

Refining the conversation: some concerns about contemporary trends in thinking about worldviews, Christian scholarship and higher education

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'Conceiving of Christianity as a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) has been one of the most significant developments in the recent history of the church.'¹ So begins a recent book by David Naugle, entitled *Worldview: The History of a Concept*. Naugle goes on to suggest that the reason why conceiving of Christianity as a worldview has risen to considerable prominence in the last one hundred and fifty years is in part due 'to its attempt to provide a comprehensive explanation of reality that is rooted in the Word of God.' And the benefits of such an approach to understanding the Christian faith are that it imparts to the believer, the student, and the scholar 'a cognitive confidence, an apologetic strategy, a cultural relevance, and a sound, spiritual basis for life in the coherent picture of God's larger story.'² The Christian and the evangelical church, I believe, is much indebted to Reformed theologians and philosophers for helping us to see the importance of worldviews and of understanding the Christian worldview in terms of the basic biblical themes of creation, fall, and redemption.

'One of the most significant developments in the recent history of not only Christian higher education but also the American academy in general has been the great flowering of conversation and literature about the appropriate relationship between faith and learning.'³ So begins a review essay of five books on Christian higher education, all written since the year 2000. More specifically,

1 David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of the Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 4.

2 Naugle, *Worldview*, 341.

3 William C. Ringenbergs, 'The Faith and Learning Discussion in the Academy at the Turn of the Century-a Review Essay', *Christian Scholars Review* 34 (2005), 251. Ringenbergs goes on to give as a partial explanation of the renaissance of interest in religion by the scholarly community, the increasing success of the orthodox colleges, and the widespread influence of the recent critiques of the secularization of higher education by scholars like George Marsden, James Burtchaell, Douglas Sloan, and Julie Rueben.

much has recently been written about the nature of Christian scholarship and the kind of teaching and learning that should take place in Christian and evangelical colleges and universities.⁴ But, here again ‘the most prominent existing model of Christian scholarship’ is the Reformed model, sometimes referred to in terms of ‘the integration of faith and learning’, which of course runs parallel to the notion of a Christian worldview based on the themes of creation, fall, and redemption.⁵

But we seem to be at a crossroads in thinking about scholarship and the Christian faith, and how the two relate in higher education. Many Christian scholars are reacting to the notion of worldviews and the Reformed model of integrating faith and learning.⁶ Already in 1984, Oliver Barclay wrote a book-length critique of the Reformed approach to developing a Christian mind.⁷ In the fall

4 On the nature of Christian scholarship, see for example: Andrew Wright, ‘Transformative Christian Education: New Covenant, New Creation: An Essay in Constructive Theology’, *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 2 (1998), 93–108; See also responses by Signe Sandsmark and Elmer Thiessen in subsequent issues of the same journal; Doug Blomberg and Ian Lambert (eds.), *Reminding: Renewing the Mind in Learning* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998); Nicholas Wolterstorff, ‘Can Scholarship and Christian Conviction Mix? A New Look at the Integration of Knowledge’, *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 3 (1999), 35–50; David I. Smith and John Shortt, *The Bible and the Task of Teaching*, (Nottingham: Stapleford Centre, 2002); Signe Sandsmark, *Is World View Neutral Education Possible and Desirable: a Christian Response to Liberal Arguments* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000); and Douglas V. Henry and Bob R. Agee (eds.), *Faithful Learning and the Christian Scholarship Vocation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). See also books listed in note 5.

On the nature of Christian schools and colleges, see for example: Paul J. Dovre (ed.), *The Future of Religious Colleges* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002); Richard T. Hughes, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian (eds.), *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

5 Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xiii. For some standard works giving expression to the Reformed model of Christian scholarship, see the following: Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton. *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984); Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For some recent works, see James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), and Naugle, *Worldviews*.

6 See Brian J. Walsh, ‘Transformation: Dynamic Worldview or Repressive Ideology’, *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 4 (2000), 103. Walsh himself expresses some reservations about the notion of a Christian worldview in this article, and also identifies Nicholas Wolterstorff as having been vocal for some years now on the limitations of worldview language.

7 Oliver Barclay, *Developing A Christian Mind* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984).

of 2004, Christian scholars and students gathered in Michigan for a conference provocatively titled, 'After Worldview: Christian Higher Education in Postmodern Worlds.'⁸ It became clear at the conference that there is a sharp divide among evangelicals about worldview discourse and the notion of a Christian worldview. Further, as already mentioned, in recent years a good number of books have been published exploring various models of Christian scholarship and higher education. One theme keeps recurring in these publications, either implicitly or explicitly – it is time to move beyond the traditional Reformed model of thinking about the relation between the Christian faith and scholarship.⁹

This essay takes a careful look at an important recent publication which gives expression to this resistance to worldviews and the Reformed model of integrating faith and learning. The subtitle of the book by Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen puts us on the alert, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (2004). A comparison of this volume with Oliver Barclay's earlier critique of the Reformed approach to the Christian mind will reveal some common criticisms. However, there are some new themes in the Jacobsen volume that reflect contemporary postmodern thinking, and that are also found in other current criticisms of Reformed thinking, and thus this book merits a more careful critical analysis.

The Jacobsen publication is a product of three years of collaboration by a group of scholars from Messiah College, an undergraduate liberal and applied arts and science college with roots in the Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan traditions of the Christian church. In the Preface, the authors inform us that their goal 'is more humble and empirical' than the critical and normative approach of Reformed thinkers. Thus they try to avoid 'telling Christian scholars how they ought to insert faith into their scholarship.' Nor do they want to 'propose any new model of what Christian scholarship ought to look like.' Instead, they 'seek merely to describe the many different forms that Christian scholarship has taken and can take' (xi).¹⁰ Then a little later in the Preface, the structure of the book is described as moving from 'a critique of the most prominent existing model of Christian scholarship', namely the integration of faith and learning, through a series of chapters exploring among other themes, 'the variety of Christian traditions affecting scholarship, and the multifaceted character of scholarship in

8 The conference was held Sept. 16 to 18, at Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids. For a review of this conference by John Wilson, see www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/139/23.0.html.

