

CCU Review

of BOOKS, CULTURE, MEDIA, LIFE

Volume 6
Issue 1



COLORADO CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY

Grace and Truth

There Must Be Something About Books

Guy Montag, Fahrenheit 451

Dear Friends,



“There must be something about books,” so said a fictionalized character who was doing his best to destroy them everywhere, until one day... (to learn more about this man, go to page 9).

What is it about books that makes them so important? This is a timely question for a society like ours where basic literacy has been dropping since the year 2000. It’s a pressing question for a digital age where our many devices are fragmenting our minds, shortening our attention spans, and undermining our ability to read deeply. It’s also a relevant question for readers of the *CCU Review*, a journal which highlights books, culture, media, and life.

Why you must read?

We at Colorado Christian University want to raise up a generation of students who resist these trends and become great readers. Why?

- 1 First of all because God himself wrote a book and filled it with words of eternal life. He commands us to be readers of his book, the book of books.
- 2 Reading well is also key to learning. It not only helps us acquire information, but it increases our vocabulary and makes us better thinkers.
- 3 Good books enlarge our vision and help us find meaning in life. We learn about human nature. We discover what is universal and unchangeable.
- 4 Reading enriches our spirits by widening our circle of friends, allowing us to have fellowship with great minds. Great books cultivate a desire for the good life.
- 5 Reading good literature also creates EQ. When we read history, novels, and biographies, it pulls us out of our own subjectivity; we learn what it means to be someone else.
- 6 Reading also expands our imaginations, allowing us to visit other places and times, from many worlds and ages, without actually going there.
- 7 Reading helps us to lead better. The best leaders are readers, watchmen, looking outward. Reading helps us understand our age.
- 8 And recent research shows that our reading habits even shape our brains for good or for ill. Reading physical books creates new circuits in the brain in a way that digital devices do not.

Yes, “there must be something about books.” And in this issue of the *CCU Review*, you will be exposed to books related to evangelism, i.e. *Just as I Am*, and *The Case for Christ*, (since this is the Year of Evangelism at CCU). You will be exposed to several classics, i.e. Pascal’s *Pensees*, and *Fahrenheit 451*. Into leadership? One of our CCU trustees reviews the important book *Mission Drift*. And gearing up for an election year, we review a book that speaks to the socialism/capitalism debate, and another which explores the so called green new deal.

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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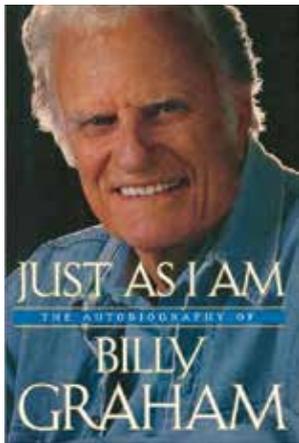
Just As I Am:

The Autobiography of Billy Graham

by Billy Graham

REVIEW BY DR. MICHAEL J. PLATO

Assistant Professor of Intellectual History and Christian Thought



Since Billy Graham went to meet his Lord and Savior on February 21, 2018, there has been an increasing interest in assessing Graham's life and achievements. A number of substantial biographies had already been written, and they are now being joined by more recent and still impending works. Even Graham's late wife, Ruth, is getting a new in-depth and scholarly biography next year. While many commentators within and outside the church will be offering interpretations of the legacy of this man who preached directly to more individuals than any other Christian in history, Graham's own understanding of his life and work should not be obscured or forgotten. As such, and in conjunction with Colorado Christian University's new exhibit on the life and ministry of Billy Graham this spring, it is perhaps timely to reconsider Graham's own major reflection on his life: his autobiography from 1997, *Just As I Am*.

BILLY GRAHAM'S LIFE

Before examining the book itself, and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, it will be helpful to briefly outline the major events of his life. William Franklin "Billy" Graham was born

in Charlotte, North Carolina, on November 7, 1918. The first of four children, he was raised on a dairy farm. Though he was born into a Christian home, young Billy showed no more than a nominal interest in the faith of his parents. He aspired to become a professional baseball player. Just before his 16th birthday that all changed. Attending a revival meeting conducted by the traveling evangelist, Mordecai Ham (1877–1961), Billy made the decision to follow Christ. Over the next few years God's plan for his life would be gradually made apparent.

