in a cold, purposeless universe. Creative anti-realism is just the story of postmodernism (at its most extreme). In this story, man's fundamental problem is oppression, and "salvation" is found in self-expression. There is no one over-arching story that explains and unifies all of reality; instead there are little "stories" or "narratives" that give meaning to various individuals or groups of individuals.⁶

So, there is a three-way battle between Christian monotheism, naturalism, and postmodernism. Each story competes for our allegiance. Each story invites participation. Each story invites us to locate our lives and find meaning within its purview. It's easy, if we are not careful, to confess

4. Plantinga, "When Faith and Reason Clash," 16.

5. Lest you doubt that perennial naturalism is a story that invites participation, consider the February 21, 2011, issue of *Time* magazine. On the front cover there is a picture of a human head connected to a computer cable. The cover reads, "2045: The Year Man Becomes Immortal*" and the "*" (also on the front cover) says, "If you believe humans and machines will become one. Welcome to the Singularity movement."

6. Opitz and Melleby summarize the main story-line of perennial naturalism and creative anti-realism respectively in terms of three main acts: matter-ignorance-progress, and culture-oppression-expression in *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness*, 61–2.

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allegiance to the biblical story all the while participating in the naturalistic or postmodern story. Faithfulness to Christ in this day and age requires wisdom, a vision for wholeness, and an understanding of the great story of God so that our lives can be integrated and find meaning within it. In this chapter we'll explore in greater depth the biblical story and draw out some implications for Christian scholars and Christian scholarship in light of this great story of God.

CREATION: THE GOD WHO IS THERE AND ACTS

Recall that the first scene in the biblical story is creation. The biblical drama begins with five important words that shape all that follows: "In the beginning God created" (Gen 1:1). The first thing God does is create a *place*: "the heavens and the earth." But God didn't stop there. Next he creates a *people*: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27).⁷ And finally, God gave his people a *purpose*: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground'" (Gen 1:28). As God beheld his work he proclaimed it good: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

In this opening scene of the biblical story, we learn about God and man. For example, there is one God, not many gods as some of the other creation stories from this time teach, God is before/apart from creation (i.e., God is transcendent), and the creator of all reality distinct from himself. In fact, the phrase "heaven and earth" is meant by the biblical writer to encompass all reality distinct from God: God is creator; all else is creature. Thus, God is sovereign: everything depends on God and God doesn't depend on anything. God alone exists *a se* (is self-existent); everything else exists *ab alio* (through another). Further, we learn in Scripture that this creator God is not absent from the world; rather his presence fills the universe. We live in a God-bathed universe (i.e., God is immanent). As Paul proclaims in Acts, "For in him we live and move and have our being" (17:28). Finally, God is orderly and purposeful (not capricious, random). Listen to the poetic cadence, repeated over and over in the creation account in Genesis: "And God said" . . . "and there was" . . . "God saw that

7. More fully, man was created on the sixth day, after the earth (i.e., the "place") was populated with plants and animals in order to make it suitable for human life.

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it was good.” God has called into being an ordered world—a world full of promise, potentiality, purpose, and design. As Augustine cries out when considering a newborn infant, “you give distinct form to all things and by your law impose order on everything.”⁸

As we read the creation account in Genesis chapter one, we settle into this rhythmic cadence (noted above) until we arrive in verse 26 at day six. The rhythmic cadence is broken: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness’ (1:26). Something new is taking place, something unique. Plants and animals were made “according to their kinds,” but God made humans according to his own kind (his likeness or image). We are like God, and on earth we represent God. As C. S. Lewis once stated, “there are no *ordinary* people.”⁹ Because we are created in God’s image, each person has great dignity. Each human being is literally priceless, so beyond worth that a monetary value cannot be placed on him or her.

Moreover, God created man for a twofold purpose (as seen in Gen 1:28): (1) to protect what has been given, and (2) to be fruitful and multiply. This two-fold purpose only makes sense in light of the fact that man is created in God’s image. Why are we to protect what has been given? Answer: as God’s image bearers, our rule over the earth should parallel or reflect God’s rule over us. Our part in the creation story is to care for the earth and all that is in it: its people, its cultures, and its animals. We are called by God to be stewards of the created order in ways that embody God’s own care and delight in the created order. Why are we to be fruitful and multiply? Does God just want us to multiply like rabbits for the sake of numbers? No, it is because we alone are image bearers. We alone reflect the *glory* of God, and God wants *his glory* to be multiplied. As we fulfill this God-given purpose and reflect his glory, we extend the image of God, and hence his glory, throughout all the earth. As John Piper states, “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”¹⁰ Part of our God-given purpose in life is to extend the reach of worshipers throughout all of creation, so that all people give God glory.

