

THE BAPTIST EDUCATOR



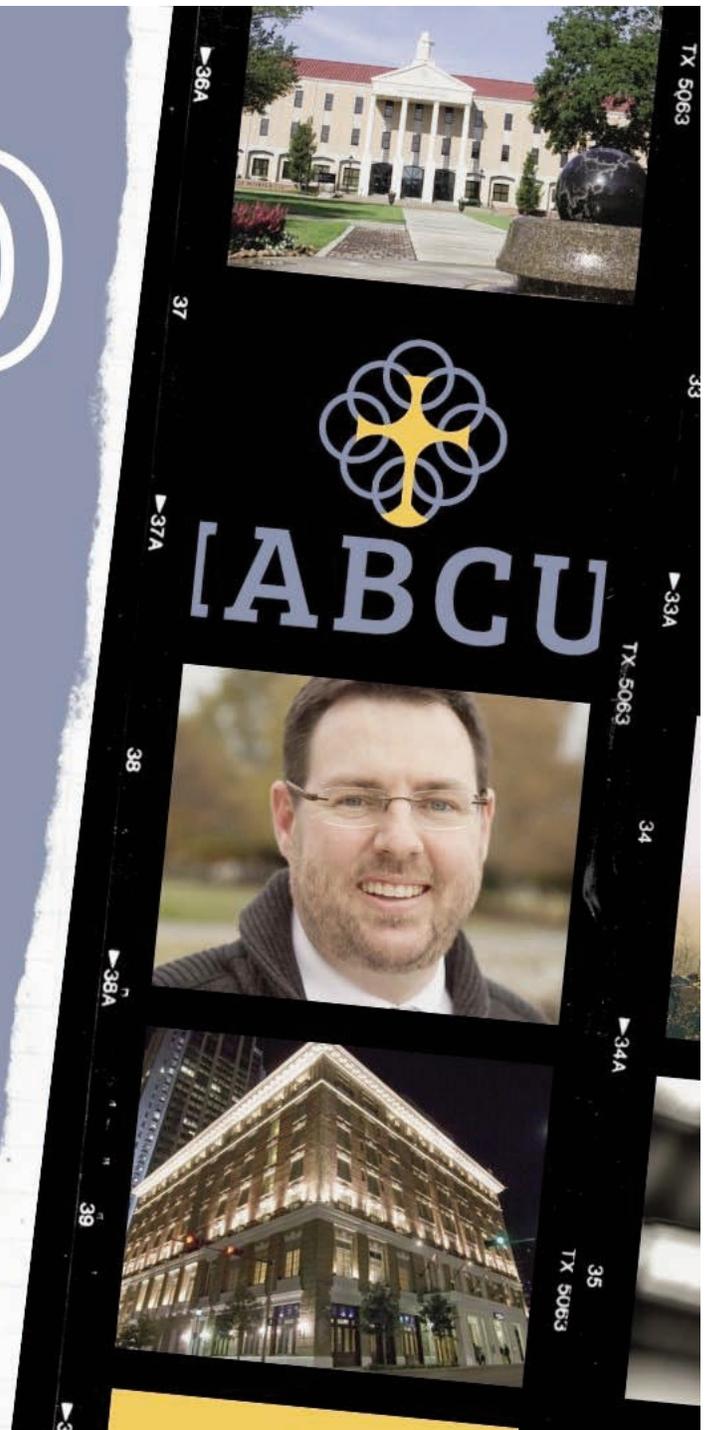
News Journal of the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities

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2020

Annual Meeting

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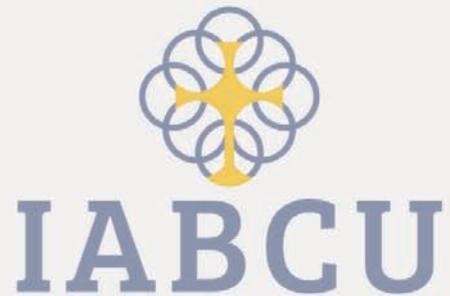
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COMMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT: *IABCU UPDATES*

Dr. Gary Cook, IABCU Vice Chair and Chancellor,
Dallas Baptist University

It is my privilege to serve this year as the vice chair of IABCU. It has been a joy to be a part of this group for the last thirty-two years. The summer annual meetings have always been a special time of refreshment, renewal, and reflection for me. Not only have I received inspiration and wisdom from the speakers, but I have also learned so much from my fellow administrators. After a difficult academic year, I have often needed this time of fellowship and inspiration with my fellow presidents, provosts, chancellors, and administrators.

I would like to invite you to attend the annual meeting to be held May 31 – June 2 in Mobile, Alabama. The new president of the University of Mobile, Dr. Lonnie Burnett, and his faculty, administrators, and staff will be hosting us. We will be staying at the historic and elegant Battle House Renaissance Hotel in downtown Mobile.

Our very organized executive secretary, Ashley Hill, is including in this issue of *The Baptist Educator* more information about the annual meeting. We are certainly



looking forward to hearing Dr. Elijah Brown, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, present the Hester Lectures. In addition to presenting the Hester Lectures, Dr. Brown will also be sharing with IABCU leaders future partnership possibilities with the Baptist World Alliance.

We want to thank Dr. Steve Vernon, associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, for his years of service on the Board of Directors. Steve has retired from this full-time responsibility at the BGCT and will begin a new part-time ministry at our IABCU member school, the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He will be assisting the gifted president of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Dr. Randy O'Rear, in denominational relations. Steve has been a true servant leader and has provided great wisdom on our Board of Directors. We will surely miss him.

Dr. Carolyn Bishop has accepted the nomination to serve as Dr. Vernon's replacement. Look all the world over, and there is no one like Carolyn Bishop. She has served faithfully as the executive director of the Consortium for Global Education for a number of years. The Consortium for Global Education is our partner in Christian higher education, and we will surely benefit from having Carolyn on our Board of Directors.

I hope the spring semester goes well for all of you who are reading this publication. Let us all pray for God's blessing on our schools and for wisdom to know His will. As challenges and opportunities come my way, I always pray for wisdom to discern the Lord's will. I often turn to Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." My prayer for each of you is that you will feel the Lord very close to you this year and that you will have the "peace that passes all understanding" as you serve.

Sincerely,

Gary Cook



OBU Selects Dr. Heath Thomas as 16th President

The Oklahoma Baptist University Board of Trustees have selected Dr. Heath Thomas as the University's 16th president. Thomas had served at OBU as the dean of the Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry and the associate vice president for church relations.

Thomas joined the OBU faculty in 2015 after serving as director of Ph.D. studies and associate professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake

Forest, North Carolina.

A 1998 OBU graduate, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature with a religion minor. He then earned a Master of Arts in Theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Old Testament from the University of Gloucestershire (UK). He also earned a certificate for leadership in higher education from Baylor University in 2016. He has served on staff at churches in Oklahoma, Texas, North Carolina and in the United

Kingdom. He preaches and teaches regularly, and has served as interim pastor for several Oklahoma churches during his time at OBU, currently serving at First Baptist Church of Moore.

He and his wife, Jill, reside in Shawnee with their four children: Harrison, Isabelle, Simon and Sophia.

Thomas is grateful for the opportunity to lead his alma mater and excited to impact students in the years to come.

“I am thrilled and deeply humbled to serve as president of our University,” Thomas said. “For over 100 years, OBU’s distinctive Christian liberal arts education has formed students so that they might meaningfully engage their world. I am excited to be a part of OBU’s story, and I believe the brightest days lie before us. I ask all to join me to pray that God would continue to bless OBU.”

Dr. Hance Dilbeck, executive director-treasurer of the BGCO, served as an ex-officio member of the search committee.

“The search committee spent much time in prayer, asking the Lord for direction,” Dilbeck said. “They also followed a very intentional and thorough process. The Lord has been faithful to lead

them to a distinguished scholar, capable preacher and a committed Baptist churchman who exudes enthusiasm and vision for the future of OBU. Dr. Thomas loves the Lord, and he loves OBU. I join all Oklahoma Baptists in supporting him. I believe we will see the Lord do great things in the years to come.”

Stephen Allen, chair of OBU’s Board of Trustees and senior vice president, general counsel and assistant secretary for ONEOK, also served as a member of the search committee.

“The Board of Trustees was delighted to elect one of our own, Dr. Heath Thomas, as the 16th President of OBU,” Allen said. “As a student, Dr. Thomas experienced OBU’s Christian liberal arts

tradition. As a dean and a member of the faculty, he understands the importance of integrating faith and knowledge as we train the next generation. As a president, he has the vision to continue the mission of OBU well into the future.

Allen praised Dr. Pat Taylor, who served as interim president after the retirement of Dr. David Whitlock.

“I would also like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Taylor for his outstanding leadership as our interim president. His passion and love for OBU is extremely evident and his wisdom and years of presidential experience were a huge asset to the University.”



