

EDITORIAL

With his usual insight and wit, Neil Postman (1996) observed that education, without a god or narrative to sustain and cultivate it, has no purpose. “The purpose of a narrative is to give meaning to the world, not describe it scientifically. The measure of a narrative’s ‘truth’ or ‘falsity’ is in its consequences” (p. 7). This sentiment may apply to much of existing sociological research, which, like its siblings in the social sciences, has an inner desire to appear *scientific* and, thereby, shed itself of the narrative which animates it. Paradoxically, the scientific approach, with its dislike for narratives in favor of criticism, and its search for dependable knowledge, postulates that there is an order to the universe yet to be discovered--a “fundamental assumption of all important narratives” (Postman, 1996, p. 9). The search for explanations about why things are as they are is the root of scientific inquiry. Such explanations must be valid, careful not to alienate various groups, and be agreed upon by a broad range of people. This is the search for a universal narrative that encompasses the various concerns of a wide variety of groups, interests, and ideologies.

Secular *scientific* sociologists privilege objectivity as they carefully observe social phenomena, apply statistics or other methodologies, and proudly announce their new discoveries. Sadly, much of what passes as results are merely platitudes. Maintaining moral impartiality ensures that few are offended or forced to reconcile the actions of society with the results. There is little need for discernment or judgment beyond the validity and reliability of the methodology. All that occurs within a society is merely studied so that sociologists have a better understanding of the group. One is reminded of the dog chasing its tail. There is no end; however, an *end* is exactly what is needed. What is the purpose of the studies if there are no ends? To simply *know the group better* hardly seems worthy of the effort unless the knowledge leads to a greater truth about the human condition, a truth that touches on the purpose for human existence. This is not to say that contemporary sociological research lacks insight. Much of the research does lead to a broader understanding of societal issues, but the research ends there, as the transcendent dimension of human social life is ignored. Christian sociology offers the τέλος through the framework of the Christian narrative. Accordingly, the goals of the *Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society* are

1. to utilize qualitative and quantitative analysis in the social sciences as a way to “weave” Christian faith into the larger cultural setting.
2. to enrich understanding regarding the diversity of the Christian faith and its potential for utilizing the social sciences as a tool for ethical and cultural issues.
3. to expand the resources and research available for Christian leaders as “world-changers” in their respective fields.

4. to stimulate ongoing dialogue among those Christians who desire to integrate their faith with their cultural setting.
5. to enhance one's understanding as to the integrative process relative to the social sciences and the Christian faith.
6. to be devoted to original research and inquiry that promises to address the difficult cultural issues of our time.
7. to attract readers who desire to pursue their witness in the world, particularly in their own professional fields as Christian-scholar practitioners.
8. to make significant contributions in the domains of family, church and society, especially from the perspective of perceptive leaders proposing God-honoring solutions to formidable problems.

When considered through the lens of a Christian understanding of the human condition, the articles published in the journal provide a deeper insight into what is happening and how it fits into the greater, more encompassing and eternal narrative.

When asked in 2011 to serve as the General Editor of the *Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society*, several problems surfaced. This was not a task for one person, but several. Where would one find assistant editors with the gifts needed to accomplish the undertaking? How would the journal appear? What parameters would be established for the publication of articles? Would Christian scholars submit research? Within a short period, many of these problems were resolved. *The Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society* quickly attracted assistant editors with the necessary talents to address the tasks. With invaluable help from Dr. Matthew Vos, the journal has published excellent book reviews. Also, Dr. Vos introduced the journal to two different Christian sociological associations--leading to fraternal relationships with both. Soon, articles began to arrive. The result is that the journal is now the official publication of these associations, and the promise of greater associations is being established. Dr. Steven Mittwede, a theologian, scientist, and experienced editor, provided advice on how to create a strong academic journal. His work has resulted in the indexing and abstracting of the journal. As one of the peer reviewers, Dr. Ines Jindra of the University of Notre Dame brought her expertise and insight into the quality of the papers published. Dr. Basil Jackson, another peer reviewer, provided tremendous insight and brought greater academic integrity to the journal. Moreover, without the tireless efforts of Dr. Joshua Reichard, the journal would never have been created. It was his vision that brought the journal into existence. Oxford Graduate School, as the official institution for the journal, is worthy of special recognition for its prophetic role in backing the journal, supervising it through its early stages, and giving it an institutional identity. I thank all of them for their work, patience, understanding, and support.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome the new General Editor of the *Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society*, Dr. Dennis Hiebert. A scholar gifted with experience and wisdom, Dr. Hiebert will oversee the continued growth of the journal. It is often

said that scholars stand on the shoulders of giants by basing research upon the work of those who have gone before. It is hoped that as the first editor of the *Journal for the Sociological Integration of Religion and Society*, I have made it possible for others to see a bit further. Under Dr. Hiebert, scholars will have vision further still.

Works Cited

Postman, N. (1996). *The end of education: Redefining the value of school*. N.Y: Vintage.