

Challenges in Christian Pedagogy: Competing Orthodoxies in the College Classroom

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Abstract

This exploratory paper examines the dynamics and potential tensions that unfold on Christian college campuses when students encounter Christian pedagogy simultaneously with high academic, scientific, and theoretical standards. The discussion begins by identifying challenges students and professors face as institutional religious values confront science, all while navigating a culture that challenges the institution's ability to be both religious and scholarly. Then the article provides a model that probes the intersection of both the traditional Christian student and the non-traditional Christian student with both an institution's academic and faith-based curriculum. Finally, the model provides a typology of students that result from the relation between student and pedagogy.

Keywords: Christian pedagogy, competing orthodoxies, traditional student, non-traditional student, academic integrity, mission statement

Recently, in a Sociology of Family class at Covenant College, I introduced the family system concept of polyamory, which is a family structure consisting of a multiple-person partnership. More specifically, Elisabeth Sheff (2016) describes polyamory as consensual and emotionally intimate non-monogamous relationships in which both men and women can negotiate to have multiple partners. According to Haritown, Lin, and Kleese (2006:515), "polyamory describes a form of relationship where it is possible, valid and worthwhile to maintain (usually long-term) intimate and sexual relationships with multiple partners simultaneously." Most Sociology of Family courses discuss monogamy, polygamy, polygyny, and polyandry, but, as I discovered, polyamory was a novel concept for some of the students in the class. I was interested in the opinions that the students might have about such a family system,

so I showed the students a brief video¹ of a polyamorous family system to stimulate a conversation. Keep in mind that Covenant College's stance on marriage is one male and one female wed for life under the blessing of God. This is Covenant's Biblical, theological, confessional, and social stance on marriage, as is the case for most Christian colleges and universities. The reaction to the video I received from students was a mix of confusion, disgust, intrigue, and sympathy. However, it was the reaction of one student who descended upon me in my office after the class that I remember most distinctly. His statement to me was, "how could I possibly show such a sinful video in class." By showing this video, I had clearly offended him, and, in his eyes, Covenant College, but more importantly, I had offended God. Ironically, this student had been offended by viewing this video in a Christian classroom setting. But presumably this same student views similar videos in the world of Netflix[®], Fortnite[®], and YouTube[®] and suffers no offense whatsoever.

This tension that can occur between student and professor is not unique to Covenant College. Different Christian colleges have various orthodoxies that generate this tension as well. Hence, the question that arose in my mind was how do I, as a Christian sociology professor teaching in a Christian liberal arts setting, impart academic knowledge without offending the Gospel (and its student adherents), and without transgressing the covenant I made with Covenant while remaining faithful to my academic discipline? Further, how do I discern my call as a professor not only to talk of the things of scripture and theology, but also to discuss sociological concepts that are often bereft of spiritual depth and breadth? Scripture speaks to this dilemma when it beseeches the Christian professor "to live in but not of the world" (John 15:19, John 17:14-16, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24). Herein lies the contest.

The Challenge

Christian professors in Christian institutions of higher Christian education face this daunting challenge on three fronts. First, the institution obligates itself and its faculty to remain true to their institution's Christ-calling. For example, the mission of Covenant College (2020) is "to explore and express the preeminence of Jesus Christ in all things. We educate Christians to engage culture and cultures, to examine and unfold creation, and to pursue biblical justice and mercy in community." Covenant College aspires to prepare its students to encounter the world both academically and spiritually.

Wheaton College (2020) has a similar mission statement to that of Covenant College, devoting itself to prepare the student not only academically, but also to equip the student spiritually to encounter the world. Wheaton's mission statement states, "Wheaton serves Jesus

¹ The video was presented by reporter Terry Moran of ABC News on primetime *One Mom, Two Dads, and a Baby* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFbwydevo2o>

Christ and advances His Kingdom through excellence in liberal arts and graduate programs that educate the whole person to build the church and benefit society worldwide.”

Likewise, Calvin University (2020) prepares students to face the world. Their mission statement is: “We envision Calvin University as a trusted partner for learning across religious and cultural differences and throughout the academy, the church, and the world. Calvin University will be animated by a Reformed Christian faith that seeks understanding and promotes the welfare of the city and the healing of the world.”

As a final example, Montreat College (2020) echoes the above mission statements of both the academic and spiritual formation of its students when it states that “Montreat College is an independent, Christ-centered, liberal arts institution that educates students through intellectual inquiry, spiritual formation, and preparation for calling and career, all to impact the world for Jesus Christ.” In sum, all the mission statements mentioned above state the institutions’ desire to groom its students to express Christ into the world via their occupation or *sitz im leben* (situation or setting in life), hence revealing Christ to culture.