Over the years, the Christian Higher Education Leadership Seminar at Baylor University has provided leadership development opportunities for hundreds of academic administrators in Christian colleges and universities from around the world. The seminar is hosted by Baylor School of Education and is sponsored by the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities (IABCU). Geared towards faculty, deans, program heads, and future administrators in Christian institutions of higher education, the seminar covers a wide range of issues from leadership principles, to institutional culture and Christian identity, to conflict resolution, to the nuts and bolts of day-to-day administration and legal issues. The program features a balanced mix of speakers, participant discussion, and other interactive methods. Deadline for registration is April 15.



Carson-Newman University Inaugurates 23rd President, Dr. Charles A. Fowler

Carson-Newman University has inaugurated Dr. Charles A. Fowler as the 23rd president of the 168-year-old institution.

David Ogle, chair of the presidential search committee, said the task of finding C-N's next president was not one the committee took lightly.

"Our search was bathed in prayer," said Ogle, who noted that they had received more than 75 nominations by over 100 individuals. "Not a time did we gather that we didn't go to the Lord in prayer to guide us in our search and to yield a nominee who would, in every way, be His nominee."

Fowler has served as senior pastor of Germantown Baptist Church in West Tennessee since 2010. The church enjoys a rich history of faithful Gospel ministry and missional engagement.

"The opportunity to serve as president of Carson-Newman University is incredibly humbling and exciting," said Fowler. "I look

forward to locking arms with Carson-Newman's trustees, faculty, staff, students and alumni as well as the churches of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. We look forward to working together to graduate servant-leaders who are equipped to be difference makers for the cause of Christ. Great days are ahead!"

The Corinth, Mississippi, native is no stranger to Christian higher education. Before answering the call to pastor Germantown, he served as senior vice president of University Relations at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. For more than 15 years, he served at Union in various roles including vice president for Enrollment Management, vice president for Development, professor of Christian ministries and education, founding executive director of the Union University Foundation and director of the R.G. Lee Center. While Union's chief development officer, Fowler helped secure approximately \$150 million in gifts and grants in support of the school's mission.

Along with holding the rank of full professor at Union, Fowler also taught at Mississippi State

University and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

His other leadership roles have included serving on the board of trustees for the International Mission Board, Baptist Memorial Healthcare, Union University, Blue Mountain College and the Leadership Council for the Ethics



and Religious Liberty Commission, as well as being chaplain for the city of Germantown.

His honors include the Union University Distinguished Service Award and being named an Alumni Fellow and Outstanding

Doctoral Student both from Mississippi State University.

"Dr. Charles Fowler is one of those rare individuals whose life experiences are a perfect fit for our institution," said Harry Brooks, chair of C-N's Board of Trustees. "His experiences in academic development and external relations will help propel Carson-Newman toward a bright future of growth and expanded programs of study."

Fowler is a graduate of Union University, Mississippi State University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife Sandra have two daughters.

Fowler, who assumed his new role July 1, 2019, succeeds Dr. Randall O'Brien who retired in 2018 after a decade of leadership.

Founded in 1851, Carson-Newman is a Christian liberal arts university located in Jefferson City, Tennessee, among the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. The

University has over 2,500 students and offers 50 undergraduate majors, as well as associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees

University of Mobile Names Dr. Lonnie Burnett As 5th President

Lonnie Burnett has been named the University of Mobile's fifth president.

Burnett, who served six months as interim president upon the resignation of Dr. Tim Smith in February of 2019, was appointed into the role in November, 2019.

Burnett, who is an alumnus of the university, most recently was executive dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and previously was vice provost, assistant vice president for Academic Affairs and president of the Faculty Council.

"It quickly became obvious there was no 'interim' in Dr. Lonnie Burnett's commitment to lead the university to becoming all that it can be. The board's action today makes it official. Dr. Burnett is the fifth president of the University of Mobile, and we are enthusiastic about the

future with his leadership," said Board Chairman Fred Wilson.

Burnett states, "The University of Mobile is a special place. While

we have a beautiful campus with great academic programs and facilities, it is our people who make the University of Mobile unique. It's a place where stu-

dents are known, educated and mentored by dedicated faculty and staff who ensure they are gaining more than just a degree from college. We truly believe we are advancing 'Higher Education for a Higher Purpose.'

Dr. Burnett has served as a member of the Saraland City School Board since 2010 and was one of five school board members statewide to be named to the 2017 All-State School Board by the Alabama Association of School Boards. Dr. Burnett has compiled an impressive scholarly research record. He has published two books with the University of Alabama Press, "Henry Hotze: Confederate





Sciences and a full professor. He gained tenure in 2012. He has written numerous articles, book chapters and reviews, and received the university's Mitford Ray Megginson Research Award in 2006. He is an active member of Redemption Church in north Mobile. His wife, Lynne, and daughter, Lauren Burnett Wetzel, are both UM graduates.

The University of Mobile was founded in 1961 as Mobile College. Dr. William K. Weaver, Jr., was the first president of Mobile College, a position he would hold until his retirement in 1984. Mobile College became the University of Mobile in 1993. Throughout the decades, the University of Mobile has maintained a highly dedicated faculty providing quality Christian higher education with a devotion to the intellectual and spiritual development of students: Higher Education for a Higher Purpose.

The University of Mobile is comprised of seven colleges and schools. The institution offers 50 bachelor's degrees, 14 master's degrees, and two doctoral degrees. The campus is over 880 acres.

The university's enrollment is more than 1,800, including students from 34 states and 23 nations.

Propagandist,” and “The Pen Makes a Good Sword: John Forsyth of the Mobile Register.” He has served in leadership positions or has been a member of professional organizations including the Alabama Historical Association, Society of Civil War Historians, and Southern Historical Association. He serves as managing editor for *The Alabama Review*, a quarterly journal of Alabama history published by the Alabama Historical Association in cooperation with the University of Mobile.

He graduated in 1979 with a Bachelor of Arts from University of Mobile, then Mobile College. He earned a Master of Arts from University of South Alabama and Doctor of Philosophy from

University of Southern Mississippi. He taught regular and honors U.S. history at the high school and middle school levels in the Mobile County Public School System from 1980 to 2004, serving as chairman of the history departments at Semmes Middle and Satsuma High schools. He taught several years as an adjunct history instructor at UM, retired from the public school system, and focused on his second career as a college professor and author. He served as visiting assistant professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi in 2002, where he earned a Ph.D. Dr. Burnett joined the University of Mobile in 2005, eventually becoming chair of the UM Division of Social and Behavioral



UNIVERSITY *of* MOBILE

IABCU ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 31 - JUNE 2, 2020

Joining us as the 2020 Hester
Lecturer will be Dr. Elijah
Brown, General Secretary of
Baptist World Alliance

**ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN AT
WWW.BAPTISTSCHOOLS.ORG**



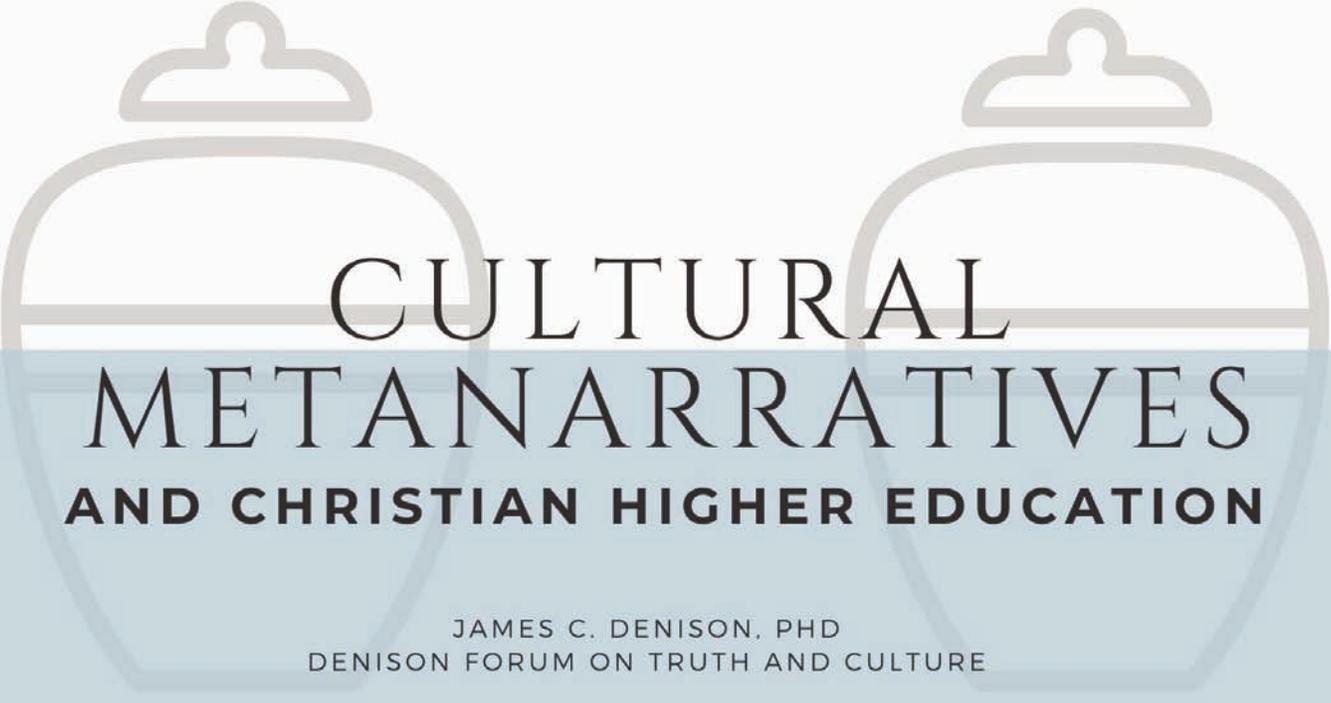
MOBILE, ALABAMA

The 2020 annual meeting will be hosted by Dr. Lonnie Burnett and the University of Mobile.



