



CCU Review

of BOOKS, CULTURE, MEDIA, LIFE

Volume 5
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COLORADO CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY

Grace and Truth

September 2019

Go West, Young Man, Go West

Dear Friends,



“Go West, young man, go West!” That was a tweet from 1851 first posted by John Babsone Lane Soule in the *Terre Haute Express*.

Actually, it was not a tweet. But it was less than 140 characters. So it would qualify as a tweet today!

The expression was later picked up by Horace Greeley, who expanded it to “Go West, young man, and grow up with the country.” His line would also have worked in our modern-day twitterverse, but it was actually written in an editorial for the *New York Tribune* on July 13, 1865.

The modern West is quite different from what it was in 1865, but I can tell you this about the west. CCU is glad to be located in the beautiful Rocky Mountain West. We are thankful for the heritage of this region and those who built it. We are also grateful for the many good things that come from the heritage of western civilization. In that we are very different from other universities.

In this issue of the *CCU Review* I review Phil Anschutz’ recent two volumes about the makers of the modern West. Tom Copeland reviews a book in defense of the West (western civilization) by Ben Shapiro. Kevin Turner and Bill Watson review two classics that have shaped the West — *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, and *The Diary of a Young Girl*, by Anne Frank (both books first published in 1952).

Mere Christianity and the piece by Megan DeVore, “This We Proclaim,” (about how architecture can evangelize) are appropriate as we begin our Year of Evangelism.

Dr. Karen Prior’s new book, *On Reading Well*, is reviewed in anticipation of her visit to our campus in the spring. *The Coddling of the American Mind*, reviewed by Ryan Hartwig, is a modern critique of what is going on in universities.

We also have a movie review of the pro-life film, “Unplanned,” by Dr. Jill McElheny. The subject of that movie, Abby Johnson, recently spoke at CCU during the Western Conservative Summit.

Whether we are talking about building a region of the country, building a nation, building a civilization, or building disciples, reading is an essential skill for growing in understanding and raising up leaders.

So, *tolle lege*, my friend, (take up and read).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Sweeting". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donald W. Sweeting
President

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CCU Review

The CCU Review of Books, Culture, Media, and Life, a values-driven journal of peer-reviewed scholarly and creative work, is published semiannually by the Office of the President and the Communications and Creative Services department. While emphasizing articles of scholarly merit, the CCU Review is a collection of reviews and essays that are informed by and further enhance the values of Colorado Christian University as outlined in our Strategic Priorities and our Statement of Faith. We welcome suggestions on reviews and essays that are centered on ideas of interest that further the mission of CCU as a Christian, liberal arts university.

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This edition's cover art was inspired by the pioneering spirit that built the West.

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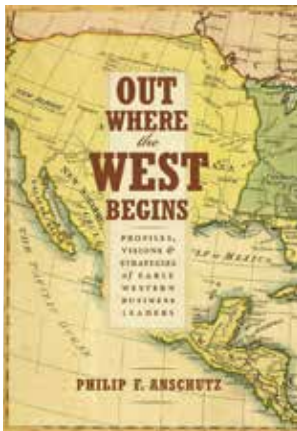
Out Where the West Begins

Vol. 1 and 2

by Philip F. Anschutz

REVIEW BY DR. DONALD W. SWEETING

President, Colorado Christian University



So where does the American West begin? It depends. Geographically speaking, you could answer — it was anything west of the 13 colonies, or anything west of the Mississippi River, or anything west of central Nebraska and the Great Platte River Road Archway

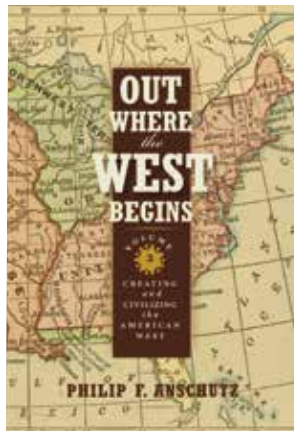
Monument which spans Interstate 80.

Chronologically speaking, one could begin with thousands of years of Native American history, the first Spanish explorers, the American pioneers, or what today is considered the region of the Far West (Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and beyond).

Or you could answer the question by looking at the region's values in a particular era. That is what poet Arthur Chapman had in mind.

*Out where the handclasp's a little stronger,
Out where the smile dwells a little longer,
That's where the West begins;
Out where the sun is a little brighter,
Where the snows that fall are a trifle whiter,
Where the bonds of home are a wee bit tighter,
That's where the West begins.*

This is the poem from which Philip F. Anschutz' two volume *Out Where the West Begins* draws its title. In these volumes, Anschutz gives us



150 profiles or mini-biographies. Volume 1 focuses on the period from 1800-1920, while Volume 2 covers a wider timeframe. Both look at the movers and shakers who made important contributions to the region's development and the unique qualities that helped these individuals

persevere.

The full title of Volume 1 is *Out Where the West Begins: Profiles, Visions & Strategies of Early Western Business Leaders*. Here Anschutz profiles 50 individuals — “an extraordinary cast of innovators, entrepreneurs and risk-takers [who] laid the essential groundwork for what we now call The American West.” He organizes the book around topics: early trade and commerce, agriculture and livestock, railroads and transportation, mineral extraction, manufacturing, finance and banking, entertainment, and communication. In Anschutz' words, these were “bold people of imagination, adept at maneuvering the rapids of change, alert to opportunity, persistent in their missions. They had big ideas [and] they were not afraid to test them.”

The full title of Volume 2 is *Out Where the West Begins: Creating and Civilizing the American West*. Here the author broadens the scope to include political and military leaders, religious leaders, explorers, surveyors, civil rights proponents,

suffragists, African American pioneers, writers, artists, architects, inventors, medical professionals, and early conservationists who also wove the story of the early western frontier.

A REFRESHING APPROACH

Like every written history, *Out Where the West Begins* is a selective history. It is not offered as a comprehensive survey of every movement, trend, or people group. I find this approach refreshing. Why?

First, it takes us beyond what has been routinely offered in histories of the American West. For example, it takes us beyond frontier histories which focus exclusively on explorers, soldiers, and early pioneers.

It takes us beyond the simplistic cowboy mythology of the American West.

It also takes us beyond social histories which focus on common ordinary lives or different ethnic groups. And yes, it takes us beyond the more recent grievance histories of the American West which are plagued by sweeping denunciations of the so-called European oppressors, (and tainted by a chronological snobbery which looks down on all these terribly flawed people who came before us).

Second, these books emphasize the unique contribution of business leaders and their entrepreneurial drive. All too often, this is overlooked in history texts. Why? Sometimes it is because of an over emphasis on other factors — politics, religion, military, etc. Sometimes it is due to an anti-business or anti-free-market bias. Or, simply because in an era of big government, there is a bias against individual initiative and a bias towards state intervention.

Third, I find this approach refreshing because it once again puts an emphasis on the importance of great leaders. History can, in part, be explained by the lives of highly influential individuals. This is not to say that other factors are unimportant — like social movements, environmental factors, genetics, providence, economics, germs, etc. Nor is it an excuse to idolize great individuals. It is simply to acknowledge the fact that some lives cast long shadows and have a decisive historical impact.

...it places a major emphasis on the unique contribution of business leaders and their entrepreneurial drive. All too often, this is overlooked in history texts.

— Dr. Donald W. Sweeting

Anschutz also writes about Cyrus McCormick, Brigham Young, Henry Wells and William Fargo, Leland Stanford, William Palmer, John D. Rockefeller Sr., Samuel Colt, Levi Strauss, Andrew Carnegie, Adolph Coors, William “Buffalo Bill” Cody, Thomas Jefferson, Sam Houston, Chief Red Cloud, Theodore Roosevelt, Frederick Douglass, Abigail Duniway, Horace Greeley, Frederick Jackson Turner, Jedediah Smith, John James Audubon, John Deere, and many more.



A FEW PROFILES

Here are a few of the characters we meet in these two volumes.

John Jacob Astor (1763-1848) was born in Germany but came to America in 1783. In his early years he served as an apprentice in New York to a furrier, where he learned the complexities of the fur trade. There he not only connected with frontiersmen, but began to dream — not of a regional trade network, but of a transcontinental trading empire. Astor eventually established a fur exchange that reached from New York to Montreal to London and Rotterdam, but his plan was full of risk.

