

Keynote Speaker - March 1998

George M. Marsden

Recently, I was with Father Charles Curry, the president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. He spoke at the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities' prayer breakfast in Washington, D.C. He gave the church-related college educators both a warning and a challenge. He said first, he warned us of the danger of relegating God to the guest house off campus. He also challenged us. He challenged us to fresh theological insights to a God who is big enough for our greatest expectations.

During Dr. Curry's message that morning, he quoted Dr. Marsden a number of times. I was going to count the number of times because I knew about this occasion and I was excited to hear Dr. Marsden myself, but my appetite was whetted more and more as he began to delve into Dr. Marsden's work and made it a very important part of his message. In fact, I think it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to go to any major gathering of church-related education and not find at least one person who would quote George Marsden at that occasion. We're so pleased that he is here.

He's the author of a dozen books or more, of many chapters in others, articles, lectures, book reviews. He is, as he said a few moments ago, professor of history at the University of Notre Dame. He's taught in the past at Yale University, Calvin College, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Duke University, and lectured in many other universities. He is the president since 1992 of the American Society of Church History. We Nazarenes know him perhaps best, and appreciate him most, for his epochal work, *The Soul of the American University from Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief*. I think I can say with certainty that every one of our college presidents has read that volume, probably all of the academic deans and many, many of the faculty members. Two years ago, I bought six copies of the book and placed it personally in the hands of each one of our General Superintendents, believing that this was the book that I would most like for them to read and know about as they are helping us as we look at Nazarene higher education.

Dr. Marsden, whether it is predestined, as it would be in the reformed faith, or prevenient grace, as we Wesleyans might say it, we believe that tonight is providential and that God will indeed speak to us through you, and we welcome you. And God bless you.

Dr. George Marsden: Thank you very much for that kind introduction and I'm very pleased to be here for the providence of being here. As I've said to a few of you, my encounters with the Church of the Nazarene have up to now been pretty much limited to my friendship with Timothy--the late Timothy Smith, who worked in the

same field that I do and was predecessor of mine in the field and . . . I might say he was predecessor as president of the American Society of Church History, which is a one-year—not since '92—but I was for 1992. And Tim was a wonderful example of the Christian scholar. I have a good friend from another faith tradition who went to Stanford and then to Harvard graduate school, and practically lost his faith. And Tim, I think, was the one thing that kept my friend in the faith, just because there was such a warm pastoral dimension to Tim, as well as this astonishing intellectual powers that he had. So my impressions are very good of Nazarene scholarship and Nazarene models in scholarship.

One of the things that one does as an historian is try to notice things about a culture that are taken for granted in the culture, but which from the point of view of another time would seem peculiar. And the kind of thing that I've done in working in the history of higher education grows out of that kind of observation that if you . . . if people go around and ask people—Americans—about their religious belief, you find out that 90-some percent of them believe in God and over half of them will claim to believe in very traditional sorts of Christian beliefs about the deity of Christ and infallibility of scripture and the importance of the Ten Commandments, etc. And even if one realizes that for a lot of people, this is a fairly low-voltage kind of belief, nonetheless, even if a third of the people in America are serious about those sorts of beliefs, that's a lot of people, and the beliefs that they claim to hold are astonishing beliefs. I mean, if you believe that God created this vast universe—it's unbelievably vast, we can't even comprehend how great it is—and at the same time you believe that God is concerned about the details of each of our lives and of everybody's lives, that's an astonishing kind of claim and one would think that everybody who held that claim would think that that had tremendous implications for everything else that they believed and thought.

Yet, the peculiarity in our culture is that when it comes to education, particularly the higher education—when we're passing on the wisdom of one generation to the next, it's taken pretty much for granted in our culture that one can . . . that if you're learning about the really important things of life, like politics or economics or psychology or how to get along with your neighbor, etc. that those things can be taught without any reference to these religious claims that you make, that the best education in our society is regarded, even my most Christian people, as education that follows the standards of the scientific culture or the literary culture of our day. You give people a good education and then you might add on to it religious belief.