It is important to understand that the first humans did not come into the world flawed. Rather, the first humans originally experienced life as it was meant to be. The Garden of Eden was literally a garden of delights.

8. Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.

9. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 46.

10. John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 11.

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The biblical world for this wholeness that God intends for us is *shalom*. As Cornelius Plantinga states,

Shalom means *universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight*—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, *is the way things ought to be* (italics added).¹¹

We were created to flourish. God wants us to function properly. And the creation account gives us a picture of what human flourishing—shalom—looks like: intimacy with God, harmony with self, others, and the created order as we live out our God-given purposes.

God is there and God acts. This creation account is incredibly subversive with respect to the two other dominant stories of the west. Naturalism tells us that there is no God and man is the product of blind evolutionary forces. Postmodernism says there is no ready-made world. There is no way things are supposed to be, or if there is, we can't know it. Both views present a God-absented world.

What are the implications of the creation story for the Christian scholar? First, because God is creator of all things, all things (including all things known) somehow point to and illuminate the divine. And since knowledge of God is an intrinsic good, in fact the noblest, greatest good of all, then theoretical knowledge is intrinsically good and worthwhile as well. As John Henry Newman, writing in 1873 states:

God “has so implicated Himself with [the creation], and taken it into His very bosom, by His presence in it, His providence over it, His impressions upon it, and His influence through it, that we cannot truly or fully contemplate it without in some aspects contemplating Him.”¹²

As a scholar, patiently look for these connections between the object of your study and God. As a scientist, look for the hand of God in the molecule, in the laws of motion, in the rhythm of a hummingbird's flutter. In literature, listen to the voice of God through the text: How does Jane Austin's Mr. Darcy reflect the heart of God? What does Dante's *Inferno* or *The Divine*

11. Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, 10.

12. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 51.

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Comedy teach us about the justice of God? Maybe the connections aren't always so obvious, but they are there. Go find them and then proclaim them in ways appropriate to your discipline.

Since all knowledge can illuminate the divine, it follows that the pursuit of knowledge is intrinsically worthwhile and valuable. In today's market-driven culture, the university is struggling to justify its existence in any terms other than productivity, efficiency, and usefulness.¹³ But if the pursuit of theoretical knowledge is justified solely based on some non-cognitive benefit, then large parts of the university (most notably the humanities) will continue to struggle to justify their existence. In the biblical account and its shalomic view that all reality is rightly ordered, theoretical *and* (so-called) practical knowledge are both intrinsically valuable—illuminating the divine and fulfilling human purposes.¹⁴

Second, since God is the creator, human life is inherently religious and communal. We have been created by God to respond to him, to love him, to worship him, to delight in him and to enjoy him. Thus, at its core, human life is inherently *religious*. All of human life is lived in response to God in either communion or rebellion. Further, as image-bearers of the triune God, we are essentially *communal*. We were created to live in community with God and with others. Recall Genesis 1:31: all that God made was proclaimed “very good.” But then, in Genesis chapter 2, we find these startling words: “It is not good for man to be alone” (2:18). Think about this for a moment. Adam had the Garden of Eden; he had a guilt-free, shameless relationship with the God of the universe, yet he was lonely. The point is this. We need each other. It is not just, “Jesus is my personal friend and I don't need anyone else.” Don't let your ability to thrive on solitude as a scholar result in isolation both inside and outside the academy.¹⁵ We need the community to thrive; it is how we have been hardwired.

13. This state of affairs is well documented in Donoghue, *The Last Professor*.

14. Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 126–27, asks, “Could it be that [theoretical knowledge] is itself a good thing? Could it be that it is itself a dimension of shalom, a component in human fulfillment? . . . I find it impossible to answer no to this question. To me it seems evident that understanding, comprehension, knowledge, constitutes a fulfillment of our created nature . . . I want to say that a theoretical comprehension of ourselves and of the reality in the midst of which we live—of its unifying structure and its explanatory principles—is a component in the shalom God meant for us. Where knowledge is absent, life is withered.”

15. Donoghue talks about the “scholarly personality” of an academic in which the capacity to thrive on solitude is essential to professional survival in academia. See *The Last Professor*, 19.