During the Napoleonic Wars, European ports were closed and American shipping was threatened. The highly competitive and visionary Astor lobbied Thomas Jefferson for a plan to establish a trading base on the Pacific coast of North America. Since overland routes were not available, this meant sending ships from New York around the tip of South America and back up the Pacific coast. It was a hazardous six-month journey involving great risk. Beyond this, Astor also began to facilitate trade with Russian Alaska and China. His empire expanded and by 1820 he became the richest man in America.

Father Junipero Serra (1713-1784) was another unlikely person who helped make the West. Born in Spain, he entered into the Franciscan order and became a priest. He earned his doctorate in theology and served as a philosophy professor. At the age of 35, Serra had a growing desire to become a missionary. In 1749 he was sent to the Americas. Beginning his ministry in Mexico, Serra eventually was sent to what was known as Alta California (a part of New Spain). There he established the first nine of 21 Spanish missions from San Diego stretching north to San Francisco. He also had an indirect role in the founding of a new settlement called El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora La Reina de Los Angeles, now known as L.A. Serra built churches, baptized many, and introduced agriculture, viniculture, metal working, and livestock husbandry. He had a massive impact on the West.

Let me mention one more — *John Evans* (1814-1897). Evans was a Chicago-based physician who began investing in railroads and real estate. In Illinois, he founded a hospital, the city of Evanston, and Northwestern University. He was a builder.

Evans relocated to Denver after being appointed by President Lincoln as the second territorial governor of Colorado. When he arrived, many were abandoning the city for Cheyenne, Wyoming, because that is where the transcontinental railroad went through. But, Evans vowed to save Denver from obscurity. He became a prime mover and president of Denver's first railroad, the Denver Pacific, which he tied into the transcontinental line. He was also the driving force behind the Denver and New Orleans Railroad, which eventually linked Denver to the Gulf of Mexico and increased trade. In both projects Evans invested much of his personal fortune. He also was the founder of the Colorado Seminary (1864), which later became known as the University of Denver.

Although his reputation was tarnished for not representing the best interests of native people in Colorado (a contributing factor to the Sand Creek Massacre), he is remembered mostly as the city of Denver's greatest builder and a generous philanthropist. Mount Evans, in the Front Range of the Rockies, was named in his honor.

This gives you a small taste of the many fascinating profiles included in these volumes. Anschutz also writes about Cyrus McCormick, Brigham Young, Henry Wells and William Fargo, Leland Stanford, William Palmer, John D. Rockefeller Sr., Samuel Colt, Levi Strauss, Andrew Carnegie, Adolph Coors, William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Thomas Jefferson, Sam Houston, Chief Red Cloud, Theodore Roosevelt, Frederick Douglass, Abigail Duniway, Horace Greeley, Frederick Jackson Turner, Jedediah Smith, John James Audubon, John Deere, and many more.

THE BOOK'S IMPACT

What impact will this survey of the "shapers of the West" have on the reader? I suspect it will help us in three ways.

First, it will remind us of the real people who built the modern West. Anschutz believes that young people, especially students, need to understand our distinctive past because it will help us to better comprehend who we are now and who we wish to become.

Unfortunately, ignorance of history -- let alone ignorance of Western civilization, American history, and the history of the West -- is pervasive, especially among students. Thankfully, this is not

the case at CCU. We are known for our celebrated core curriculum. We require students to take 57 hours of general education courses providing a foundational knowledge that includes (among other subjects) Western civilization and American history.

Second, there is much to learn from the lives of those who came before us. Many of these individuals did not come from privileged backgrounds. Hardly any of them would qualify for sainthood. They were all flawed people, but that should not stop us from learning from and admiring the good they achieved.

In them we see a number of qualities worth emulating. We see people with extraordinary vision and energy. We see the amazing risks many of them took. Unlike today, their first concern was not personal safety. They were big dreamers who sacrificed much. Many experienced failure, but they succeeded through trial and error. There was a resilience about them. They had grit. They persevered. And when they succeeded, a large number of them generously gave back to society.

Reading *Out Where the West Begins* may prompt you to ask: What are we building? How will we contribute to the on-going legacy of the West? These are important questions.

The good news is that we now have a fresh record of the amazing achievements of many who came before us. Let it challenge you. Let it renew your understanding and appreciation for what it means to be a world changer, right here and right now. This, too, is where the West begins.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. DONALD W. SWEETING

Donald W. Sweeting (Ph.D., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is the president of Colorado Christian University and an ordained minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Sweeting speaks and preaches around the country and has published numerous articles for well-known magazines and scholarly journals. He has co-authored two books and is working on several others.

Unfortunately, ignorance of history — let alone ignorance of Western civilization, American history, and the history of the West — is pervasive, especially among students.

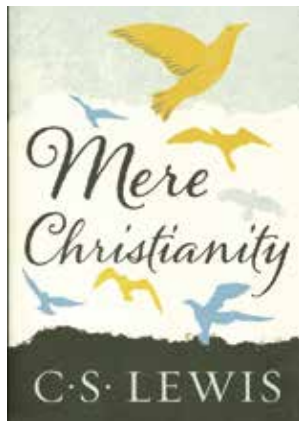


Mere Christianity

By C.S. Lewis

REVIEW BY DR. KEVIN TURNER

Professor of Youth Ministry and Theology



It would be hard to overestimate the impact of C.S. Lewis and his books on Christianity in the 20th and 21st centuries. His more than 30 published works have been translated into over 30 languages. His variety of literary genres include children's literature,

autobiography, science fiction, apologetics, as well as literary and biblical studies. These works have sold millions of copies and remain in print more than 50 years after his death.

During World War II, Lewis delivered a series of three talks over BBC radio to encourage the weary nation of Great Britain during the most challenging days of the blitz. These broadcasts were well received at the time and were quickly released in three separate books between 1943 and 1945. The books were combined in 1952 and entitled *Mere Christianity*. Since 2001, more than 3.5 million copies have been sold, which clearly demonstrates the timeless relevance of this apologetic classic.

The book is divided into five sections. The first is the preface where Lewis explains the title and purpose of the book. He writes that the drive behind this work is “to explain and defend the beliefs that have been common to nearly all Christians at all times.”⁽¹⁾ To this end, Lewis submitted the manuscript to Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic clergy who agreed the book presented a “common Christianity.”⁽²⁾ In the preface Lewis also explains the famous metaphor of *Mere Christianity* as “like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms” which represent various

Christian traditions to be selected, but with the stipulation to always “be kind to those who have chosen different doors as well as those who are still in the hall.”⁽³⁾

Book One focuses on “Right and wrong as to the meaning of the Universe.” In clear and easily understandable stories and illustrations, Lewis explores the reality that all cultures have rules or standards of what constitutes decent behavior. In addition to presenting his case, Lewis presupposes questions that the reader may be asking and answers them, such as the issue of changing applications of morality or the argument of social conventions through education. The end result is that chapters 1-5 present a poignant argument for the need of a transcendent god who is the ultimate law giver as well as the solution to the problem of broken laws.

“I have been asked to tell you what Christians believe and I am going to begin by telling you one thing that Christians do not believe ... that all other religions are simply wrong all through.”⁽⁴⁾

These words introduce Book Two, which is entitled “What Christians Believe.” Atheism and deism are explored and found to be too simple and “After all, real things are not simple.”⁽⁵⁾ Chapter 3, “The Shocking Alternative,” contains the oft-quoted groundbreaking statement, “You must make your choice. Either this man (Jesus) was and is the Son of God: or else a madman or worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him as a demon or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not have any such patronizing

Having laid a credible case for Christian belief and calling to a faith commitment, the outflowing of those theological ideas move toward Christian behavior, which is Lewis' topic in Book Three.

nonsenses about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”⁽⁶⁾

Having laid a credible case for Christian belief and calling to a faith commitment, the outflowing of those theological ideas move toward Christian behavior, which is Lewis' topic in Book Three. The topics selected for exploration could not be timelier for our present cultural tensions and struggles. Chapters include discussions on sexual morality, Christian marriage, forgiveness, and pride — which Lewis calls “The Great Sin.” Also explained are the cardinal timeless virtues such as charity and hope, as well as an expanded exploration of faith. The section concludes with a reaffirmation that faith in Jesus is not just about behavior modification or shame. He writes, “Christianity seems at first to be all about morality, all about duties and rules and guilt and virtues, yet it leads on out of all that, into something beyond.”⁽⁷⁾

The doctrine of the Trinity is the subject of Book Four: “Beyond Personality.” The discussion is built on the metaphor of theology as a map which is useful because it is practical, based on much more than a personal experience, and specific, not merely vague. This section is filled with golden nuggets of wisdom that have appeared in classroom lectures and sermons since the book was published. Some of these nuggets include, “The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God”⁽⁸⁾ — as a nod to the church father St. Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373) — and “Men are mirrors or carriers of Christ to other men, sometimes unconscious carriers.”⁽⁹⁾

The book closes with these profound words, “Look for yourself and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him and with Him everything else thrown in,” ⁽¹⁰⁾ *which recalls to the reader's mind Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33.*

Mere Christianity is significantly more than a collection of witty and memorable thoughts on Christian doctrine and behavior; the impact that it has had on its readers is profound. This fact is demonstrated by the way that reading it challenged the thinking of a man like Chuck Colson, resulting in his conversion to Christ, as well as my own children when I read it to them while they were growing up. This is a book for all time, to be read and reread as a conversation with an old and trusted friend. If you have not read *Mere Christianity* yet, I urge you to run, not walk, to your local library or bookstore and get a copy immediately. If you have read the book, dust off your copy and renew your acquaintance with the most significant Christian writer from the 20th century.