Conference hotel will be the historic Battle House Renaissance. Rooms are available at \$152/night. See reservation info at www.baptistschools.org.





CULTURAL METANARRATIVES AND CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

JAMES C. DENISON, PHD
DENISON FORUM ON TRUTH AND CULTURE

Let's begin with an approach to our subject that I have found especially helpful.

George Friedman is the founder of Stratfor, a geopolitical analysis organization. In his bestselling books he posits the concept of a "metanarrative." He sees this as a kind of cultural DNA, a "north on the compass" that defines a nation. The concept applies to a company, a church, and even a family, I think.

He would argue that your universities and your seminaries have a metanarrative. He would argue that this metanarrative explains your history and predicts your future. And he says that if you can understand a nation's metanarrative, you can better understand not only where they have been but where they are going. And you can predict off of that with some level of success.

To illustrate: Iran is obviously, in the geopolitical world, very much in the news on a daily basis. I just got back from Israel a few weeks ago. I've been to Israel over thirty times. I

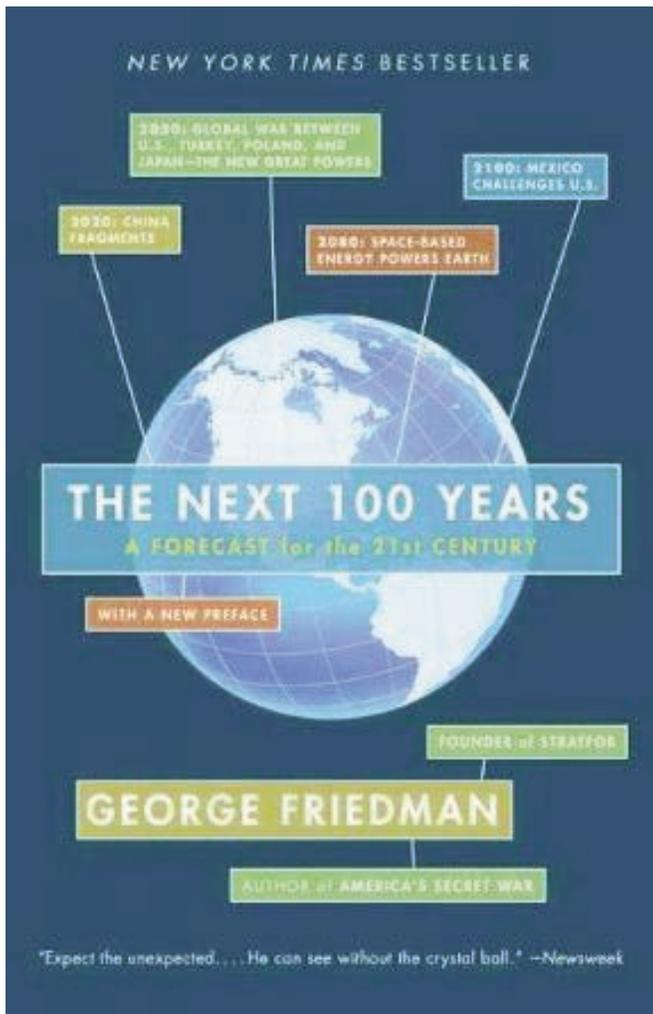
love leading study tours to Israel, and I'm fascinated by the Middle East and the geopolitics of that region. In Friedman's mind, what is really going on is a metanarrative of rebuilding the Persian Empire. He believes that is really what is behind the scenes here. Iranians are Persians. "Iran" is a new name, as it were, describing the Persian Empire. It was developed, really, in the 20th century. Persians are not Arabs. In fact, there was a cold war that may even be heating up between the Arabs of Saudi Arabia and the Iranians. And what Iran is after with the Shiite Crescent, as it is being called, from Iran through Syria to Hezbollah and into Lebanon is really a rebuilding of the Persian Empire. It is a desire to regain a pre-eminence in at least that part of the world that they believe they have historic claim to. And so Friedman interprets their motives and their decisions in light of this larger metanarrative.

He would say the same thing about Turkey. Turkey's Ottoman Empire was at one time the largest empire

the world had ever seen. And when you're watching what Erdogan is doing now, you're seeing the way that they are oppressing journalists, turning what was a secular democracy into much more of a theocracy, and with Erdogan trying to position Turkey as the leader of the Muslim world, what Friedman and others would suggest is that really, in some ways, they are trying to rebuild an empire, an Ottoman Empire.

When you're trying to understand Vladimir Putin and what's happening in Russia, what you really need to think about is Mother Russia. You need to be thinking about the USSR and the belief that there really is, in Russia's Manifest Destiny, a kind of geopolitical leadership that they believe they have lost and that they must regain. And what Putin does is, in part and parcel, done in the means of advancing that metanarrative.

You are obviously aware of the Islamic state. I've done a lot of work on the topic of radical Islam. I was a missionary in the Muslim world at



one point. I am fascinated and very troubled by what is happening currently in that part of the world. I'm very afraid of the fact that ISIS losing its caliphate is causing us to think that they are less of a threat. In some ways they are more of a threat, as they have been exporting fighters around the world. I know you really don't want to hear that, but it is a real challenge to us. But their idea remains that this is the intended caliphate, and it is the caliphate they will have one day. ISIS believes they should be able to name the land masses they want to have under their control as part of this intended caliphate. They would build the metanarrative around those desires.

And so George Friedman, if he were here tonight, talking about the culture and context of Christian higher

education, would suggest this idea of a metanarratives a way of understanding where we've been and where we are going.

So how does that apply to us? How does that apply to your context and to your calling? I'm here tonight to suggest three cultural metanarratives that can help explain why America is where we are and where we are going, and then in our next lecture we will talk about some practical applications of that relative to Christian higher education.

Let me suggest three cultural metanarratives. These ideas are not new to you. I'm not here to provide groundbreaking new research. I'm here to give us a way of interpreting and reframing a good deal of what we already know is happening, in a way that could perhaps be helpful.

The first cultural metanarrative is this: Truth is personal and subjective. We are now dealing with what is known as the post-modern shift. Post-modernity. As a philosopher, let me do in about three minutes what took me a semester to do when I was at Southwestern Seminary. I would suggest that the way we got to post-modernity started with the Protestant Reformation and with the response to it by Rene Descartes. Descartes wanting to find a way to defend his Catholic tradition in the light of the protestant movement. Descartes, being a mathematician, had a desire to

build an apologetic around his Catholic faith. He comes to the belief, as a mathematician would, that doubt is the means by which one guarantees truth. A mathematician doesn't guess at a sum of numbers; they doubt they have the right answer until they've proven it. Doubt becomes the means of achieving truth. Descartes comes to realize he can doubt anything. He can doubt that you exist. He can doubt that he exists. What he can't doubt is the he is doubting. If he is doubting, he must be thinking. And I think, therefore I am. Cogito, ergo sum. That is rationalism. Pure rationalism – truth comes through the unaided use of the mind, says Descartes.

The reaction to Descartes, known as British empiricism, comes from John Locke, who says that no, truth comes through the senses. Seeing is believing. There are all sorts of reasons that Locke and others come to this position instead of rationalism. And it's a massive issue in that day and in that culture. It sounds pretty abstract today, but in that day and time, it's really critical in the culture. There is a war, an epistemological war, going on between the rationalists and the empiricists.