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The final implication is related to the second: since man is inherently religious, there is no such thing as neutrality. Recall Paul's speech to the Areopagus in Acts 17. His entry point with the Athenians was his observation that they were very religious. We can rephrase this statement by observing that in the academy, there is no such thing as neutrality. Every discipline has its own control beliefs, faith presuppositions, and axioms (we'll talk more about this in chapter 8). Part of our job as scholars is to understand and expose the faith commitments of each academic discipline so that we can advocate an alternative picture of reality (where needed) based on the biblical vision of reality.

THE FALL: VIOLATION OF SHALOM

Act 2 of the biblical story is the fall of humanity. Things are no longer the way they are supposed to be. Shalom has been violated. Sin, suffering and death have entered the world. It doesn't take much to convince us that something is not right. When we come face to face with evil—embodied either in a terrorist flying a hijacked plane into a building or an earthquake that devastates an entire nation—we have this sense in our gut that this isn't the way the world is supposed to be. Daily we read of wars, famine, disease, disaster, injustice, slavery, genocide, rape, and murder. Time spent researching a topic doesn't always bear fruit (e.g., in the form of a publishable article). Tenure isn't always awarded. The prestigious position or hoped-for research money doesn't materialize. Marriages struggle. Friendships grow cold. Children rebel. Our own hearts are often far from God. This is not the way the world is supposed to be. So, what exactly happened?

As Genesis chapter three opens, the question facing the first couple is, will they fulfill the purpose for which they were made? The answer is a resounding no. God tells Adam and Eve that they should not eat of one tree and that doing so results in death. The scene introduces another character, Satan, in the form of a snake. Satan's strategy is to deceive Adam and Eve by first undercutting God's authority ("You will not surely die," Gen 3:4) and then God's goodness ("For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil," Gen 3:5). Adam and Eve decide to try to meet their needs in their own way, instead of following God, and "fall" from the shalomic state of wholeness, delight, and grace. Because of sin, man no longer enjoys relationship with God, but rather is alienated from him; because of sin, man no longer

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enjoys harmony with others, but experiences strife and murder; because of sin, man no longer enjoys harmony with the created order, but encounters disasters and dangers at every turn. Because of Adam and Eve's original sin, all of humanity is damaged, born into the world in a state of alienation from God and others. Sin defiles every inch of creation. It corrupts our inner lives, our relationships, our work and play, even our rest. We are no longer whole because of the wickedness in our hearts and the injustice of our actions.

There are at least two implications related to the fall for the Christian scholar. First, the received role of the academic is a fallen role; not fallen full stop, but nonetheless fallen. As a university professor, God and man are served. But just as the businessperson does not enter into the profession and uncritically play the received role of the businessperson, so too the Christian academic ought not to enter the academy and uncritically play the received role of the academician. As Nicholas Wolterstorff states, "To serve God faithfully and to serve humanity effectively, one has to critique the received role and do what one can to alter the script."¹⁶ There is no aspect of the university untainted by the fallenness of humanity. The values, norms, and culture of an academic department or discipline are shaped by fallen humans and thus by the dominant stories they embody.

Second, people tend to deny culpable sin and thus misdiagnose the core human problem and solution. In our society, there is room for evil, i.e., bad things that happen to people. But sin, understood as an affront to a holy God, is rarely acknowledged. Hence, the solution to man's problems can be found in education and technology (according to the naturalistic story) or in expression and giving voice to individual causes (in the post-modern story) instead of in repentance and trust in a gracious and personal God. Without culpable sin, there is no need for a Savior. Without an understanding of shalom in terms of a relationship with God (as well as its other dimensions), there is no need to seek forgiveness and restoration. As Christian scholars, we can help, in winsome and appropriate ways, to show how the strife, dissent, and pluralism so characteristic of the academy is ultimately due to the fallenness of man against a personal God.

16. Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom*, 272.

REDEMPTION: THE COMING OF THE KING

From Genesis 12 to Revelation 20, we read about a God on a rescue mission to redeem the enslaved, to save the lost. God calls Abraham to be a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:1–3). Sub-themes and individual scenes in God's redemptive story include the exodus, the nation of Israel, the giving of the Law, monarchy, exile and return, and the prophets. Each event and sub-theme within the Old Testament weaves together a tapestry of the sovereignty and grace of God in the life of his people and sets the stage for the climax of God's rescue mission. The climax is the coming of Christ. In the incarnation, God himself takes on a human nature and enters the created order. Think about this for a moment. It would be like the author of a book taking on the nature of one of its characters and entering into the story—Lewis going to Narnia (as a talking animal, surely) or Tolkien going to Middle Earth (as a Hobbit, undoubtedly).