And that's a strange way of treating these Christian beliefs. Stephen Carter talks about the phenomenon as the trivialization of Christian beliefs in our culture. There's plenty of Christian belief around, that people say, you know, Thank the Lord that my 3 point shots are dropping in tonight and people cross themselves in the end zone . . . at Notre Dame this year, we had an encounter where the Navy football team, of all

institutions, after the game have a tradition of praying in the center of the field and the Notre Dame band has a tradition of playing in the center of the field after the game. And there actually were people . . . there was almost a fight . . . that people were pushing each other around because the Navy players wanted to get out there to pray.

So there's plenty of religion around in our society, but we have this trivialization of religion that Carter says is sort of a hobby that you have, that you don't really integrate it with the other things that you think about. And that's often the case, even at religious colleges, that people learn in graduate school that you put your faith in one box and put your learning in another box and although there may be some piety that's expressed, there isn't much done to actually relate the faith to what you're teaching, what you're trying to convey to another generation.

In other words, we . . . even at religious colleges we tend to simply have Christianity as a sort of "add on" and it's a private option that you have, but our education is defined by public standards and the public domain is defined by essentially secular kinds of principles, where we teach sociology or economics or psychology or history or whatever without reference to these religious beliefs. And that's a very strange kind of arrangement, that if you had to explain that to somebody from . . . I'm working on Puritans now, if you had to explain it to some people from the 17th or 18th century, they would find it very curious.

So that kind of phenomenon set the agenda for me as an historian to talk about, well, how did we get from the situation where it used to be—colleges were predominately religious—to this current state of affairs. And I've talked about that historically and I'm not going to talk about the history of it tonight but rather, to talk about the prescription that's implied in that history, that is that what I have argued, and it's in *The Soul of the American University* and then in a more recent book called *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, is that there should be some integration of religious belief, Christian belief or other religious belief—but in our case, Christian belief—should be integration with our academic disciplines, that there should be an integral relationship between these great claims we make about God and what we think about the rest of the world.

Well, that kind of prescription has raised some skepticism in the main stream academy. I'll just read part of one book review of *The Soul of the American University* by Professor Bruce Kuklick who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, an historian. He says this, he says, "It's hard to believe that Marsden actually means what he says and it occurs to me that he has not thought through clearly the claims that he makes. Does he think that at his university, Notre Dame, they teach a Roman Catholic chemistry or that Aryan biology would be sanctioned by his former university, Duke? This carries over into the social sciences and history as well. Would

Calvin College actually devote itself to Presbyterian anthropology or worry that Episcopal psychology should get a hearing? Should historians of the Reformation be primarily identified as Protestant, French, or female? These are serious issues to be confronted but the — that Marsden appears to defend demeans his vision of the university.”

Now this is an interesting critique because I think it spells out many of the major objections to the whole idea of relating faith to scholarship. And I find that many Christian scholars, although they might not have exactly those objections, are at least puzzled by the enterprise. What in the world does it mean to try to relate faith to scholarship, because I think we are programmed in graduate school to keep these things in their separate compartments. That’s one of the first things that the Christian scholar learns in graduate school, that you keep these separate.

So what I want to do tonight is to talk about some of the ways that I see this integration taking place. And before I give some examples, I want to head off some of the objections, such as the ones that Bruce Kuklick suggests, by making some preliminary observations. First of all, Christian perspectives on an academic topic will not change everything about that topic, but they will change some of the things. In this respect, I think it’s helpful in explaining Christian perspectives to use the analogy of the feminist perspectives or gender perspectives. Gender has pretty much come to be accepted as a category in scholarship in the last 30 years or so and although some extravagant claims are made for its importance, I think it’s clear that gender affects some of the things . . . some of the perceptions that people have, in varying significant ways, even though it doesn’t change everything. It doesn’t change the way you do mathematics in saying . . . I don’t think that there is a Christian mathematics or Muslim mathematics or there’s not a Jewish view of photosynthesis, etc.