Second, the institution obligates itself and its faculty to present a rigorous academic agenda for its students so that each student can participate in the marketplace of the world. In addition to spiritual maturity, the mission statements recorded above stress the importance of academic rigor as well. Yet, this can be a cumbersome task for a faculty member as he or she endeavors to remain true to all things theological and all things academic. For example, in a class at Covenant College entitled Christ and Culture, a colleague of mine addressed the issue of immigration. Dr. Matt Vos (2019) crafted a wonderful lecture expressing a political account of immigration, plus a moral, social, and Biblical response to the immigration quagmire in which the United States currently finds itself. The counter response to the lecture by the students was one of extremes. Some students critiqued the lecture for not being empathetic to all migrants (open all the borders and allow a free flow of peoples in and out, because this is what Jesus would do). Other students critiqued the lecture contrarily, advocating the building of walls so enormous (both materially and non-materially) that everyone who is not a “true American” would be kept out. Drifting between these extremes were positions such as “if the immigrant enters legally then we ought to be open to them.” Or “what skills does the immigrant have that they can offer to our country that would enhance our way of life?” One student stated that Vos did not do his due diligence in preparation, as he did not fully define the concept “immigrant” (legal, illegal, temporary, visa, student, refugee, etc.), though the allotted time for the lecture was only 50 minutes. Another student said Vos was “too political and less Jesus-like.”

Obviously, Vos stimulated a varied response. However, is this not the point of academia? Vos presented a rigorous academic platform including statistics, personal anecdotes (Vos has three adopted children born in countries outside of the U.S.), and theoretical plus theological perspectives. On one hand, some students thought Vos was not academic enough; on the other hand, some thought Vos was not spiritual enough. In sum, Vos attempted to

remain true to the Gospel and to the mission statement of Covenant College while presenting material that may have challenged certain theological philosophies. This was a difficult, if not ominous task. This type of experience may not be uncommon for most professors at Christian institutions of higher education as they remain true to academic integrity.

Finally, the institution obligates itself and its faculty to confront a culture that continually batters the institution as well as the student. Culture is pervasive both positively and negatively. Positively, culture provides numerous wonderful tools that can be incorporated into Christian academia. Material goods such as computers, projectors, and smart classrooms bring a technological culture into a spiritual atmosphere. Further, non-material goods such as political points of view, a denominational theology, ethnic values, prejudices, social media manifestos, and so on bring cultural ideologies that may clash with a particular establishment's institutional and pedagogical posture, yet provide platforms of discussion to allow Christian paradigms an opportunity to reveal cultural shortcomings.

Negatively, the things of culture press in on the things of Christ and, further, the things of culture compel the things of Christ to change for the sake of a more politically correct, compliant, and accommodating co-existence. Culture constrains a Christian college to cease being offensive and climb on board the peace train of cultural acquiescence. For example, Covenant College does not participate in athletic activities on the Sabbath. This is a theological position holding to the fourth commandment in scripture, "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy" (May & Metzger 1977:93). According to the Aquila Report (2017), on one occasion Covenant College's tennis team did not participate in a tennis match because it was scheduled on a Sunday. The USA South Athletic Conference (NCAA Division 3) was unwilling to rearrange the schedule to accommodate Covenant College, hence, the match was forfeited. Culture thwarted a tennis match due to a spiritual stance. Both culture and Christian theology held firm.²

Hence, as demonstrated pragmatically, the small Christian college (as stated in the mission statements above) asks, educates, and prepares its students, at its core, to be offensive. The small Christian college implores its students to contend with culture by asking culture to think, behave, and consider the principles and practices of the Christian institution. In other words, the Christian college positions its students to be *offensive* rather than *defensive* (albeit, there is a place for an apologetic). Refusing to play the tennis match on the Sabbath was not defensive, but offensive. An institutional statement was declared at the cost of a tennis match, but to the benefit of glorifying the Lord. Some student members took issue with not being able to play the match. Others applauded the decision. Either way, obedience to God quarreled with culture, as the world was watched.

² According to Tim Sceggel, Athletic Director of Covenant College, the USA South Conference currently modifies its athletic schedule to accommodate Christian colleges that observe the Sabbath.

