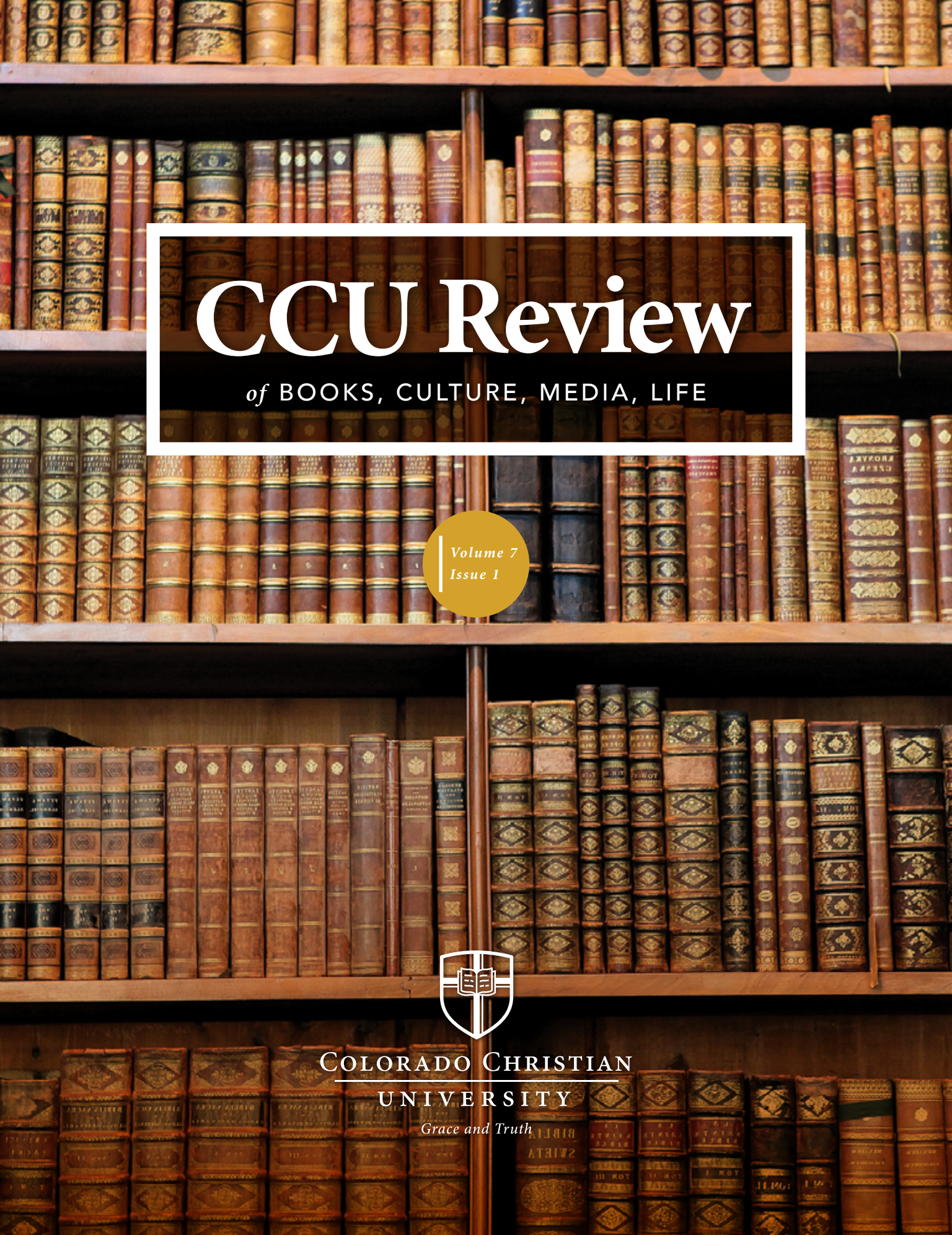

CCU Review

of BOOKS, CULTURE, MEDIA, LIFE

Volume 7
Issue 1

COLORADO CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY
Grace and Truth

We Still Believe in Great

Dear Friends,

We believe in great. In fact, most people do. They have enough common sense to still want to send their child to a great school, send their car to a great mechanic, find great role models for their teens, hire a great attorney, go to a great dentist, move into a house crafted by a great builder, and go out to see a great movie.

Unfortunately, a vocal but influential minority in higher education has given up on great. Are some books better than others? No, they tell us. Are some ideas more important than others and worthy of deep discussion? Are some conversations more important than others? Again, no. Who is to say what is best, we're told.

There is a rebellion against greatness at the university level. No one can agree on what is best. Great books and any kind of an esteemed canon have long been dismissed.

Why? There are multiple reasons. Who is to say what is best? It is all relative, a matter of taste or personal feeling. There is an anti-authority mood in the air. We want facilitators, not teachers. Authority and hierarchy are bad. Great is elitist. Value judgments are simply assertions of power. Moreover, everyone should be on the same level. A kind of radical egalitarianism rules. To say one thing is great means something else is not. Who are you to condemn another work? And so it goes. We are living in an age of rebellion against greatness.

But wait a second, are there not grounds for believing in greatness? Does not Scripture say that God is great — "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised," Psalm 48:1 (ESV)? Are we not to at least praise Him for "His excellent greatness," Psalm 150:2? Are not His works great, Psalm 92:5? Scripture tells us His love and faithfulness are great, Psalm 103:21. In fact, in Philippians we are told "whatever is true, whatever is honorable … whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Are we not surrounded by a "great a cloud of witnesses," Hebrews 12:1? Do we not have a great Savior? Does God not have a great name? Was Israel not a great nation? Is the Bible not a great, holy book?

The world is not flat! Some things are excellent and some are not. There is ample reason for believing in great. We have been sold a false bill of goods, and it is destroying the quality of our schools.

Greatness is determined by a lot of things — quality, skill, character, lasting impact, truth, etc. Without greatness, we sink as a civilization to low, low levels.

When it comes to education, we at CCU still believe in great. We want to ennoble our students by exposing them to what is best. We want to call them to a higher level of achievement. We want to inspire them with a great education, with great books, with the best of what has been thought and said, with great conversations, great ideas, great questions, and great lives.

Yes, some books are great — they are superior texts. They have stood the test of time, they speak across the ages, they engage the meaning of life, or pass on wisdom — they are worth reading more than others.

In the *CCU Review*, we seek to expose you to some of the better or more important books. Some are new. Some are old. In this edition, John Wind gives us a review of the late J.I. Packer's classic, *Knowing God*. Mark Mittelberg reviews Lee Strobel's important book, *The Case for the Creator*. David Kotter reviews Rod Dreher's new book, *Live Not By Lies*. Heather Day reviews *The Shallows*, revealing what the internet is doing to our brains. Ian Clary reviews Carl Trueman's new *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. Ryan Hartwig reviews Al Mohler's leadership book, *The Conviction to Lead*. Jeff Hunt looks at a new book on social revolution. Gary Steward reviews *The 1620 Project*. And yours truly reviews *The World Almanac*.

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

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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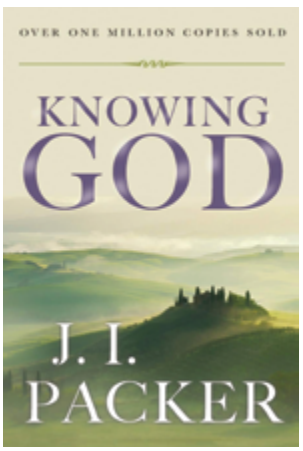
BOOK REVIEW

Knowing God

by J.I. Packer

REVIEW BY DR. JOHN WIND

Assistant Professor of Theology in the School of Theology



On July 17, 2020, amidst the fog and disorientation of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Anglican theologian and author, J. I. Packer, received his promotion to glory, just short of his 94th birthday. By longevity, productivity, and personality, Packer had immense influence over the course of 70 years on the English-speaking evangelical world. Perhaps most influential of all is his book, *Knowing God*, a modern classic first published in 1973 and subsequently selling more than 1.2 million copies. When I think of the book, I am reminded that I have assigned this text numerous times for my own classes to read. When I think of the author, I think of my own father. Packer was two years younger than my dad (1926 vs. 1924). Both were sickly and bookish growing up. Both were not drafted into World War II for health reasons. But most importantly, I recognize a common pastoral spirit in the two men (both ordained to the ministry in the 1950s, my father as a Lutheran, Packer as an Anglican). While I never had a chance to interact with Packer personally — though I was able to hear him speak in person — his books exude a pastoral wisdom and care that I associate with my own long-departed father.

Packer's pastoral and academic ministry in the 1950s and 1960s focused primarily on Great Britain. The great success of *Knowing God* from its publishing date in 1973 onward played a crucial role in launching Packer into his subsequent North American and global ministry, including his move to Regent College, Vancouver, Canada, in 1979 where he spent the final 41 years of his life. He officially retired in 1996, but continued his writing and speaking ministry until growing blindness in 2015 no longer allowed it.

To understand Packer and *Knowing God*, one must first understand the influence of the Puritans on Packer. As a young man and a new Christian in the 1940s, while trying to navigate the often turbulent waters of both modern theology and contemporary spirituality, Packer discovered the Puritans, beginning with John Owen. In the Puritans, young Packer found a freeing and beautiful combination of both head and heart — a grounded piety and a warm theology. As Packer's first biographer, Alister McGrath, describes it, Packer began to mine for himself "the Puritan heritage of experiential piety."[1] This Puritan influence on Packer is most explicit in his book *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*.

But all of his writings, including* Knowing God, *exhibit Packer's determination to produce theology that is devotional.

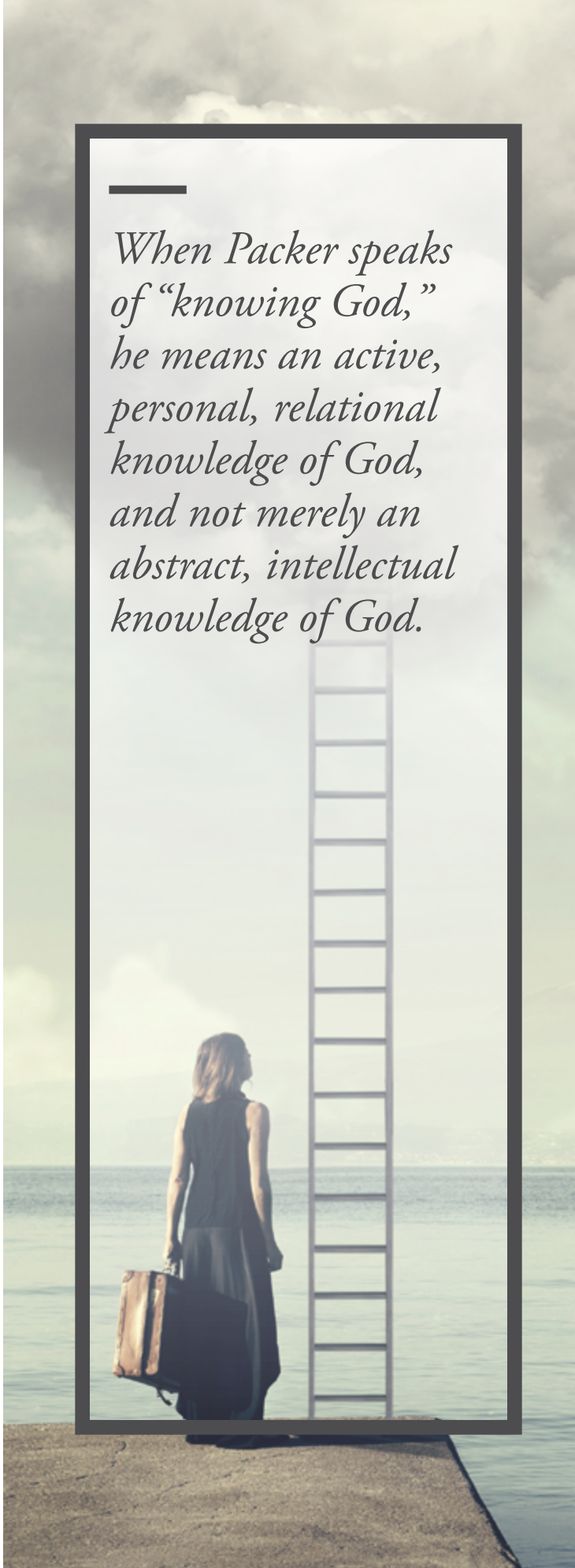
(One noteworthy expression of this in *Knowing God* is Packer's use of hymns and poems. I counted [sometimes lengthy] quotations of 22 hymns or poems throughout the chapters of the book.) To capture this combination of theology and personal

devotion in his writing and thinking, Packer employed phrases such as "spiritual theology" or "systematic spirituality."[2] As Packer put it, he wanted to "arrange a marriage ... between spirituality and theology."[3] This vision of the Christian life is expressed in the pages of *Knowing God* and goes far in explaining the enduring influence and appeal of the book.