On his mother's advice, he first briefly attended Bob Jones College (later Bob Jones University), before making the switch to Florida Bible Institute. Graham still had doubts as to what he was going to do with his life, but while on a Florida golf course it was made clear that he was to spend his life in service to God.

After graduating in 1940, Graham went to Wheaton College in Illinois to continue his studies for the ministry. Wheaton and the move to the Chicago area would prove formative to his later development. Perhaps the most significant thing that happened to him was meeting the woman who would eventually become his wife, the daughter of missionaries to China, Ruth McCue Bell (1920–2007).

Immediately following Wheaton, Graham married Ruth and began a career in pastoral ministry in Illinois. This career as a church minister would last only a little over a year. He had begun to recognize that his true gifts were for evangelism.

In 1944 Graham began working for a new organization called Youth for Christ (founded in Chicago and now headquartered in Englewood, Colorado). As World War II was coming to a close, Graham sought to evangelize returning soldiers. Through Youth for Christ he preached to them across the nation. After the war had ended, Graham's ministry would take him overseas for the first time.

By 1948 Graham had parted company with Youth for Christ and briefly ran Northwestern Schools in Minneapolis, Minnesota (now the University of Northwestern, St. Paul). He also began to lead revivals in North Carolina, where he had settled in Montreat with Ruth.

In 1949 Graham was invited to conduct a large tent revival in Los Angeles. This would prove to be a major turning point in his career.

Initially the revival was poorly attended. Then suddenly he gained considerable attention. The media mogul, William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951), for reasons of his own had decided to “puff Graham” in his papers. Soon Billy Graham was gaining national and international attention. Things would never be the same.

Over the next several decades, Graham's evangelism would move onto an increasingly larger world stage. In 1950, he began the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to help him administer his revival crusades and media ministry. Over the course of nearly six decades Graham conducted 417 crusades; preached in 185 countries to 215 million people. He would also publish 33 books, start the magazines *Christianity Today* and *Decision Magazine*, as well as produce numerous radio and television programs. He would become a counselor to American presidents and evangelical Christianity's most recognizable international ambassador. Despite his global travel and worldwide friendships, Graham always considered North Carolina his home and it was there that he passed away at the age of 99.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Just As I Am was published in 1997, 21 years before Graham's death. As such, it does not cover some of the most significant events of Graham's later life, including his speaking at the 9/11 memorial service or his final crusade of 2005. Yet it does comprehensively cover his life until the age of 79.