So, how does a Christian college persist in its theological agenda, yet maintain academic veracity, while confronting a culture that increasingly desires to tear it down? To address this challenge, one must consider two potential hurdles: one from outside the institution, and the other from within. First, in many cases the outside world does not understand the purpose of a Christian institution. How can the institution remain academically rigorous in scientific disciplines and maintain the “hocus-pocus” of religion? The two do not mix well, says the outside world. As a result, the Christian institution may not be taken seriously by the outside secular world. The outside world may even see a Christian institution taking on certain cult-like behaviors. For example, currently at Covenant College, the Presbyterian Church in America’s (PCA) flagship institution of higher education, no women serve on the board of trustees. To the outside world, this seems narrow-minded, judgmental, and obtuse.

However, the outside world is not aware and probably will not read the scriptural, doctrinal, & theological stance of the PCA on this particular issue. The challenge of Covenant, and other Christian colleges and universities, is to preserve a theology while dodging barbs from those outside its walls. Often the out-group (society) cry for their brand of justice and political correctness while demanding that the in-group (the Christian college) change for the betterment of the world. The current storm that is battering Christian institutions, and will continue to assault these institutions moving forward, will demand change. Consequently, the outside pressures may enforce inside adjustments with regard to the availability of federal financial aid and scholarships for students, the social and athletic cold shoulder from other colleges (such as colleges that do not play sports on the Sabbath), and, possibly, a decrease in the number of students matriculating to the college because of lower levels of church attendance and religious affiliation.³ Students may care less about a Christian liberal arts degree as their religiosity wanes. These potential impediments may be made manifest as a result of an institution’s desire to remain true to its calling.

The second hurdle is that in many cases the inside world of a Christian institution struggles with asserting Christian dogma while facing academic disciplines that argue against the way of the Christian. One familiar debate is that of Creation *ex-nihilo* versus evolution (Larson 1997).⁴ Christian professors of biology hold fast to creation by God *out of nothing*, yet

³ PEW research reports that “the religious landscape of the United States continues to change at a rapid clip.” PEW states that “there is a wide gap between older Americans (Baby Boomers and members of the Silent Generation) and Millennials in their levels of religious affiliation and attendance. More than eight-in-ten members of the Silent Generation (those born between 1928 and 1945) describe themselves as Christians (84%), as do three-quarters of Baby Boomers (76%). In stark contrast, only half of Millennials (49%) describe themselves as Christians; four-in-ten Millennials identify with non-Christian faiths” (<https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>).

⁴ For further understanding of this debate see, Edward J. Larson. 1997. *Summer of the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Basic Books.

to what level are they committed to teach all aspects of alternative academic scientific disciplines with regard to Creation. For the Christian biologist, the hope is to confirm the position of *ex nihilo* while contrasting other theoretical perspectives. Often, other assessments outside of the *ex nihilo* stance can offer insights into a particular theological/academic position. In other words, what can a student gain by discovering other standpoints that counter one's theological beliefs? Some believe much can be absorbed. Others believe that such opportunities should not even be offered at a Christian institution for fear of turning a student away from Christ, or allowing culture to take a foothold in the college's pedagogy, or challenging an institution's covenantal world view.

More subtly, professors encounter a progressive student culture asking for Christian understanding of the "real world out there." For example, in a scriptural study of gender and sexuality, simply and accurately stated, God created male and female. Furthermore, only one male and one female are to unite in marriage. However, the world outside the conservative/traditional Christian standpoint has socially constructed numerous other genders and numerous other practices of sexuality (i.e., polyamory, polygyny, polygamy, cohabitation, pornography) to give credence to other sexual and gender choices. It behooves the Christian sociologist to address the issues of identity, behavior, affect, causes, and consequences of sexual practice and gender distinctiveness in a Christian institution's classroom. For the Christian sociologist, this is very tricky to navigate. On one side, the professor must appease the trustees of the Christian institution to not stray from doctrine, and on the other side the professor must be true to the academic discipline of social behavior all, in the midst of a culture pressuring the institution to change.

So what are the potential outcomes? Major universities such as Southern Methodist University (2020)⁵ and Texas Christian University (2020)⁶ dismantled their early Christian character while replacing it with a more culture-friendly program. According to Jerry Coyne (2014), Christian institutions like Bryan College continue to hunker down and persist in their philosophy at the expense of matriculating students, for example reifying patriarchal models to the disdain of the surrounding culture. Further, there is the challenge of some students wanting a traditional Christian pedagogical influence versus students who want secular/cultural depth, rigor, and breadth in academic disciplines. In addition, the traditional Christian student, when exposed to ideas outside his/her theology, may take offense to such teaching. It's complicated.

⁵ The mission statement of Southern Methodist University is void of religious affiliation: "To advance the goals and objectives of the University by creating residential communities which empower students to value learning, citizenship, and leadership in comfortable, well-maintained facilities." (smu.edu/StudentAffairs/Housing/General/Mission).