The book had an unconventional path to best-seller since it was first written as a series of articles in the 1960s for the now long-defunct *Evangelical Magazine*. Packer's initial charge in writing the articles was to write about God for "honest, no-nonsense readers who were fed up with facile Christian verbiage."[4] Combined in one book, these articles became a practical manual for pilgrims actively following the path of Christ. As Packer puts it, "this is a book for travelers, and it is with travelers' questions that it deals."[5] Yet in contrast to some Christian books labeled as "practical," *Knowing God* remains robustly theological, maintaining a marriage between head and heart, between theology and spirituality. This combination is well-captured in the very idea of "knowing God." As Packer states, "One can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of him."[6] When Packer speaks of "knowing God," he means an active, personal, relational knowledge of God, and not merely an abstract, intellectual knowledge of God. Furthermore, Packer's concern for the true knowledge of God is not merely a matter of individual, private experience but of pastoral concern for the health of the body of Christ. As he wrote in 1972 for the original Preface, "The conviction behind this book is that ignorance of God — ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him — lies at the root of much of the church's weakness today."[7]

Knowing God consists of 22 chapters divided into three sections. Section one, six chapters under the label "Know the Lord," entails three chapters on truly knowing God, one chapter on the danger of using images in worship, one chapter on the person and work of God the Son, and one chapter on the person and work of God the Spirit. Section two ("Behold Your God!") includes 11 chapters on various attributes of God (such as: unchanging, wise, truthful, loving, wrathful, and jealous). Section three ("If God Be For Us ...") consists of five chapters on the topics of propitiation,

When Packer speaks of "knowing God," he means an active, personal, relational knowledge of God, and not merely an abstract, intellectual knowledge of God.



adoption, divine guidance, God's purposes in suffering, and the adequacy of God for the believer as revealed in Romans 8.

This brief survey helps illustrate the fact that* Knowing God *cannot be seen as attempting any sort of comprehensive treatment of its subject.

There are many more attributes of God that could be considered and many other aspects of knowing God that are revealed in Scripture. Counter-intuitively, perhaps this explains in part the popularity of Packer's book. Many are intimidated by the massive tomes that aspire to theological comprehensiveness, books that may thoroughly explore the landscape of academic discussion while giving limited space to the devotional focus that ought to be at the heart of truly knowing God. For Packer in *Knowing God*, theology is always used as a flaming arrow aimed at the heart of the disciple, a means to enflame the soul of the pilgrim in fresh ardor for a glorious Savior.

Another aspect of *Knowing God* that separates it from much academic theology and much pragmatic spirituality is its manifestly biblical orientation and saturation. Victorian-era preacher Charles Spurgeon commended the earlier Puritan-era preacher John Bunyan by saying, "Prick him anywhere — his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him." The same can be said about Spurgeon himself. Packer, with much more formal education than either Spurgeon or Bunyan, is nonetheless likewise flowing with "bibline blood." While the enduring influence of *Knowing God* is explained by some of the elements already mentioned in this article and also by additional facts, such as Packer's undeniable gifts as a popular-level communicator and writer, behind it all is the living power of God's own written Word.

Now almost 50 years after first being published, is *Knowing God* still worth taking time to read? In approximately 620 BC — 300 years since the days of David and Solomon, 800 years since the days of Moses and Joshua — the prophet Jeremiah was told, "Thus says the Lord: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls,'" Jer. 6:16 (ESV). J.I. Packer was a man who understood this admonition. He found those ancient paths in his reading of Scripture and his reading of the Puritans. In *Knowing God*, Packer helps lead us along those same reliable roads. No matter how ancient, these ways are never outdated. As a pastoral theologian, Packer continues to be a trusted guide in the pilgrim pathways that many have trod before us.

FOOTNOTES

1 Alister McGrath, *J. I. Packer: His Life and Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 111.

2 McGrath, *J. I. Packer*, 105.

3 Ibid, 107.

4 J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 9.

5 Packer, *Knowing God*, 12.

6 Ibid, 26.

7 Ibid, 12.

REVIEWER BIO

DR. JOHN WIND

John Wind (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is an assistant professor of theology at Colorado Christian University. Previously, he served on the mission field in Asia with his family for eight years and as a youth pastor for four years. In addition to his teaching, Wind is a member of both the Evangelical Theological Society and the Evangelical Missiological Society.

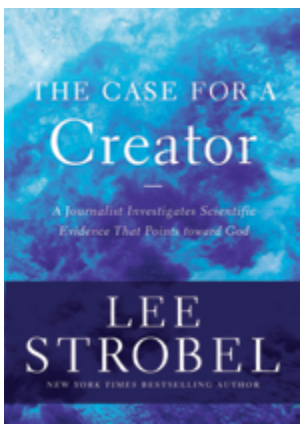
BOOK REVIEW

The Case for a Creator:
A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God

by Lee Strobel

REVIEW BY MARK MITTELBERG

Executive Director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics

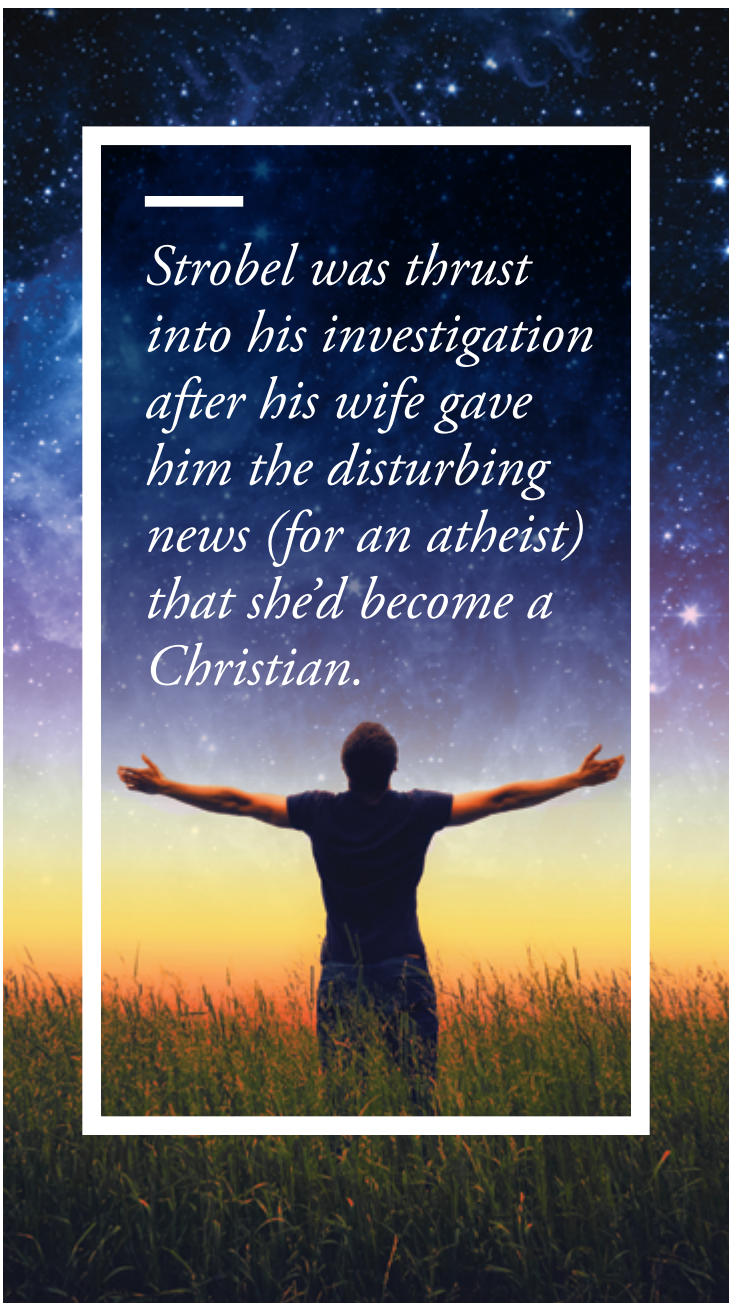


"I felt like I had stared unadorned Christianity in the face — and saw it for the dinosaur it was," said skeptical journalist Lee Strobel, an ardent atheist. He'd been put on assignment by *The Chicago Tribune* to investigate a dustup between some backwoods religious types and the scientific community. "Why couldn't these people get their heads out of the sand and admit the obvious: science had put their God out of a job!"[1]

Strobel's bold conclusion would soon be challenged by his own investigation into the evidence — a sojourn of discovery that he later retraces through a series of expert interviews recorded in his groundbreaking work, *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God*.

JOURNEY LAUNCHED BY LOVE

Why would a busy newspaper reporter study such matters? Strobel was thrust into his investigation after his wife gave him the disturbing news (for an atheist) that she'd become a Christian. It seemed intolerable that his fun-loving Leslie could suddenly buy into such superstition — and he feared she'd soon lose her zest for life and replace it with serving at soup kitchens.



He had to do something to stop the nonsense! So he investigated the facts, confident they'd lead to the undoing of Leslie's silly excursion into a fairytale faith. His study of the historical facts is well known and documented in his book and the later movie, *The Case for Christ*. But there is a scientific side to the saga that's less well known, though equally fascinating, and he unpacks it in *The Case for a Creator*. I strongly recommend both volumes for believers as well as anyone who is spiritually curious. You'll be exposed to a robust and captivating case for the Christian faith.

UNEXPECTED DISCOVERIES

When Strobel embarked on his scientific investigation, what he soon discovered was startling. "My road to atheism was paved by science," he reports. "But, ironically, so was my later journey to God."[2] Between his statements about science putting God out of a job and science paving his way back to God, what evidence did Strobel uncover? That's what he explains in *The Case for a Creator*.

"I probed six different scientific disciplines to see whether they point toward or away from the existence of an intelligent designer," said Strobel. "When I opened my mind to the possibility of an explanation beyond naturalism, I found that the design hypothesis most clearly accounted for the evidence of science."[3]

Here are those six areas of investigation.