Motivated by love, God sends Jesus: “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world” (1 John 4:9a). The “good news” is that humanity can be redeemed and shalom can be restored through forgiveness of sins in Christ. “God . . . sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Man (and ultimately all of creation) is redeemed from all the consequences of sin: death, alienation, disintegration, and slavery to his passions. This is how love invaded our planet. This is how the revolution of the human heart began. And this is the great revolution in which God invites our participation.

Further, from Jesus' opening words (in Matt 4:17–19) to his last words (in Acts 1:8), the progress of the gospel, this good news about the Kingdom of God, was foremost on his mind. God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, that through him and his descendents all the nations of the earth would be blessed, finds its fulfillment in Christ. The mechanism, the thing that makes the gospel work, is the death and resurrection of Christ. As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:17, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” After his work on earth was done, Jesus went back to the Father, promising to send a helper, the Holy Spirit, who will give his followers power to proclaim the good news to others (see John 14:26 and Acts 1:8). Thus Jesus inaugurates the present age by commissioning his followers as “sent ones” as well: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). Jesus will return to finish what he has started; the Kingdom in all its fullness will one day be revealed.

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Christians today find themselves living “between the times” of the first and second coming of Christ. This period is sometimes called “the last days” (2 Tim 3:1) and is also called “the age of the spirit” and “the church age.” Moreover, it is the intersection of two ages—the present age and the age to come (both talked about in Matt 12:32). The Kingdom of God is already among us, but it is not yet fully consummated. The question naturally arises, why the delay? Why didn’t Jesus inaugurate his Kingdom in all its fullness and power at his first coming? Or, why doesn’t Jesus return sooner and perfect the Kingdom? The answer is that God has deliberately delayed the return of Jesus so that more people have the chance to hear the gospel and repent before it is too late. In short, we live in an age of *gospel proclamation*. The followers of Jesus, as apprentices of Jesus, proclaim the good news of the forgiveness of sins in Christ to the world and embody the message in life and action.¹⁷ We have been redeemed to be a witness for Christ, to flourish in light of our nature, to embrace the scandal of grace. The question before us then is this: Is it possible to be a faithful follower of Jesus without thinking about or living out one’s life in terms of advancing the gospel? The answer is no. Part of our task as Christian scholars is to join with God in the process of redeeming souls and ushering in, together with the church, shalom and blessing to all the earth.

There are at least two implications for the Christian scholar with respect to the redemption of Christ. First, Jesus’ mission must be ours as well. Just as Jesus was sent by the Father, so too we are sent by the Son. Jesus’ mission of seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10) and of healing the sick and bringing justice to the oppressed (Luke 4:17–21) must be our mission as well. Jesus commanded as much before he ascended to heaven (Matt 28:19). As the philosopher Greg Ganssle states, “It is not enough to integrate Christian *beliefs* with our research, we must integrate all that God calls us to in terms of his redemptive Christian *mission* with all we do as scholars and teachers.”¹⁸ In short, we must live missional lives. Wherever Christ is denied or shalom is violated, the mission of God’s people exists. Thus, missional living is not just about going on a “mission trip” with a church (however important this may be). For professors, the university context is front and center as a mission field, a place where people are in

17. For a good discussion of the over-arching story of Scripture, see Roberts, *God’s Big Picture*. According to Roberts, believers today live within the “Proclaimed Kingdom.”

18. Quoted in Gould, “The Fully Integrated Life of the Christian Scholar,” 39.

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need of redemption and ideas are taught that either further or hinder the progress of the gospel.

Secondly, we must never lose sight of the fact that we need the gospel as much as the lost do. Prior to conversion, our greatest need is the gospel. Once converted, our greatest need is still the gospel. Consider the great truth that “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith” found in Ephesians 2:8. What is interesting is that Paul was writing to believers, not unbelievers. The gospel is not just the way to enter the Kingdom of God; it is also the way of growth and grace in the Kingdom of God. As Tim Keller states,

The gospel is not just the “ABCs” but the “A-to-Z” of the Christian life. The gospel is the way that anything is renewed and transformed by Christ—whether a heart, a relationship, a church, or a community. All our problems come from a lack of orientation to the gospel. Put positively, the gospel transforms our hearts, our thinking and our approach to absolutely everything. The gospel of justifying faith means that while Christians are, in themselves still sinful and sinning, yet in Christ, in God’s sight, they are accepted and righteous. So we can say that we are more wicked than we ever dared believe, but more loved and accepted in Christ than we ever dared hope—at the very same time.¹⁹