But it simply fall from that observation that therefore Christian scholarship doesn’t make a difference, or that there isn’t some difference in Christian scholarship, because even though Christian perspectives don’t change everything, they do change some things and they change some very important things. So although there may not be a Roman Catholic view of chemistry, there is a Roman Catholic view of nature and that will affect the context in which you do chemistry and the significance that you give to chemistry. And certainly there is a Catholic view of economic justice and that’s going to affect what one says—or ought to affect what one says about a whole range of topics in the social sciences and the humanities. And although there isn’t a Presbyterian view of anthropology, there certainly are important Christian views of human nature and views of human nature affect all the human sciences. If you believe that humans are fallen creatures, that they are prone to sinfulness, etc., that ought to be making a difference in lots of other things you say about human nature.

So even though Christian perspectives will not change the technical aspects of scholarship, they do change the big picture. They shift the perspective on the big picture. And I'd like to use the image of the . . . the gestalt images like . . . you've seen the duck/rabbit image for instance, where you have a figure that some people will see as a duck and other people will see as a rabbit or you can see them as both, but let's just . . . you say there are two groups of people, one who sees the image as the duck and the other people see it as the rabbit, when they would be doing their technical analysis of the drawing . . . let's say you have the drawing here and you have people come in and they measure what the ratio of white lines to black lines are in the drawing, there could be perfect agreement among all schools of thought about those technical kinds of questions, and mathematical questions about the distances, etc. But when they look at the big picture, what one group of people see as the ears, the other group of people see as the bill, so that the framework in which they do their technical work will be different. And so in sociology, you may use the same techniques that other people use, but you using them in a different framework, which gives it some different significance, or different set of relationships.

Secondly, for Christianity to make a difference, it doesn't mean that a Christian perspective has to be uniquely Christian, and I think that's important to say because a lot of times people will talk about distinctly Christian viewpoints and that's all right to say, but that's interpreted, I think, to mean uniquely Christian viewpoints. And there's no requirement that for Christian faith to make a difference that it has to come to unique conclusions. You can take the feminist analogy again that, let's say, feminists and conservative Christians will agree that pornography is pernicious.

The fact that they agree on that, that they come to the same conclusion about pornography, doesn't mean that the feminist view of that is any less feminist and the same way that the Christian view on that doesn't mean it's any less Christian because somebody else happens to come up with the same argument. And certainly there is, on most relevant points, there's not going to be a big difference between a Christian view and say a Jewish view or a Mormon view of subjects and theists are going to agree on probably 95 or high 90 percent of things, that the really relevant question will be theism as opposed to naturalistic, non-theistic views of reality, so that theists will agree with each other. But even sometimes theists and non-theists will agree on a particular point, but that doesn't make theism any less relevant to getting to that conclusion.

A third preliminary point is that there's no set formula for the Christian perspective. When one talks about Christian perspectives, you're really talking about plural. There are plural Christians, there are many different kinds of Christians and there are many kinds of applications of Christianity to particular disciplines. And there may be disagreements among Christians about many things, but nonetheless, that doesn't mean that Christian perspectives aren't making differences for people, even though

one group of Christians may be pacifists, another group of people may be pro-war or think that we should be well-armed, nonetheless they may be both arguing from Christian perspectives.

So those are three sort of general kinds of provisos to keep in mind in thinking about what difference Christianity will make. It won't change everything but it will change some things, that things . . . you don't have to be uniquely Christian, and third, that there's no one set of Christian perspectives. There's no sort of formula, like old orthodox Marxism or something that you, you know, you pour in your Christian principles and with your discipline, you come up with a group of set answers,

Then, one other preliminary thing that I want to say is that it's often the case that the way Christian perspectives affect scholarship will be in sort of indirect, by indirect means, and by that I mean this: that often the difference will be in, for instance, simply the question, What is worth studying? What subjects are worth my time, and that, if you're a religious sociologist, I think that's well illustrated that you are interested in religious questions that sociology can approach because you see those as significant kinds of questions. And so that, even though your technical work may be the same as the work of other kinds of sociologists, you use the same methods of counting things, and regressions, whatever sociologists do--nonetheless it's in a framework of a certain controlling set of beliefs that shape your scholarship.