⁶ The mission statement of Texas Christian University is "To educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in global community." TCU's vision is "To be a world-class, values-centered university." Both statements are void of religious language. (tcu.edu/mission-history.php).

At the crossroads of theological purity, academic dogmatism, institutional restriction, and cultural intolerance, the Christian student seeks a way to express his/her faith, thoroughly comprehend her/his academic discipline, pledge loyalty to the institution, and endure in a culture attempting to pull them asunder. Following is a discussion of several outcomes this type of student may encounter in a Christian College setting.

A Model of the Intersection Between Christian Pedagogy and Competing Orthodoxies

Figure 1 represents a model of the intersection between *Christian Pedagogy & Competing Orthodoxies*. *Pedagogy* is the method and practice of teaching. The Competing Orthodoxies exist on a varying degree by a student attending a particular college. In other word, students may differ in the personal orthodoxy with the orthodoxy of the college or university. Within this milieu, various outcomes unfold as an *Institutional Christian Pedagogy* and an *Institutional Academic Pedagogy* interact with a *Traditional Christian Student* and a *Non-traditional Christian Student*.

Figure 1: A Model of the Intersection between Christian Pedagogy & Competing Orthodoxies

| | A: Traditional Christian Student | B: Non-Traditional Christian Student |
|--|---|---|
| C: Institutional Christian Pedagogy | 1. Affirmed | 3. Agitated |
| D: Institutional Academic Pedagogy | 2. Awakened | 4. Abandoned |

5. Alienated

Assumptions

Four assumptions emerge to begin this discussion. The first assumption (A1) is that a student who desires to matriculate and ultimately graduate from a Christian institution, proposes to follow the theological objectives stipulated by the Christian institution. Failure to do so would result in negative sanctions directed at the student. The second assumption (A2) is that the institutions depicted in the model are Christian institutions of higher education. As stated above in the discussion of college mission statements, the Christian institutions illustrated here have a specific theological intention to which administration, faculty, and students adhere fervently. The third assumption (A3) is that a Christian institution of higher education requires a rigorous academic standard. In other words, academics matter to this institution. The faculty member not willing to provide tutelage at a high academic level forsakes the academic model required by the institution. The final assumption (A4) is that the student attending the institution is serious about learning in an atmosphere that will challenge her/him to think critically and observe phenomena empirically. In other words, academics matter to the student. The function of an education is more than earning a diploma. Hence, a student who fails to embrace the challenges of academic rigor will not reap the benefits of the institution's pedagogy.

Consequently, *A Model of the Intersection Between Christian Pedagogy and Competing Orthodoxies* identifies four independent variables: a Christian institution, a Christian student, a rigorous institutional academic intention, and a student desirous of such rigor. Adamant faith and steadfast academic rigor simultaneously collide and fuse to make these types of institutions and students unique. The uniqueness of each student outcome is the dependent variable (discussed further below). For now, a more in-depth discussion about institution and student follows.

The Traditional Christian Student & the Non-traditional Christian Student

In reference to A1 above, two types of Christian students are represented here. First, the *Traditional Christian Student* (Figure 1. A.) is a student who has been nurtured in a particular expression of the Christian faith and who perceives the orthodoxy of the institution to be consonant with his or her own beliefs. The ideal type student in this category enters the "Christian" institution with an expectation of minimal challenge and affirmation of his or her beliefs. This student has a firm grasp of theology, doctrine, and gladly embraces the mission statement and the pedagogy of the college of choice. For example, a *Traditional Christian Student* who desires to matriculate to Covenant College has a reasonable understanding of scripture, reformed theology, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the polity of the PCA. Further, this student willingly states that he/she will abide by the Community Standards of

Conduct (2020). In other words, the *Traditional Christian Student* adheres to the theological traditions of the institution. Hence, there is a seamless transition to the college's theological atmosphere.

In contrast, the *Non-traditional Christian Student* (Figure 1. B.) is a student who has not been nurtured in a particular expression of the Christian faith and who perceives the orthodoxy of the institution to be unharmonious with his or her own beliefs. The ideal type student in this category enters the "Christian" institution with an expectation of challenge and refutation of his or her beliefs. The *Non-traditional Christian Student* is possibly from a different Christian faith heritage as compared to the student who has been socialized into the college's particular theological position. Upon matriculating, this student will grapple with the institution's manner of teaching and academic priorities. For example, a *Non-traditional Christian Student* who was nurtured in the United Methodist Church tradition and who desires to matriculate to Covenant College may not have an agreeable understanding of reformed theology, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the polity of the PCA. As a result, the student may either conform to the institution's positions, reject the institution's positions, which may result in withdrawing from the school, or persevere for the sake of earning credentials, even though it requires navigating an unwanted or misunderstood theology. In other words, the *Non-traditional Christian Student* does not necessarily adhere to the theological traditions of the institution. Hence, there can be a difficult transition to the college's theological atmosphere.