FOOTNOTES:

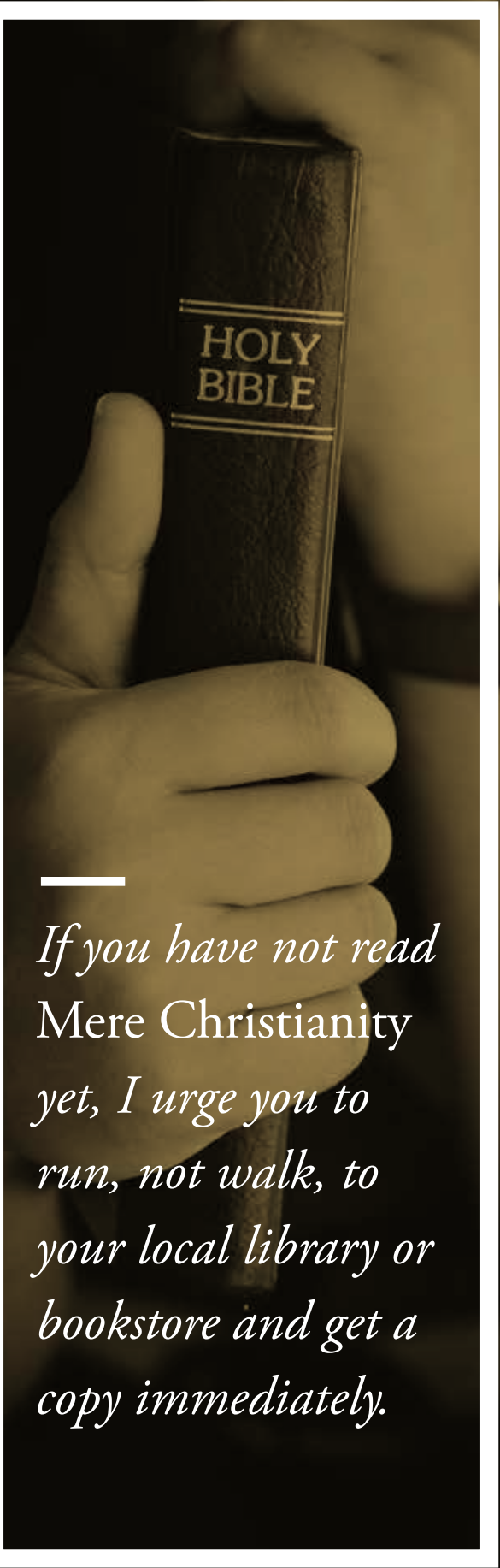
1. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Macmillan, 1952) 6.
2. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 8.
3. Ibid, 12.
4. Ibid, 43.
5. Ibid, 46.
6. Ibid, 56.
7. Ibid, 130.
8. Ibid, 154.
9. Ibid, 163.
10. Ibid, 190.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. KEVIN TURNER

Kevin Turner (D.Min., Reformed Theological Seminary) is in his 19th year of teaching at CCU, where he serves as professor of Youth Ministry and Theology. In addition, he serves in the CCU Freshman Year Integration Program teaching a class on C.S. Lewis and the Inklings movement titled, "To Narnia, The Shire, and Beyond."



*If you have not read
Mere Christianity
yet, I urge you to
run, not walk, to
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copy immediately.*

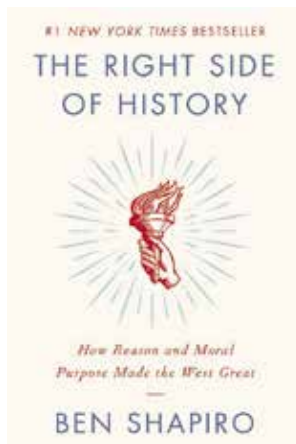
The Right Side of History:

How Reason and Moral Purpose Made the West Great

by Ben Shapiro

REVIEW BY DR. TOM COPELAND

Professor of Politics



Ben Shapiro is no stranger to controversy. The conservative columnist launched into the national media spotlight in 2016 when his speeches at universities like Cal State Los Angeles and the University of California Berkeley were met with violent protests. What got him into trouble?

Challenging liberal orthodoxy on race.

But Shapiro was also a critic of then-candidate Donald Trump during the 2016 election, and famously broke with *Breitbart News*, which he thought was going easy on the racism of the alt-right. Shapiro found himself *persona non grata* among Trump supporters, as well.

Race is just a small part of Shapiro's broader thinking on what ails us. He asks, "Why are things so good?" and "Why are we blowing it?" He notes that many Americans have lost faith in free speech, democracy, economic freedom, and shared morality. "That turn away from our values began when we lost faith in the path that brought us here in the first place."¹

QUICK TAKE

In *The Right Side of History*, Shapiro argues that we must rediscover and shore up the foundations of Western Civilization. He walks the reader

through 3,000 years of Western history, starting with the synthesis and tension between Jerusalem (divine meaning) and Athens (reason). In accessible language, he traces how both faith and reason have been destroyed from within, how self-expression and materialism have taken the place of self-sacrifice and transcendence. This is a timely and important book for those who love liberty and the Western tradition.

REALLY BIG IDEAS

There are several ideas worth highlighting in this book full of big ideas.

The Pursuit of Happiness. Shapiro helpfully retells how the Founders understood the "self-evident truths" of the Declaration — including the pursuit of happiness.

"The founding ideology was the basis for the greatest experiment in human progress and liberty ever devised by the mind of man.

... It was the best that men have done, and the best that men will do in setting a philosophic framework for human happiness."²

The author's vision of happiness includes four elements: individual purpose and capacity, and community purpose and capacity. "If we lack one of these elements, the pursuit of happiness becomes impossible; if that pursuit is foreclosed, society crumbles."³

Le Cataclysm. The French Revolution led to three utopian visions — nationalism, which offered communal purpose without Judeo-Christian values or the Greek *telos*; the forced leveling of communism; and the power of bureaucracy, which led to know-it-all modern American progressivism. These culminated in the cataclysm of the two World Wars, the communist revolutions, and, closer to home, central planning and eugenics.