9 See, for example, Hughes, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*; Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*; Dovre, *The Future of Religious Colleges*; and Jacobsen and Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith*.

10 Since I will be referring to the Jacobsen and Jacobsen volume repeatedly in the essay, I will insert page numbers in the text, immediately after making a direct quotation. So any page numbers in the body of the essay refer to *Scholarship and the Christian Faith*, by the Jacobsens.

general, ending with a map of the complex terrain of Christian scholarship in all its many forms and manifestations' (xiii).

The present essay grows out of some concerns that I have about these calls to abandon the notion of 'worldview' and to enlarge the conversation regarding the relation between the Christian faith and scholarship. I fear that we may be giving up worldview thinking and the Reformed model of integration of faith and learning too quickly and for the wrong reasons.¹¹ Lest my argument be dismissed on the grounds that the author must just be a disgruntled Reformed theologian or philosopher protecting his own turf, let me say a little about my own background. I am a Mennonite, as are several of the contributors to the volume by the Jacobsens. I am also a philosopher, having received most of my post-graduate education within a secular context. Most of my teaching career has also been spent at a secular college. So throughout my academic career I have enjoyed and learned much from my 'conversation' with students and writers and scholars who do not share my Christian worldview. I have to confess, though, that I have been deeply influenced by Reformed philosophers – indeed, I would attribute my philosophical salvation to this esteemed Christian tradition. So I am biased – but then who isn't! At least we should all agree on that, in today's postmodern climate. In the winter of 2005, I spent a semester in Belgium, teaching a course on 'Worldviews and the Christian Mind' at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven, and so had occasion to review some of the recent literature with which this essay is concerned.

Postmodernism and Christian scholarship

So what are my problems with the overall thrust of the current evangelical thinking (fad) about worldviews and the relation of faith and learning? My first concern relates to the very postmodern ring to calls for the abandonment of worldview discourse and to claiming that there are many different forms that Christian scholarship can and should take. Indeed, it is no accident that the title of the conference described in the introduction, 'After Worldview', also makes reference to 'postmodern worlds.' The Jacobsens quite explicitly refer to and approve of an overall shift in the academy, 'away from grand-scale theorizing about the nature of the world', to a more piece-meal 'decentered, multilateral, post-modern orientation' (27). In another essay in the same volume, Crystal Downing informs the reader that she wants to offer a paradigm of Christian scholarship 'that reflects not only our postmodern times but also the constructs of religious traditions that are different from the Calvinism that generated the integration model' (40). More specifically, she wants to replace the modernist word 'integration' with a word postmodern thinkers have appropriated to talk about the

11 For an earlier defense of the Reformed integration model against objections being raised by Oliver Barclay's *Developing a Christian Mind*, see Elmer J. Thiessen, 'Defending the Christian Mind', *EQ* 64 (1992), 37-54.

various overlapping discourses that make up the self: 'imbrication' (41). Further, there would seem to be something very right about challenging the long-reigning Reformed model of integrating faith and learning – oppressive narratives need to be exposed, and room needs to be made for other voices that have been silenced for too long. Hence, there is a need 'to make space for alternative models to develop' (28). We need to listen to the voices of 'other Christian scholars – whether Catholic, Wesleyan, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Anabaptist, or any other non-Reformed tradition' (26). And of course, in good postmodern fashion, the mere hint of defending a better alternative is denied. 'Our point is not to declare one model better than all others and then to fend off rival approaches but to encourage an ongoing conversation' (29).

But here of course is the rub. Suggesting an alternative seems to be unavoidable. The Jacobsens clearly are defending a pluralistic approach to Christian learning. Similarly unavoidable, is the seemingly oppressive feel to suggesting an alternative to the integrationist model. To propose multiple models of Christian scholarship finally entails that those who think in terms of just one model of Christian scholarship have got it wrong. After raising a number of pointed objections to the Reformed integration model of faith and learning, the Jacobsens conclude Chapter 1 with the astounding claim that all this is not meant 'to denigrate the integrationist model' (28). But, this is plainly contradictory as is made obvious from the title of two major sections of this chapter, 'When Integration Takes a Negative Turn', and 'Inherent Limitations of the Integration Model.' To suggest that there are inherent weaknesses in the integration model is to denigrate it. Yes, talk about enlarging the conversation, and accommodating differing voices has a very pleasant and tolerant ring to it. But, when all is said and done, there is an exclusivism also in postmodern pluralism. And this exclusivism also pervades the Jacobsens' analysis of Christian scholarship, as well as the numerous other recent publications that have followed a similar pluralistic approach to Christian scholarship and higher education.

Very few will deny that there is a pervasive relativism inherent in postmodern pluralism.¹² But such relativism goes counter to what I think the Christian gospel and a genuinely Christian worldview entails. Of course there is some truth to 'relativism.' At a descriptive level, there are obviously many claims to truth. The human search for truth is also relative. Thus too we have to admit that it is the case that there are multiple models of Christian scholarship, and that human scholarship in this area is relative. But all this has nothing to say about the important question as to whether there ought to be multiple models of Christian scholarship. Perhaps worldview discourse with its grand-scale theorizing about the nature of the world is in fact laudable. Perhaps the Reformed model

12 This relativism expresses itself in various ways – there is no common starting point, there is no universal reason, all positions are equally valid, and belief systems are merely human constructs. Some postmodernists are quite explicit in denying absolute or universal truth.

of integration of faith and learning is in fact the best one around, maybe even the right one. Strangely, when the Jacobsens 'critique' the integration model for acting as if this is the only valid way to do Christian scholarship, or at least the best way, they provide nothing by way of an argument. We are simply told that such a claim 'is not true.' And when they go on to say that there are 'many valid and insightful ways of construing the goals and purposes of Christian scholarship' (25), one again looks in vain for any argument that these other ways are valid. And of course, the Jacobsens seem to be oblivious to the exclusive nature of their own declarations of truth and validity. We need to be careful not to dismiss worldview discourse and the integration model too quickly in the name of postmodern relativism.