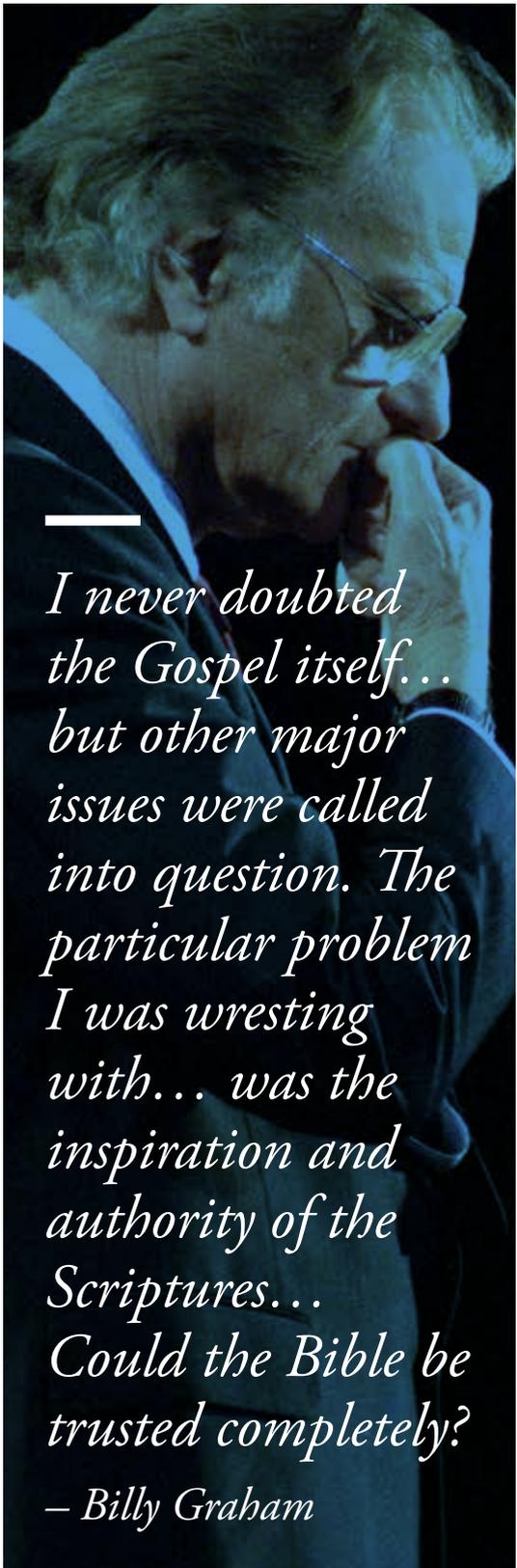
Graham's autobiography is at once intimidating and approachable. At almost 800 pages, its sheer bulk may be overwhelming to some, but in the reading it is quite accessible. As with his preaching there is a common touch which many can relate to — at times it verges on the folksy. He even refers to his parents as his “folks.” His father is sometimes “dad” or “Daddy”; mother, however, is always “Mother.”

Structurally, the narrative is arranged chronologically and he hits all the main points outlined in the summary of his life above, though in much greater detail. At times there is a lightness of touch, even a charm and sense of humor. For example, here is how he introduces his chapter on courting Ruth:

“Saturday nights I dedicate to prayer and study, in preparation for the Lord's day.”

What kind of romance could a college man have with a woman who said a thing like that? Dating Ruth Bell had to be creative. And I did my best. For example, on one occasion we took a long walk to the graveyard, where we read tombstone epitaphs!¹

Along with happy moments are some of the sadder ones as well. One of the best-known incidents from early in his ministry was when his friend and evangelistic colleague, Charles Templeton, began to study liberal biblical scholarship and came to doubt his faith. Templeton's questioning, which eventually led to Templeton abandoning the Christian faith altogether, affected Graham for a period and led to Graham's own dark night of the soul. Graham would come out on the other side with his faith intact, but it is worth hearing the episode in his own words to get a sense of the personal despair that gripped him for a time:



I never doubted the Gospel itself... but other major issues were called into question. The particular problem I was wrestling with... was the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures... Could the Bible be trusted completely?
— Billy Graham

I had similar questions arising from my own broadened reading habits. I wanted to keep abreast of theological thinking at mid-century... I never doubted the Gospel itself... but other major issues were called into question. The particular problem I was wrestling with... was the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures... Could the Bible be trusted completely?... The disturbing conversations with Chuck Templeton, my confused reaction to studying influential and sometimes contradictory theologians... all these were the intellectual, spiritual and emotional baggage I was carrying in the summer of 1949 as we began to prepare for Los Angeles.²

Despite these and numerous other places where Graham discusses his personal life and theological struggles, there is often a sense that they are background to his encounters with the great and famous of the world.

One immediately gets a sense of this in his introduction where he declares that his meetings with President Harry S. Truman in 1950 and President Kim Il Sung of North Korea in 1992 were like “bookends” on his “shelf of memories.” Everything and everyone else seems to fit in between them. Even many of the chapters are dedicated to encounters with individual men, most especially American presidents. For those looking to learn more about Graham himself, this can seem distracting, and inflating to an already oversized book.

To be fair, as a global figure himself, Graham probably recognized that many of his readers would be wanting to hear his thoughts on meeting and knowing prominent and powerful people. The index is largely dominated by names, rather than subjects. Yet as a confidant and spiritual counselor, this also puts him into something of a quandary. He does share a lot, but quite often there will also be a clear point where he will go no further.