And then a fellow, one really not heard of in the larger world, was teaching philosophy at the University of Konigsberg in Germany. He brought the two together. His name was Immanuel Kant. Kant suggested that truth is how your mind interprets your senses. And you might say, "Well, of course it is." But you wouldn't have said that before Kant. At least, not the way he did with critiquing pure reasoning, critiquing practical reasoning, critiquing judgement. Why am I telling you this? Here is the practical outcome:

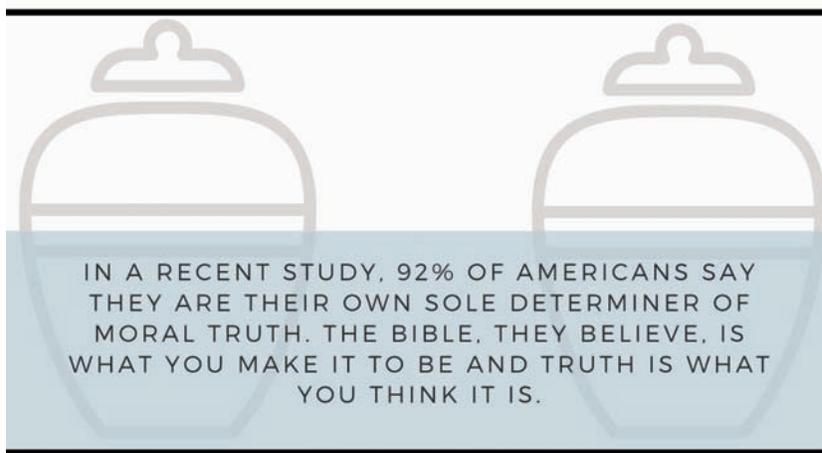
According to Kant, because knowl-

edge is how your mind interprets your senses, and no one interprets the world in exactly the same way as anyone else, and no one interprets their sense experience in exactly the same way as anyone else, therefore there can be no such thing as absolute truth. There can only be your truth and my truth, because your mind interprets your senses differently than mine does. You have the same primary categories, according to Kant – quantity, quality, substance, and relation – by which you might interpret data. However, that’s like the software on your computer. You type the keystrokes on the keyboard, the software interprets the keystrokes, and the results go onto the hard drive. It goes onto the cloud, and that’s what you call knowledge. But your mind is different from mine, and your senses are different from mine. So, by definition, you cannot know the thing that Kant calls “the thing in itself.” If I’m holding an object in my hand, I can look at it, smell it, taste it, and I can tell you what it sounds like, but I can’t know the thing in itself. I can only know my experience of it, and my experience of it is different from yours. You take that through Nietzsche and get to the post-modernists, and you get to conventional wisdom today – that truth is personal, individual, and subjective. And Americans who might have never heard of or read Kant are convinced that he is right.

In a recent study, 92% of Americans say they are their own sole determiner of moral truth. The Bible, they believe, is what you make it to be and truth is what you think it is. They might say if the Bible works for you, great! But don’t force it on me. You have no right to force your

beliefs on me. By definition, they believe, there can be no such thing as absolute truth.

Now, that is, of course, an absolute truth claim, right? There is no such thing as truth? And we’re sure of it? That line of thinking doesn’t work practically. If there is only relative truth, how do you decide speed limits? How do you do seat belt laws? Your truth is yours, my truth is mine. The cyanide that I sprinkled on your dinner is just my truth? At the end of the day, you can’t do a society in post-modernity, truly.



September 11, to a radical Muslim, is a completely different metanarrative than it is to you and me. They have absolute reasons for why they did what they did. It goes back to Qur’an 2:190, and their belief that the West has been oppressing Islam since the Crusades, and their belief that they are commanded by the Qur’an to defend Islam by attacking us. So 9/11 is not an unprovoked attack on innocent Americans. 9/11 is a defensive Islam striking back at the heart of Western crusader imperialist aggression. The Twin Towers - financial, the Pentagon - military, The White House - political. That’s how Osama Bin Laden explained the events 9/11. That’s his metanarrative. A post-modernist would have to say, “Who am I to say he is wrong?” It doesn’t work, as a culture, but it’s where we are, nevertheless.

You live in a culture that believes truth is personal, individual, and subjective. You deal with students who have never heard of Immanuel Kant, will never read anything by Immanuel Kant, but they are convinced his teachings are true, whether it has to do with one’s biblical commitments, one’s biblical worldview, or one’s biblical orthodoxy. That’s just the conventional wisdom of the day.

And this leads to a second metanarrative: Sexuality is therefore your choice. One of the ways we drive

post-modern relativism into cultural expression is the belief that our sexuality is, therefore, what you define it to be. It’s not really a coincidence that the sexual revolution of the 1960s begins to occur at the same time the post-modern revolution of the 1950s and 1960s has been

sweeping American academics. Another much-overlooked phenomenon was the legalization of oral birth control in the 1960s. All of that together started a movement that begins by saying, “I have control over my body. Therefore, I can have sex whenever I wish.”

That moves into 1973 when Roe v. Wade legalized abortion, as an expression of this same post-modern relativism. “Therefore, I can choose what to do with what is inside my body.” That moves, ultimately, to Obergefell and the belief that “Therefore, I can marry whomever I marry or whatever gender I wish.” And we’re not done yet. That train hasn’t come to its destination yet.

The next stage on the journey is polygamy, the argument that if the state can’t tell you what gender to

marry, it has no right to tell you how many people to marry. There are 50,000-100,000 polygamist Muslim families in America today. Because Islam allows a man to marry up to four wives, the way it works today is that a man marries his first wife legally and the next three in civil ceremonies at the mosque or the Islamic center. They aren't legal marriages, but they are practical marriages. The argument is, "What right does America have to tell a Muslim that he can't live the way he wishes to live?" Polygamy is the next stage.

Beyond that is what is known as "consensual marriage." Consensual

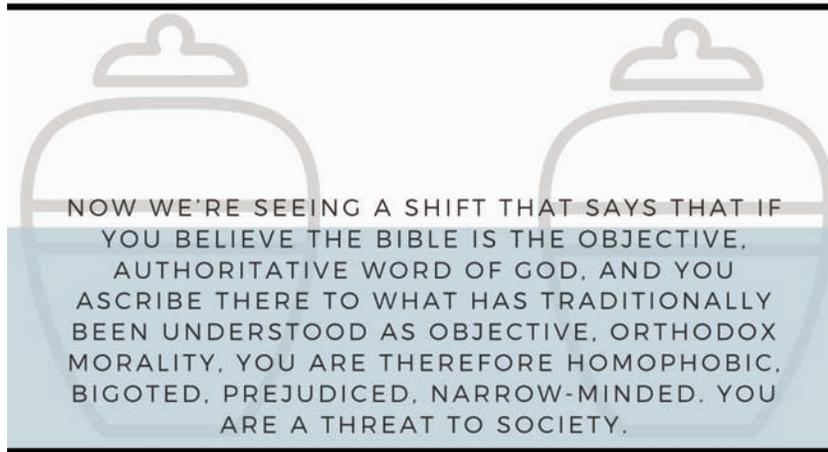
marriage is the argument that people ought to be able to marry whoever they want to marry regardless of biological relation or age. Because, again, what right do we have to tell anybody else what to do with their own bodies or their own relationships? It goes to gender politics and

gender identity. It goes to transgenderism, the LGBTQ movement, that 30 years ago drafted a very specific game plan and is following that game plan. And they are moving in forward. And they are doing so in the context of a metanarrative that says sexuality is your choice.

And that leads to one last cultural metanarrative: If you disagree with anything that I've said then your religion is dangerous. I'm old enough to remember when people went to church on Sunday, or at least they said they did. I remember blue laws, which meant you couldn't buy certain things on Sunday. I remember a day when you wouldn't schedule a soccer practice on a Sunday, because Sunday was a day

set aside for church. My family didn't go to church; I had no church background at all. Nevertheless, we lived in a culture that thought Sunday was a day set aside for church. That was how Christianity worked. And that was at the center of the culture. When the west was settled, the first thing that would go into a new town was a church. Usually it was on Main Street in the center of town. It was typically the tallest building in town. The idea was that the church was at the center of culture.

Then in the 1960s, we started seeing the church move to the sidelines, because of this post-modern relativism issue among other things.



This idea that church was really just for Sunday and that religion can be separated Sunday from Monday. That spiritual and secular were separate and so were religion and "real world." And now church becomes less relevant to the culture. It's really seen as kind of innocuous. "It's fine of you want to go to church, but don't tell me I have to go to church. I don't mind if you do." As I said, I didn't go to church at all growing up, but I didn't mind of people did. Whatever they wanted to do with their spare time was fine with me. It was like a hobby.

But now we begin to see another shift. We've gone from religion is central to religion is peripheral to religion is dangerous. Now we're see-

ing a shift that says that if you believe the Bible is the objective, authoritative Word of God, and you ascribe there to what has traditionally been understood as objective, orthodox morality, you are therefore homophobic, bigoted, prejudiced, narrow-minded. You are a threat to society. That is the third metanarrative.

Archbishop Francis George, who died recently of cancer, said, "I expect to die in bed. My successor will die in prison. His successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and will slowly help to rebuild society as the church

has done so often in human history."

You have seen Catholic Charities being forced out of the adoption business unless they are willing to adopt babies to same-sex couples. You might have seen Governor Cuomo announced a few years ago that right-to-life Christians have no place

in New York state. I didn't know governors got to make those decisions, but nevertheless, that was his pronouncement. You might follow Richard Dawkins and have seen his t-shirt that says, "Religion: Together We Can Find the Cure." He says, "Religion is a virus on the software of humanity that must be expunged." Or seen Christopher Hitchens' book *God Is Not Great*. The subtitle is "How Religion Poisons Everything."