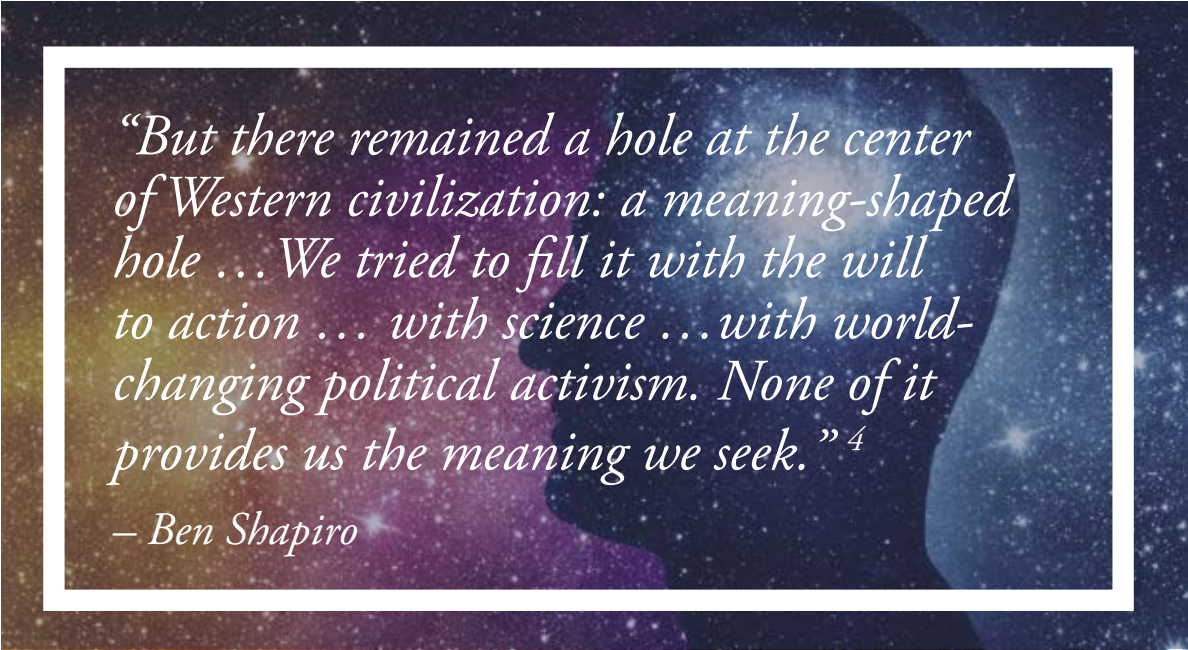
Shapiro notes that the world survived the World Wars, and became wealthier, healthier, and freer. “But there remained a hole at the center of Western civilization: a meaning-shaped hole ... We tried to fill it with the will to action ... with science ... with world-changing political activism. None of it provides us the meaning we seek.”⁴ In Chapter 8, he details the path from existentialism to naturalism to hedonism to moral relativism.

“*The Return to Paganism.*” Shapiro saves his best for last. Chapter 9 is a *tour de force*. He highlights how intellectual radicals suggested that the only way to fix things was to tear down the entire social, economic, and political structure and start over — a thought echoed today by Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez. Shapiro explains how this thinking inevitably leads to inter-sectionality, “repressive tolerance” toward free speech, sexual freedom, victimhood culture, and anti-scientific thinking on gender. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

WHAT SHAPIRO MISSES

In a book that endeavors to cover 3,000 years of history in approximately 200 pages, it is no surprise that Shapiro misses the mark a few times. As an Orthodox Jew himself, he generally gives short shrift to the Christian part of the Judeo-Christian tradition. He claims that “Christianity took the messages of Judaism and *broadened* them ... and successfully spread the fundamental principles of Judaism, as *emended* by Christianity ...”⁵ But Christ did not claim to be an improvement upon Judaism, He claimed to be and indeed was the Messiah, the fulfillment of God’s covenantal promises. It is the Gospel, not merely the Jewish views of history and morality, which has been the engine of Western history.

Shapiro is also dismissive of the Christian tradition, highlighting only the flaws he sees in leading figures like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. But he seems to be unaware of the legacy of these Christian thinkers — the idea of Two Cities/Kingdoms of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin were significant in how early Americans understood the relationship of church and state and the separation and balance of powers. Reformed thinking also played a role in the development of both the natural rights of the American founding and human rights from the 17th to the 20th centuries.



“But there remained a hole at the center of Western civilization: a meaning-shaped hole ... We tried to fill it with the will to action ... with science ... with world-changing political activism. None of it provides us the meaning we seek.”⁴

– Ben Shapiro

READ IT, SHARE IT, AND READ SOME MORE

Perhaps the significance of this book lies not so much in *what* it says (there are, after all, many books on the decline of Western civilization), but in *how* it says it. Shapiro is a Harvard Law grad, but he writes for the ordinary reader. His writing is clear and concise, without a lot of intellectual jargon. He accurately summarizes the big ideas of individual thinkers, and simply explains challenging concepts like existentialism. This is the kind of book you read first and then pass on to a friend or relative who is interested in politics or history.

At the same time, because the book is relatively short, the reader may be left wishing they understood more. A number of other texts are worth diving into. (The following are recommended by CCU faculty.)

- *From Dawn to Decadence: 1500 to the Present: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life*, by Jacques Barzun
- *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages*, by Harold Bloom,
- *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, by Niall Ferguson
- *The Roots of American Order*, by Russell Kirk
- *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization*, by Vishal Mangalwadi
- *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, by Frances Schaeffer
- *How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity*, by Rodney Stark. This text is used in CCU's Western Civilization classes.

In sum, this is a timely and insightful book from an author who is on the front lines of the culture wars, and well worth the read.



Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966). *Man Pointing*. This 1947 sculpture perhaps captures the ephemeral nature of human life, in light of the horrors of both concentration camps and nuclear destruction. Its abstract form also reflects Shapiro's concern about a "meaning-shaped hole" in Western Civilization after the World Wars.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Ben Shapiro, *The Right Side of History: How Reason and Moral Purpose Made the West Great* (Broadside Books, 2019), XXV.
2. Shapiro, *The Right Side of History*, 90-91.
3. Ibid, 17.
4. Ibid, 159.
5. Ibid, 21, emphasis added.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. TOM COPELAND

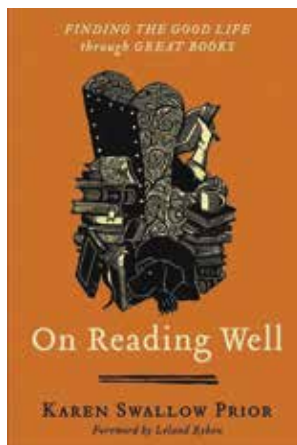
Tom Copeland (Ph.D. University of Pittsburg) is a professor of Politics at CCU. His writing has appeared in USA Today, The Hill, Politico, and The Federalist, as well as in academic journals.

On Reading Well: Finding the Good Life through Great Books

by Dr. Karen Swallow Prior

REVIEW BY DR. JANET BLACK

Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs and Professor of English



I have long been intrigued with Thomas Jefferson's advice to his nephew, Peter Carr, in the famous letter of August 10, 1787, where he says that the moral sense "may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body." He closes this observation with an admonition: "above all things lose no occasion

of exercising your dispositions to be grateful, to be generous, to be charitable, to be humane, to be true, just, firm, orderly, courageous &c. Consider every act of this kind as an exercise which will strengthen your moral faculties, & increase your worth." Not surprisingly, Jefferson says, "read books" as part of this exercise.

Karen Swallow Prior, in her book *On Reading Well: Finding the Good Life through Great Books*, provides models for reading great works of literature with an eye to virtuous life resonant in the literature. This is a remarkable book, a kind of roadmap to a grown-up list of works, much like William J. Bennett's 1990s enterprise, *The Book of Virtues*, provides for children. Prior selects three catalogues of virtues — four cardinal virtues (Greek); three theological virtues (faith, hope, and love); and five heavenly virtues (counters to the seven deadly sins). For each virtue, Prior selects a great work of fiction (in one case, two works) for her observations.

And what does she observe? A lover of the stories of words themselves, Prior digs into the etymology of each virtue's English name, teasing out layers of meanings. For instance, she notes that the etymology of *kindness* is closer to *kin* than to the shallow term *nice*¹. She meditates on the way a virtue lives at the fulcrum between an excess and a deficiency. Sometimes, this leads to surprises. Patience, she claims, is the mean between the excess of inaction and the deficiency of wrath. Wrath, you say? Isn't the deficiency of patience *impatience*? But she is convincing.

Prior builds her arguments of careful definitions and later examples with quotes by the heavy-hitters — Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas; G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Simone Weil; Alasdair MacIntyre, Peter Kreeft, N.T. Wright; and many, many more. In fact, one of the joys of this book is that Prior makes the research feel smooth and unified with her own purposes of exploring a virtue through a narrative.

***The reader wants to say,
"Of course! I knew that!"
while keeping a list of books
and essays to read on the subject.***

For readers who missed the opportunity to know one of the great works central to each chapter, Prior provides a satisfying summary. Her compassion for characters in her retellings of their stories sometimes rises almost to the level of the author's compassion, as in the case with the chapter on *Ethan Frome* highlighting the virtue of chastity.