This is not at all to deny that there are some important lessons that we have learned from postmodernism. I agree that claims to knowledge and truth are to some degree relative to place, society, culture, historical epoch and conceptual framework. But, knowledge and truth are not completely conditioned by these factors. Despite these subjective factors which influence reasoning, I would suggest that there is still a degree of commonness in human reasoning – otherwise, we would not be able to argue with one another at all. We also cannot, and must not, eliminate entirely the ideal(l) of truth with a capital 'T'. What is needed here is to make a distinction between knowledge and truth as ideals, and the human search for knowledge and truth. As Christian scholars we need to humbly acknowledge that we see through a glass darkly, that we only know in part (1 Cor. 13:9, 12). But at the same time, we can and must affirm that knowledge and truth exist as objective ideals – 'when perfection comes the imperfect disappears,' 'although now I know in part; then I shall know fully' (1 Cor. 13:10, 12). Here, in Paul's memorable words, objective knowledge and truth are affirmed in an eschatological sense. As Christian scholars we need to take Paul's words seriously, also with regard to positions taken about the legitimacy of worldview discourse and the nature of Christian scholarship. While Reformed philosophers must avoid being dogmatic about their model of integrating faith and learning, they need not and should not give up proposing this model as the better and perhaps even the best model.

Here a follow-up point needs to be made in defense of the Reformed integration model. The Jacobsens express concerns about the 'epistemological arrogance' implicit in the 'antisecular crusade for truth' that is found in Reformed Christian scholarship (23). But, there is nothing inherently arrogant in claiming that there is truth, or in claiming to have the best model for integrating faith and learning. Indeed, Reformed philosophers would be the first to acknowledge that they too only see through a glass darkly, and that they only know in part.¹³ We are

13 In a classic statement of the Reformed integration model, we find the admonition not to confuse our so-called scientific laws with God's laws for creation (Walsh and Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*, 178). In a more recent article, Walsh warns about danger of holding a worldview with universal finality ('Transformation', 107). Naugle,

finite, fallible creatures, whose thinking is also tainted by sin. Indeed, I would argue that it is precisely the affirmation of transcendent truth that keeps scholars humble. The sin of arrogance also colours much of postmodernist scholarship, and sadly, I could not help but feel that it was also present in the Jacobsens' treatment of the nature of Christian scholarship. Note, for example, the irony inherent in the title of one of the essays in this volume, by David Weaver-Zercher: 'A Modest (Though Not Particularly Humble) Claim for Scholarship in the Anabaptist Tradition.'

Old versus new

There is another worry that I have concerning trends in Christian worldview thinking and higher education. It seems to me that the rejection of worldview discourse and the old Reformed model of faith-learning integration is sometimes based on little more than that it has been around for a long time. It is traditional and old. And surely the old needs to be discarded in favour of the new and the avant-garde. Here again there is some connection to postmodernism, with its hermeneutics of suspicion, its deconstruction of past meta-narratives, and its tendency towards constructivism where individuals are free to create reality in accordance with their own personal desires, inclinations and prejudices.¹⁴ The very label 'postmodern' is significant. The postmodern era follows the modern era. And I want to suggest that there is often an implicit suggestion that the new supercedes the old. Postmodernism is thought to be better than modernism simply because it is new. And a postmodernist approach to Christian scholarship must be better than the modernist approach because the latter is old and the former is new.

Of course, this is just plain silly. The new is not necessarily better than the old. In fact, it can be a lot worse. What is curious here is that the prophets of postmodernism are very much reflecting modern liberalism with its faith in the inevitability of progress. Note that they are here reflecting 'modern' liberalism, again a very un-postmodern thing to do. Modern liberalism (and contemporary postmodernism) says that change is good. The new represents progress. But these assumptions are simply false. Change can be for the worse. The new can be inferior to the old. Of course there is a danger in hanging on to the old. Jesus warned us of the dangers of traditionalism (Mark 7:1-12). But there are equal

in a more recent statement of a Reformed epistemology defends critical realism, which seeks to avoid the arrogance of modernity, stressing the fact that knowledge 'is always conditioned by human finitude, sinfulness and the experience of redemption' (*Worldviews*, 326).

14 Note for example the postmodern language of constructivism in Crystal Downing's paradigm of Christian scholarship 'that reflects not only our postmodern times but also the constructs of religious traditions that are different from the Calvinism that generated the integration model' (in Jacobsens, *Scholarship and Christian Faith*, 40).

dangers in ‘changism’, to coin a new term that is desperately needed in our day to highlight the silliness of worshipping all that is new and avant-garde. Sadly, faddishness is all too common even among academics. We are like the Athenians who spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas (Acts 17:21). I must confess that I detect an element of this idolatry of newness in the current calls for the abandonment of worldview discourse as well as the current preoccupation with suggesting new models of integrating faith and learning. Such idols need to be smashed. Worldview discourse and the Reformed model of faith-learning integration have been around a long time, as David Naukle shows so well in his recent book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (2004). These Reformed contributions have stood the test of time. Let us not give them up in the name of a shallow faddishness and worship of that which is new.

Sidestepping the issue

I move on now to a third concern that I have with the current trend in Christian worldview thinking and its application to Christian higher education. It seems to me that the multiplicity of models is also a product of sidestepping the issue of the nature of Christian scholarship in schools of higher education. Let me illustrate. In their anthology, *Models for Christian Higher Education* (1997), Hughes and Adrian document how fourteen American Christian colleges and universities are seeking to engage in Christian scholarship on their campuses. The descriptive and historical narratives are written by respected representatives from seven major faith traditions – Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Mennonite, Evangelical/Interdenominational, Wesleyan/Holiness, and Baptist/Restorationist.¹⁵ Each set of descriptive/historical essays is preceded by an introductory essay that defines the theological heritage of the given tradition and asks what that tradition can contribute to the task of higher education. What Hughes and Adrian are of course trying accomplish with this collage is to suggest that it is not possible to talk of a generic approach to Christian scholarship and higher education. They, like the Jacobsens, stress that there are and should be many models.¹⁶

They are forced to concede, however, that the Reformed approach, stressing the influence of presuppositions and worldviews on all disciplines, has had a significant influence in many of the institutions represented in their anthology.¹⁷ A question that is not adequately dealt with, in my opinion, is how important the

¹⁵ The Jacobsens too review various traditions of faith in Chapter 3 of their book, *Scholarship and Christian Faith*, 77-101.