• THE EVIDENCE OF COSMOLOGY

In this section Strobel interviews eminent Christian philosopher William Lane Craig, and they unpack Craig's formulation of the ancient kalam cosmological argument. It has two premises: first, whatever begins to exist has a cause; and second, the universe had a beginning. These point inexorably to the conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a cause. That cause, Craig explains, "must be an uncaused, beginningless, timeless, immaterial, personal being endowed with freedom of will and enormous power."[4]

• THE EVIDENCE OF PHYSICS

Strobel interviews physicist Robin Collins to discuss the evidence that "the laws and constraints of physics unexpectedly conspire in an extraordinary way to make the universe habitable for life. For instance," he said, "gravity is fine-tuned to one part in a hundred million billion billion billion billion billion."[5] That's just one of many examples of how astronomically steep the odds are against even one constant being calibrated to support life through mere chance — yet here we are!

• THE EVIDENCE OF ASTRONOMY

"Similar to the fine-tuning of physics," Strobel reports, "Earth's position in the universe and its intricately choreographed geological and chemical processes work together with exquisite efficiency to create a safe place for humans to live."[6] This is further evidence of the loving design of a caring Creator.

• THE EVIDENCE OF BIOCHEMISTRY

"If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications," said Charles Darwin, "my theory would absolutely break down."[7] In this chapter Strobel interviews biochemist Michael Behe, who demonstrates through numerous examples of "irreducibly complex" molecular machines that this is indeed the case.

• THE EVIDENCE OF BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION

"The six-feet of DNA coiled inside every one of our body's one hundred trillion cells contains a four-letter chemical alphabet that spells out precise assembly instructions for all the proteins from which our bodies are made," reports Strobel in his interview with Cambridge-educated Stephen Meyer. "This kind of information is always the product of intelligence," says Meyer. "And purely from the evidence of genetics and biology, we can infer the existence of a mind that's far greater than our own — a conscious, purposeful, rational, intelligent designer who's amazingly creative."[8]

• THE EVIDENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

"Many scientists are concluding that the laws of chemistry and physics cannot explain our experience of consciousness,"[9] says Strobel. He interviews philosopher J. P. Moreland, who compellingly shows how the evidence for our immaterial soul that is separate from our physical brain, points powerfully to the existence of an ultimate divine Spirit who made us in His image.

COMPELLING CONCLUSION

"The portrait of the Creator that emerges from the scientific data is uncannily consistent with the description of the God whose identity is spelled out in the pages of the Bible,"[10] Strobel concludes.

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made [that is, his creation], so that people are without excuse," the apostle Paul explains in Romans 1:20 (NIV).

"I see faith as being a reasonable step in the same direction that the evidence is pointing," Strobel adds. "In other words, faith goes beyond merely acknowledging that the facts of science and history point toward God. It's responding to those facts by investing trust in God — a step that's fully warranted due to the supporting evidence."[11]

I couldn't agree more. I highly recommend reading *The Case for a Creator* — especially for students whose faith is being challenged by scientific-sounding arguments.

FOOTNOTES

1 Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004) 15-16.

2 Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, back cover.

3 Ibid, 279.

4 Ibid, 283.

5 Ibid, 280.

6 Ibid, 281.

7 Ibid, 281.

8 Ibid, 282.

9 Ibid, 282.

10 Ibid, 284.

11 Ibid, 286.

REVIEWER BIO

MARK MITTELBERG

Mark Mittelberg (M.A., Trinity International University) is the bestselling author of The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask (With Answers)*, as well as the forthcoming* Contagious Faith *book and training course. He also serves as the executive director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University (StrobelCenter.com).*

BOOK REVIEW

Live Not by Lies:
A Manual For Christian Dissidents

by Rod Dreher

REVIEW BY DR. DAVID KOTTER

Professor of New Testament Studies and Dean of the School of Theology

After winning their elections, members of the House of Representatives of the 117th Congress were sworn in on January 3, 2021. The next day a resolution changing the rules of the prior Congress was adopted to eliminate the use of any words associated with gender. For example, the House agreed in clause 15(d)(2) of rule XXII to strike "father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, husband, wife, father-in-law or mother-in-law" and insert "parent, child, sibling, spouse, or parent-in-law" Likewise, the use of "himself or herself" was changed to "themself" in contradiction of the created order of manhood and womanhood and violating all conventions of singular and plural pronouns in the English language. Though this House resolution occurred after the publication of Rod Dreher's excellent book, *Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents*, he undoubtedly would have considered the nascent 117th Congress to be a shining example of "living by lies."

The concept of not living by lies was the subject of the last essay published by dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn on February 12, 1974, the very day of his Moscow arrest and subsequent exile to the West. He considered the inherent lies of a totalitarian state to be like an infection that can exist only in a living organism. Renouncing lies cuts short their existence and disrupts the hosting state. To the people under totalitarian rule, Solzhenitsyn urged liberation through personal non-participation in lies. Even if shouting the truth in the public square would be too dangerous, Solzhenitsyn urged every person to individually choose to live not by lies.

Dreher, the best-selling author of *The Benedict Option*, takes up the mantle from Solzhenitsyn and applies it to the creeping totalitarianism advancing in the United States in 2021. Through interviews with men and women who once lived under communism, he warns that a new type of totalitarianism can happen in America. Dreher distinguishes between the old, hard totalitarianism of the Soviet Union bent on the eradication of Christianity and the new, soft totalitarianism that uses different methods toward the same end. Rather than the gulags and insane asylums of hard totalitarianism, the modern cancel culture uses the guise of "diversity," "inclusivity," and other egalitarian jargon to control discourse and marginalize dissenting people.

Secret police and strict censorship are no longer required if people are made instant pariahs for expressing politically incorrect opinions or freedoms are eliminated using the language of liberating victims from oppression.

The foundation of both hard and soft totalitarianism is an ideology made of lies, such as

that a man can choose to become a woman and compete in the Olympic Games. Such a system depends for its existence on an individual fear of challenging the lies. Therefore, Dreher's book explores the question "What does it mean for us today to live not by lies?"

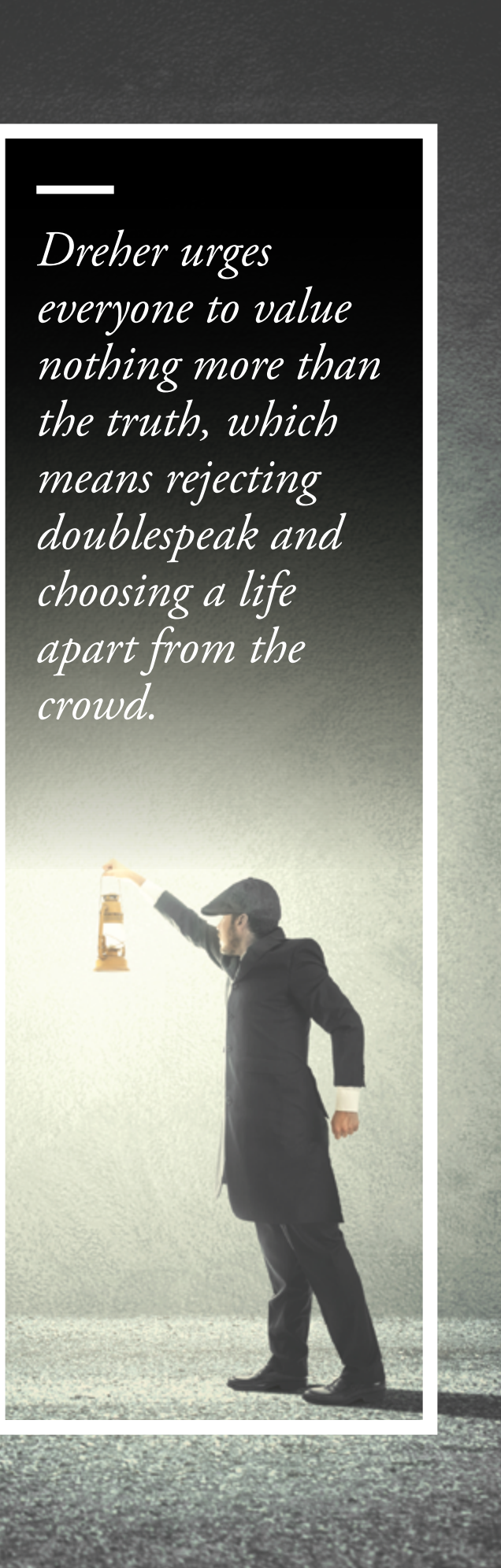
His goal is to share the wisdom gained through the hard experiences of Christians who lived throughout the Soviet bloc.

Hard totalitarianism used wiretaps and other monitoring of citizens, while under soft totalitarianism, people voluntarily purchase smart speakers and place them throughout their homes. The speakers are continually monitored by corporations and the data is sold and used to subtly influence the homeowners for money. Every online search is recorded, categorized, and used for future influence of the searchers. Big Data has replaced Big Brother with apps, credit cards, and smart devices which make life much easier and more pleasurable.

Dreher explores the precursors forming a fertile ground for soft totalitarianism which are already observed throughout American culture: loneliness and social atomization, lack of faith in institutions like religion, sexual adventurism and transgression, a mania for ideology, and a willingness to believe useful lies. He also demonstrates how progressivism has become a religion and how capitalism has become woke. Only months after publication of his book, Apple and Google fulfilled Dreher's predictions by booting right-wing apps such as Parler from their online stores while Amazon effectively destroyed Parler by removing its data from cloud servers. Subsequently, Facebook and Twitter have become the gatekeepers of progressive speech by censoring and banning the tweets of a sitting president.

Amidst this gathering storm, Dreher devotes the second half of the book to specific prescriptions to stand for truth and to stop living by lies. He urges everyone to value nothing more than the truth, which means rejecting doublespeak and choosing a life apart from the crowd. Further, Dreher urges people and institutions to cultivate cultural memory,

Dreher urges everyone to value nothing more than the truth, which means rejecting doublespeak and choosing a life apart from the crowd.



especially by strengthening families to become small fortresses of memories. Stories of the truth must be told in literature, film, theater, and other media, but also through the rituals, joys, and remembrances of churches and families.

A thriving Christian liberal arts university seems to be an ideal institution for implementing the recommendations of Dreher's book for resisting totalitarianism. For example, the Strategic Priorities of CCU include teaching students to be seekers of truth, to think for themselves, and to debunk spent ideas. The very motto of CCU is "Grace and Truth" based on the gospel description of Jesus Christ Himself. Every student of every major at CCU is encouraged to trust the truthfulness of the Bible in the Old and New Testaments.