*“...above all things
lose no occasion
of exercising your
dispositions to
be grateful, to
be generous, to
be charitable,
to be humane,
to be true, just,
firm, orderly,
courageous &c.
Consider every act
of this kind as an
exercise which will
strengthen your
moral faculties,
& increase your
worth.”*

– Thomas Jefferson

Compassion is no easy task, as characters in great works of literature often exhibit the antithesis of a virtue: Jay Gatsby's intemperance, Ivan Ilych's cupidity not love, and Sebastian Rodrigues' test of personal faith.

Although Prior selected all fictional examples in her list of great works, she does include several genres of fiction: allegory (*Pilgrim's Progress*); comedy of manners (*Persuasion*); picaresque (*Tom Jones*); short stories (Flannery O'Connor and George Saunders); historical fiction (*Silence* and *A Tale of Two Cities*); and a lot of literary realism (*Huckleberry Finn*, *The Great Gatsby*, etc.). Perhaps the primary downside to her choices is that she fails to include great biography, creative non-fiction, drama, or poetry. Ah, the constraints of page limits!

What Prior is doing in this book is edgy. Moral and ethical readings of literature ride on a bumpy road of reception.

Many scholars prefer aesthetics or social politics as platforms for literary criticism. Even Leland Ryken, in his introduction to Prior's book, devotes most of his space to defending her work within great critical traditions because "moralistic" readings can be riddled with problems.

But Prior doesn't read the stories in a throwback, authoritative manner. No, she unfastens the windows of her life and provides the reader glimpses of virtues through her own open eyes. Her references to "self" — participating in a weight-loss program, attending a revival in a country church, hearing words that startled her into a new frame of mind — make her readings fresh. Virtue and the lack thereof can be witnessed all around us and in us. There is a vital connection between literary experience and the lives of readers, as Wayne Booth reminds us in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*.

CCU is embarking on a new journey into the Great Books this fall with the Augustine Honors Program. With students and professors from many disciplines reading great literature together, this

program seeks to stand out from other Great Books programs by being character-driven. This is how a recent flyer describes the difference: “Augustine Honors subordinates the rich advantages of a Great Books program to the higher pursuit of developing Christian character, as rooted in God’s *charis kai aletheia* (grace and truth) expressed on the CCU seal. Augustine Honors students cultivate gratitude because of God’s grace, as well as the double qualities of integrity and faithfulness as flowing from those devoted to truth.”

Prior’s teaching, in *On Reading Well*, is a valuable guide to the exercise of virtue — whether one reads it before tackling a great work, or afterwards. I am happy to work out with her and “strengthen [my] moral faculties” through these great works of art.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Karen Swallow Prior, *On Reading Well: Finding the Good Life through Great Books* (Brazos Press, 2018) 207.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. JANET BLACK

Dr. Janet Black (Ph.D., University of Denver) is the assistant vice president of Academic Affairs and professor of English at Colorado Christian University. She has taught literature and writing for more than two decades and served as a Fulbright scholar in Uganda. Dr. Black lives in Lakewood, Colo., with her husband and her books.



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*CCU is
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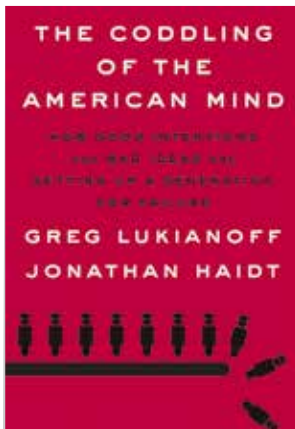
The Coddling of the American Mind:

How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure

by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt

REVIEW BY DR. RYAN T. HARTWIG

Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and Professor of Communication



“We don’t do trigger warnings here.”

That’s what Colorado Christian University President Dr. Don Sweeting told students and parents during his welcome address at the University’s recent freshmen orientation. Having come back to CCU from a campus that issued trigger

warnings on a seemingly weekly basis, his strongly worded comments caught me off guard. But I so appreciated them.

In that one statement, he expressed several clear messages to our new students (and their parents): You will be challenged here. You will sometimes feel uncomfortable here. Higher education is confrontational, not conformational. We expect our faculty to push and test you. (Don’t call us when your students tell you they’re challenged here.)

To be fair, CCU’s approach stands in stark contrast to what’s happening on most university campuses, which Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt describe in *The Coddling of the American Mind*. They suggest three un-truths running amok on college campuses and in modern society are weakening the rising generation and setting up young people for failure:

1. The Untruth of Fragility: *What doesn’t kill you makes you weaker.*
2. The Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: *Always trust your feelings.*
3. The Untruth of Us vs. Them: *Life is a battle between good people and evil people.*

Ultimately, they propose: “Whatever your identity, background, or political ideology, you will be happier, healthier, stronger and more likely to succeed in pursuing your own goals if you [run the opposite direction of these un-truths] ... *seeking out challenges* (rather than eliminating or avoiding everything that ‘feels unsafe’), *freeing yourself from cognitive distortions* (rather than always trusting your initial feelings), *and taking a generous view of other people, and looking for nuance* (rather than assuming the worst about people within a simplistic us-versus-them morality).”

The implications of these ideas extend far beyond the college campus.

For all of the concerns Lukianoff and Haidt express for our nation’s kids and their individual futures, they’re more worried, rightly so, about what will transpire for our society if we don’t correct course. Thus, in this timely and incisive book, they advise parents, teachers, coaches, professors, and university

administrators to stop coddling and overprotecting young people and to, instead, force them to grapple with difficult people and different ideas, thereby strengthening them for the road ahead. Sowing struggle will reap strength.

Written by a constitutional lawyer and a social psychologist, Coddling is a thought-provoking and data-rich resource for everyone who is engaged in the education and development of young people.

Parents (and perhaps even grandparents and aunts and uncles) will be challenged and perhaps even inspired, and educators of all kinds will be pushed to think about how they are helping or hindering students in their classrooms and then take appropriate action to maximize their positive impact.

Smartly riffing the title off Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, which 30 years earlier critiqued what had gone wrong in higher education and similarly offered an alternative recipe to pursue wisdom rather than folly¹, Lukianoff and Haidt follow the same pattern in *Coddling*, which expands on their viral 2015 article in *The Atlantic* of the same name.

In the first section of the book, Haidt and Lukianoff suggest the modern university has gone mad. They tell tales of safe spaces on university campuses where students can pet dogs and paint watercolor pictures when triggered by challenging people or propositions. They describe the fury over microaggressions, and recount student walk-outs and sit-ins that demand removal of professors and administrators who have offended students. These dynamics — exemplars and products of the three un-truths in action — have created a university where feelings reign supreme, where intimidation of people holding “wrong” views is not only tolerated but encouraged, and where witch hunts determined to rid the academy of those perpetrators of emotional torment regularly occur.