¹⁶ Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 1-9, 445.

¹⁷ See, for example, Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 5. The Jacobsens too admit that the Reformed vision of faith and scholarship ‘has spawned perhaps more sustained reflection on faith and learning than any other Protestant theological tradition.’ For that it is to be complimented, they say, though we need to remember that it is ‘but one way of understanding the task of Christian scholarship’ (26).

distinctives of each faith tradition are to the actual curriculum and scholarship offered at each of these institutions of higher learning. Do the denominational distinctives really make any difference in the teaching of biology, literature, sociology, or economics? Do these unique theological emphases affect scholarship per se? I doubt it. I want to suggest that the basic presuppositions of the Christian faith, which all Christian traditions share, would seem to support the appropriateness of a more generic approach to the integration of faith and learning. Hence, we don't need many models of Christian scholarship.

Let me illustrate from my own faith tradition, the Anabaptist/Mennonite understanding of the Christian faith. Yes, there certainly are some important distinctives to a Mennonite understanding of the Scriptures, the most obvious one being the emphasis on peace and reconciliation. The Jacobsens also point to the Anabaptists' tendency to marginalize philosophical theology, stressing instead the need for faith to be expressed in actions, not in words (28).¹⁸ My question however is this: Does a distinctive like this affect Christian scholarship, which is supposedly the subject under investigation in the Jacobsen volume? If the Anabaptists do not like philosophical theology, then perhaps they simply have nothing to contribute to Christian scholarship per se. Christian scholarship is after all concerned with words, theories, and thinking. Clearly there is much more to the Christian life. But the topic under consideration is Christian scholarship, not practical Christian living. We need to stay on topic!

And when we do stay on topic and deal specifically with Christian scholarship, then we are going to have to focus on 'worldviewish theology' and the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. We will have to limit ourselves to important Christian doctrines that have the power to shape and transform the rest of one's belief system. I want to suggest that the distinctives of the Mennonite faith do not belong to these central doctrines of Christianity. They simply are not basic presuppositions that colour all the rest of one's thinking.¹⁹ Even with regard to the Mennonite peace position, I am not sure this is essential to defining the nature of Christian scholarship. I happen to believe that the peace and reconciliation emphasis is a very important doctrine that is desperately needed in our day, especially given the militaristic overtones of neo-conservativism that is so often dressed in Christian clothing in America today. But, does this doctrine belong to

18 The same point is made in the Introduction, in Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 6.

19 J. Denny Weaver, would disagree with me on this – *Anabaptist Theology in the Face of Postmodernity* (Telford, Penn: Pandora Press U.S., 2000). He maintains that the Anabaptist position on non-violence is not just an emphasis that can be added on to a generic core of orthodox theology, but that it in fact belongs to the essence of Anabaptist theology and transforms all the other core doctrines. By implication, it would therefore also transform scholarship in all areas. But Weaver's analysis, like that of the Jacobsens, rests on a postmodern epistemology which I have already criticized. Weaver also fails to do justice to the possibility that Anabaptism might represent a 'refinement' of orthodox theology and as such does not need to be seen as completely distinctive.

the core of a Christian belief system? Is it so important that it will shape the rest of one's belief system, and transform the kind of education given at a Christian institution of higher learning, and yield a unique view of Christian scholarship, as distinct from the Reformed model of integration of faith and learning. I think not, though more needs to be said on this, and I want to return to this issue later in this essay.

Here let me make one qualification. In this essay I am focusing on the integration of faith and learning, on Christian scholarship. Obviously there is more to Christian higher education than scholarship and the integration of faith and learning per se. And clearly the Mennonite vision of radical discipleship will affect the *overall* education given at a Mennonite institution of higher learning. Thus the emphasis on making service a central element in the overall educational experience of Mennonite schools, as is noted by Hughes.²⁰ I am not denying that this distinctive will make a difference in the education offered at a Mennonite school. It is interesting to note that Adrian, in a concluding essay in this anthology is forced to admit that the theological distinctives of each of these denominational colleges are most evident in the 'extracurriculum'.²¹ I agree. But, my concern in this essay is with the curriculum itself and with scholarship per se. And here, as I have already argued, this distinctive Mennonite doctrine will be rather peripheral, whereas the central doctrines of the Christian faith stressed by Reformed model of faith and learning will be found to be essential.

Hughes goes on to describe a conversation that he had with a scholar at Goshen College. 'The Reformed model, she observed, tends to be cerebral and therefore transforms living by thinking. The Mennonite model, on the other hand, transforms thinking by living and by one's commitment to a radically Christocentric lifestyle.'²² Interestingly this same Mennonite scholar goes on to suggest that the Reformed model may be particularly suitable for graduate education, while the Mennonite model might be more suitable for undergraduate learning. I would suggest that even for undergraduate learning, the Reformed model will be found to be essential when it comes to describing what is going on in the classroom and in the scholarship of the school. And maybe the emphasis on a radically Christocentric lifestyle is something that should be emphasized in all Christian schools, including graduate schools. More on this later.

Let me restate the central argument of this section in a more positive way. Worldviews have to do with important beliefs at the core of a belief system. Although there is some dispute among Reformed thinkers on the nature of a worldview, whether it involves beliefs, or a transforming vision, or something even deeper, such as a heart orientation, in the end, the alternative interpretations inevitably get translated into theoretical categories. So, what are the essentials of a Christian worldview? Here again, I think the Reformed thinkers have got it right. The basic themes of the Christian faith, the transforming motifs of

20 Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 6.

21 Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 451.