I was actually privileged to be on a panel discussion with Mr. Hitchens several years ago. I'd published a book around the same time he had, and we were at a publishers convention in Orlando. I had the chance to be in a panel discussion with Lee

Strobel, Bill Craig, Douglas Wilson, myself, and Mr. Hitchens. Off the panel, he was terrific. He was fun to talk to. He was witty. He was gracious to us. On the panel, he was very acerbic. That was kind of his thing, his schtick, as it were. He died a few years ago of esophageal cancer, but prior to the debate he and I were talking about this, and I mentioned that I had a philosophy background. And so I was interested in his subtitle “How Religion Poisons Everything.” He had some philosophy background as well.

So I said, “You know, of course, that religion has no ontological status, meaning, it doesn’t exist as a thing. How much does religion weigh? What color is religion? It’s a category. It is an umbrella.

There are only specific religions (plural) like Judaism, Christianity or Islam. And so for you to say how religion (singular) poisons everything means that you are really saying that every expression of religion at any point in history across all of human history poisons everything.”

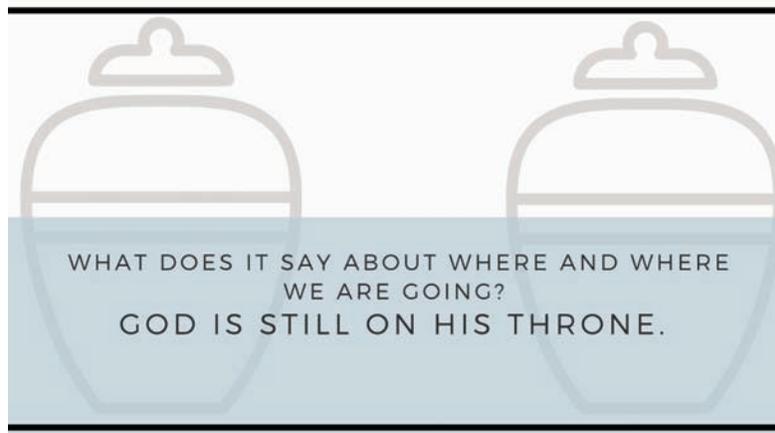
He said, “That’s exactly what I’m saying.”

He said, “religion flies planes into buildings and causes 9/11s. Religion causes clergy abuse scandals. Religion spends money on buildings instead of people and heaven instead of earth. As Richard Dawkins says, ‘We’ve gotten rid of all gods except one, and we only have one to go.’ And religion poisons everything. Religion is dangerous.”

I get to live in Dallas, Texas, where we don’t see the implications of this nearly so much as some of you do where you are. The closer you get to a coast, the more difficult it

becomes to get zoning for a church. The more difficult it becomes to operate a Christian ministry without fear of slander by the press.

Michael Lindsay is a dear friend of mine, and I think of what he has gone through at Gordon College has been nothing short of horrific. His intent and the intent of the school has been so misinterpreted by the press in the Boston area. I really do think this is where we are and where we are going. In our next lecture, we will talk more about that. What does all of this say about your Title IX status or your student handbooks? What does it say about your codes of conduct that you have in place for faculty and staff or your student body?



What does it say about where and where we are going? God is still on His throne.

I’d summarize the cultural metanarratives I’ve presented to you by suggesting to you if I’m trying to explain how we got where we are and why ten years ago the world looked so differently than it does now, I’d put it into three categories. I’d say that we have come to a place as a culture where we believe truth is personal, individual and subjective, and therefore sexuality is your choice, and if you disagree with me then your religion is dangerous. Now, let me lay against that the briefest explication as I can offer of

what a Christian metanarrative would look like. You know everything I’m going to suggest already. I’m simply listing these things to show you how radical they are in the context of the cultural metanarratives in which we live and serve.

If I were to build a biblical metanarrative, I would argue that God is King. All through scripture, God is a king. Jesus begins His ministry with the pronouncement, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” He teaches us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,” and “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” And when He comes back, He will be King of kings and Lord of lords. All through scripture God is a king, and not a ceremonial king like we see today.

But a king who owns it all. You are sitting in His chairs. You are breathing His air. You are wearing His clothes. He is king on Monday, and not just Sunday. He is king of what you do in private, not just what you do in public. That’s the kind of king God is. How revolutionary that is in a culture that believes truth is

personal, individual, and subjective and doesn’t want you to force your king on it. They want to be their own king. They will choose their own king. They will make the king whoever they wish the king to be. And that’s why, as I suggested earlier, in our culture God is a hobby. God is for Sunday, but not Monday. God’s the spiritual but not the secular. He is the religious, but not the real world. And everybody knows, “You can’t force your hobbies on me.” How radical to call God a king!

The second part of a biblical narrative is that scripture is truth. It’s what Schaeffer called true truth. It is not just my truth or your truth,

but it is objectively the truth. How radical that claim is, how dangerous that claim is, in our culture. The culture doesn't mind you calling scripture your truth, unless you force it on me. And I understand that. I'd be terrified of living in a theocracy in such that the Qur'an were understood as THE Truth, and I were forced to live by sharia law. That would be a disconcerting situation. That's how so much of the culture looks at you and me today. They see our imposition of biblical authority on the culture the same way we would see an imposition of Bhagavad Gita or Hindu teachings or the Talmud or the Qur'an. They want you to stay in your lane. They would tell you that the separation of church and state means the separation of faith and state. It doesn't, but that's nonetheless the claim. And it's a terrifying claim to claim that scripture is truth.

The third part of a biblical metanarrative is that Jesus is the only way to the Father. How radically narrow-minded and bigoted and prejudiced a statement could you make?! Even though Jesus made it. Even though Peter said, "There is no other name under heaven by which you must be saved." Even though when you unpack our claim to the exclusivity of Jesus and the gospel, the logic is compelling. Buddha didn't die for our sin. Muhammad didn't die for our sin. "The wages of sin is death."

The consequence of sin is that it cuts us off from God, who is the source of light and eternal life. When you cut flowers off to put them in a vase, the moment you cut them they start dying. Death is the consequence of sin. That's why the payment for sin is death. I can't pay for your sin because I have my sin

to pay for. The only one who could die for me is someone who didn't need to die for themselves, and only one person in human history qualifies. And it's not unkind and judgmental to say that Jesus is the only way to heaven because that way is open to every person who will take it. If I wished to become an active Buddhist, I'd have to follow the four noble truths and the eightfold noble path and be devoted to a lifetime of ascetic discipline. If I'm going to seek the Hindu path with its multiple reincarnations or Islam with its five pillars of Islam or Judaism with its 613 laws of Judaism, I must learn the ways. But if anybody on the planet will ask Jesus to be their Lord, will have eternal life tonight. It's not bigoted to say there is only one key if that key opens every lock.

And that's what we offer.

But, again, the culture doesn't hear that. The culture doesn't see that. The culture thinks our claim to the exclusivity of Jesus is exactly what it is – counter-cultural. It couldn't be more counter-cultural in a post-modern culture

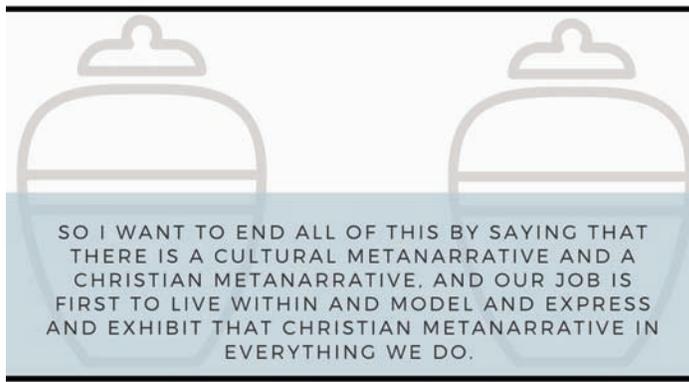
faculty, your staff, and to your students how critical it is that we love those that we serve. And that we serve them because we love them. And let the culture see love as the motive behind all that we do. Unfortunately, that is not what the culture sees when it looks at evangelical Christianity today. They see clergy abuse scandals, judgmentalism, extremism. We really have a way to go, don't we, to rebrand ourselves? To reclaim ourselves as primarily those that are known for loving God and loving others.

And lastly, in a Christian metanarrative, eternity is coming. I'm certainly not here to announce when that will happen. But I do know this – we are one day closer than we have ever been. And there really is a heaven, and there really is a hell. And what we do with Jesus makes an eternal difference. And, again, the culture doesn't want to hear that, doesn't believe that, doesn't understand that. And that's our job, isn't it? If we are THE salt of the earth and THE light of the world, it is our job to add salt where it is needed and add light where it is needed. And the good news is that the God who made the universe will empower us, encourage us, lead us, and help us to do well with that.