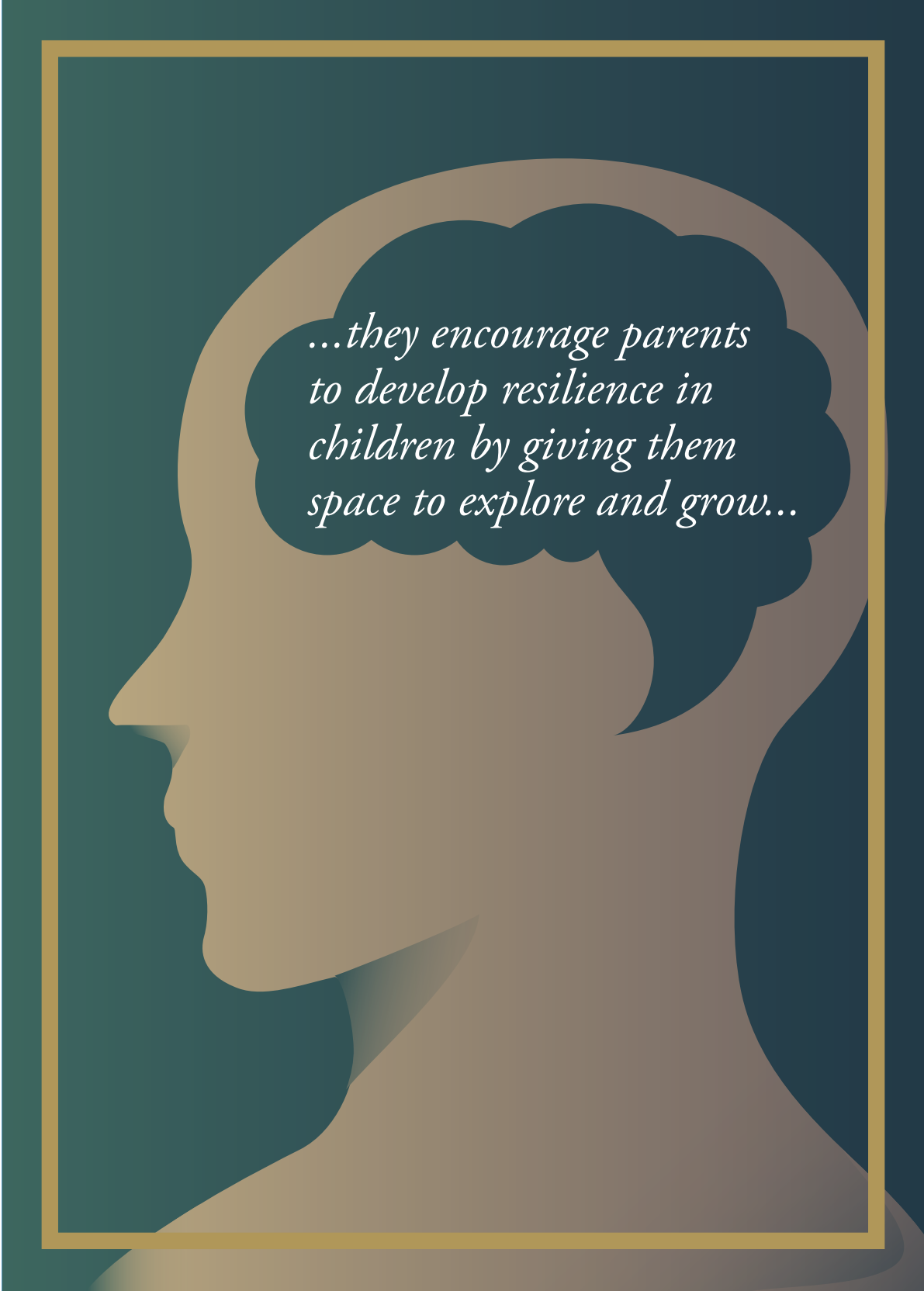
However, Lukianoff and Haidt don't just describe a malady affecting colleges and universities, but one affecting, and affected by, culture. They propose what's happening on so many university campuses is best explained by examining six cultural forces:

1. deep divides between those holding opposing political philosophies and beliefs;
2. overwhelming anxiety and depression gripping so many members of iGen (those born starting in 1995, who have grown up with the internet in their pockets);
3. parenting styles most influenced by paranoia;
4. children who prefer to play on their device of choice rather than outside with their (real) friends, if they even find time to play at all in the ultra-competitive race to get into the finest universities;
5. a trend toward the “corporatization” of the university and a concomitant rise in both the number of administrators (vs. teaching faculty) and their proportionate influence over campus practices and culture; and
6. quests for justice, particularly related to ensuring equal outcomes rather than equal opportunities for students (and faculty).

While these forces do explain the students (and their parents) who matriculate into colleges today, their beliefs, and their expectations of the university to provide for and protect them, Lukianoff and Haidt place less emphasis on the cyclical effects of what's happening on campus and off. For instance, not only are polarized political views causing the upheaval on campus, but what's being taught on so many university campuses — both in class and out of class — is deepening the divide in American politics. Likewise, students' protests and actions create legal, disciplinary, and public relations burdens for the campus, thereby prompting greater administrative personnel and oversight.

Optimistically, however, in the closing pages, Lukianoff and Haidt offer hope, and a prescription for wise parents and university administrators. In sum, they encourage parents to develop resilience in children by giving them space to explore and grow, to prepare young people to encounter the difficulties ahead rather than protecting them from them, and to act counterculturally when it comes to devices and schooling.

Perhaps the most useful tool they offer is a framework university administrators can use to strengthen their schools, and discerning college students and their parents can employ to find a



*...they encourage parents
to develop resilience in
children by giving them
space to explore and grow...*

university experience that avoids the three great un-truths:

1. How does the university teach students about academic freedom and free inquiry?
2. How would the university handle demands to fire a professor because of opinions expressed that others found offensive?
3. What would the university do if the invited visit of a controversial speaker sparked protests?
4. How is the university responding to students suffering from anxiety and depression?
5. What does the university do to foster a sense of shared identity?

It is incumbent on all of us who care for our kids and our society to think deeply about how we can prepare the next generation to not only enter and thrive in this world, but to influence it for good. Coddling helps us to think well and act accordingly.

As a parent myself, *Coddling* has opened up good conversations between me and my wife. We continually reflect on how we are raising our kids, what cultural streams we're simply swimming in, and how we want to raise our kids to become mature, thoughtful, discerning adults and influential citizens. My high school daughter has begun to read *Coddling*, too — and that has already sparked good conversations. I commend this book to every parent of the rising generation, and every kid who wants to think deeply about what s/he wants in and for her/his college education.

As a university professor and administrator, I've seen firsthand what Lukianoff and Haidt describe. Many coddled kids have sat in my classes and office. They're weak and ill-prepared for both the present and the future. But, not all kids have been coddled or want to be coddled. There are many, many students — including many enrolled at CCU — who run toward, not away from challenging

ideas and tasks. In so doing, they are strengthening themselves for success in their university experience, and for all God has for them in the future.

Admittedly, Lukianoff and Haidt don't address everything that beleaguers the university. There are other issues that must also be considered and acted upon, such as the rising cost of college and the limitations therefore placed on who can attend, and the value proposition of university education and how to strengthen it. But they do cast a clear vision for homes and universities, who like CCU, seek to be places that don't coddle, but challenge minds and hearts, and communities where students can learn to think for themselves and seek to know and understand truth (and Truth).

FOOTNOTES:

1. Bloom argued higher education wasn't giving the Great Books of Western tradition the serious consideration they deserved, and instead were problematically privileging multicultural and social scientific approaches. It's worth mentioning that CCU's new Augustine Honors Program is grounded in the Great Books, for we know the great works in history prompt students to consider good, true, and beautiful.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. RYAN T. HARTWIG

Ryan T. Hartwig (Ph.D., University of Colorado Boulder) is dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and professor of Communication. His teaching, research, training, and consulting work centers on teamwork, collaboration, and group facilitation, particularly in the church. He is author of *Teams That Thrive* (Intervarsity, 2015) and the forthcoming *Leading Small Groups That Thrive* (Zondervan, 2020).

Unplanned

by Abby Johnson with Cindy Lambert

REVIEW BY DR. JILL MCELHENY

Director of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program and Professor of Nursing



Former Planned Parenthood director Abby Johnson discusses the viewpoints, practices, and beliefs of both sides of the fence surrounding a Planned Parenthood clinic. Her account of the naiveté that allowed her to fall into the pro-choice movement, the “war zone” at the clinic fence line, and the way

God opened her eyes to the truth challenges readers to examine their convictions regarding the biblical principle of the sanctity of life.

“Unplanned” is the true story of Abby Johnson, a Planned Parenthood clinic volunteer turned director, who continuously struggled with her beliefs about the mission of the Planned Parenthood organization. Johnson describes her indoctrination by the organization as a college student at Texas A&M and her continued belief that she was “caring for women in crisis” and “making abortion rare” per the mantra of the Planned Parenthood volunteer recruiters (p. 13). She details her rise from volunteer to the role of clinic director and the life-changing event at work that challenged her to re-examine her beliefs about Planned Parenthood.

Johnson’s account of her involvement with Planned Parenthood provides a unique perspective from both sides of the abortion debate that has polarized our country.

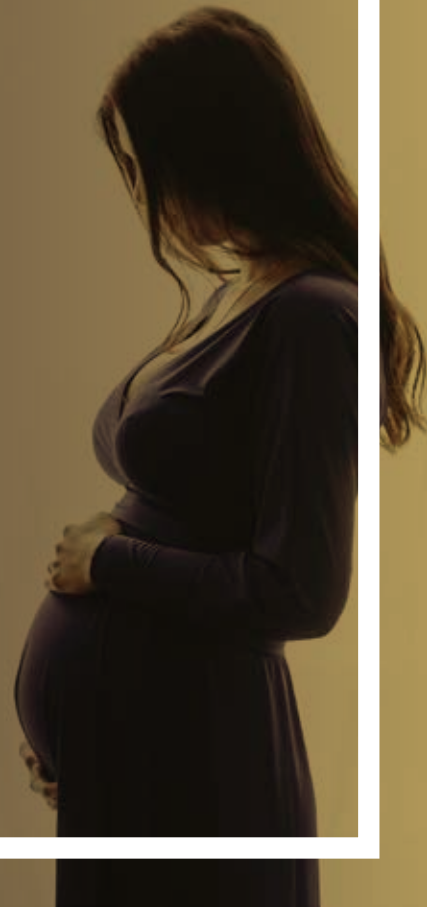
As a former employee of an organization that routinely performs abortions, Johnson is now a pro-life activist who is vehemently opposed to abortion. “Unplanned” provides multiple opportunities for teaching at Colorado Christian University related to CCU’s Strategic Priorities, including the University’s commitment to impact our culture in support of the sanctity of life.