22 Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 6.

the Christian story, are creation, fall, and redemption.²³ These themes belong to 'worldviewish theology', and they will fundamentally shape a distinctive belief system, the curriculum, and the scholarship in any Christian institution of higher learning. But at this fundamental level, Christians in fact agree. Whether one is an Evangelical, Baptist, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Reformed, we agree on these essentials. And it is these essentials that shape a Christian worldview. And it is these same essentials that will then shape the way in which philosophy, psychology, biology, history, and even mathematics will be taught.

Interestingly, David Naugle himself, though clearly committed to a Reformed model of integration, falls prey to the current pluralist mentality with regard to Christian scholarship and education when in his introductory chapters he contrasts Protestant Evangelicalism (really Reformed), Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox worldviews.²⁴ A close reading of these three 'models', however, shows that they really are remarkably similar, with the themes of creation, fall, and redemption occurring in each. What each tradition might contribute to this 'generic' approach to Christian scholarship are slightly different emphases – a further refining of the Reformed model. So, rather than thinking of new models of Christian scholarship, Christian academics would be much better served to think in terms of refining the Reformed model which even the Jacobsens admit 'has spawned perhaps more sustained reflection on faith and learning than any other Protestant theological tradition' (26).

Integration model too philosophical

The Mennonite scholar referred to in the previous section hints at another problem with the Reformed model of higher education when she describes it as tending to be too cerebral.²⁵ The Jacobsens are more specific – the integration model

23 See, for example, Wolters, *Creation Regained*, chs. 2-4, and Walsh and Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*, chs. 3-5.

24 Naugle, *Worldviews*, chs. 1 and 2.

25 Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 6. Oliver Barclay too complains that an emphasis on developing a theoretical Christian mind 'is out of the intellectual reach of most Christians', because it requires that you 'have to try to become an amateur philosopher' ('A Reply to Elmer J. Thiessen', *EQ* 64 (1992), 56, 59). Barclay, like the Jacobsens also commits the straw man fallacy. I am not saying that all scholars or all Christians have to become philosophers. Barclay's position also seems to be contradictory in that he lauds attempts (including his own) to work out the biblical implications for various complex social, political, and ethical problems, and then decries the development of a theoretical Christian mind. His own attempts to do so are partly speculative, partly man-made, and also controversial (not all Christians will agree with his suggestions), and yet these features are seen as fatal flaws in developing a theoretical Christian mind. Barclay urges us to 'keep to what is clearly biblical' (59), but of course, the problem is that the Bible just is not as clear as he thinks it is when we are dealing with complex social, political and ethical issues that he himself is wrestling with, and that Reformed thinkers are also wrestling with as they seek to integrate faith and learning.

is too philosophical in nature, they maintain. 'In essence, the integration model requires that Christian scholars temporarily become philosophers (instead of being biologists, psychologists, engineers, artists, or whatever else), whenever they want to engage in doing Christian scholarship' (24-25). This claim, according to the Jacobsens, does not seem to be warrented. But why? Again, no reasons are given. The argument also commits the straw man fallacy. The integration model does not require that Christian scholars temporarily become philosophers *instead* of being biologists or whatever else. This sets up a false either-or dichotomy. Instead, the integration model claims that the sciences are ultimately rooted in worldviewish philosophy or theology. So, in order to be a good biologist, you must also examine the philosophical presuppositions underlying your science.

I can still recall my final course in the sciences, my first major in my university education, a course in nuclear physics. My professor was aware of my having become enamoured with philosophy, and so he would from time to time make it a point to show how some important aspects of nuclear physics rest on philosophical assumptions. This dear professor helped ease my transition from physics to philosophy. Sadly, not too many instructors at our universities deal with the underlying philosophical and worldview assumptions of their discipline. But they should! If there is any kind of consensus emerging in academia, it is that ultimately all thought rests on a worldviewish presuppositions. This is surely the central lesson that can be drawn from David Naugle's recent book, *Worldviews* (2004). So, the Jacobsens are in part right. To be a good scientist, you must *also* be a worldview philosopher, as is stressed in the Reformed model of integrating faith and learning. But this is not a liability, but a strength of this model. And this acknowledgement of the importance of worldviewish philosophy on all disciplines is not unique to Reformed thought. Indeed, as Naugle's book shows, there would seem to be a growing consensus in the scholarly world that this is the right way of conceiving of epistemology and scholarship. It should therefore not surprise us that there might just be one best or even right way to conceive of Christian scholarship.

Conflict with the secular academy

An overriding concern of the Jacobsens is the tendency of the integration model to portray the relationship between Christian scholars and the secular academy in terms of separation and even antagonism. Already in the preface, they express concerns about the 'critical edge' of a number of Christian publications which tell the secular academy 'that it ought to show more respect for faith-informed learning' (xi). Then a little later in the preface, they complain that Christian scholars have been too defensive, and that Christian scholarship 'can involve listening as much as speaking, service as much as leadership, and simple friendship as much as critical engagement with one's colleagues' (xii-xiii). In Chapter 1, these concerns surface once again, as part of a condemnation of an 'epistemological arrogance in Christian scholarship' (23). Again, the Jacobsens express

concern that the integration model promotes ‘conflict rather than conversation’, and devolves ‘into a win-lose contest over truth.’ Instead of bringing insights from the two domains together, the task of Christian scholarship is reconceived as one of conquest: an antisecular crusade for truth’ (23). George Marsden and David Naugle are singled out and criticized for taking on Tolkien’s imagery of a battle-strewn earth, where we are involved in ‘a great spiritual struggle between forces of darkness and light’ (23-24, 30 fn. 21).

Now as an Anabaptist, I am quite sympathetic with the need to address the question as to how we engage in dialogue with that segment of the academic community which does not share our own Christian worldview. I believe that the Anabaptist/Mennonite emphasis on peace and reconciliation might have something important to teach us about how we relate to those who disagree with our Christian convictions. Indeed, the Jacobsens’ argument grows in part out of this same theological framework. But my worry is that the agenda of the Jacobsens is much larger than this. Again, they seem to be taking on the language of postmodernism and thereby rejecting the very idea of a battle for truth. They want conversation rather than combat. While they are forced to admit that the imagery of a great spiritual struggle between forces of darkness and light ‘is merely standard Christian theology’, the repeated expressions of concern about the conflict model, and the stridency with which they attack Marsden and Naugle would suggest that they are in fact wanting to deny the very existence of such a struggle. They worry about applying the battle imagery to the realm of scholarship ‘too quickly’, but give no criteria as to when it is, and when it is not, appropriate to use such imagery. Indeed, it would seem that the Jacobsens would rather not use this imagery at all, what with their tendency to see combat and conversation in either-or terms.