The key difference between a *Traditional Christian Student* and a *Non-traditional Christian Student* is his/her theological position. The *Traditional Christian Student* will enthusiastically embrace the ways and means of the Christian institution. But whereas the *Non-traditional Christian Student* may acquiesce to the theological practices of the institution, she/he may grapple with the pragmatic application of theological practices while on campus. For example, in a recent Social Diversity and Inequality class, we discussed Max Weber's interpretation of predestination. Weber states that "The empirical fact, important to us, that men are differently qualified in a religious way stands at the beginning of the history of religion. This fact had been dogmatized in the sharpest rationalist form in the 'particularism of grace,' embodied in the doctrine of predestination by the Calvinists" (Gerth and Mills 1946:287). The class drifted into a debate of the theological content of the concept of predestination. Accordingly, the students who had a Reformed theology background (*Traditional Christian Students*) better understood the concept, while some students from a Baptist background (*Non-traditional Christian Students*) remained confused. Further, for other students, this was their initial, chance meeting with predestination (or so they thought).

Institutional Christian Pedagogy & Institutional Academic Pedagogy

In reference to A2 above, a college that adopts an *Institutional Christian Pedagogy* (Figure 1. C.) focuses on the things of scripture, confession, creed, and an obedient lifestyle while a student is on (and possibly off) campus. As stated above, Christian college mission statements make it imperative that faith in Christ and the application of that faith in occupational endeavors supersede any other criteria of the college. For example, Covenant College, like many other Christian colleges and universities, has core requirements related to a Christian pedagogy in order to earn a baccalaureate degree. Covenant's Academic Catalogue (2020) states,

The core curriculum is also designed to provide Covenant students with common learning experiences, to emphasize the God-ordained unity of knowledge, to provide a global rather than a provincial emphasis in learning, to focus students' attention not only on the past and the present but also on the future, and to develop students' capacities to learn not only through ratiocination but experientially. Crucial to the success of the core curriculum is the pervasiveness of a biblical perspective in every course.⁷

Explicitly stated, there is an emphasis on the "God-ordained unity of knowledge." The academic integrity of Covenant College is not simply about academics. The core curriculum points a student in the direction of a life in Christ, and pursuit of an occupation and a world view which makes Christ pre-eminent in all things.

In reference to A3 above, an *Institutional Academic Pedagogy* (Figure 1. D.) beckons rigorous academic adherence to the passions of science, logic, empiricism, and the tangible. For example, Covenant's Academic Catalogue (2020) states,

The core curriculum is based on the faculty's belief that a liberal arts education should be broad and inclusive, introducing students to ideas and values of continuing concern and providing them with historical and spiritual perspectives on the complex problems of our society.

The academic integrity of Covenant College is not simply about Christian doctrine. The core curriculum steers a student in the direction of academic excellence and to undertake an occupation that not only provides for the personal needs of the student and his/her family, but also, because of gaining an significant academic, a student is prepared to confront a world with creativity and expertise.

⁷[Catalogue.covenant.edu/content.php?catoid=16&navoid=370#Core_and_Distribution_Requirements_F or_Baccalaureat_Degrees_Traditional_Undergraduate_Programs_](https://catalogue.covenant.edu/content.php?catoid=16&navoid=370#Core_and_Distribution_Requirements_F or_Baccalaureat_Degrees_Traditional_Undergraduate_Programs_)

The final assumption (A4) mentioned above aligns with A3. Here, the student attending the institution is serious about learning in an atmosphere that will challenge her/him to think critically and observe phenomena empirically. A student who desires to attend a college or university for reasons other than academics (sports, regional location of the school, legacy, social life) in most cases will not succeed at the institution.

Within these four categories of *Traditional Christian Student*, *Non-traditional Christian Student*, *Institutional Christian Pedagogy*, and *Institutional Academic Pedagogy* (Figure 1.), Christian colleges can *expect* to encounter five types of students who may or may not matriculate to their institution. Students also have certain *expectations* of the institutions they attend. Expectations are a central dynamic of interaction between institution and student. What students and institutions expect to occur and what actually occurs will arouse either positive or negative emotion. Positive emotions are aroused when expectations are realized. Hence, if a student is satisfied with both a strong faith-based education that prepares them to be a Christian in the marketplace, coupled with sound academic training and scholarship, expectations are met for both the institution and the student. In contrast, if either academics or Christian preparedness fail, negative emotions are aroused when these expectations are not met. A sense of justice and fairness emerge when the expectations of both the institution and the student are met. Nevertheless, there are times when both institution and student tread lightly for fear of offending one another.