And closely related to that is the questions that you ask about the scholarship that . . . if for instance, you ask a question about what's the relationship of say, education to poverty. Does poverty affect education, or lack of education create poverty, or something? That question, for a Christian, could be framed in a particular way that has to do with Christian kinds of sensibilities, or how you should be dealing with poverty. Or you're dealing with family issue, what's the impact of broken families on people's lives? Well, the Christian probably will be dealing with that in a different way than, say, the radical feminist will be dealing with that kind of question. The social techniques they use . . . the sociological techniques they use will be the same, but the framework of asking the questions will control the scholarship, just as in, say, my work on the history of the university is controlled by the question that I'm asking about it. Why did religious universities become secular? And I have an agenda there, even though I try to do the history in the same way as other historians would actually do the technical history.

In another, a third broad way that Christianity can affect scholarship, or ought to be affecting scholarship, has to do with the question of what theories am I willing to accept in my scholarship? In each generation, we're confronted with lots of academic theories and you learn in graduate school various theories about interpreting reality. And these all have philosophical kinds of basis. And the Christian ought to be

critically looking at the theories that are current and saying, Can I accept that consistently with my faith?

For instance, it seems to me that Christians who believe in the authority of scripture ought to have a hard time accepting some of the postmodern views that question the authority of any sort of text, or postmodern views that say that humans really are the creators of reality. It seems to me that's very difficult to reconcile with Christian kinds of beliefs. So you reject those sorts of views. And there are views in the social sciences, I think as well, that presuppose that humans are simply the products of natural social forces and nothing else. So that can make a big difference in determining what school of thought in scholarship one subscribes to. And I think Christians ought to be thinking a lot more about how does my faith relate to the theories of interpretation that I use.

Now let me talk about . . . give a couple of examples . . . types of examples of the difference that I think Christianity ought to be making in scholarship, and the ways it can make a difference, and in teaching. First of all, I think many of the differences have to do with the belief in the doctrine of creation, that the claim that God is the creator of the heaven and the earth is so fundamental to Christianity and to other Judeo-Christian kinds of . . . other monotheistic religions. And one can interpret the history of western thought, I think, in the last century or two as largely the history of the removal of the doctrine of creation from western thought. And the kind of scholarship that we all have been trained in is in scholarship after the removal of that doctrine. If you take creation away, what do you have left as a way of interpreting reality? And that's what we learned.

And so we've all been trained to essentially analyze things in terms of their natural kinds of causes and I think we have to . . . it's important to recognize that there is a legitimate place for that kind of methodological naturalism, that is, one can analyze things in terms of their observable causes and social scientists do that all the time. You're looking for a certain effect in the observable kinds of causes that can be measured, and that sort of technical use of natural causes and use of science, is perfectly legitimate. But that has to be distinguished from naturalism as a world view and it's characteristic of our century that people make the jump from saying natural scientific methods of analysis are the most effective kind of analysis for a certain kind of question to saying that the highest way of understanding reality is through a natural scientific model.

So, in the natural sciences themselves, you get physicists who begin to make . . . particularly after they win the Nobel Prize or something like that, they begin to make all sorts of claims about the nature of reality. There was the series by Carl Sagan where it started out saying that the universe or the cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be, by which he meant the observable reality is all there really is, and

failed to mention that that was not a conclusion of scientific investigation, but rather the premise of scientific investigation, that science simply is defined as observation of natural causes. And then you say natural phenomena is all we have in the universe but it's a circular kind of argument.

Well, Christians need to be challenging such thinking, and particularly when natural scientists step out of their role of being, say physicists and they become metaphysicians. They get into the field of philosophy and talk about what happened before the Big Bang, etc. That needs to be challenged, that there is a world view behind natural science and that one can revere natural science as a way . . . as a method of understanding things but . . .