But, there is a spiritual battle going on, also in the realm of ideas and scholarship. To my mind there is nothing strident about Marsden and Naugle applying the image of warfare thinking to the world of Christian scholarship. It is very biblical. The battle imagery begins in Genesis and doesn’t stop until the book of Revelation. And the imagery is very specifically applied again and again to the world of ideas. The wisdom of this age and the rulers of this age stand in sharp contrast to the divine wisdom found in Christ (1 Cor. 2:6). We are called to ‘demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ’ (2 Cor. 10:5). ‘See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ’ (Col. 2:8). We need the armour of God to stand up against the devil’s schemes, and included in this armour is the belt of truth (Eph. 6:10-18). Jesus was in fact very confrontational at times when he encountered error especially with so-called intellectuals! Thus Naugle is perfectly justified in suggesting that ‘a worldview warfare permeates biblical revelation.’²⁶

26 Naugle, *Worldviews*, 280.

To explicitly or even implicitly deny these contrasts between truth and error, light and darkness, good and evil, and then to minimize or even negate the idea that Christians are engaged in a battle for truth, light, and goodness, is to be unbiblical. As already mentioned, while the Jacobsens admit that this notion of spiritual and ideological conflict is ‘merely standard Christian theology’ this admission is in fundamental tension with their repeated expressions of concern about conceiving of the task of Christian scholarship in terms of conflict, conquest, and an antisecular crusade for truth. As any Christian academic knows, when, in the academic community, Christ is clearly upheld as source of all wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3), antagonism and persecution will come very quickly from the secular academic community.

Let me provide just one example from my own experience – a blind assessment report of an application that I made for a research grant: ‘Could Dr. Thieszen overcome his own personal religious convictions and concentrate on developing philosophical arguments that could compel and stand against any critical inquiry simply because they represent philosophical thinking at its best regardless of one’s religious affection or affiliation.’ This is an outrageously biased request that is rooted in a dogmatic secular mind-set which is unable to appreciate anything that smacks of a religious orientation in scholarship. And this is not the only time that I have encountered this kind of a bias as I have tried to be faithful, over the years, to do battle for Christian truth in the area of the philosophy of religion and religious education.

It is important here to show the connection between the anti-conflict position of the critics of Reformed thinking with the earlier discussion of postmodernism. Here I would recommend a rather hard-hitting editorial in a recent issue of *Themelios* which critiques the ‘veritable industry developing within evangelical circles with reference to what is tiresomely referred to as “postmodernism”’.²⁷ The editorial’s analysis of the real tragedy of evangelical writers who buy into the post-foundational relativist paradigm bears repeating at length:

What they appear to want is a bit of interpretive and doctrinal modesty; what they buy into is a way of thinking that destroys any critical edge which Christianity might have relative to the ways of the world around. It is perhaps no coincidence that so many of the evangelical postmodern gurus who maintain an orthodox faith have not studied systematics, philosophy or cultural theory outside of the seminary or Christian college environment, and have never worked in the secular university system. Instead, they have been surrounded by the safety of communities of teachers with no desire to take relativism to its obvious conclusion.²⁸

The editorial goes on to suggest that if these evangelical writers flirting with postmodernism would have spent more time in university environments ‘where postfoundational relativism is used to justify everything from female circumci-

27 ‘Postmodernism, Free Markets and Prophetic Margins’, *Themelios* 3 (2005), 1.

28 ‘Postmodernism, Free Markets and Prophetic Margins’, 2.

sion to infanticide', they might just find it easier to acknowledge the dangers of postmodernism. The further tragedy of evangelical scholars who buy into the post-foundationalist relativist paradigm, this editorial continues, is that it destroys any critical edge which Christianity might have in relation to the world. It destroys their prophetic voice. It undercuts their ability to take up the biblical call to do battle with the scholarship of the world around them. 'Woe to you when all men (and other scholars) speak well of you,' Jesus said (Luke 6:26).

As an aside, it should be noted that when the Jacobsens are trying to downplay the conflict between Christians and non-Christians in the area of scholarship, they prefer to use the language of 'faith' or 'spirituality' (xii). Now, I quite agree that the academic community is much more willing today to acknowledge a generic kind of faith or spirituality as important in understanding the world. But, unfortunately, generic spirituality is simply not good enough for orthodox Christianity. And when any Christian academic dares to make exclusive claims in the name of Jesus Christ, and when that person humbly and gently points to the error that exists in any realm of thought that denies that all wisdom and truth is found in Jesus Christ, that person will very quickly discover that he or she is engaged in a spiritual battle of epic proportions. Frankly, I found the movie version of 'The Lord of the Rings' inspiring. And as a Christian academic, I have been inspired by Reformed thinkers who have challenged me to take up the battle for truth in my area of study. Let us not bury this model too soon, or replace it with a conciliatory model which owes more to postmodernism than it does to biblical theism.²⁹

It further needs to be pointed out that the Reformed model of integrating of faith and scholarship provides a very nuanced description of the relationship between Christian scholarship and the secular academy. While admitting that there is a conflict going on in the realm of ideas, the classic statements of the integration model are careful to caution against arrogance and a crusading mentality. Marsden, for example, worries about 'the tone' of Christian scholarship. 'Not only should Christian commitments lead one toward scholarly rigor and integrity, they should also encourage fairness and charity towards those with whom one differs.' Indeed, Marsden specifically objects to 'tendentious scholarship'.³⁰

Reformed thinkers are also very careful to stress that there is some common ground between Christian and non-Christian thinkers, based on the doctrine of

29 The essay by Crystal Downing in the Jacobsen volume illustrates conciliation taken to an extreme. In describing the freedom of Christian scholarship to go out of the protective edifices of one's own tradition, and enter into relationships with the other, she suggests that 'freedom comes not through reconciling dissonant discourses' but through acknowledging the incompleteness of our claims to knowledge (43). While I agree that we must be careful not to come to conclusions too quickly, and I have more to say about this later in the essay, the call to reconcile all truth to Christ is surely a biblical call (cf. Col. 1:20).