Hypotheses

A Model of the Intersection between Pedagogy and Student (hereafter, MIPS) offers several hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: If a *Traditional Christian Student* attends an institution that integrates a Christian Pedagogy, the student will be *affirmed*.

Figure 1, Quadrant 1 represents a *Traditional Christian Student* learning the things of an *Institutional Christian Pedagogy*. This student is *affirmed* in their belief system as his/her faith is supported by the institution and the institution authenticates the student's faith stance. Both student and institution are satisfied with the academic and theological exchange. If the institution proposes a core curriculum which can include both academic and theological requirements, it is embraced by the student as reasonable. In this manner, the institution continues to uphold the nurturing process (both academic and spiritual) already established in the student. For example, when a professor opens class with prayer, this would not be odd or confusing to the *Traditional Christian Student*. In fact, it would be welcomed and expected. There are few theological or academic challenges placed upon the *affirmed* student.

Expectations are met by both student and institution. The student's response and outcome is generally positive.

Hypothesis 2: If a Traditional Christian Student attends an institution that integrates an Academic Pedagogy, the student will be awakened.

Figure 1, Quadrant 2 represents a *Traditional Christian Student* learning the things of an *Academic Discipline* (maybe for the first time). This student is *awakened* to the wonders of an academic discipline in the arts and sciences. New knowledge enhances the faith of a student by challenging well established theological ideas. The institution broadens the vision of the student to think with critical discernment by proposing theoretical perspectives that may challenge previously accepted beliefs. The purpose of "awakening" the student is not to shatter their belief but rather to enhance their belief by the means of enlightened academics. For example, the wonders of God's creation unfold scientifically in the fields of chemistry, physics, and biology. The intricacies of atoms, molecules, protoplasm, electrons, oxygen, and hydrogen unfold before the very senses of the student, and he/she apprehends creation in fresh ways. For the artist, the depth and breadth of color, the role of negative space in a painting, or the delicate nature of a sculpture all take shape. The elements that stood alone now stand together as art. For the writer, learning new ways of reading words, creating sentences, understanding grammar, forming paragraphs, making an argument, and writing stories opens avenues of communication to those who would listen. The business major not only learns the complexities of financial forecasting models, but also reflects on moral and fair business practices. There are other examples in other academic fields that transmit knowledge to the traditional student seeking academic enlightenment.

The challenge for the *awakened* student is when science or culture, for example, press against their theology. For example, most Introduction to Sociology courses provide a discussion on Karl Marx. Marx is not someone who would find a home in most Christian communities. However, he is very important to study to understand the Social Conflict perspective pertaining to human behavior. An Introduction of Sociology course bereft of Marx would be a sub-standard academic and sociological offering; Marx must be studied. However, professors at a Christian Pedagogical institution do not proselytize students to follow the ways of Marx. The challenge for professors is to provide theory that is pertinent to a meticulous and extensive comprehension of sociology. The challenge for students is to hear and learn germane things without ambiguity and to be able to properly scrutinize new concepts within a Christian lifestyle. The expectations of students and professors are met as students receive a complete perspective of all theories. Student response can vary from listening to and thinking critically about material that is presented in class, to calling a professor a heretic for even offering such information in a Christian setting.

Hypothesis 3: If a Non-traditional Christian Student attends an institution that integrates a Christian Pedagogy, the student will be agitated.

Figure 1, Quadrant 3 represents a *Non-traditional Student* learning the things of *Institutional Christian Pedagogy*. This student is *agitated* (Figure 1. 3.) to consider a Christian belief system he or she may have never considered before. On one hand, the *agitated* student may embrace the rigorous academic pedagogical core curriculum of a traditional Christian Institution, but, on the other hand, may experience the theological pedagogical core curriculum as an impediment to achieving academic success. This student may be agitated that theological classes are a part of his/her academic course load. Or this student may be agitated that his/her theological background (for example, Baptist versus Reformed Presbyterian) is at odds with the theological stance of the institution, and therefore struggles to understanding concepts, confessions, creeds, or a scriptural focus from a different theological perspective. Perhaps this student matriculated with a marginal faith and struggles with keeping up with the spiritual pace of the other students on campus. Perhaps this student attends the institution because he/she wants to play sports and to succeed academically, but has little concern for spiritual things. Perhaps the agitated student was not socialized into the things of religion and, therefore religious campus behavior is foreign to him/her.