. . . and the social sciences, I think, is one of the areas where it's particularly important because in those fields, the excluding of theism means that humans have to be regarded as the products of purely natural causes. If you exclude God from the picture, as modern thought has, well then what's left? Well, the next best explanation is we're simply the products of not only natural biological evolution, but of social evolution. And modern sociology is based on social evolutionary kinds of principles that are very effective principles as a methodology of understanding cause and effect, etc. but also carry with them very often a world view of saying, That's all there is, that the social evolution of things is the essential dimension of that.

And that's particularly, I think, true of . . . important for Christians with respect to questions of morality, that if you remove God from your intellectual picture, then the best way that's left to explain morality is through its social functions, that you see different cultures develop different moral systems for the particular uses of that culture. And it follows from that, if you follow that consistently, that then all moral systems are relatively good in relation to their cultures and moral systems . . . that you can't really make a judgment that one moral system is better than another.

There was an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* last fall by a teacher at a community college who was trying to get students to talk about a short story that involved human cannibalism—or cannibalism. And the students would not condemn the cannibalism. In their view, it was sort of, well, who's to say? I mean, some people are cannibals and other people aren't. And we have a culture that has taught tolerance that all morals are the same. I think you can see this with the current White House fiasco, that people are simply unwilling to make judgments about other people. That's one moral value that we've learned and I think it grows out of this idea that moral judgments are essentially functional and if you can understand them functionally, then they all become essentially equal. So that we have a generation of people who are sort of moral pygmies, who are kind of immobilized by this inability to make to judgments.

Whereas, if you put God into your picture, then although you can still analyze the social causes of morality, and the social functions of morality just as well as the next social analyst can, you can see how they function and, you know, see what they're used for . . . power and this, that and the next thing . . . nonetheless, you're doing that in a framework of saying, Not all moral systems are equal, that some are closer to what's right, what's ordained by God, than others. So just understanding their functions doesn't give you a complete explanation. Some things are simply wrong. And even though Christians may disagree among themselves about these moral judgments, as for instance, the case of . . . let's say Mennonites who say that warfare is always wrong and some other Christians who believe in the just war theory and the like, and other Christians who tend to be militarists and the like, nonetheless, each of those groups will be working from some sort of Christian principles.

I mean, they all may believe that Christians ought to be peacemakers. Some may believe the best way to be peacemakers is to be armed to the teeth and other people think the best way to be peacemakers is to be disarmed. But then they are not arguing about the moral principle of being peacemakers, they're arguing about how do you get from here to there. So the point is, Christians, even when they disagree about the moral conclusions, still the fact that they have God in the picture changes the picture because they at least agree that there is a right and a wrong to be argued about. And in our society, that's the problem, that lots of the students that we're getting or constituencies are being trained to accept social interpretation that really relativize morality.

I think that sort of emphasis particularly is a point at which we can intersect very well with the mainstream academy and with mainstream education and with the larger society, because in the mainstream academy, for instance, I think it's often the case that people have very strong opinions about what is right and wrong in certain areas. There are certain areas where they're unwilling to make judgments, there are other areas in which they're very moralistic and judgmental. So, for instance, in academia, people believe very strongly that there ought to be equal treatment for women, for minorities, etc. which are good things to believe but they don't have any grounds for these beliefs that they feel so strongly about.

A couple years ago, there was another article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by an anthropologist and she was agonizing over the fact that she was studying the African cultures and she was running into cases where the subjects that she was studying were engaged in racial genocide or female circumcision, which she found very offensive, etc. but she was trained with the westerner's academic question of what authority do we westerners have to impose our concept of universal rights on the rest of humanity. Could she, as a social scientist, jump in and say, this is wrong? And she didn't really have any way to resolve that question intellectually though her

instinct was to say she ought to simply forget about being a scientist and say what she thought was wrong when she saw it.