30 Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 54-55.

common grace.³¹ Thus, Christians can work together with non-Christian scholars in the pursuit of truth. Naugle, therefore, in commenting on how worldview thinking alters the approach of Christianity to other philosophies and religions, suggests that Christianity ‘values the genuine insights other outlooks contain’.³² Instead of arrogance, Reformed thinkers stress humility, as I have already pointed out. At the same time, Reformed thinkers are careful to say that there is still a fundamental conflict that is inevitable given the different worldview orientations between Christians and non-Christians. How we engage in that conflict is of course another important question. And here Reformed thinkers affirm what Anabaptists like to emphasize. So even here there is no need for a new model for Christian scholarship. The old Reformed model quite adequately accommodates the need to defend the faith with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:16).

One or many models?

I conclude by returning to the overall thrust of the Jacobsens’ volume, which is very much in keeping with the current tendency among Christian scholars who like to argue for multiple models of Christian scholarship and higher education. While acknowledging the influence and even the usefulness of the Reformed model of integrating faith and learning, the Jacobsens urge us to ‘remember that this is but one way of understanding the task of Christian scholarship’ (26). The Jacobsens go on to argue that there is a need ‘to acknowledge and nurture the development of other models of Christian scholarship that can stand alongside and complement the Reformed, integrationist approach’ (26). Similarly, Richard Hughes expresses concerns about viewing the Calvinist model for Christian higher education as the only available model.³³ Both books go on to review various other models of Christian scholarship and higher education.

There is of course much to be said for ‘enlarging the conversation’ about Christian scholarship. There are differing Christian traditions, and Christian scholars

³¹ In fact, the Jacobsens acknowledge the role that common grace plays in defining the relation of Christians with scholars who do not share the same faith (26). The paragraph where this is acknowledged ends with this statement, exposing a questionable assumption made by Reformed thinkers: ‘Still, the assumption is that on most matters of scholarship Christians will see things more clearly than their non-Christian colleagues’ (26). Even this claim needs to be more carefully nuanced because the notion of seeing things more clearly is surely very vague. What is surprising is that the Jacobsens characterize Reformed scholarship in such stridently negative terms when they in fact acknowledge the Reformed emphasis on common grace which makes communication with non-Christian scholars possible. Earlier in chapter 1, they further point out that Wolterstorff admits that Christian scholars will sometimes have to revise their control beliefs in the light of scientific advances, that sometimes faith should give way to learning (22). This hardly sounds arrogant and non-cooperative.

³² Naugle, *Worldviews*, 11.

³³ Hughes and Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education*, 5.

should be aware of the traditions that shape their academic work. Indeed, no academic works in a ‘traditionless void’, as the Jacobsens point out (77). The Jacobsen volume frequently refers to the Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, who argued for a dialogic approach to knowledge. Conversing with others provides for a ‘surplus of seeing’, and thus helps us to recognize our own blind spots as well as those of others (78). Yes, there is a danger that Christian scholars preclude such conversation by adopting a fortress mentality which tends towards premature answers and dogma. Hence the attractiveness of Bakhtin who advocates the ‘unfinalizability’ of ‘becoming’ as the various imbricated discourses of the self take on new shapes through genuine dialogue with the vocabularies of the ‘other’.³⁴

But, there is also a danger of an overemphasis on unfinalizability, becoming, dialogue and plurality. In this essay I have tried to argue that the current frequently made call for multiple models of Christian scholarship rests on some problematic assumptions, a central one being the uncritical adoption of post-modernism. I have also tried to show that the objections raised against the reigning Reformed integrationist approach as made by the Jacobsens are themselves problematic and even unfair. So, *should there be* multiple approaches to Christian scholarship, as is being increasingly maintained by evangelical scholars today? I think not. Indeed, I believe that the Reformed model of integrating faith and learning is in fact, ‘if not the one and only valid way to do Christian scholarship, clearly the best and brightest way’.³⁵ Of course, it might benefit from some fine tuning. But, let us not lose the tremendous benefits that this model offers by proposing unnecessary alternative models.

Here one final important point needs to be made. The purpose of enlarging the conversation is in fact to come closer to the truth. As Bakhtin himself recognized, conversing with others helps us to recognize our own blind spots, but the aim of all this is to help us to see better, and to know better. An overemphasis on unfinalizability and dialogue and plurality will in fact undermine the very process of moving towards a more adequate model of Christian scholarship and

34 Downing, in Jacobsen and Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith*, 42.

35 The Jacobsens use this phrase to criticize the Reformed model (*Scholarship and Christian Faith*, 25).

higher education.³⁶ Here let me illustrate by setting up a hypothetical situation and starting with some assumptions about the Reformed model of Christian scholarship. Let us assume, as even the Jacobsens grudgingly admit, that the long-standing and very influential integration model is a powerful and very useful way to conceive of faith and scholarship. Let us further assume that the advocates of this model of Christian scholarship have in fact tended to overlook the importance of deep personal commitment to Jesus Christ, as well as the importance of 'living the questions' of intelligent faith, moving too quickly to providing 'neat and tidy answers to all the quandaries of life', as the Jacobsens maintain.³⁷

36 It is of course difficult to know when one has overemphasized unfinalizability and dialogue and plurality. Elsewhere I have suggested that the key to avoiding such an overemphasis is to seek a reconciliation between the insights of modernism and postmodernism, and in the area of education to maintain a balance between commitment and openness, and between teaching for commitment and teaching for openness. See Elmer John Thiessen, *Teaching for Commitment: Liberal Education, Indoctrination and Christian Nurture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

The Jacobsens are not alone in succumbing to an overemphasis on these matters. It strikes me that Brian Walsh also goes too far in accommodating the insights of postmodernism in a recent essay where he warns about the danger of worldviews becoming repressive ideologies. For example, he maintains that it is 'highly inappropriate that we should ever claim universal finality for our worldview' ('Transformation', 112). While I agree with the intent of this claim, a problem remains in that it is in fact impossible to avoid claiming universal finality for our worldview, or for any other claims that we make, for that matter. Truth claims are by their very nature universalizing. Weaver describes this in terms of confessing truth with 'universal intent and significance' (*Anabaptist Theology*, 27, 137). We need to face this fact, while at the same time confessing our fallibility and our sinful condition, and therefore offering our truth claims to others with a degree of tentativeness, gentleness and humility.