One of the most alarming parts of Johnson’s story is the account of her recruitment into the Planned Parenthood organization.

She describes herself as a Christian college student whose family had raised her to be a pro-life supporter. She was excited to make a difference in the world as she perused the on-campus volunteer fair in her junior year at Texas A&M. The Planned Parenthood recruiter appealed to Johnson with hot pink-colored giveaways in the form of water bottles and fingernail files, and boasted goals such as helping women in crisis, equality for women, and a commitment to a reduction in the number of abortions through the services the clinics provided. Over her eight-year involvement with Planned Parenthood, Johnson began to see the deception in these talking points and falsehoods that had lured her into becoming a part of an organization that did not support her Christian beliefs. This highlights the value of Christian higher education that is provided for students at CCU. Through the commitment to the University’s Strategic Priorities, providing a Christian worldview, and faith-integrated curriculum, CCU supports young, impressionable adults as they grow in their walk with Christ.

“I had invested myself, my heart, my career in Planned Parenthood because I cared about women in crisis. And now I faced a crisis of my own.”

– Abby Johnson



CCU affiliate faculty member and former CCU Board of Trustees member Tim McTavish was a significant financial supporter of the nationwide release of the “Unplanned” movie. When McTavish was presented with the opportunity to invest in the movie based on Johnson’s book, he was interested due to the impact of this topic on society, adding that Johnson’s story is unique and important for the validity of the anti-abortion cause. The movie was shown in selected theaters across the nation in March 2019, as well as on the campus of CCU. It will be available for streaming and available on DVD in August 2019.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. JILL MCELHENY

Jill McElheny (DNP, University of Colorado) serves as the director of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program and a professor of nursing at CCU. She is board certified as both a pediatric nurse practitioner and as an emergency nurse practitioner. She has served on staff with Samaritan’s Purse International Relief for the past 10 years with the medical disaster relief team and as a medical transporter for the Samaritan’s Purse Children’s Heart Project.

This We Proclaim

Basilica de la Sagrada Familia by Antoni Gaudi

REVIEW BY MEGAN DEVORE

Associate Professor of Church History and Early Christian Studies

When we hear the word ‘evangelism,’ it’s easy to think of sharing printed words or spoken concepts. Yet 1 John 1:1 makes an intriguing assertion: the gospel is communicated in other ways as well. *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have gazed upon and touched with our own hands — this is the Word of life.”* (BSB)

***Here, Christ’s life is
proclaimed through that which is
heard, as well as seen and touched.***

It is worth asking whether we allow the gospel to be this dynamic in the ways that we engage evangelism. Are we heeding the Great Commission in ways that John indicates — in proclaiming Christ through that which is heard, seen, gazed upon, and touched?

It is this question that guided me over a decade ago into an exploration of the arts, particularly those that historic Christians frequently expressed the gospel through: visual arts and architecture. What

if we allow ourselves to entertain the possibility that, with redeemed imaginations, Christians might communicate grace and truth in ways that engage our senses as well as our minds and hearts?

THE GOSPEL AND THE ARTS — AN EXPLANATION

There are many reasons for us to reconsider the place of the arts in the Christian life. Throughout the Scripture, God is the creative Creator, and His creation “proclaims His handiwork,” Psalm 19:1 (ESV). Yet even as Romans 1 affirms that the nature of God is reflected in the created world, Paul warns us that human ability to see this reflection is clouded: we can wrongly glorify the created things themselves. Thankfully, the mere potential for distortion does not close the door on our interaction with the visual world.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, human creativity is called and enabled to declare God’s grandeur (Exodus 31:1-11), and, if we are in Christ, old realities no longer have ownership of us (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Holy Spirit actively



Entrance to Basilica de la Sagrada Familia

transforms us, just as an artisan shapes and re-shapes his work (2 Corinthians 3:18). Our previously ‘carnal’ eyes, minds, and imaginations can seek the kingdom of God, and we can imaginatively create in a way that serves as a testimony to the gospel.

Here, we pause. We *can* redemptively, worshipfully create ... but *do* we? Or have we been implicitly taught that creativity belongs only in the children’s wing at church, as a teaching tool for the young-minded?

Many gravely fear that, indeed, the arts have been neglected by a church that suffers both disorientation and amnesia.

One symptom of this disorientation might simply be the air of today’s culture: from many vantage points, it is often described as cynical, noxious, narcissistic, and vexingly directionless. Yet it is rarely acknowledged that there is a direct connection between culture and the triad of beauty, goodness, and truth. If the culture is septic, the creative acts of that culture will be equally so: that which is distorted with hopelessness, meaninglessness, or self-gratification, for example, will be called ‘beautiful’ or ‘true.’

This confusion should be a call to the church. In the recent words of the Christian artist Makoto Fujimura, “If we do not teach our children, and ourselves, that what we imagine and how we design the world can make a difference, the culture of cynicism will do that for us.”

What can be done? A hundred different voices might offer suggestions. It seems clear that both *information* and *formation* will be crucial. While we can teach remedial Christian artistic literacy — that is, how to interpret art’s layered truths and grace of the gospel narratives in them — we must also cast a vision to encourage Christians to *create* redeemed, worshipful arts. In every aspect of life, we must say along with John’s epistle, “*this* is the Word of life.”

This is, in fact, why I find the mission of CCU so compelling: we seek, are transformed by, and speak *grace and truth* into every aspect of life. We emphasize that each of our students are lifelong ministers of the same gospel, no matter their particular academic program or vocational aims. We are members of a kingdom living out Christ’s Great Commands and Great Commission in both



Basilica de la Sagrada Família



Basilica de la Sagrada Família interior

word and action — in our beholding, in our telling, and in our showing. Our pursuit of grace and truth means that we do not simply teach Christian ‘principles,’ assuming otherwise secular perceptions and imaginations. We are committed to faithfully developing an altogether Christian *worldview*: the seeking and sharing of truth involves the mind as well as the heart, careful discernment and hopeful grit, as well as humble imaginative wonder.

THE GOSPEL AND THE ARTS — AN EXPLORATION

As we seek to cultivate this wholly Christian worldview and to share it in evangelism and discipleship, it is helpful to have some tangible examples. One striking illustration is the Basilica de la Sagrada Família in Barcelona, Spain. Even in our age of advanced machinery, this towering church building has taken over 135 years to construct and is still underway, aimed at completion within the next decade.

Its now-deceased visionary architect Gaudi esteemed quality over velocity: “My client is never in a hurry,” he insisted (speaking, of course, of God). The church, like a response to the Great Commission expressed in stone and color, displays witness of God’s works in a way that is meant to be both an intricate teaching tool and an exuberant testimony.

From the outside, the church depicts the biblical narrative in carvings that convey movement into their stone medium. The towering front entrance walls are divided into three sections portraying Christ’s birth, death, and eternal reign. Deeply moving scenes from the crucifixion are over the central doorway, showing a truth central to the gospel: there is no Church, no entry into the kingdom of God, outside of Christ. It is His work, not our works, which makes salvation possible — a truth both *preached* and *portrayed* here. Walking beneath the crucified Christ, the viewer ventures through the doors, which are entirely inscribed with the Lord’s Prayer. After all, part of the Great Commission is *discipleship* — teaching what Christ taught, including how to pray.