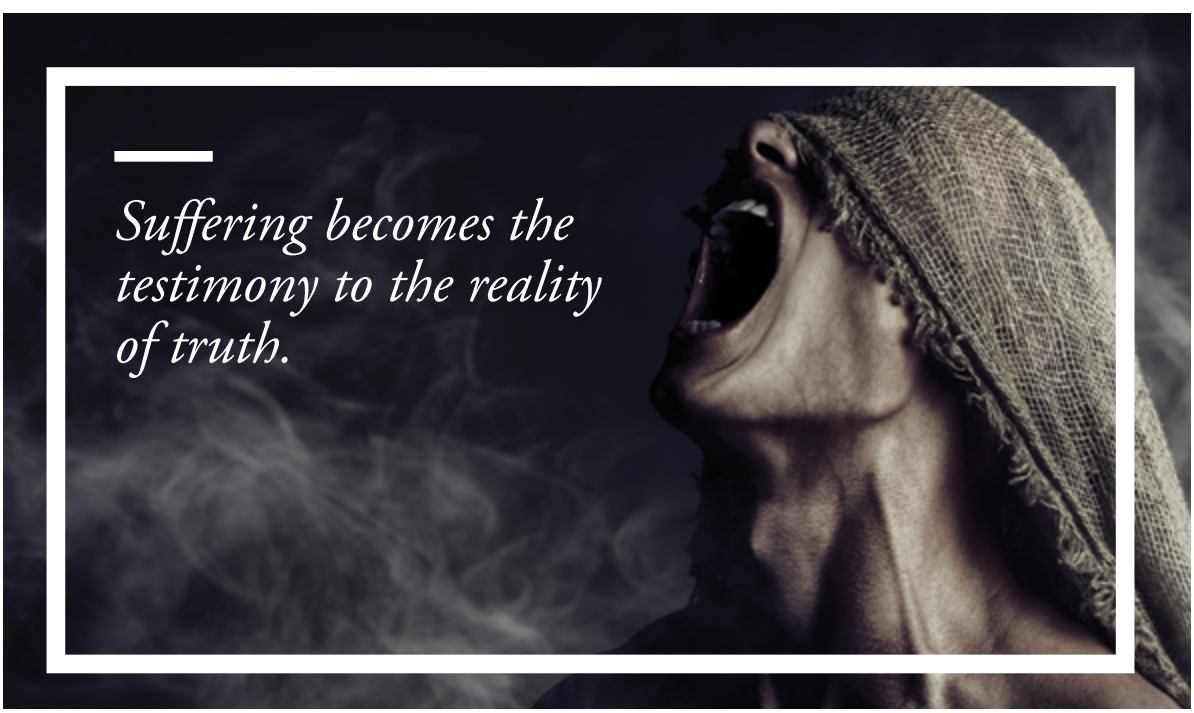
Along these lines, Dreher sees religion as the bedrock of resistance. In one powerful section of the book, he describes how memorizing passages from the New Testament preserved the sanity and lives of political prisoners subjected to repeated beatings and interrogations. Not only the church as an institution, but specifically small groups within local churches are excellent places to form tangible human connections and to model truth. Above all, preparing for suffering will be essential in resisting totalitarianism. Suffering becomes the testimony to the reality of truth. To this end, Dreher urges Christian churches (and one can also assume universities) to organize now while it is still possible.

Reading books such as *Live Not by Lies* is an excellent first step, especially now that the 117th Congress has formally adopted lies about the gendered nature of human beings created in the image of God.

REVIEWER BIO

DR. DAVID KOTTER

David Kotter (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is both an archaeologist and theology scholar. He leads CCU students in yearly archaeological excavation experiences in Israel. Dr. Kotter is also a visiting scholar for the Institute for Faith, Work, and Economics outside of Washington, D.C.



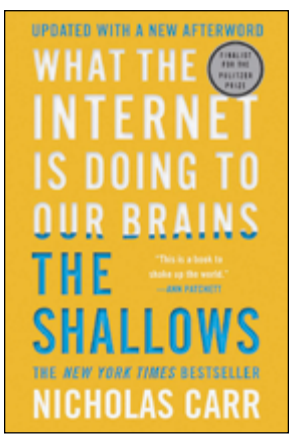
BOOK REVIEW

The Shallows:
What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains

by Nicholas Carr

REVIEW BY DR. HEATHER DAY

Associate Professor of Communication in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences



When I was a kid I had a diary. It had a lock and a key and I hid it under a loose board in my closet. Today, I have a diary, but it is online, and I call it a blog where I publish intimate details of my life to nearly 200,000 women every single week.

There are many upsides to the accessibility of the internet. It has created community, a reservoir of information, and the ability to connect you to friend and foe alike all at your literal fingertips. But what are the downsides? The internet is a tool that has radically interrupted everything about how we interact with one another, entering the scene with much of the same force as papyrus or Gutenberg's printing press.

Nicholas Carr writes in *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, "In a 2010 Pew Research survey of some 400 prominent thinkers, more than 80 percent agreed that by 2020, people's use of the internet will have enhanced human intelligence; as people are allowed unprecedented access to more information, they become smarter and make better choices."[1] 2020 has come and gone and no one is smarter, or making better choices.

The title of the book refers to how the human brain has changed to become one with the machine it engages. In traditional deep reading, the activity is not passive. We know from functional magnetic resonance imaging scans that the reading process stimulates the brain so much so that it mirrors what it reads as if it were experiencing it. Readers become the books that they flip through as their brains process the details on the pages, integrating them with their own past and present experiences.

Much of online reading does not work this way. Not because your brain necessarily experiences the letters on a screen differently, but because the screen is filled with so much more than just the narrative you are scrolling through.

The internet has caused our brains to shift back and forth between information and interruption, and we love it.

The dopamine hits that we experience as our Twitter sends us a notification, our email alerts us, and the ad for the product we were just talking about magically appear on the sidebar cause us a near constant cognitive interference. The interruptions tell us we are important, and we can't get enough of them.

In one experiment when a group of adults was shown a series of colored shapes and asked to make predictions based on what they saw, they were asked to complete the task while wearing headphones that administered a series of beeps. In a second trial, with different visual cues, they were told to also keep track of the beeps. When the participants were asked to reflect on what they had just done, both groups were able to make predictions with equal success.

But those who had multitasked, had a very difficult time drawing conclusions from their experiences. The bouncing back and forth between visual cues and beeps didn't stop them from completing the overall task, but it did prevent them from processing the meaning. We see something similar to this with internet reading. The once deep mirroring process where the reader becomes the book has become something much more shallow, (hence, *The Shallows*). Online reading has our eyes no longer reading linearly, they now bounce back and forth in the shape of an F, constantly scanning at amazing speeds.

Carr says that this adaptation of the brain doesn't just happen when reading online, but now goes with us even when we read offline. If you have struggled to read as long as you used to, or catch yourself checking your phone, skipping around the page while trying to immerse yourself in a book, you are not alone. This is just one symptom of how our brains have adjusted to a near constant flood of online information. While our math scores on standardized testing have remained relatively the same, our reading comprehension and verbal scores have dropped significantly. From 1999 to 2008 critical reading fell 3.3% and our writing skills dropped a dramatic 6.9% on PSAT scores.[2] College students' SAT scores have also been dropping significantly. The U.S. Department of Education showed that the scores of 12th graders between 1992 and 2005 for literacy aptitude declined 12 percent.

At Colorado Christian University, faculty and staff have the honor of leading the next generation as they navigate the world and everything it offers them online. In 2008, young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 were only spending 49 minutes a week with printed material. It becomes important to remind students of the value of deep reading, and spending even 30 minutes a day flipping through pages to help aid their brains in the process of reading comprehension.

Taking a moment to open a physical Bible instead of just an app, can help them resist interruptions.

Carr says "the reader becomes the book" and for the Christian this is the great privilege of daily reading and wrestling through the Gospel. Oh, to become that book!

As a communication professor, I would like to remind you of the words of Marshall McLuhan who has been repeated in every communication theory course since 1964: "the medium is the message." What this means is that while we may argue that it is not the internet itself that taints us, as much as the content we choose to consume on it, McLuhan would disagree. He believed that the medium's content mattered less than the way that medium would influence our thoughts and actions. "The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts," Carr quotes on page 3. Rather McLuhan believed that they altered "patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance." In other words, to argue that it is the good or bad content itself consumed on technology that impacts us is a fool's debate. The medium is the message.

And what happens to human beings when the medium is *The Shallows*?

FOOTNOTES

1 Nicholas G. Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), viiii

2 Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, 146.

REVIEWER BIO

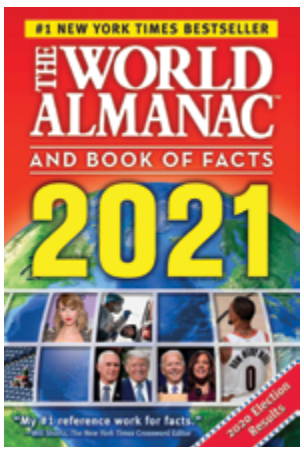
DR. HEATHER THOMPSON DAY

Heather Thompson Day (Ph.D., Andrews University) is an associate professor of communication in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. She is an interdenominational speaker and contributor for Newsweek *and the Barna Group. Day is the author of seven books, including* It's Not Your Turn *and* Confessions of a Christian Wife.

BOOK REVIEW

The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2021

REVIEW BY DR. DONALD W. SWEETING
President of Colorado Christian University

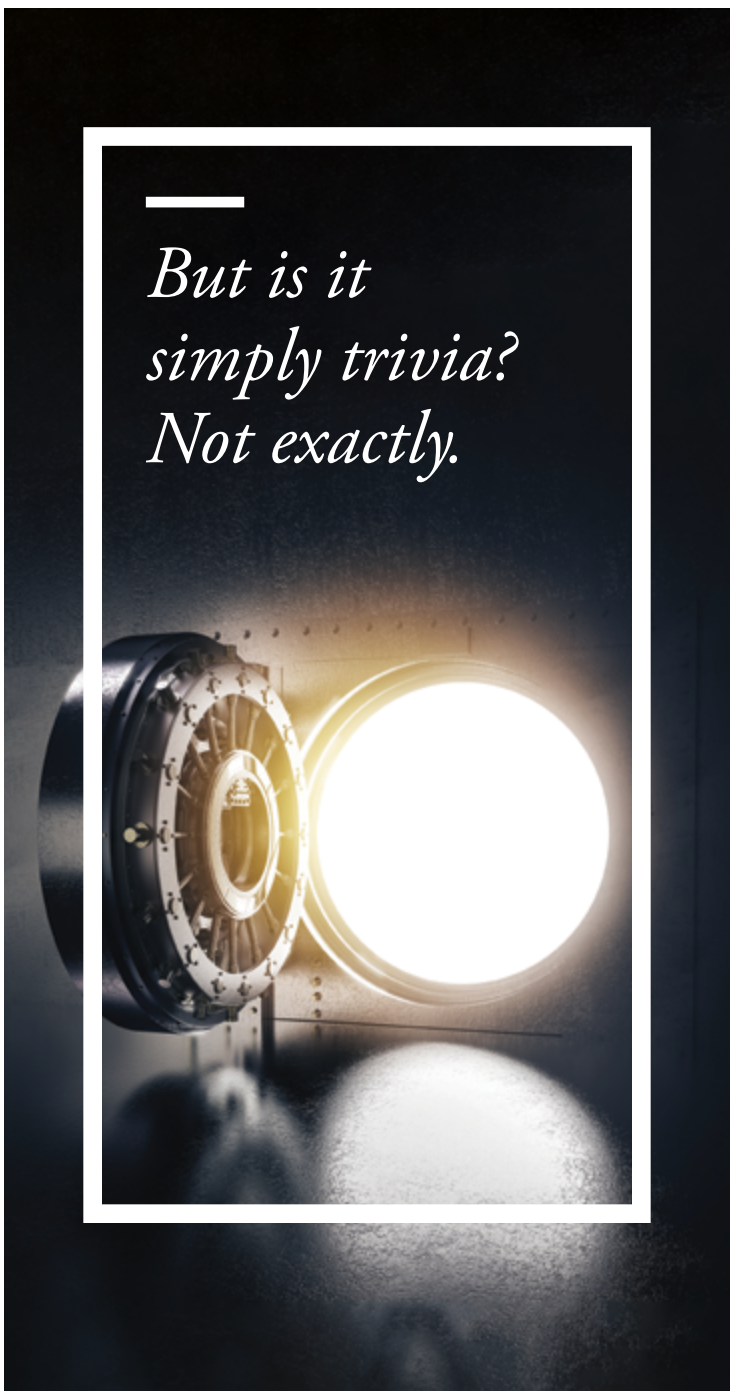


Do you know about *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2021*? My reading for the new year often begins with the annual World Almanac, and ends with the special edition of *The Economist, The World in 2021* (this year's edition).