RESTORATION: THE MAKING OF ALL THINGS NEW

The climactic vision of the Bible found in Revelation 21 and 22 pulls together all the plotlines and sub-themes found in both the Old and New Testament: all things are renewed/reconciled in Christ (Eph 1:9–10; Col 1:19–20); there will be a renewed heaven and earth (2 Pet 3:13, Rev 21:1); and mankind will once again experience perfect intimacy with God and each other (Rev 21:3–4). God will bring heaven—his presence—to earth. And we will delight in God. Man has gone from a garden (the garden of delights) to a city (Jerusalem). Shalom in all of its dimensions will be fully restored. We will (once again) experience life as it is meant to be—intimacy with God and harmony with self, others, and the created order as man eternally lives out his purposes. This great story, full of promise, intrigue, real violence, and real heroes, ends with all things made new:

19. Keller, *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, 2.

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And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” (Rev 21:3–5)

One final implication for the Christian scholar in light of the restoration of all things is this. Since man’s chief end is shalom (in all its dimensions), the activities of the Christian scholar find further justification in terms of their contribution to the cause of shalom. If part of shalom is being rightly related to reality—possessing true knowledge about God, self and the world—then the pursuit of all knowledge, both theoretical and practical, is justified and worthwhile. Both kinds of knowledge are important and should be pursued as part of our vocation as Christian scholars in service to God and man.

ENTERING GOD’S STORY

As Author, the triune God invites us to join his story. This is why a self-centered life built on the pursuit of prestige, success, money, or power will leave us unfulfilled. When Jesus said we must lose ourselves for his sake in order to find life (Matt 16:25), he was recounting what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have been doing for eternity. A life built on self-interest, self-advancement, and self-preservation is a life contrary to human nature. We were not meant to function with everything and everyone revolving around us. As Tim Keller states, “self-centeredness destroys the fabric of what God has made.”²⁰ We were made to join in to his story, his drama, his dance: “The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance. There is no other way to the happiness for which we were made.”²¹ God is inviting us to this eternal dance as we locate our lives within the great story of God in the Bible. I close this chapter with two practical steps we can take toward finding our places in God’s story.

20. Keller, *The Reason for God*, 227.

21. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 176.

Locating Your Story Within God's Story

First, our response to God begins with *faith*. Faith allows us to enter into the story, right now in the twenty-first century (we'll discuss the virtue of faith in chapter 6). The Bible presents us with an alternative reality—a story of the world that is subversive, running counter to the Western story we imbibe from the world. Faith requires that we step into the story. Faith requires that we act. Faith requires that we join the dance, entering a trust-relationship with the triune God. In doing so, we find out that the story itself is self-validating and self-reinforcing. In fact, Jesus argued as much in John 8:31: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” We must step into it and personally participate in it in order to see its truth most clearly.

Second, we are to follow Jesus. His standard invitation in the New Testament is “follow me,” stated over ninety times. To follow Jesus is to step into the big story of God, to make the story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration our story as well. It is to make Jesus' mission our mission. It is to reorient and restructure our lives to be consistent with the ways of Jesus. It is to live a life of brokenness and humility, broken as Jesus was broken, humble as Jesus is humble, and to allow the grace of God, the music of the gospel, to flow from within our souls to a lost world.

Being a missional professor is not just about “getting the missionary job done.” It is first and foremost about being a certain kind of person. As Christopher Wright states, “If our mission is to share good news [in all its dimensions], we need to be good news people. If we preach a gospel of transformation, we need to show some evidence of what transformation looks like . . . The biblical word . . . ‘holiness’ . . . is as much a part of our missional identity as of our personal sanctification.”²² In short, we need to become whole people. We need to integrate all that we are and do as Christians with all that we are and do as university professors. The gospel is not just something to believe, it is also something to obey. In the next chapter, we will consider what kind of person we ought to be. As we shall see, the Bible is passionately concerned about the character of God's people and their commitment to the God whose mission they are called to share.

22. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 29–30.

The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Think of your favorite story. Why are you drawn to the story? How does the story invite participation? What does the story reveal about the storyteller?
2. Gould suggests that there is a three-way battle between Christian monotheism, naturalism, and postmodernism for your allegiance. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? What is the dominant story of your academic discipline?
3. Discuss the implications for Christian scholarship in light of the doctrine of creation. Do you agree that all truths discovered somehow point back and illuminate the divine? What might this look like in your academic discipline?
4. What is the “received role” of the university professor? In what ways is this received role good and useful? In what ways is it fallen and in need of correction?
5. Gould states that the university is a mission field. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
6. Do you agree that you need the gospel as much as the non-believer? How is the gospel not just the “ABC” but the “A-to-Z” of the Christian life?
7. How can you more fully enter the story of God as a university professor?