His writing on Queen Elizabeth II can perhaps serve as something of an example of this. Since Graham's fictional portrayal in the Netflix series, "*The Crown*," many viewers have been curious to know what exactly transpired between the preacher from Charlotte and the Queen. What can one find here if one is looking for details? The answer is, not much:

No one in Britain has been more cordial towards us than Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Almost every occasion I have been with her has been in a warm, informal setting, such as a luncheon or dinner, either alone or a few family members or other close friends. Out of respect for her privacy and that of her family, I will say little more.³

Graham chooses not only to be tight-lipped with regard to many of his most influential conversations, but he leans in an interpretive direction that is almost always charitable. In his chapter on President Richard Nixon, which was written years after the initial exposure of Watergate, Graham still highlights what he thinks were Nixon's better motives. *Just As I Am* was written before the revelation of tapes of conversations between Nixon and Graham. These recordings were not flattering for Graham. Segments of the tapes exposed the president's cynical attempts to manipulate Graham and exploit his public image. One wonders how different this chapter would read had it been written a few years later.

There are other areas where people have found reasons to be critical of the autobiography. Graham often appears to gloss over matters concerning his broad ecumenism, an aspect of his ministry that distressed many evangelicals. He also focuses on the more positive aspects of his handling the volatile social and political issue of race relations, and ignores his failings in this regard. That Graham does not spend much time justifying himself or being openly self-critical may not satisfy those who find these aspects problematic, but he does acknowledge many of his faults when he sees them. There will no doubt be other biographies that delve into his failings in much greater detail, and there already are. The value in reading an autobiography, however, is that the subject is given a place to provide his or her own perspective and explanation for why they did what they did.

Graham chooses not only to be tight-lipped with regard to many of his most influential conversations, but he leans in an interpretive direction that is almost always charitable.



*Christ raises up people
for their specific times
and places...*

One thing that is abundantly clear when reading through *Just As I Am* is the titanic cultural, social, and political shift that has taken place in America and the world from the time of Graham's Cold War-dominated late 20th century to our own more "woke" but uncertain times. Graham was addressing a largely biblically literate culture (at least in America) and his message often focused on the despair and malaise that many were feeling following World War II.

We now live in an age that is in many ways less naïve, but it is also an age when the Christian ethos is no longer assumed by many, and Christianity as a whole is under greater siege.

That Graham may seem out of place in terms of many of our sensibilities should in some ways be expected. This is not meant as an excuse for his failings, but it should nevertheless nuance our perspective and framing of the man.

Since Graham's passing, some commentators have wondered at the possibility of another Graham-like figure emerging on the scene. In this reviewer's opinion, especially after having spent the past several months intensively studying him and his ministry, this seems to be highly unlikely, at least in the foreseeable future. The same conditions are just not there. But also we might wonder if this is something we should even desire. Christ raises up people for their specific

times and places, whether it is an Athanasius, an Augustine, a Luther, a Jonathan Edwards, a Sophie Schol, or a Billy Graham. And so we must expect that those who will stand for Christ and his unchanging gospel in our own time or in the near future, will in some way be fitting and responsive to their age's unique and pressing challenges. In this sense, when we read Graham's autobiography, whatever his faults and weaknesses or strengths and successes, we should be mindful that we are not simply encountering a remarkable, fascinating, flawed, or dull individual. We should not read Graham's life seeking to find a plan for our own lives. Nor should we be reading it to find a fitting version of the celebrity-worship on which our culture seems to be so fixated. Rather, we should be mindful that we are peering in on one figure on one small stage of the ever-unfolding panoply that is the Spirit-directed mission of the church.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (HarperCollins, 1997) 71.
- 2 Graham, *Just As I Am*, 135-136.
- 3 Ibid, 689.