What is an almanac? It is an annual best-selling publication gathering thousands of facts at your fingertips from business, the arts, pop culture, education, science and technology, U.S. history and government, world geography, religion, sports, and so much more. Some almanacs also include information such as weather forecasts, farmer's planting dates, and astronomical information.

The World Almanac is America's best-selling reference book with more than 83 million copies sold. It is your go-to source for questions on many topics for the up-coming year. *The Wall Street Journal* praises it as a "treasure trove of political, economic, scientific and educational statistics and information" that will answer all your trivia needs effortlessly.

But is it simply trivia? Not exactly. We usually understand trivia as bits of information and data of little consequence. I don't look at it that way at all. Rather, I look at it in the old sense of that word. Trivia is the plural of *trivium*. The trivia were the three lower liberal arts: grammar, logic, and rhetoric



— topics considered basic in an undergraduate's education. Hence the word trivial at one time meant, of interest only to undergraduates. Only later did the word come to mean trite, unimportant trifles.

So why do I bother with the *Almanac*? For numerous reasons.

First, it helps me sum up the year from a macro perspective. It reviews the top 10 news stories, includes the year in pictures, key obituaries, and picks a time capsule listing the items that most came to symbolize the year from news, sports, and pop culture.

Second, it has a section called "The World at a Glance" which features a quick look at the surprising and curious facts that define our changing world, profiling each nation.

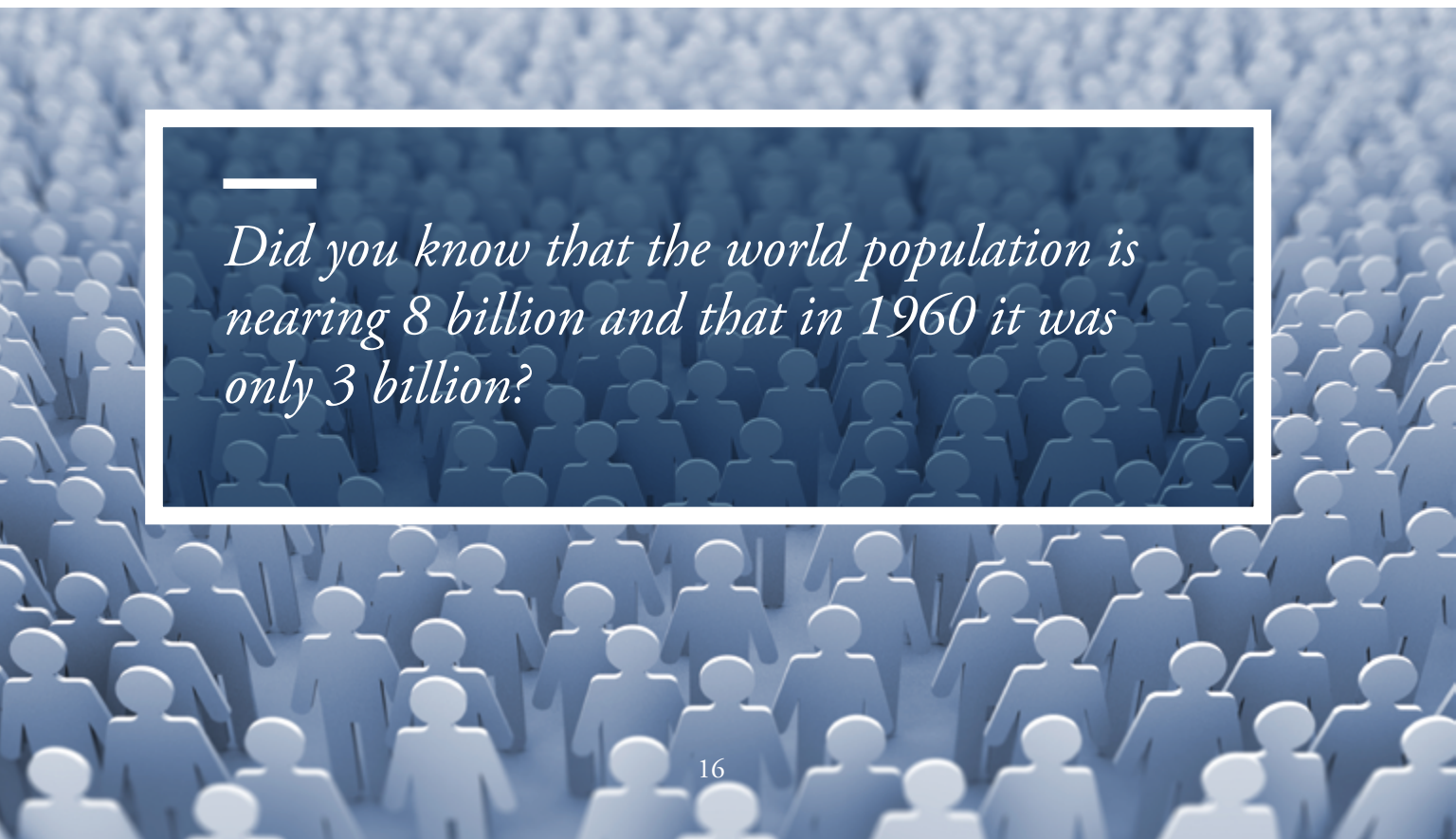
Third, it has a "Statistical Spotlight" that highlights statistics relevant to the year and giving a fresh perspective on important issues.

This year's *World Almanac* has a section detailing the 2020 election results, with a comprehensive look at the election process from the early primaries to the actual voting results of states, counties, and the nation.

It also features a section on the 2020 coronavirus pandemic with up-to-the minute information about the world's largest public health crisis in a century, providing a summary of what scientists know about the virus so far, and what they don't know.

Sixth, the *Almanac* helps me think about what events are coming in the new year — significant dates, historical anniversaries, and big national or international events. This lets me anticipate topics that we will all be talking about in the new year.

Seventh, the *Almanac* provides up-to-date data, tracking population and demographic trends. It gives helpful profiles of each state. It tracks figures in religion and denominational growth. It tracks higher education and health trends.



Did you know that the world population is nearing 8 billion and that in 1960 it was only 3 billion?

Oh yes, and sports. It tracks the latest statistics essential for any sports fan. As a baseball fan, it helps me gear up for spring training and anticipate the coming year with basic reminders of key benchmarks and records sacred to baseball!

This year's edition also gives an overview of previous Olympic moments and records as we anticipate the Olympic Summer Games in Tokyo.

This is a reference book. So you read it according to the sections that interest you. What does not, you simply pass over.

For instance, did you know that the world population is nearing 8 billion and that in 1960 it was only 3 billion? Did you know that the number of refugees in the world increased from 10.5 million in 2010 to 20.4 million in 2019? Did you know that the latest reported budget deficit for the U.S. government was $1 trillion (2019), that the largest company in the U.S. is Walmart, that the richest person in the world (whom you make richer with every Amazon purchase) is Jeff Bezos, that the total cost of the U.S. election last year was a whopping $10.5 billion — the most ever? Did you know that the flu vaccine for 2019-2020 was only 39% effective? Do you know the average life expectancy for your age group or the maximum Social Security benefit allowed by law? Did you know that 39% of high school students say they text or email while driving? Or that the average TV viewing time for Americans per week is 26.37 hours, and that the time spent online each week for Americans is 22.5 hours? Think of what you could do with all that extra time! Do you know where your dog lands on the most popular U.S. dogs list? Did you know that Harvard's endowment is $39 billion?

Do you know Colorado's racial demographics, its crime rates by county, or its poverty rate? Did you know that Colorado's population has grown by 33% since 2000 making it the seventh-fastest-growing state in the U.S.?

Did you know that a black hole about 1,000 light years from earth is the closest yet discovered in a star system visible to the naked eye?

And did you know that the fourth-place Rockies have the fifth-highest batting average in the National League, but the highest ERA in major league baseball (5.59), the lowest number of strikeouts in baseball, and gave up the second-most hits of all teams in baseball? Hmm … explains a lot!

For all these reasons, you will find the *World Almanac* both interesting and a great reference tool. True, it's information that's only good for a year, but hey that's much better than your newspaper which is only good for a day.

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.

BOOK REVIEW

The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self:
Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution

by Carl Trueman

REVIEW BY DR. IAN CLARY

Assistant Professor of Historical Theology in the School of Theology

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that "to know something is to know its cause." We see the truth of this when we develop a cough and want a doctor to figure out its cause in order to diagnose and cure the ailment. This concept is important beyond curing the common cold and can be applied to greater societal issues. For instance, what was the cause of the social unrest of the summer of 2020? What was the cause of the storming of the U.S. Capitol at the beginning of 2021? To know the causes for such things can help us in our attempt to heal political divisions and prevent them from happening in 2022 and beyond.

This principle can also be helpful as we seek to understand the rapidly changing culture around us today. I distinctly remember sitting with a friend at a park in West Toronto in 2015 the day after *Vanity Fair* placed a picture of Caitlin Jenner on its cover. As much as we were discussing the nature of transgender people, we were quite bewildered at how fast things had changed in terms of sexual ethics and of sexual identity. Up to that point, my only awareness of trans people was seeing them on street corners in certain parts of the city after hours; now a famous athlete was on the cover of an influential magazine. Trans people had moved from the farthest margins to center stage, culturally speaking. How did this happen so quickly? What was the cause of this rapid change?

It is in providing an answer to this question that Carl R. Trueman's recent book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self,* is so helpful. As it turns out, what my friend and I perceived to be a rapid change in the terms of sexual identity was not rapid at all, but had been a long time coming and was, in a sense, the logical conclusion of a long chain of arguments. It is not just to the 1960s that we might look to discover the origins of the sexual revolution; rather, we must go back a couple of hundred years and walk the halls of academia, sit in French cafés, and peruse European art galleries to get a real sense of what lies behind this cultural change.