In these various manners, the *agitated* student is “stirred up” by all this “religious fluff.” Hence, once this student arrives on campus (possibly via sports recruitment), he/she encounters an unexpected and uncomfortable curriculum. The challenge for this student is to discover where he/she fits into Christian campus behavior. For example, some Christian Liberal Arts Colleges require a student to shoulder a core curriculum containing both academic and Christian courses. Most likely, the expectations of the Institutional Christian Pedagogy are met if the Non-traditional Student embraces the academic portion of the core. However, the expectations of the Non-traditional Student can be dashed if the Non-traditional Student does not see the value of the theological portion of the core, which then results in frustration, ambiguity, possible anger, and *agitation*. On campus, *agitation* can lead to either acquiescence or rejection. In other words, the response of this student could vary from leaving the institution altogether when the *agitation* becomes too great, to embracing new theological precepts and adapting to new spiritual behaviors as *agitation* opens up new ways of thinking and believing.

Hypothesis 4: If a Non-traditional Christian Student attends an institution that integrates a Academic Pedagogy, the student will be abandoned.

Figure 1, Quadrant 4 represents a *Non-traditional Student* hoping to learn things only from an *Institutional Academic Discipline* perspective while attempting to avoid influence from

a Christian belief system. If the *Christian Pedagogy* fails to reach the heart of the student and the *Academic Discipline* fails to edify the student, the result is a non-believing, non-educated student who has been *abandoned* both spiritually and academically by the institution. Here, both student and institution made an effort to accommodate each other. The student desired an academic degree and the institution desired to reciprocate. However, for whatever reason, the student does not achieve his/her academic goal and may leave the institution or, if the student finishes the course work and graduates, does not believe the education he/she garnished is adequate. From the perspective of the institution, the goal of graduating the student may be thwarted if the student drops out due to low grades or his/her lack of academic enthusiasm. Theologically, a student may feel abandoned if the Christian pedagogy is too overwhelming or off-putting. A student unprepared to enter a theologically based institution may feel ostracized for his/her lack of theological or spiritual connection. For example, some Christian colleges require students to attend chapel on a regular basis. If the student fails to do so, negative sanctions will be assessed to the student. Some negative sanctions are formal (not able to graduate for lack of chapel attendance). Other negative sanctions are informal (fellow classmates expressing disapproval of the “chapel skipper” via critical facial expressions and the like). *Abandoned* students who matriculate and are unfamiliar with the ritual of chapel can reluctantly conform and attend chapel “because I have to.” Or, the spiritual dimension may be too uncomfortable and the student leaves the college. It is not the responsibility of the institution to convert the unbelieving student; conversion rests with the Holy Spirit. However, it is the obligation of the institution to communicate openly the spiritual and theological requirements for students during the recruitment phase. The same can be said for the institution’s obligation to clearly outline the academic standards for the student before he/she decides to enter the college. Consequently, this abandoned student is set adrift in the world on two fronts. The academic expectations of the students are unmet and ultimately, the institution and student failed each other.

Hypothesis 5: If a student is not a Christian and does not desire to pursue academic rigor, both the student and the institution will *alienate* each other.

Finally, Quadrant 5 represents the student who does not matriculate to a Christian Institution (Figure 1. 5.). This student is *alienated* from the institution as the institution does not want this student matriculating at the school nor does the student want to matriculate to such an institution. Whether the disparity is academic or theological, both parties agree there is no student-institution fit. In other words, there is mutual agreement that they are mutually exclusive. For example, evangelical Christian Colleges do not recruit Muslim students to attend their college. The theological expanse that exists between the two groups is too wide to span. In agreement, the Muslim student realizes that the Christian College does not fit with his/her

religious orientation. Both agree that the relationship would be doomed to fail. In the same manner, the student seeking a less rigorous academic setting (maybe due to low entrance exam scores or a low GPA) would clash with an institution requiring a high standard of education. In agreement, the low achieving student realizes that the college does not fit his/her academic level. The result, then, is a more homogenous student body that aligns with the theological and academic objectives of the college's administration, faculty, and mission statement.