Walsh also maintains that we cannot conclude that our worldview represents universal finality because a worldview is a construct, rooted in a particular time and place (112). Again, while I agree with this, we must be careful not to think of a worldview as merely a construct. Worldviews represent an attempt to view and understand a given world – a common world. As such, worldviews are not entirely arbitrary and human. And while they are rooted in a particular time and place, they are always seeking to transcend this particularity – hence the inescapability of making claims that seem to have universal finality. For an account of epistemology that maintains a healthy balance between 'particularity and self-transcendence' see, Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), esp. ch. 3.

37 Jacobsen and Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith*, 46, 60 fn. 2. I believe that these claims are in fact false and even the Jacobsens are forced to admit, in this same footnote, that Wolterstorff is one exception to these generalizations. In fact there are other examples that could be provided to show that these claims about Reformed thinkers are false. Naugle, for example, ends his book with a caution about substituting a theoretical system of belief for passionate commitment to a personal Saviour. He also maintains that a 'genuine Christian Weltanschauung must always

What should we do about this? Yes, we need conversation with other faith traditions like the Mennonites who emphasize radical discipleship, for example. And yes, we should engage in conversation with other traditions, even atheistic existentialists who stress the importance of ‘living the questions.’ But the purpose of such conversations is to learn from them. It is to recognize our own blind spots. And ultimately such learning should lead to a refining of the Reformed integration model. The purpose of such conversations is to improve something that *should be replicated in all institutions* of higher learning. Thus again, we don’t need many models of higher education, but we should all be striving towards one model that best captures a balanced Christianity.

Of course, the Jacobsens will probably find all this talk of refining existing models and striving towards a better model problematic. It sounds argumentative and rational, rather than contemplative or conversational (47). Unlike arguments that are necessarily oriented towards a clearly defined goal, conversations meander along. ‘Conversation is more like a walk through the woods than a race around the track; it is more cooperative than competitive’ (47). Yes, we need conversation with the other. And yes, we need to cooperate with the other, and live at peace with everyone – as much as is possible, Paul says (Rom. 12:18). But if we only have pleasant conversations that don’t go anywhere, that are not searching for the truth, then of course we have undermined scholarship itself. That is the ultimate conclusion of a paradigm of Christian scholarship that reflects our postmodern times more than it does a biblical understanding of truth and our struggle for truth. Indeed, it might even be better to remain silent! And whatever happened to the biblical imagery of running a race and winning a prize (2 Tim. 2:5)?

Conclusion

Does all this matter? Is the difference between having multiple models of Christian scholarship and Christian higher education, and there being only one best model, an important difference? Does the distinction between ‘enlarging the conversation’ or ‘refining the conversation’ matter? Yes indeed – it does matter if there is such a thing as truth. It does matter if there is a God who is the source of all truth. I, for one, have certainly found the Reformed model of integrating faith and learning to be an inspiration in my academic career.³⁸ I have also found

be formed and Reformed by the Bible as the Word of God’ (Naugle, *Worldviews*, 331–39). The Jacobsens further admit that the positive qualities of Christian thought and discipleship that I have hypothetically described as missing in Reformed thinkers are ‘not necessarily foreign to those who affirm the integration model’ (60 fn. 2). The word ‘necessarily’ is important, because we need to distinguish between theory and practice when we criticize a position. A failure in practice does not undermine a theoretical model!

³⁸ David Naugle provides some similar biographical reflections of the significance of worldview thinking in his academic career, in the Preface to his book (*Worldview*, xx–xxi).

it to be a key to helping me to expose the faith-presuppositions underlying the worldviews of my students over many years of teaching philosophy within a secular context. And that is why I, even though I am a Mennonite, don't want the Reformed model of worldviews and their approach to higher education to be abandoned too quickly and for the wrong reasons.

A final teasing question involving the application of the argument of this essay. Suppose that I am right in maintaining that the recurring proposals for multiple models of Christian scholarship are in fact unwarranted. Suppose that the Reformed model of integrating faith and learning (with perhaps some refinements) is in fact the best, and perhaps even the only valid way to approach Christian scholarship. Suppose further that the basic doctrines of creation, fall and redemption which all Christians agree on are in fact central to defining what Christian scholarship should look like. Does it not follow that the plurality of denominational institutions of higher learning, particularly in the area of the liberal and applied arts and sciences, is really a mistake?

Abstract

This article critically evaluates a growing trend among evangelical academics to reject the notion of a worldview and the related long-standing model of integrating faith and learning as espoused by Reformed scholars. It is argued instead that there are many models of Christian scholarship and higher education. I argue that we may be giving up worldview thinking and the Reformed model of integration of faith and learning too quickly and for the wrong reasons. While I agree that we must be open to other voices, conversations with the other must go somewhere. We must seek an ever more adequate model of Christian scholarship and education. The long-standing Reformed model of faith and learning might need refining, but not abandonment.

Ecumenical and Eclectic Studies in Honour of Alan P.F. Sell

Anna M. Robbins (ed.)

In this collection of essays in honour of Alan P.F. Sell colleagues and friends offer reflections on his work and other related themes under the banner of the unity of the church in the contemporary world. The essays explore the foundations of unity, its historical context and some of the challenges of ecumenism today. Together they make a unique contribution to the theme which has occupied so much of Sell's attention over the years, and which continues to be of crucial importance to the life of the church.

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