So I want to end all of this by saying that there is a cultural metanarrative and a Christian metanarrative, and our job is first to live within and model and express and exhibit that

Christian metanarrative in everything we do. And then second, to speak the truth in love in such a way as to bring that metanarrative to play in the cultural context where God has assigned us.

I close this talk with a call to courage because where we are is a moment that requires courage. God



The fourth part of the Christian metanarrative is that we are to love God and others. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." "Speaking the truth in love" motivates me every day. We cannot overemphasize – YOU cannot overemphasize to your

not only has a where for you, but He also has a when for you. We all have the sense that there is a geographical call of God in our lives, the Macedonian vision that I know God called my family and me to Midland and to Atlanta and to Dallas, and we have a clear sense of God's leadership in all of that. And I trust that you have a clear sense of God's leadership in where He has placed you, the where of your ministry. But there is also a when in God's providence. It's by His providence that you weren't around 100 years ago. Or 100 years from now, if the Lord tarries. If you couldn't be effective

when you are, then you wouldn't be when you are. If you couldn't be effective in the chronological moment, to these challenges and these issues, then God wouldn't have you facing these challenges and these issues. If God couldn't use you to be salt and light today, then you wouldn't be here. There is a when and there is a where. And God is Lord of all of that.

I'll close by inviting you to a courageous commitment to what God has called you, to the leadership where He has placed you. I mentioned leading study tours of Israel. We always make the last stop the Garden Tomb. We tour the tomb and have a Lord's Supper service together as a group. And then I always close by offering

to the group my favorite confession of faith (outside of scripture). There are many versions of it, and it has been attributed to many different authors. It was given to me when I was pastoring in Atlanta. I had a dear friend and mentor there that led an international missions-equipping ministry. It was in that context that this has been given to him. It was found in the diary of a young pastor in Zimbabwe who had been martyred for his faith. After his death for Jesus, it was found in his journal. It's called "Fellowship of the Unashamed." I offer this to you as God's invitation to you:



I am part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, shut up, slow down, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, promotions, plaudits, or praise. I don't have to be right, first, tops, regarded, praised, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean by prayer, and labor with power. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my way rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, and my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back,

deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of suffering, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of compromise, pander at the pools of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I belong to Jesus. I will not give up, let up, shut up or slow up until I have preached up, prayed up, stayed up, and stored up for the cause of Christ. I must

go until He comes, preach until all know, give until I drop. And when He comes for his own, He will have no trouble recognizing me. . .my colors will be clear!

God bless you.

Higher Education Roundtables Offered by Capin Crouse

Higher education financial reporting and audit procedures, regulations, and tax issues continue to change rapidly. In order to keep faith-based institutions of higher education apprised of the ongoing updates in these vital areas, Capin Crouse hosts Higher Education Roundtable events each year.

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our three regional events coming in 2020.

Our first roundtable opportunity will be Tuesday, March 3 in Columbia, South Carolina. The event will be at the South Carolina Bar Conference Center.

The second opportunity will be on March 19, 2020, in Dallas, Texas. We will be hosted on the campus of Dallas Theological Seminary.

The third opportunity will be April 1, 2020 in Anaheim, California. The event will be hosted on the campus of Hope International University.

All events require a reservation,

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IABCU member institutions are invited to join us for a day of learning, networking, and fellowship as we work to advance the cause of Christian higher education.



LEGAL NOTES

Preview of a Coming Distraction

BY JAIME JORDAN

Call me irresponsible. I pay very little attention to what might happen in Washington, DC, because what does happen is often so very different. Like Sherlock Holmes, I prefer to reserve my limited memory attic for storing important facts. If I had used my attic to lay up all manner of proposed legislation and regulations through the years, I doubt I would have enough memory left to keep up with my email password.

Today I'm making two exceptions. Herewith, a visit from the Ghost of Regulations Yet to Come.

Any day now - quite possibly between the writing of this article and its publication - the Department of Education (ED) will release a final version of the first new Title IX regulations in 45 years. These will be the re-tooled version of the proposed regulations released for public comment 14 months ago and then recalled to ED's regulatory machine shop for modifications - which some hope will be extensive. Whatever modi-

fications are being made, you can rest assured that practically every college and university in the country will soon be changing policies, re-writing handbooks, and trying to understand exactly how to do education in a way that convinces ED no person is being subjected to discrimination on the basis of sex.

Be alert. These new regulations will require changes, and those changes will probably be significant. As for when the new regs will take effect, we won't know for sure until they are released. I expect an effective date before the beginning of the fall semester.

Following the admonition of Matthew 6:34, I won't bother to alarm you just yet about what changes may be required. Suffice it to say that the previous "one-size-fits-all" proposal would have burdened small schools with courtroom-style judicial systems more appropriate to large universities with large budgets. And it would have created a huge distraction from the school's primary mission.

Let's leave these impending regulations behind for now. ED has released another set of brand new proposed regulations addressing a totally unrelated aspect of Title IX - the exemption for certain religious schools. The law, as enacted in 1972, simply said that Title IX's prohibition on sex discrimination

shall not apply to an educational institution which is controlled by a religious organization if the application of this subsection would not be consistent with the religious tenets of such organization....

Although this statutory language appears to make the exemption automatic, ED's 1975 regulations said that any school wishing to claim this exemption "shall do so" by writing to ED's assistant secretary and identifying the regulations in conflict with the organization's religious tenets. Because of this requirement, some 228 schools wrote to ED to claim the exemption. After some pressure from the Human Rights Campaign and other groups, ED published a list of the schools requesting

religious exemptions. That list became a lightning rod, drawing attacks against religious schools for “stating their intentions to discriminate on the basis of sex.”

Finding itself in the eye of this storm, ED backtracked. A new Q & A appeared on ED’s Title IX exemption web page which said:

Q: Is a religious school required to submit a written statement to OCR [ED] in advance of claiming a religious exemption?

A: No. The regulation does not require that a recipient institution submit a written claim of exemption.

Now ED wants to broaden the interpretation of the Title IX religious exemption. On January 17, 2020, ED published proposed regulations to clarify which schools are eligible for the Title IX exemption.

These regulations could be very helpful. Since 1972, a lot of uncertainty has developed about what is meant by the phrase “controlled by a religious institution.” Does it include schools that withdrew from the control of a religious governing body (e.g., Baptist state convention) but still consider themselves religious institutions? What about schools that were founded as religious schools but were

never under the control of an outside body?

The proposed regs list six (6) factual circumstances, any one of which will entitle the school to claim the Title IX religious exemption. While the list is too long to quote here, two of the factors may be of particular interest to Baptist schools:

(5) A statement that the educational institution subscribes to specific moral beliefs or practices, and a statement that members of the institution community may be subjected to discipline for violating those beliefs or practices.

(6) A statement that is approved by the governing body of an educational institution and that includes, refers to, or is predicated upon religious tenets, beliefs, or teachings.

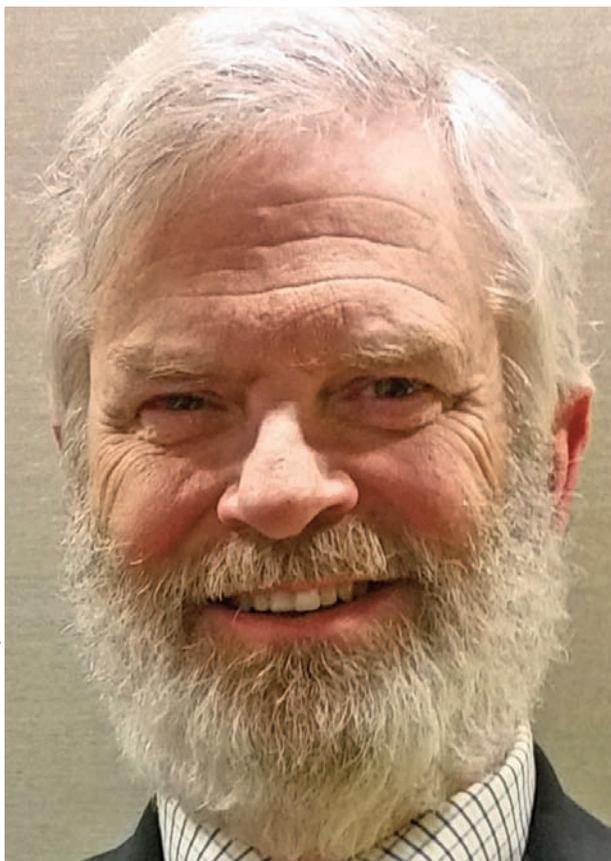
If these regulations become final, item (5) above would appear to grant the exemption to a school having a code of conduct with rules based on particular religious beliefs - for example, prohibiting sex outside of a traditional, biblical marriage. Or, a university’s board of directors could