So I think that's often a dilemma for modern academia, that people may have strong moral opinions but not much basis for it. There's another example, a book that came out a couple of years ago called *Freedom and Authority*, which was sponsored by Amnesty, International, and they were asking postmodern scholars, how can you talk about the concept of human rights if you're defending human rights around the world, if the whole concept of being human has been deconstructed and western ideas about rights have been deconstructed? How can you talk about human rights? And these scholars were, you know, standing on their heads, etc. to try to answer that dilemma, but it's really hard to know how do you talk about any universal rights in the postmodern world where things are relativized?

So it seems to me academia, and much of our culture, is in this dilemma where people still have a certain set of moral things that they will feel very strongly about but they have very little in the line of resources of how to get from here to there. How do we get to the conclusions that we hold from a nontheistic kind of starting point, which only leaves you social evolution as a way of explaining morality?

Another area where I think the doctrine of creation can make a big difference has to do with the debates about modernism, postmodernism, and epistemology, questions about how do we know this, or how do we know that, which I'm not going to go into in any detail. But it does seem to me that the current situation is an interesting one for Christians, that postmodern scholars have successfully often challenged some of the assumptions of the old objectivism, the scientism that I think was prevalent 30 or 40 years ago. When I first started college in the 1950s. I think scientism was much stronger then than it is today. And postmodernists and people like Thomas Kune, etc. have undermined some of that faith, but then . . . and from a Christian point of view, that's a good thing . . . but then postmodernists have lurched to the other extreme of relativizing reality by making everything into a sort of ad hoc social construction.

And I think one good observation about this situation was made by a theologian, Diogenes Allen, who points out that the old scientific modernism and postmodernism are really two parts of the same outlook, that they share two essential assumptions of contemporary thought. And that is a belief in a self-contained universe, that there's nothing more than what you see, and a belief in unlimited human freedom, that those are the . . . Allen says, are the two pillars of 20th century thought and both the old liberal science objectivists and the postmodernists believe in those two things—a self-contained universe and in human freedom. And I think Christians who believe that God created reality and created the human mind can view these kinds of questions from a different perspective.

And again, Christian philosophers aren't always going to agree exactly what the implications of believing in God's creation will be for epistemological questions. But the point is, a set of questions are different if you put God into the picture, that the whole question of what can the human mind understand, can we get an objective reality, changes if you believe that God has created us and created the rest of the world. Well, that for instance means that you can entertain seriously the possibility that our perceptions somehow relate to what's actually there, though from a Christian perspective, you might also want to say that since we're fallen creatures that our perspectives are limited, but nonetheless, you're not going to lurch into a complete postmodern kind of relativism.

A third area in which I think a belief in God or creation will have a big impact on our scholarship or our way we address our culture has to do with the relationship to the contemporary view of what I would call the transcendent self. One of the traits of modern thought, modern culture, is the absolutization of humanity and you can see what's happened, that if God is taken out of the intellectual picture, then humans get . . . the importance of humans get inflated because humans are relatively filling up so much larger percentage of the picture. If you keep God in your intellectual picture, then even though you may regard humans as significant, you're not going to regard them as ultimate because they're always subordinate to God. So Christians can affirm human significance without getting it out of bounds. I like Pascal, who suggests that humans are both the crown of creation and the scum of the earth, that it's that paradoxical view—realistic view of humans that I think the Christians can bring to their study of human behavior, that you're not saying they're all bad but you're not saying they're all good either. They work within limits.

And that should, I think, transform Christian scholars into dissenters from many of the views that are taken for granted in the academy today, and should make them critical of . . . a lot of the views that you find, particularly in the arts and literature and humanities, etc. that emphasize human freedom and creativity as supreme values, that creativity justifies anything, and one wants to say that the Christian perspective is that even though creativity is a wonderful sort of gift from God, that creativity works best within limits, that there have to be limits and one is understanding humans as essentially limited beings. And in Christian colleges, that should be one of the major lessons being conveyed to people. You can't just do anything you want, or the whole American idea, you can be anything you want . . . Every time . . . the Olympics or whatever, you can be anything you want. Well, that's not exactly true. I mean, I can't be a concert pianist. I've worked at it for 50 years or so and it's not going to happen, I can barely play hymns, but it's not because the will isn't there.