It might seem strange that a historian like Trueman would write a book on the nature of the self, which is typically conceived of as a philosophical problem. Indeed, as one of my favorite historians, Trueman has written works on the Reformer Martin Luther, the Puritan John Owen, and on the craft of history itself.[1] Without wanting to pump up my own discipline too much, it is actually as a historian that Trueman offers us the most help as he is able to look at historical

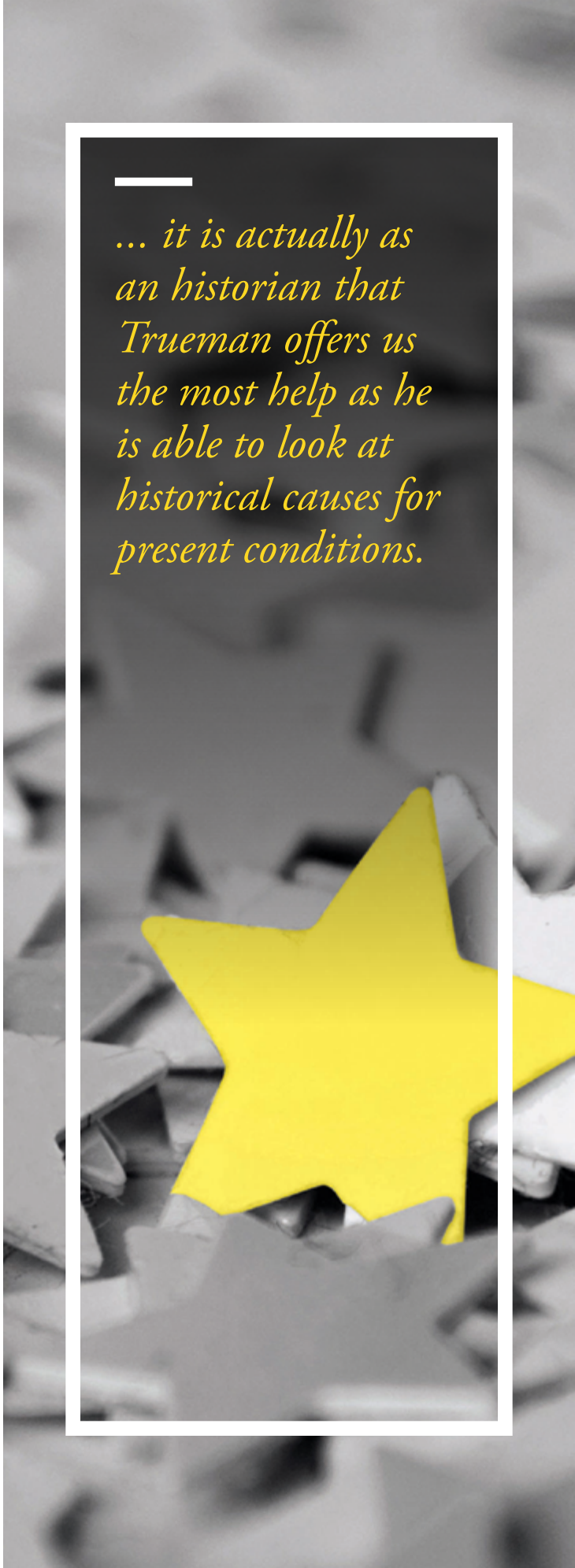
causes for present conditions. By traversing the last few hundred years, we see very clearly that the groundwork of 21st century culture had been laid by thinkers as diverse as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, William Blake, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Oscar Wilde, Sigmund Freud, Simone de Beauvoir, and the Frankfurt School.[2] Nevertheless, Trueman is not purely historical in his approach to the nature of the late-modern self. Indeed, he relies heavily on the work of three more philosophically oriented thinkers to help him frame these cultural changes, namely Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Philip Rieff.

The fundamental question that Trueman asks, and that drives his book, is how could our society so easily adopt a statement like, "I am a man trapped in a woman's body"? What would have sounded contradictory to an earlier generation is almost commonplace today. Trueman turns to Taylor, a Canadian philosopher and author of the justly famous *A Secular Age*, to help us understand the notion of the "social imaginary." This is a way of getting at how a society understands and interprets its social surroundings, typically disseminated over time by cultural elites to the masses. Among other important concepts, Taylor also gave us the term "expressive individualism" that gets at the way people derive personal meaning by "giving expression to ... feelings and desires."[3]

We see this most clearly in those of the social media generation who live their lives out on TikTok or Snapchat, where the inner psychological self is placed on full display for all to see, in the name of the "culture of authenticity."

This ties into the thought of MacIntyre, the Notre Dame virtue ethicist, who observed how our culture derives its ethics from "emotional preference."[4] This "emotivism" ends up trumping any kind of rational argumentation — hence why people can be convinced of a particular viewpoint if a personal story is attached to it, even if that view is demonstrably wrong.

... it is actually as an historian that Trueman offers us the most help as he is able to look at historical causes for present conditions.



It is to Rieff, the psychological sociologist, that Trueman engages as a more sustained conversation partner. Rieff categorizes four stages of human life throughout history: the first is the "political man" of the Greeks and the Romans; the second is the "religious man," seen largely in the Middle Ages; the third is "economic man," that describes the period of industrialization and economic development. It is to the fourth stage that Rieff situates our own culture, describing humans in it as "psychological man." As Trueman explains, this is a "type characterized not so much by finding identity in outward directed activities as was true of the previous types but rather in the inward quest for personal psychological happiness."[5]

As such, we live in a therapeutic age where personal, inward happiness derives all notions of right or wrong, regardless of any discursive argumentation. If something makes me feel bad, it is,* ipso facto, *wrong.

In detailing these types, Trueman then tells a story about how the nature of the "self" changed from ancient and medieval perspectives, grounded as they were in God and His creation, into notions of the self today that are arbitrary and without fundamental purpose or meaning. Trueman's approach, to be honest, is the basic one I take in my philosophy classes at CCU, so this was a delightful surprise. The notion of the self as grounded in creation, and told throughout a history that is directed by God's providential hand, is what the Christian faith's notion of a human is oriented to and from. The modern self, however, has lost that solidity as thinkers like Renee Descartes placed an emphasis on the self as a mere thinking being, as Humean skepticism[4] destroyed the possibility of knowing the self, and Nietzschean nihilism argued that we construct ourselves according to subjective notions and desires that are not tied to any metaphysical authority. Characters in this story include poets like Percy Bysse Shelley, psychologists like Wilhelm Reich, and feminists like Simone de Beauvoir. Without going too far afield in a review like this, it is worth noting the impact of de Beauvoir, as she is not often treated in such taxonomies. It is to her that we can turn to for the argument that one does not have an essential quality that makes them either male or female, but that gender is something that is psychologized and constructed by the individual. In works like *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir argued that a woman is not born as such, but becomes one.

The final section of Trueman's book applies the themes of expressive individualism and the therapeutic self into the particulars of today's culture wars, with a focus on the rise and development of Supreme Court legislation that made great changes to the nature of marriage, long before Obergefell[5] in 2015. A significant watershed in our late-modern legal view of marriage came under the governorship of Ronald Reagan who brought no-fault divorce to California in 1980. Trueman also traces the rise of gay rights from the Stonewall Riots to today, relating its unique trajectories to the rise of lesbian feminism, and explaining how the two are not logical bedfellows in light of their respective views of gender — Trueman explains that lesbians did not see themselves as having the same ethical concerns as gay men, and that to treat lesbianism under the same rubric was a manifestation of patriarchy. It was not until the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, when gay men were viewed less as pariahs and more as victims of a horrible disease, did lesbian thought become more attached with broader legal notions of gay rights. As Trueman astutely observes, with the recent cultural trend towards transgenderism, a new fissure will arise within the LGBTQ+ movement. Whereas feminists especially understand gender to be something fixed and even essentialist, the transgender movement argues for gender fluidity, thus rendering male or femaleness without any essential, ontological quality. Feminists like Camille Paglia and Germaine Greer, along with the derisively described Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFS), push against the idea that a biological male can, based on their own psychological needs, declare themselves to be a woman. However, because our social imaginary, grounded in Rieff's notion of an "anticulture," is expressed in therapeutic terms, the impact of transgenderism on women's rights will prove significantly difficult.

Trueman's historical survey and philosophical analysis are very helpful. Though it can at times feel overwhelming, this book should be considered by all serious pastors and laypeople. I also think that everyone in the CCU community should read it. I found it remarkably helpful in trying to understand my own students and the issues that they face culturally. Now that I know the causes of the culture that we share, I hope to be able to shape a meaningful engagement with them, whether they are struggling with being gay or trans, or whether they manifest other traits of the therapeutic age beyond just the sexual revolution.

The final chapter is also useful in that Trueman gives some future-looking advice on how to progress as a church that is cutting against the cultural grain. Though a historian, Trueman does not fall to the temptation of mere historical nostalgia. Rather, he reminds us that our faith should be historically and doctrinally grounded, not driven by ungrounded tastes and aesthetics. Just because the culture has rid itself of sound argumentation in favor of therapeutic needs does not mean that the church should, too. Finally, Trueman calls the church to live as a true community, a true culture amidst the anticulture that is collapsing around us. He further calls Protestants to join their Roman Catholic counterparts in developing a robust view of the body, a view of the self that is grounded in nature and in God's special revelation. Just look at nature and we'll see that life is simple. I could not agree more.

FOOTNOTES

1 Carl R. Trueman, *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom, Theologians on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); idem., *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man, Great Theologians* (London: Routledge, 2007); idem., *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

2 This is not his first foray into contemporary cultural issues, see his helpful book on politics that is very relevant for today: Carl R. Trueman, *Republocrat: Confessions of a Liberal Conservative* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010).

3 Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 46.

4 Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 161.

5 Ibid, 45.

REVIEWER BIO

DR. IAN CLARY

Ian Hugh Clary (Ph.D., University of the Free State) is an assistant professor of historical theology at Colorado Christian University, the author of Reformed Evangelicalism and the Search for a Usable Past *(2020), and co-host of the "Into Theology" podcast with The Gospel Coalition Canada.*

This "emotivism" ends up trumping any kind of rational argumentation — hence why people can be convinced of a particular viewpoint if a personal story is attached to it, even if that view is demonstrably wrong.

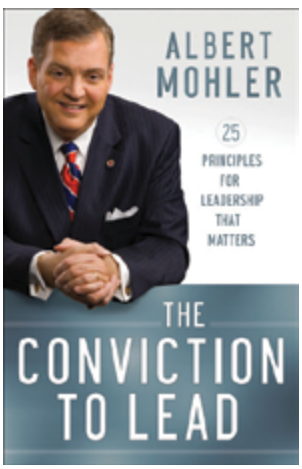
BOOK REVIEW

The Conviction to Lead

by Albert Mohler

REVIEW BY DR. RYAN T. HARTWIG

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



For many decades now, countless observers, scholars, and practitioners of leadership have sought to answer two key questions: "What is leadership?" and "What does it take to effectively lead others?" In those intervening years, many volumes have been written with various attempts to answer those key questions, most of which focus on the practice of leadership to the neglect of the purpose and the most basic presuppositions of leadership. Al Mohler's *The Conviction to Lead* steps squarely into that open space, proposing a great why of leadership, one that grounds and directs the what and how of leadership.

Especially for the Christian leader, Mohler convincingly argues that leadership is driven by conviction, the leader's deeply and passionately held beliefs, and results in cascading conviction among those who follow that leader. Though well-known as one of America's most influential public Christian intellectuals as host of the extremely popular "The Briefing" podcast, Mohler writes with decades of experience leading the Southern Seminary through significant change upon his arrival as president in 1993. This book is deep, yet accessible and immediately applicable to leaders at every stage of the leadership journey.