REVIEWER BIO



MICHAEL J. PLATO

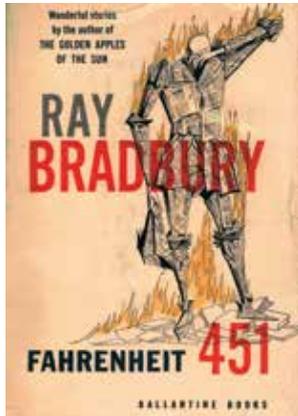
Michael J. Plato is Assistant Professor of Intellectual History and Christian Thought at Colorado Christian University. He is also lead curator and historian for CCU's Billy Graham exhibit in 2020.

Fahrenheit 451

by Ray Bradbury

REVIEW BY DR. KATHERINE S. HYON

Assistant Professor of English



“It was a pleasure to burn.” Thus begins Ray Bradbury’s iconic novel, *Fahrenheit 451*. I have vague memories of reading this novel as a teenager and enjoying it at the time, but 30 years later, I could not recall any specific details aside from its basic plot. Rereading *Fahrenheit 451* as an adult, I was struck not

only by the beauty of the language but also by the relevancy of its themes for our present age.

First published in 1951, *Fahrenheit 451* is prophetic in its vision of the not-so-distant future. It is a future in which automobiles have become reckless vehicles of destruction; people drive so fast that billboards must be stretched to 200 feet, and driving 40 miles an hour will result in a two-day jail sentence. It is a future in which parlor walls are replaced by giant television screens that enclose viewers in “interactive” experiences in which nothing really happens, and one’s “parlor family” becomes more real and engaging than one’s *actual* family. It is a future in which people spend their days disconnected from one another but constantly connected to media through “seashell” radios small enough to fit directly into one’s ears. Sound familiar?

Perhaps the most alarming idea presented in this novel (at least for someone whose professional and leisure life is consumed by books) is the depiction of a world in which printed books are contraband, and possession of these objects results in the burning of not only the books themselves but also the homes in which they are hidden. Thus, firemen like our protagonist, Guy Montag, have become individuals

who destroy rather than individuals who save. Montag himself seems content with the status quo until he meets Clarisse, a young neighbor with peculiar notions and even more peculiar habits. Their friendship sparks the flame of his own discontent, which is fanned by one woman’s refusal to leave her precious books; she and the books together are consumed by fire. Afterward, Montag ponders the incident: “There must be something in books, things we can’t imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don’t stay for nothing.”¹

And he’s right — you *don’t* stay for nothing. You stay for the truth and the beauty conveyed through those books.

Books may contain, as Captain Beatty attests, stories of imaginary people who never actually lived. However, just because a story isn’t true doesn’t mean that story cannot contain Truth.

Atticus Finch and Tom Robinson may not be flesh and blood people, but *To Kill a Mockingbird* conveys truths about good and evil and (in)justice that cannot be denied.

Similarly, Guy Montag, Captain Beatty, Clarisse, and Faber are not real flesh and blood people, but *Fahrenheit 451* conveys a truth and a warning that rings true in our own time. Later in the novel, Faber explains to Montag, “It’s not the books you need, it’s some of the things that once were in the books. . . . Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were

Recognizing a lie, however, is not enough; like Guy Montag, we must be willing to confront and challenge this idea, to make it known as a lie. Literature allows us to engage in this process.

afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them, at all. The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us.”²

This quote reinforces some of the greatest virtues of literature: 1) It does not let us forget; 2) It allows us to empathize with others, to share experiences with those who are different from us; and 3) It lets us see things from a new perspective — not always a right perspective, but a different one. These virtues provide us the possibility to find common ground.

However, according to Captain Beatty, books are troubling because their diversity creates contradiction; they divide rather than unite. Beatty explains to Montag, “We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against. So! A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it.”³

Christian readers should recognize the falsehood in Beatty’s words. As believers in Christ, we know man is not made equal but rather *born* equal in the image of God. Recognizing a lie, however, is not enough; like Guy Montag, we must be willing to confront and challenge this idea, to make it known as a lie. Literature allows us to engage in this process.

It is precisely this idea that makes *Fahrenheit 451* relevant and worth reading even 70 years after it was first published. As believers in Christ, we cannot shy away from ideas that are contrary to what we know to be Truth; we must confront and engage them thoughtfully and intelligently, with Bible in hand. When we do so, we are better equipped to respond to ideas that run contrary to our own, and we are better equipped to see and experience God in new and unexpected ways. We need not be afraid to confront what is different.