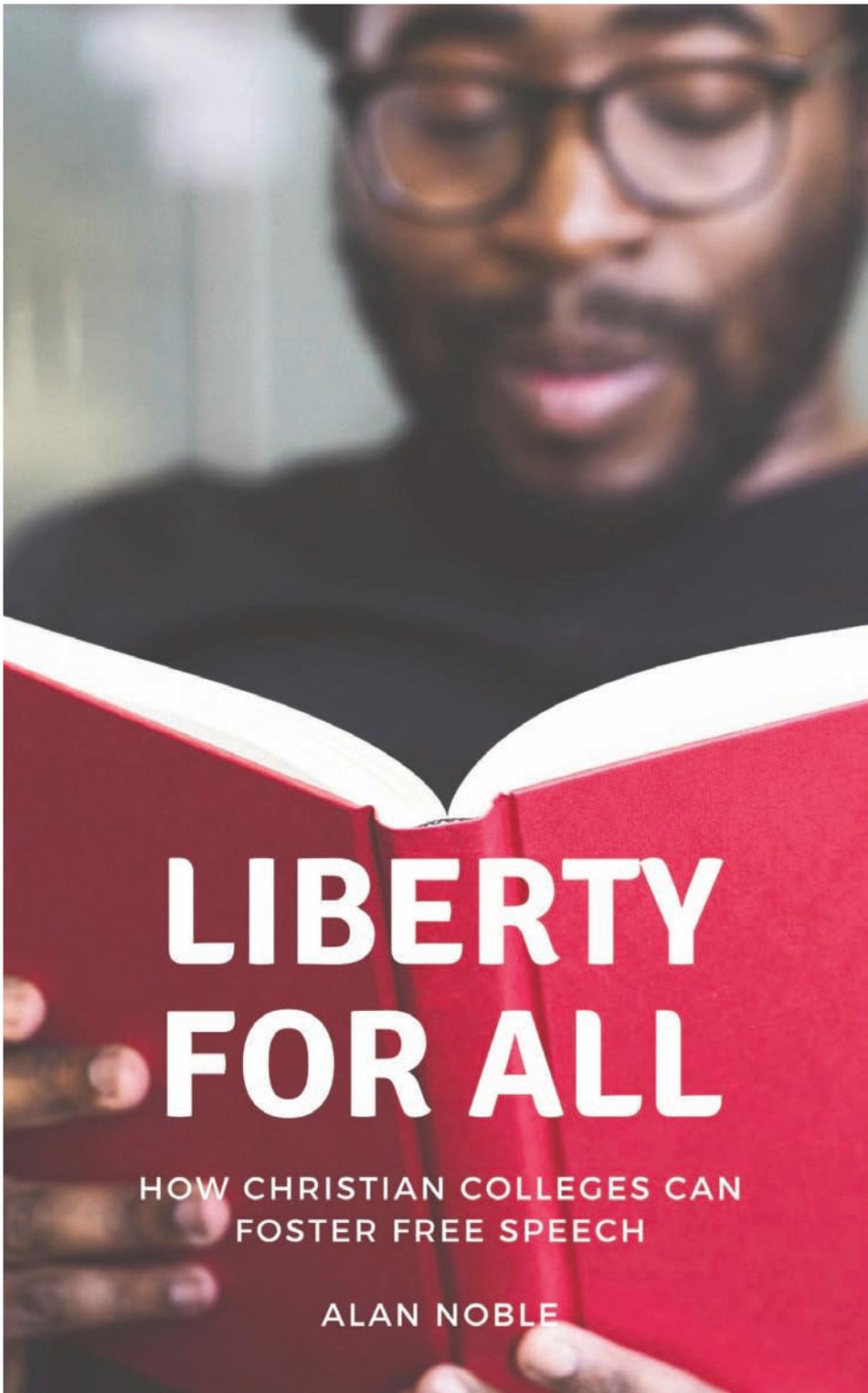
remove all doubt about claiming the exemption by adopting a statement “that includes, refers to, or is predicated upon religious tenets, beliefs, or teachings.”

These proposed regulations are open for public comment until February 18, 2020. After that, ED will consider comments and possible changes to the proposed regs. The regs can be found here, on page 3226:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-01-17/pdf/2019-26937.pdf>

Schools that want to see changes to ED’s list can submit comments directly, through their legal counsel, or through associations or affinity groups.





unappeased with these changes, submitting additional demands.

While Reed College may be an extreme example, debates over free speech on college campuses have become so heated that some states have passed laws protecting free speech on campus. Our country continues to drift further apart across political, economic, racial, and religious lines, and college campuses have become ground zero for these discussions—but not without good reason. Colleges and universities produce vital research and educate students, preparing them for the workforce and civic life. The ideologies that guide this research and teaching shape public policy, cultural trends, and voters. Which is why so much seems to be at stake in the debate over what kinds of speech should be permitted on college campuses. Curricula are amended, commencement speeches are canceled, speakers are protested, protests are counter-protested, and classes are interrupted by students who find the material offensive.

In the end, many wonder if free speech is even possible at the university level.

Christian campuses, from colleges and universities all the way to seminaries, are not immune from these culture wars—nor from the suspicion that they curtail free speech (although for theological reasons). Between policies prohibiting cohabitation and same-sex romantic relationships and mission statements claiming that Christianity is the Truth, the structures of many

In September 2016, a group of students began protesting a required humanities course at Reed College in Oregon. The course covered the ancient Mediterranean world, but the group argued it was Eurocentric and marginalizing to ethnic minority voices. These protests

continued for over a year. Student activists would target each Humanities 110 class, holding signs as they sat or stood near the professor for the entire period. In 2018, Reed College expanded its Humanities 110 curriculum to include Mexico City and Harlem; however, the protestors remain

Christian schools appear to be antithetical to the entire university enterprise. How can scholars pursue truth wherever it may be found if they begin by assuming they already know that Christianity is true? It's no wonder that some education leaders are calling for the end of Christian school accreditation.

To be fair to the critics, on occasion, Christian schools have stifled scholarly work because it appeared to challenge their faith statement. And sometimes they have censored school papers and pushed hard conversations away rather than inviting them.

Still, in my experience, Christian schools are remarkably open to free speech. Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries have resources to balance the pursuit of truth with the obligation to preserve goodness and justice. It is this balance, in fact, that allows these schools to be far more supportive of free speech than is commonly thought.

Expressive Individualism

Much of the hyper-sensitivity and trolling on college campuses can be seen as an outworking of “expressive individualism,” which is the widely held belief that life is meaningful only when we discover and express our identity—I matter in the world when I know who I am, and I express that identity, usually through consumerism and social media. When it comes to campus free speech, expressive individualism dramatically raises the stakes for debate. Instead of an idea being wrong or even harmful, it becomes an exist-

tential threat to students. If an idea challenges one of my closely held beliefs, then it challenges my identity, and if it challenges my identity, it challenges my very existence. Thus, when you disagree with me, you are actually questioning my humanity or right to exist. While this logic usually plays out in more explicit language on the political Left, the Right is just as committed to expressive individualism, and so they are just as likely to elevate their political beliefs into ultimate goods.

Perhaps due to the influence of expressive individualism, some people live in a paradox of desperately needing to announce their beliefs while feeling incredibly sensitive to the beliefs of others.

Here is where Christian colleges and universities have an advantage. By rejecting expressive individualism, schools can provide a better foundation for engaging ideas that offend, challenge, or trouble students. The Christian understanding of identity is grounded in personhood, our unique createdness as humans by a loving God. Because our worth is not contingent upon our ability to express our identity, we should be able to entertain opposing viewpoints without feeling existentially threatened. Our personhood remains an objective fact regardless of what others may say. When faculty teach students to have this confidence in their personhood and avoid the insatiable demands of expressive individualism, Christian campuses can produce the vibrant intellectual debate that ought to define the university.

Language as Power

Another belief prevalent on secular campuses is this: All human interactions are fundamentally about power. If the basic truth about our relationships is that we are always competing against one another, then taking offense and giving offense turn into strategies of leveraging power. When we see ourselves as antagonists, we have no incentive to listen or respect one another and we have every incentive to coerce, shame, mock, and persuade each other into submission.

The Christian alternative is that we see our neighbors as fellow image-bearers of God, those we are called to love, whose interests Paul commanded us to consider. In disagreement and debate, we desire that our opponent is won over by the beauty, truth, and goodness of our argument, for their own good. The purpose of argumentation is not to “own” someone but to edify and exhort them. Such an approach to public discourse doesn't come any more naturally to students and faculty on Christian campuses than it does to those at secular schools, but Christian schools have the theological framework and vocabulary to make charity the defining characteristic of campus speech.

I have seen this work on my own campus. Burdened by the racial tensions in our nation and the church, last year, student leaders at Oklahoma Baptist University organized an event where we sat, listened, and talked with one another about racism. At times, the conversations were tense and difficult. They required vulnera-

bility and humility. But overall, it was a success. I suspect that in many secular colleges, events like this would either alienate anyone who wasn't already progressive in their understanding of racism or devolve into a yelling match. Our Christian conception of the human person enabled us to speak charitably to each other, even—especially—when we disagreed.