Mohler's treatise on leadership departs from so many who have come before him — as he devotes this effort to first help aspiring leaders find and develop conviction, and then equip those leaders to lead with conviction as they cultivate a growing sense of conviction among the people and/or organization those leaders lead. Refreshingly blunt and straightforward, Mohler writes with great passion himself, and clearly articulates his aims for the book:

> *My goal is to knock the blocks out from under the current models of leadership and forge a new way. I stake my life on the priority of right beliefs and convictions, and at the same time I want to lead so that those very beliefs are perpetuated in others. [Thus, I aim] to redefine Christian leadership so that it is inseparable from passionately held beliefs, and to motivate those who are deeply committed to truth to be ready for leadership … to set the world on fire.*

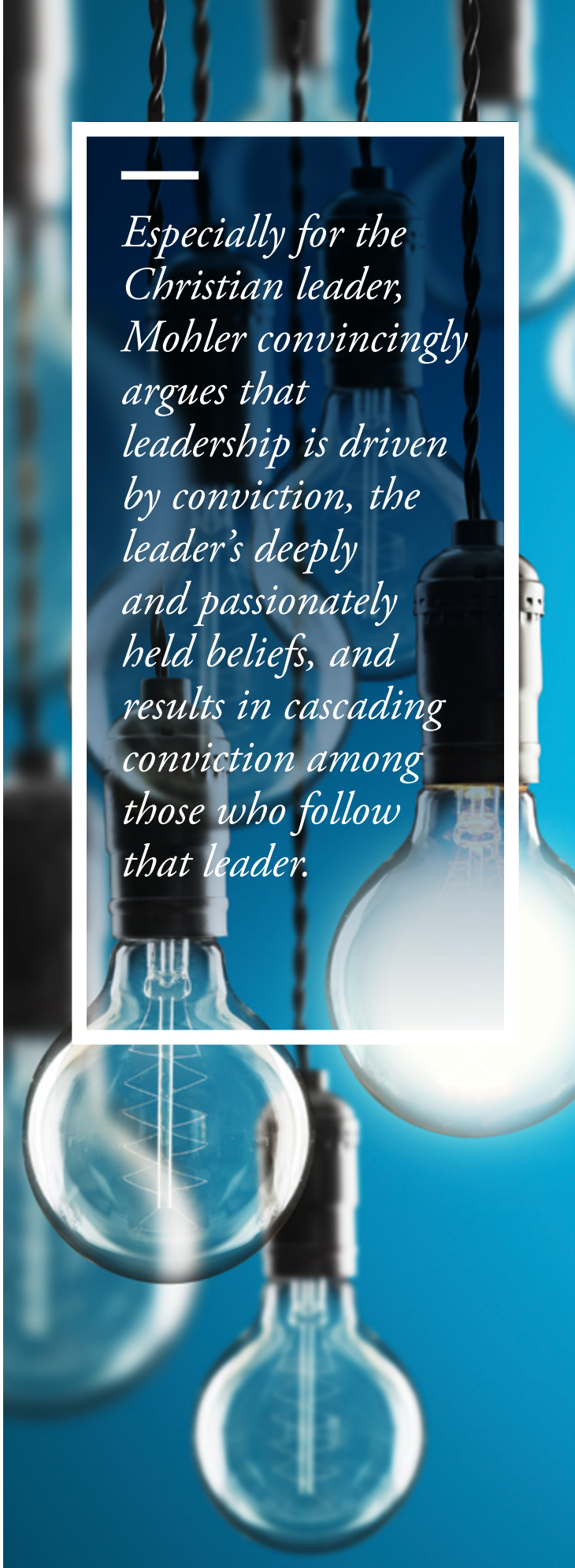
And he delivers. When I first read this book, Mohler challenged me to explore my own leadership convictions, test my leadership actions and outcomes against those beliefs, and evaluate how I am catalyzing conviction in others about ideas, principles, and commitments that truly matter. If you give it a read, I suspect you'll be similarly challenged.

The first third of the book unpacks Mohler's notion of convictional leadership, explaining how core beliefs shape leaders' actions, framing how one's leadership is always driven by narratives (and for the Christian leader must be driven by the Grand Narrative), and explaining how such leadership both shapes and is shaped by worldviews. In addition, he articulates the attribute of convictional intelligence: possessing intuition in line with one's convictions, and then acting nearly reflexively upon those convictions when dealing with matters of great importance.

While leaders have been urged recently to develop all kind of intelligences, such as emotional, social, decency, adversity, and curiosity intelligences (yes, all of these are actual "intelligences" that have been recently theorized) Mohler's call to develop convictional intelligence is perhaps one of this book's greatest contributions to contemporary — and Christian — thinking about leadership.

In the second part of the book, Mohler presses in on what leaders driven by conviction do. They think deeply, and help others to do the same. They take advantage of ubiquitous opportunities to teach, recognizing that the modern organization is a learning organization, and therefore the modern leader should be one of, if not the, educator in chief. Convictional leaders communicate their priorities and perspectives, over and over again, and excel as they speak and write to various audiences across a variety of media and contexts. They read voraciously, developing a greater and greater sense of convictional intelligence as they feast on books that spur spiritual health and deep thought. Finally, they effectively manage their organizations, and make critical decisions when easy answers are nowhere to be found.

Throughout, Mohler doesn't just tell leaders what they should do, but goes the next step to instruct them how to do those things. For instance, in the "Leaders are Readers" chapter, he offers valuable insights on the fundamentals of how to read, what to read, and when to read (whenever you can!). In "Leaders are Teachers," he draws on the theologian Augustine to identify three goals of effective teaching — that every student be instructed, delighted, and moved. Insights like these extend the applicability of this book to people who lead in all different kinds of contexts, not just those elevated in the corporate hierarchy. A deeply practical book, Mohler also addresses how leaders engage with the



Especially for the Christian leader, Mohler convincingly argues that leadership is driven by conviction, the leader's deeply and passionately held beliefs, and results in cascading conviction among those who follow that leader.

media, how they can best manage their limited time, and how they engage with and offer impact in the new worlds of social and digital media.

Finally, the last part of the book deals with the endurance and legacy of the leader. In a world where success is too often measured too quickly, Mohler flirts with the morbid by discussing the inevitability of every leader, indeed every person — death — and what will be left once every leader is no longer present in this world. At that point, Mohler prompts his readers to consider that what will remain is conviction, held in the hearts of people and the cultural DNA of organizations and movements shaped by that leader!

Whether you're new to leadership or a seasoned executive, this book will help you think about why you lead, the effects of your leadership, and how to become a more effective, influential leader of your team, office, department, division, church, ministry, sports team, or family.

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).*

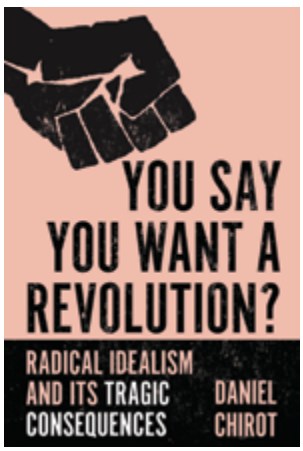
I stake my life on the priority of right beliefs and convictions, and at the same time I want to lead so that those very beliefs are perpetuated in others.

BOOK REVIEW

You Say You Want a Revolution?: Radical Idealism & Its Tragic Consequences

by Daniel Chirot

REVIEW BY JEFF HUNT
Director of the Centennial Institute



Is America facing a revolution? I am writing this review less than two weeks after the violent protests at the U.S. Capitol and days before Joe Biden's inauguration as the 46th president of the United States. Washington, D.C., has 25,000 national guard troops protecting it. We may not be in a revolution, but it feels like our country is on the brink of coming apart.

Yet, the past month's events are a continuation of the problems our country has been facing for a while. The book, *You Say You Want A Revolution?: Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences*, was published in early March 2020, even before the lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The author Daniel Chirot writes, "We are returning to a pre-World War II world of unbridgeable polarization and doubts about the foundational ideas of democratic liberalism."[1]

His book is a historical analysis of revolutions throughout world history in an effort to find common themes. He explores the American, French, Russian, Mexican, Chinese, Iranian, and Arab Spring revolutions. He also explores the more peaceful revolutions of 1600s U.K., late 1800s Germany and Japan, and 1980s Eastern Europe.

His book finishes with eight conclusions. First, common in all revolutions, "state political institutions solidified and became encrusted as those with power protected themselves by preventing reforms that risked endangering their wealth and privileges."[2] Second, "it is possible to overcome a crisis if there are strong institutions that can be used by a self-aware political elite capable of understanding that change is necessary."[3] Third, as a country's institutions collapse, "liberals tend to underestimate both the anger of previously powerless masses and the growing appeal of those who propose radical solutions."[4] While moderate liberals may help begin revolutions, they can fall under the rise of more radical elements within the movement. Fourth, "it is not just moderate liberals who can lose control because they do not fully grasp what very radical extremists have in mind,"[5] moderate conservatives can become victims of the same problem. Fifth, "wars, whether with outside powers or internal civil war, invariably enhance the power of radicals who can claim to be fully committed to the revolution."[6] Sixth, "we all need to be reminded to pay attention to what political leaders write and say, and never assume that what sounds like extremism is just an opportunistic exaggeration."[7] Seventh, we must not just pay attention to political elites. Ideas shaped by cultural and intellectual elites will have a dramatic effect on culture. "It is, therefore, necessary to pay attention to changing fashions among cultural and intellectual elites to better understand what might happen."[8] Finally, "if you want a revolution, beware of how it might turn out, because you might one day rue the one that you get. Gradual change, compromise, and flexibility are better ways to adapt to demands for reform."[9]

So is America on the brink of a revolution? Not a violent effort to overthrow the government. A few years ago, I reviewed, in-depth, the reasons the colonists listed for their declaration of independence from England. At that time, the colonists were without reprieve. All three branches of government — executive (king), legislative, and judicial were under the control of the crown. Returning to Chirot's first conclusion that "state political institutions solidified and became encrusted," there are still options for competing parties to win political power in America. If you are a conservative disillusioned with the 2020 election, a reminder that the Supreme Court leans conservative and Republicans are one seat from controlling the Senate and will likely take control of the House of Representatives in 2022. If you are a liberal or progressive, you now have control of the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.

Still, America faces serious problems with its institutions and is likely facing a social revolution.

There is a swamp and entrenched political class in Washington, D.C. Many Americans do not trust our media. Education, with the exception of Colorado Christian University and a few others, is dominated by leftists. Free speech, freedom of religion, even the freedom to support a political candidate are under attack. We're watching conservatives silenced from social media platforms, their businesses protested, and lists of conservatives being made to prevent their employment by corporate America. These types of actions fuel discontent that could lead to revolution.

What should we glean from this book about revolution? Mainly — try to avoid revolution. America was fortunate that its revolution wasn't nearly as violent as most of the world's. It was primarily a political revolution and not a social revolution. In fact, Chirot points out that many peaceful revolutions were "carried out by enlightened, socially conservative bureaucrats, not by radicals intent on overthrowing the entire social order."[10]

We should take revolution talk very seriously. We should not discount the words of revolutionaries that want to fundamentally change America. We should also work to ensure that our nation has the proper civil society "release valves" for when pressure builds.

We also need to be weary of efforts by extremists to capitalize on initially moderate revolutions to push an even more extreme agenda.

Some of the world's worst revolutions didn't start out extreme but ended there, i.e. French, Iranian, Chinese, Arab Spring, and Russian. The Beatles song, "Revolution," published in 1968 provides a good summary for how we should view threats of revolution. "You say you want a revolution. Well, you know. We all want to change the world. But when you talk about destruction, don't you know that you can count me out … But if you go carrying pictures of Chairman Mao, you ain't going to make it with anyone anyhow." I recommend *You Say You Want A Revolution?: Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences* by Daniel Chirot for a historical survey of the world's revolutions and a reminder of the larger problems we can face if we don't address the smaller problems in our country today.

FOOTNOTES

1 Daniel Chirot, *You Say You Want a Revolution?: Radical Idealism and Its Tragic Consequences* (Princeton University Press, 2020) 127.

2 Chirot, *You Say You Want a Revolution?*, 28.

3 Ibid, 129.

4 Ibid, 130.

5 Ibid, 130.

6 Ibid, 131.

7 Ibid, 132.

8 Ibid, 133.

9 Ibid, 133

10 Ibid, 120.

REVIEWER BIO

JEFF HUNT

Jeff Hunt (MPS, George Washington University) is the director of the Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University. The Centennial Institute sponsors research, events, and publications to enhance public understanding of the most important issues facing our state and nation. By proclaiming truth, the institute aims to foster faith, family, and freedom; teach citizenship; and renew the spirit of 1776.