There is one final point to ponder here about the rapport of the Christian institution and the *alienated* student. What is the responsibility of a Christian institution to reach out to students who do not know Jesus and invite them to matriculate on their campus? Some Christian Institutions believe their solitary role is to equip and train students who are already believers in Christ to go out into the world and be an influence. This alienating institution chooses not to recruit the non-Christian, but rather to prepare a generation of students who will seek out non-Christians after graduation, and be evangelists within their chosen field of study. Some may consider this thinking to be short sighted and separatist. Others believe that if an institution can maintain a spiritually homogenous and academically proficient campus, the opportunity to prepare students to go out into the world ready to glorify and serve the Lord is more attainable. Still, does the Christian institution have the assignment to reach out to and recruit non-Christians? Is it even possible for a Christian institution of higher education to prepare "the found" while ministering to "the lost?" According to PEW (2019) research,

The Christian share of the population is down and religious 'nones' have grown across multiple demographic groups: white people, black people and Hispanics; men and women; in all regions of the country; among college graduates and those with lower educational attainment. Religious 'nones' are growing faster among Democrats than Republicans, though their ranks are selling in both partisan coalitions. And although the religiously unaffiliated are on the rise among younger people and most groups of older adults, their growth is most pronounced among young adults.

The "nones" are the alienated group identified in Figure 1, quadrant 5. PEW (2019) continues,

Only about one-in-three Millennials say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month. Roughly two-thirds of Millennials (64%) attend worship services a few times as year or less often, including about four-in-ten who say they seldom or never go. Indeed, there are as many Millennials who say they 'never' attend religious services (22%) as there are who say they go at least once a week (22%).

The task of a Christian Institution to equip "the found" students while simultaneously evangelizing "the lost" would be a formidable task for any Christian institution. However, given

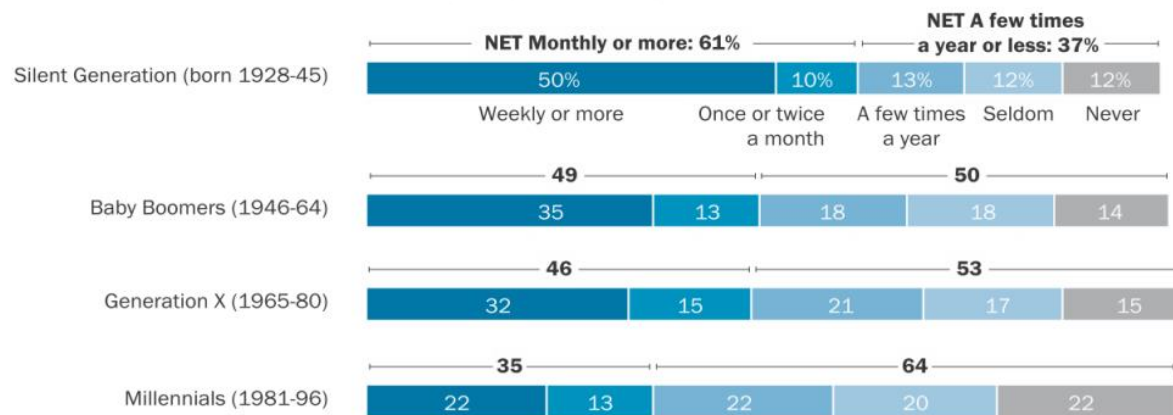
the trend that current and future generations are turning away from religion and becoming “nones,” where does accountability of the Christian institution lie for these generations?

Large generation gap in American religion

In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who identify as ...



In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who say they attend religious services ...



Note: Don't know/refused not shown.

Source: Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted January 2018-July 2019 on the telephone.

"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Conclusion

To date, the *Model of the Intersection between Christian Pedagogy and Competing Orthodoxies* has not been tested. Various surveys could be developed and administered to incoming freshman and outgoing seniors that would provide insight with regard to pedagogy and spiritual experience while on campus. Another test of the model could be an investigation of colleges and universities that are enrolled in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). The CCCU's (2020) mission is "to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth." Together, schools could collect data reflecting the behavior of students regarding pedagogy and faith.

Christian colleges and universities face the challenging juxtaposition of the ideals they place upon and the behavior they desire to see from their student body, while staying attuned to market pressures, gaining their market share, and remaining financially solvent. Tensions arise here. Where are the lines drawn between admitting students who may not be an exact fit either theologically or academically, and the pressure of a college's administration to "meet the bottom line?" What about the student athlete who wants to play a sport for a given college or university, yet does not have the academic make-up or religious structure to fit into the school? Recruiting by coaches will be affected by decisions arising from the tension between cultivating a winning team and fidelity to the school's charter. Whatever the case may be, as Christian colleges and universities struggle to offer their students a subversive and "Biblical" alternative to the secular paradigm which increasingly colonizes higher education, they will find themselves tested in myriad ways. May God grant them the vision and perseverance to continue to put their collective shoulders to the wheel.

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