Freedom and Limits

Underlying this debate over freedom of speech is a deeper discussion on the relationship between limits and freedom. In America, we tend to think of freedom as the absence of limits. If someone limits what we are allowed to say, what words we can use, what kinds of arguments we can make, we feel that our free speech has been infringed upon. At the same time, we acknowledge that there are extreme cases where limits are necessary. The University of Chicago released a “Statement on Principles of Free Expression” in 2012 which has served as a kind of manifesto for Jonathan Haidt (co-founder of Heterodox Academy) and other campus free-speech advocates. The statement calls for speech “free from interference.” Where the statement does place limits on speech, they are almost entirely legal: defamation, harassment, and threats. These restrictions are presented as unfortunate exceptions to the rule of “free and open inquiry,” which the statement refers to as one of the defining characteristics of higher education.

By way of contrast, the traditional Christian understanding proposes

that proper limits constitute freedom. In John 8, Jesus claims that “the truth will set you free,” but this is a freedom from sin and toward righteousness (v. 32). When the Jews ask Jesus how he can make them free, he replies that “everyone who sins is a slave to sin. . . . So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (v. 34, 36). Limitless freedom does not exist; it is a lie we tell ourselves to conceal our slavery to sin. True freedom, to be “free indeed,” is to be obedient to God’s law, to live according to his will. Limits are not a necessary evil but a constituent good of freedom.

We can see this dynamic work out in marriage. To a certain secular way of thinking, committing to one person for life in marriage is an infringement upon our freedom. What if your tastes change? What if you want some variety? What if the other person changes? What if you discover some latent desire that only a different sexual partner could fulfill? Christ demands that we deny these impulses. Not only are we to stay sexually faithful to our spouse, but we also are prohibited from even fantasizing about infidelity. And yet it is precisely within these limits that we have the freedom to love. Without these limits, our desires will be swept away by every fleeting passion, enslaving us to the insatiable hunger for novelty or vanity. When we acknowledge these limits, they create a vision for our desires; our spouse ceases to be a hindrance to attaining love and becomes the subject of that human love.

Christian doctrines and practices

constitute the good, the true, and the beautiful in which God calls us to live. Freedom is not doing whatever I desire but being given agency by the Holy Spirit to live life in Christ—that’s true freedom. So while Christian schools are willing to study why non-Christians reject the doctrine of the Trinity or Christ’s atoning work on the Cross, those doctrines are not matters of debate. If a school gives up those essential doctrines, it cannot help students pursue a life of freedom in Christ.

How these limits work themselves out in practice is a matter of prudence and discernment, but the key is that administration and faculty have a responsibility to care for the souls, hearts, minds, and bodies of their students—not to stifle them but to help them live in the freedom that is Christ. That means, from a secular perspective, restricting free speech. From a Christian perspective, it’s what makes true free speech, and freedom itself, possible.

The “Statement on Principles of Free Expression” assumes that we are autonomous rational agents who are responsible for discovering truth for ourselves. According to this anthropology, it would be offensive for professors or administration to decide what ideas students should adhere to—that would be an infringement on their autonomy and an insult to their reason. But this view of human persons is flawed. We aren’t autonomous; we are communal, with ties and obligations that bind us. We aren’t rational agents, but rational, physical, and spiritual. And we don’t discover

truths for ourselves, but rather we conform to the Truth of reality, a universe made by God.

This may seem like it would lead to a Christian intellectual bubble, where all the difficult and hostile secular ideas are hidden from students or reduced to caricatures. However, in my experience as a graduate student at Baylor University, we read and discussed the best secular thought in our field without misrepresentation or denigration. We read postmodern and queer literary theory in a Christian community of scholars, treating the texts with respect and seriousness, even when they were antagonistic to our faith. Embracing limits did not mean retreating from scholarly discourse—it meant engaging that discourse at the right time and with the proper context.

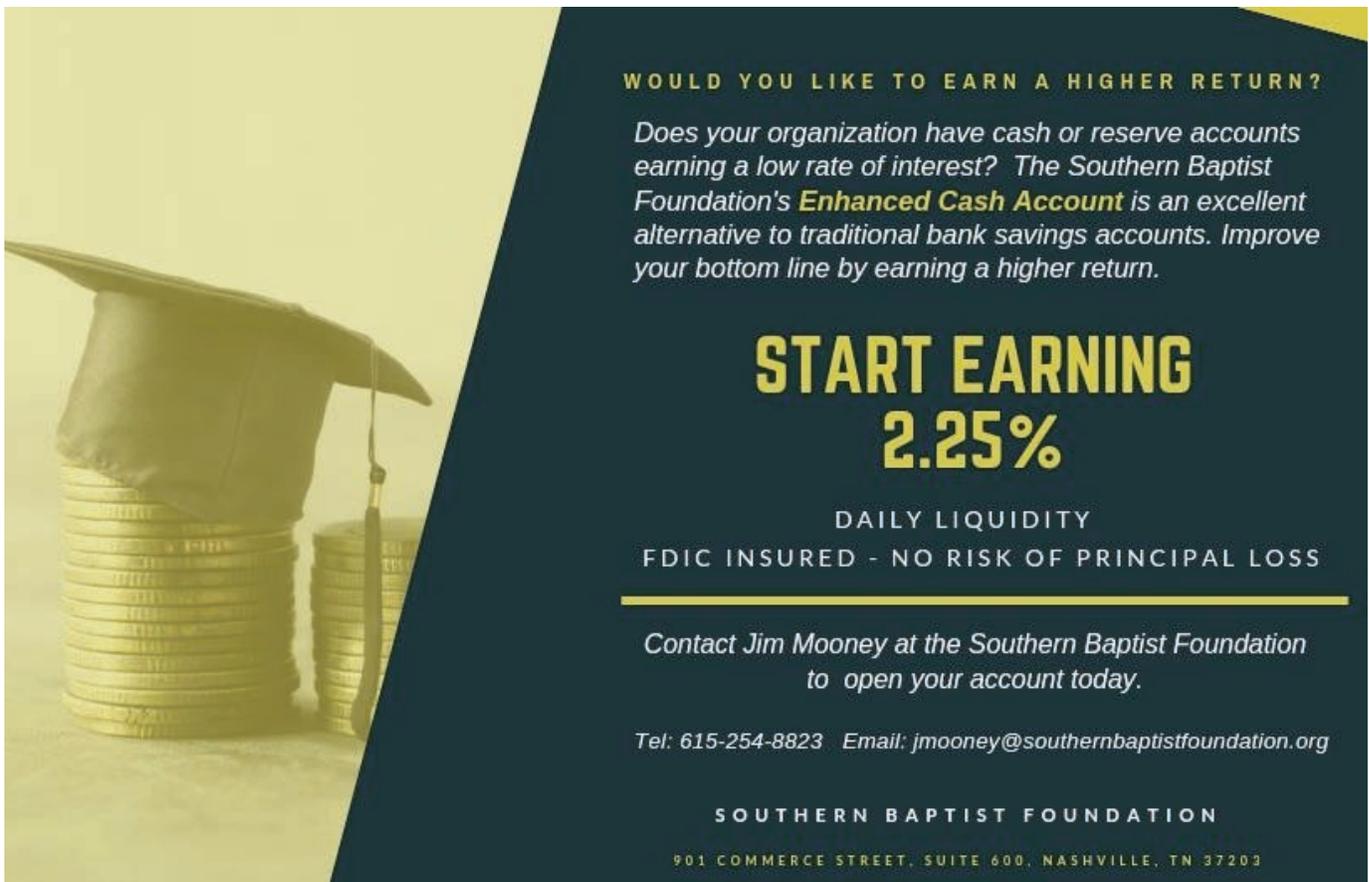
As tense as our public discourse is in 2018, I see glimmers of hope in my teaching. In a recent composition class, I witnessed two students peer review each other's papers with charity and grace, even though their chosen topics were at opposite ends of the culture war. One paper made a case for abortion while the other argued against children seeking gender transition. Here were two culturally sensitive subjects that could have easily led to offense, outrage, or protest. But my students not only tolerated views they disagreed with, they helped make those arguments more persuasive for the purpose of the essay. I hope that outside of the class, those students dialogue with that same charity and grace, without sacrificing truth.

The animus that divides our

nation is not subsiding, and higher education institutions will continue to struggle to balance the pursuit of truth with justice. Rather than being held back from free speech by religious strictures, Christian campuses can call upon shared values and a more humane conception of freedom to guide campus debates. This is not the "safe space" many conservatives and liberals seek to create. It involves challenging students' beliefs, unsettling their understanding, and pushing them to mature with guidance and love.

*Alan Noble is an assistant professor of English at Oklahoma Baptist University, the editor-in-chief of *Christ and Pop Culture*, and author of *Disruptive Witness* (2018, IVP).*

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