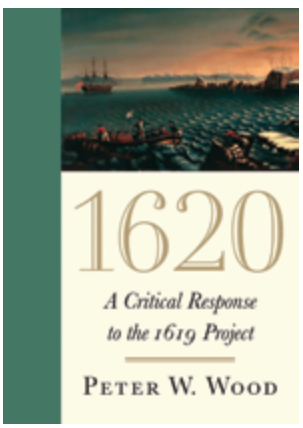
Some of the world's worst revolutions didn't start out extreme but ended there, i.e. French, Iranian, Chinese, Arab Spring, and Russian.

1620:
A Critical Response to the 1619 Project

by Peter Wood

REVIEW BY DR. GARY STEWARD

Assistant Professor of History and Chair of the Department of Social Sciences



"Who controls the past ... controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past."

– George Orwell

Those who control the narratives of the past wield enormous power over the policies and programs we pursue in the present, as George Orwell intimated in his *1984*: "Who controls the past ... controls the future."[1] Indeed, those who shape the narratives of the past possess a powerful tool to manipulate the terms of discourse on contemporary challenges and possible solutions. For this reason, historians are more important and more consequential than most people realize. We should choose our journalists and historians wisely and be very careful about the narratives we commend to others as true.

The New York Times attempted to seize control of the American narrative with its controversial 1619 Project, launched a few years ago to mark the 400th anniversary of the purported introduction of slavery into what is now the United States.[2] The stated aim of this endeavor is "to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contribution of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative."[3] In actual practice, however, the 1619 Project seeks to get rid of and replace more traditional tellings of America's past, reframing the story of our nation completely around racial conflict and oppression. In this new narrative, slavery is the defining institution of America's past, and racial oppression is the most fundamental feature of American life, past and present.

Peter W. Wood, an anthropologist and president of the National Association of Scholars, has written a wide-ranging response to the *New York Times'* attempt to control and "reframe" the narrative of our national past with his *1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project*. According to Wood, the thesis of the 1619 Project is that "the nation's history is best understood as a struggle by American blacks against white supremacy."[4] Wood convincingly demonstrates that the aim of the 1619 Project is not to provide an accurate telling of America's past but to selectively use the past to launch a wholesale assault on Western values, capitalism, private property, free markets, and the system of ordered liberty that has come to define American life.[5]

After briefly discussing slavery around the world as it existed before and immediately after 1492, Wood begins his book by examining the "pre-founding" of America, namely, the signing of the Mayflower Compact, which introduced into the New World the "ideal of self-government."[6] This exercise in self-government was egalitarian in spirit, argues Wood, with sentiments that would be echoed again much later in the Declaration of Independence.[7] America was truly founded, then, according to Wood, on the principle of the fundamental dignity of all. Enslavement of various kinds, according to Wood, was a global phenomenon found extensively among Arab, African, and Native American societies, long before it was found in colonial America. European colonizers of the New World should not be singled-out for their involvement in it, argues Wood,

especially if such fault-finding is motivated by radical plans to fundamentally restructure American society.

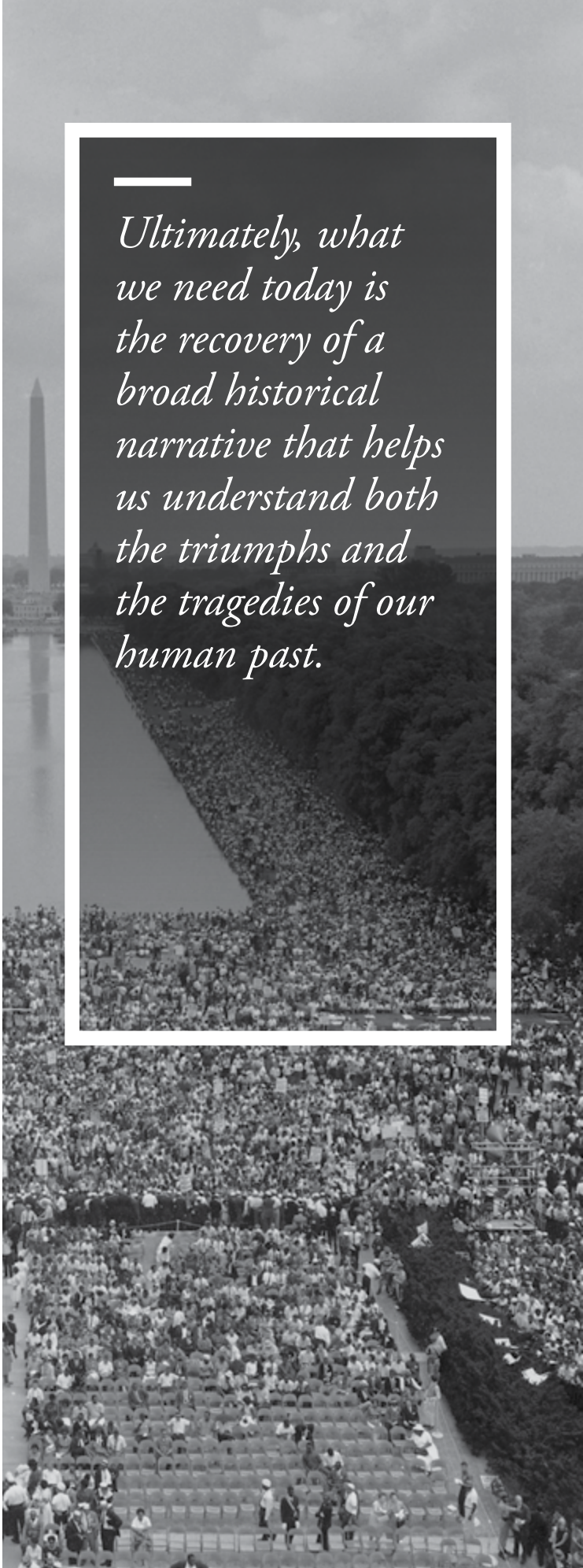
In a scattershot way, Wood addresses a wide variety of claims and insinuations made by the 1619 Project, including assertions made by Nikole Hannah-Jones, "the project's chief architect."[8] Hannah-Jones, for example, has stated that "the American Revolution was fought to protect American slave owners from the threat of abolition by the British authorities."[9] Another contributor to the project, Matthew Desmond, has asserted that slavery lay out the foundation of American capitalism.[10] Wood marshals the responses of professional historians like Gordon Wood, Sean Wilentz, and others to show the dubious falsity and "cynicism" of these claims.[11]

Wood's response to the 1619 Project is a helpful introduction to the current discussion regarding race in America's past. When thinking about the past, we should all care, first of all, about truth — truth in all of its complexity and detail. The story of the American past is complex and multi-faceted, and responsible historians are needed to speak into that national conversation about our past. Simplistic assertions and slogans don't help us much on this front, as Ben Franklin once wrote, "Half the truth is often a great lie."[12]

As Americans, we have a great deal to celebrate about what we have achieved as a nation.

As Wood puts it, "A citizen should grow up knowing we are a free people under the rule of law. A citizen should know that it is not some happy accident but the result of an immense effort over many generations. … All Americans should learn that the struggle to end slavery across the globe started in Western culture and was advanced by the United States."[13] Indeed, the American story has many moral triumphs worth remembering and celebrating.

Ultimately, what we need today is the recovery of a broad historical narrative that helps us understand both the triumphs and the tragedies of our human past. Thankfully, we have this narrative in Scripture,



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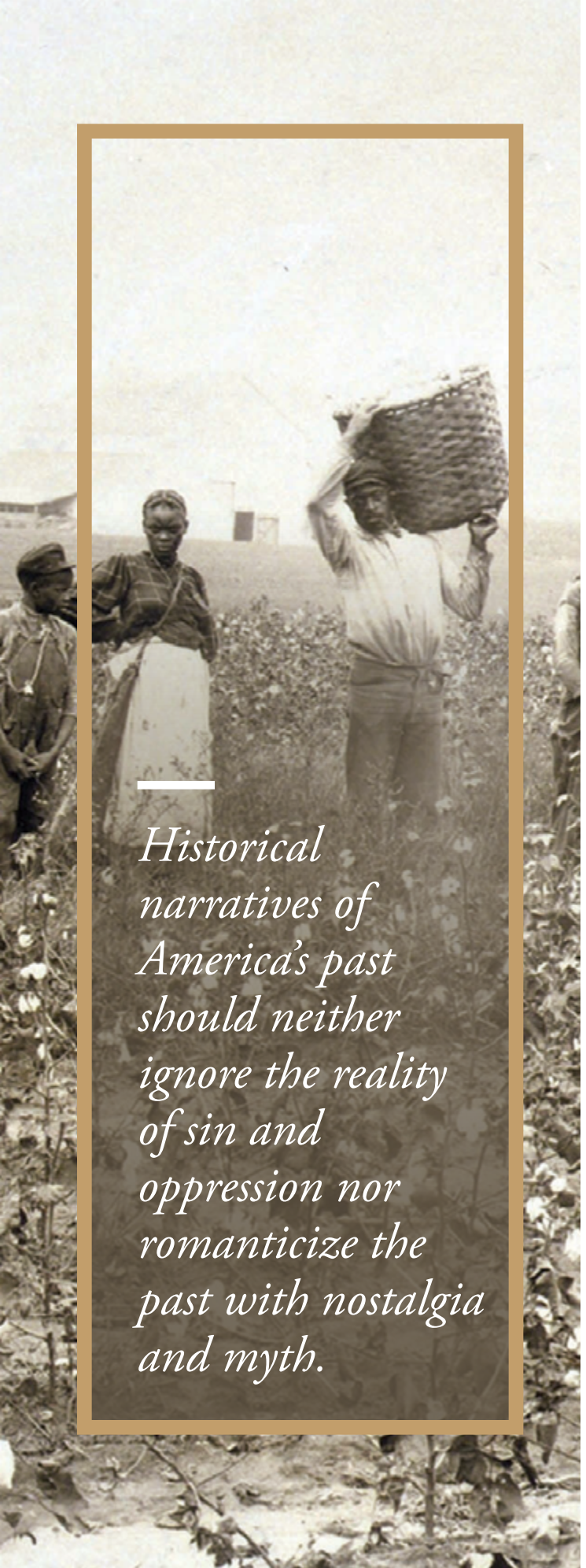

Historical narratives of America's past should neither ignore the reality of sin and oppression nor romanticize the past with nostalgia and myth.

which diagnoses the root of our contemporary problems and points us to the true solution. Historical narratives of America's past should neither ignore the reality of sin and oppression nor romanticize the past with nostalgia and myth. Neither should political activists pose as historians in an attempt to manipulate the conversation in support of destructive policies and radical agendas.

FOOTNOTES

1 George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1983), 33.

2 The use of the year 1619 is largely symbolic, as varieties of enslavement and servitude existed in the Americas long before this date. See Michael Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

3 "The 1619 Project," *The New York Times Magazine*, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html

4 Peter W. Wood, *1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project* (New York: Encounter Books, 2020), 68.

5 Wood, *1620*, 3–7.

6 Ibid, 26, 33.

7 Ibid, 49.

8 Ibid, 55.

9 Ibid, 68.

10 Ibid, 127-131.

11 Ibid, 77-98.

12 Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanack* (New York: Century Co., 1902 [orig., July 1758]), 169.

13 Wood, *1620*, 224.

REVIEWER BIO

DR. GARY STEWARD

Gary Steward (Ph.D., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is an assistant professor of history and the chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Colorado Christian University. He specializes in American political and religious history and has published works on the American Revolution and Christian approaches to social reform in antebellum America.

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