And I think you can see this celebration, this absolutization of the self, has all sorts of implications in popular culture that's a subject that students are very much aware

of and being shaped by, and provides inroads for critiques that can be effective, that you know, if you look at MTV, for instance, creativity doesn't have any limits and anything goes. But it also leads to a terrible cynicism that's part of our culture and I think, just teaching a history course, that you talk about the jazz age, etc., I think you could call the 1990s the jaded age. That really characterizes our culture today, that there's such a celebration of, you know, anything goes and just being a human justifies whatever you want to do—or freedom justifies everything.

I think scholars from all sorts of traditions might make critiques of popular culture along that line, but if you're doing it from a Christian perspective, then one can see it as part of a pattern of human's tendency to create alternate religions, religions that celebrate the self. I was just reading today of using it in a course . . . Paul book, *Psychology as Religion*, which is a very strong critique of just this tendency in much of psychology to say that self awareness and self development is an absolute and to turn the development of one's self into kind of a religious ideal.

There's also the Augustinian theme that's closely related of critiquing the idols of the age, the tendency that's part of human culture to take something that's good and to absolutize it and turn it into something that functions as a quasi-religion, so that there's all sorts of isms today that are of that sort. Nationalism is taking faith in the nation, which is essentially an all-right thing but absolutizing it—or socialism, liberalism, individualism, etc. And Christian scholars should be criticizing these idols of the age. I think a good sociological example is the work of Robert Withnow, for instance, his analysis of American materialism or the way Americans spend their money. Well, that's a set of questions that are being conditioned by his Christian commitments and even though his sociology is just like the sociology other people use, the questions are being shaped by an implicit critique of some of the ways of some of the things that are shaping American culture. And I think there's a lot of room in our scholarship for using scientific techniques to be really critical of things that are taken for granted in a culture.

And I think we also need to be alerting our students and other Christians to the dangers of Christians themselves absolutizing aspects of the culture in the name of Christ, that the Christian faith is constantly being entangled with some of the idols of the age and sanctifying the idols of the age and we need to be warning people of the danger of using faith as a way of celebrating the self or celebrating material values and material gains, etc. That's constantly been a danger for Christians throughout the ages to endorse the culture, or baptize the culture, with Christian belief. And so we have to be teaching students that the human heart is deceitful and we have to be self-critical as well as critical of the other more obvious idols around us.

And for that reason, I want to emphasize in closing that I think one of the major themes in Christian scholarship should be humility, that it's very important, I think,

for Christians to be thinking hard about what's the relationship between Christian truth and my academic discipline, and humility should not sort of undercut that enterprise. But nonetheless, I think one can relate Christian faith to the discipline in a humble sort of way, and I think it's crucial for Christian scholars to exemplify Christian kinds of virtues as personal representatives of Christ on earth. And rather than scholarship being something that's used to inflate your ego, that there has to be an emphasis that it's for the purpose of serving people, for helping people.

And so being a Christian scholar is first of all a spiritual condition and one that should be exemplified in the loving way that Christians deal with both each other and with other people. People are not usually convinced of Christianity through arguments, though good argument in good scholarship, I think, is essential, but usually most of us are convinced of things through the people who present them as much as by the arguments. We all can remember revered teachers, etc. that you simply come to respect everything they say because you respect the person. And I think that should be the model for the Christian scholar.

There's a passage in Thomas Kune in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* where he says that people are converted from one scientific paradigm to another paradigm not by the argument, because they can't really get inside the other system or understand it and they'll say, rather, that, I don't know what those people are doing. I can't understand their arguments but there's something about what they're doing that really works. And that's what attracts me to this paradigm. And I think there's an analogy there to Christian scholarship, that ultimately it's not simply that you do the scholarship well—though as I said, I think that's essential—but that other people should be looking and saying, there's something about that community that works, that this is attractive and I think, from what I can gather, probably the Nazarene schools are doing a pretty good job in that direction.

So thank you very much.