The church’s light-drenched interior space imitates a grove of trees, and the viewer’s eyes find themselves drawn upwards, as though being caught up towards heaven, inundated with a sense of awe and peaceful expectation. Light and color pour forth everywhere. The four tallest ‘trees,’ which support the roof, are each marked with a medallion representing a Gospel: the inspired revelation of



Gaudi's masterpiece Sagrada Familia Basilica roof top

God, the Scripture, here holds the church upright. At the front and center, a glowing seven-sided chandelier floats above the communion table, laden with a grape-filled vine and surrounded by suspended, nearly dancing tiny lanterns in the shape of descending flames. This is, of course, alluding to the Holy Spirit — revealing the light of Christ, present with believers, bearing fruit, descending like fire. As Christians, we read and hear of the Holy Spirit, and we sing of the Spirit and in Him. To do these *alongside* a symbolic visual representation is to engage yet another of our senses in worshipful awe. Like hymns or theological writings, our depictions never claim to wholly capture God’s glory. Instead, each humbly gesture towards an awesome God who inspires worshipful creativity and who we are called upon to proclaim to the world.

There are no pretenses that God is more present inside this building than other places. Yet, nearly all who enter find that they are present differently here than other places.

Interestingly, many of those working on the cathedral have been transformed in the process. Sculptor Etsuro Sotoo, for example, has spent 35 years on the project; he began as a Buddhist but became captivated by the God portrayed in his stonework. He is now a Christian. Inscribed into the church’s steeples are “Hosanna” and other proclamations; in polluted skies, the steeples, like our lives, stand out in declaring living hope and praise.

Ultimately, then, informed and imaginative artistry is meant to proclaim the God who holds all things together. From towering architecture to the subtle grandeur of a poem, dance, or sketch, we are called to cultivate creativity (after the image of our God), and we are drawn to beauty (as a vital aspect of truth and goodness). These can be distorted, but, perhaps just as dangerously, they can also be neglected to our great detriment. We do need words to inform the arts — the gospel, after all, is about the Word — but as we share in Christ’s call to make disciples, may we remember that this Word took on flesh and was the Life “heard, seen, gazed at, and touched.”

Recommended Resources for further reading:

- *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue*, by William Dyrness
- *The Substance of Things Seen: Art, Faith, and the Christian Community*, by Robin M. Jensen
- *Selfies: Searching for the Image of God in a Visual Age*, by Craig Detweiler

REVIEWER BIO



MEGAN DEVORE

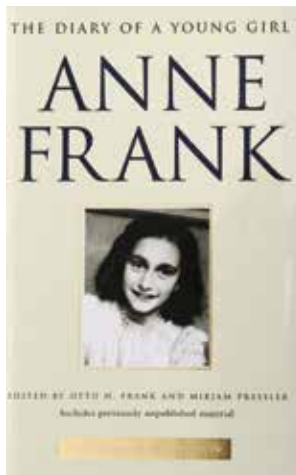
Megan DeVore (Ph.D., Theology) has served in CCU’s Theology department as associate professor of Church History and Early Christian Studies for 12 years. Her research and publications focus on the early Christian theology and practice. She speaks at venues both on and off campus, including international academic conferences, interdisciplinary colloquia, seminaries, chapels, and retreats. She is married to a local pastor and has two young children whose sense of wonder for God’s world is a daily delight.

The Diary of a Young Girl:

by Anne Frank

REVIEW BY DR. WILLIAM C. WATSON

Professor of History



This young girl's diary has sold millions of copies since it was first written in the Second World War. It is a firsthand account of the experience of a Jewish girl hiding with her family and the Van Daans with their teenage son for over two years in a secret space within an Amsterdam warehouse. It describes how Jews were treated

by the Nazis: the destruction of Jewish businesses, the rounding up of Jews into concentration camps, and attempts by Jews to flee or hide. When Anne's sister received a summons to report to the Nazi SS, the family went into their prepared hiding place.

We should be mindful of those who cared for Anne and the others. They were all employees of Anne's father, and hid the Jews in secret rooms in the attic of Mr. Frank's warehouse. Having provided food by possessing excessive ration cards, they risked death if discovered. Corrie ten Boom and her family were also in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation and hid Jews in their home. They were raided by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps, with only Corrie surviving.

Anne's diary reveals the private thoughts of this girl in her early teens, her hopes and aspirations, personal feelings about boys, longing to return to school, and expecting the English to invade the continent to end their ordeal. In April 1944 they were almost discovered, but according to Anne "God truly protected us." This caused her to lament:

that we are in hiding, that we are Jews in chains, chained to one spot, without any rights ... We must do what is within our power to trust in God. Sometime this terrible war will be over. Surely the time will come when we are people again, and not just Jews. Who has inflicted this upon us? Who has made Jews different than all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up till now? It is God that has made us what we are, but it will be God, too, who will raise us up again. If we bear all this suffering, and if there are still Jews left, when it is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all its peoples learn good, and for that reason, and that reason only, do we have to suffer now. We can never become just Netherlanders, or just English, or representatives of any country for that matter, we will always remain Jews, but we want that, too.

Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl, 11 April 1944
(New York: Doubleday, 1952) 186.

What powerful words from a 15-year-old girl! Contrast Anne's innocence with the hatred and violence of the Nazi regime.

Anne hoped those suffering would "trust in God," that one day "God ... will raise us up again," and that the world may "learn good" from the example of the Jewish people. On the other hand, Hitler and his demonic minions committed horrendous evil, killing not only 6 million Jews, but also about 12 million other civilians, not to mention the tens of millions of casualties in Europe during the war itself, caused by Nazi aggression.

In August 1944, as Allied troops were reaching the Dutch border, Anne and the others were discovered by the Nazis and sent to extermination camps. Anne died of typhus shortly before her 16th birthday in March 1945. The following month Hitler perished in his Berlin bunker, ending the Nazi regime.

Only Anne's father survived the death camps. When he returned to the warehouse after the war, he was given her diary. Within a few years it was published and became a global best seller. Millions of school children have been assigned to read it over the past 70 years, as I was in the ninth grade.

Her diary should remind us of the potential for evil in all of our hearts, and of our need to rise above any hatred we may harbor against the "other."

What motivated Germans to follow Hitler and commit such atrocities? Before jumping to judgment, consider that all of us are capable of hatred toward other groups. How easy it is for us to be caught up in the moment, when stirred by a charismatic leader to fear, hatred, and violence? What inoculates us against being swept up into such a movement? Some would say education, others the transforming power of Christ and His love.

Anne's writing should inspire those suffering persecution. The hope and joy she expressed in the little things of life over the two years hiding behind a wall also should produce sympathy towards persecuted groups, motivating us to be vigilant defending their rights, and making sure that a similar situation will "Never Again" happen.

Unfortunately it continues to occur. The world stood by once again as Hutu tribesmen killed a million Tutsis in Rwanda. China is currently

imprisoning over a million Muslims in the Sinkiang province of western China, which goes mostly unreported. Boko Haram and Fulani tribesmen have recently killed tens of thousands of Nigerian Christians with hardly a word about it in the media.

We should also become aware of currents in our own country to vilify others, whomever they may be, by those who would depreciate the value of their lives and limit their God-given freedoms. Even Christians in America are now suffering at the hands of those promoting rampant secularism, forcing us to conform to the "progressive" ideology sweeping across our nation. Bakers and photographers are forced to violate their consciences by participating in activities which violate their deeply held religious beliefs. The time may come when even we will have to go into hiding.

REVIEWER BIO



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William Watson (Ph.D., University of California) is a professor of World History at CCU specializing in the interaction between Western Civilization and the rest of the world. He has traveled to more than 30 countries, lived in five, studied six foreign languages, was a linguist in Military Intelligence at a NSA listening post in Berlin during the Cold War, and has taught on world issues for 40 years.



Mission

Christ-centered higher education
transforming students to impact
the world with grace and truth.

Strategic Priorities

Our Strategic Priorities were adopted by the CCU Board of Trustees to serve as a guiding compass for the University. They direct the implementation of CCU's Mission and provide context for our first priority — an enduring commitment to Jesus Christ and His kingdom. The Strategic Priorities provide a point of convergence for every member of the CCU community and for every aspect of life at CCU, from how we teach and learn in the classroom to how we live with and serve others.

- Honor Christ and share the love of Christ on campus and around the world
- Teach students to trust the Bible, live holy lives, and be evangelists
- Be a magnet for outstanding students and prepare them for positions of significant leadership in the church, business, government, and professions by offering an excellent education in strategic disciplines
- Teach students how to learn
- Teach students how to think for themselves
- Teach students how to speak and write clearly and effectively
- Give students significant opportunities to serve our Lord while they are at CCU and to help them develop a lifetime habit of such service
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- Be seekers of truth
- Debunk “spent ideas” and those who traffic in them
- Ask God to multiply our time and ability to the glory of His great name
- Be a servant of the Church
- Become a great university

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