At the end of *Fahrenheit 451*, Guy Montag recalls a passage from the book of Revelation: “And on either side of the river was there a tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”⁴

Like the society we see in the novel, our world is broken, sick, divided, and war-torn, but healing is possible, and literature can play a vital role in that healing if we let it.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (Simon and Schuster, 2013) 48.
- 2 Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 78-79.
- 3 Ibid, 55-56.
- 4 Ibid, 158.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. KATHERINE S. HYON

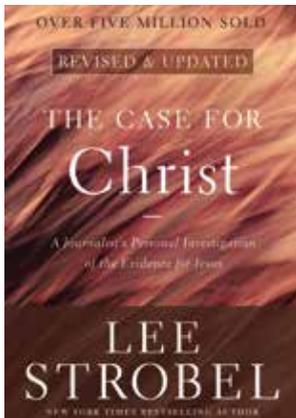
Katherine Hyon (Ph.D., Georgia State University) is an assistant professor of English at Colorado Christian University, where she teaches composition, literature, and creative writing. Her teaching and research interests include fiction writing and theory, as well as science fiction/fantasy literature. Her fiction has most recently appeared in *Barely South Review* and *Puerto del Sol Online*.

The Case For Christ

by Lee Strobel

REVIEW BY MARK MITTELBERG

Author



“As far as I was concerned, the case was closed,” wrote Lee Strobel in his introduction to *The Case for Christ*. “There was enough proof for me to rest easy with the conclusion that the divinity of Jesus was nothing more than the fanciful invention of superstitious people. ... Or so I thought.”

That was before Strobel began his investigation into the evidence for the Christian faith, and especially the resurrection of Jesus. Some 300 pages later he describes how he reached a very different verdict — as have countless readers who are among the 5 million people who have bought this classic page-turner in the two decades since it was published.

What is so special about *The Case for Christ*? It contains a wealth of fascinating information, but it is presented through a personal story — the retracing of an atheistic journalist’s journey toward faith, and the momentous spiritual decision he would finally make.

Why was the legal affairs editor of *The Chicago Tribune* investigating the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus in the first place? He was compelled to do so by a sudden announcement from his wife, Leslie, telling Lee she had become a follower of Jesus. He said later that it was the worst news an atheist could possibly hear.

So Strobel set off to study the facts behind Leslie’s faith — not to discover her Savior but, rather, to discredit Christianity in order to deliver her from the “cult” she had joined.

But when you read the book, or as you watch *The Case for Christ* movie that so powerfully tells their story, you soon realize the evidence was stacked against him. After almost two years of vigorously digging into the historical details, Strobel realized there is an avalanche of information pointing to Jesus’ resurrection and, with it, his claim to be the unique Son of God. As he explains it, Strobel realized that “it would require much more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to trust in Jesus of Nazareth.”¹ So Strobel trusted in Jesus, and years later he wrote *The Case for Christ*, detailing what he had discovered.

And the influence of this book? As one who was there from the beginning — encouraging Strobel as he presented the original sermon series called “The Case for Christ,” later making suggestions on the early manuscript, and then helping promote the book over the years as Strobel’s ministry partner — I’ve seen and heard about countless lives touched in amazing ways.

God has used it to reach doubters and skeptics, including professional athletes, influential business leaders, brilliant trial lawyers, men and women who were enmeshed in other world religions, students whose faith had been challenged, and many others

who were just spiritually curious. Even a character like the motorcycle daredevil icon Evel Knievel read the book and gave his life to Christ. In addition, untold numbers of Christians have found that it bolstered their faith in ways that gave them confidence to share the gospel with others. (To read about some of the lives that have been influenced by *The Case for Christ*, see the new final chapter in the updated and expanded edition in which I interview Strobel about the impact of the book.)

So significant is its influence that Christian scholar Robert M. Bowman Jr. recently released *Faith Thinkers: 30 Apologists You Should Know*, which ends with a chapter about Strobel. Here is his last paragraph:

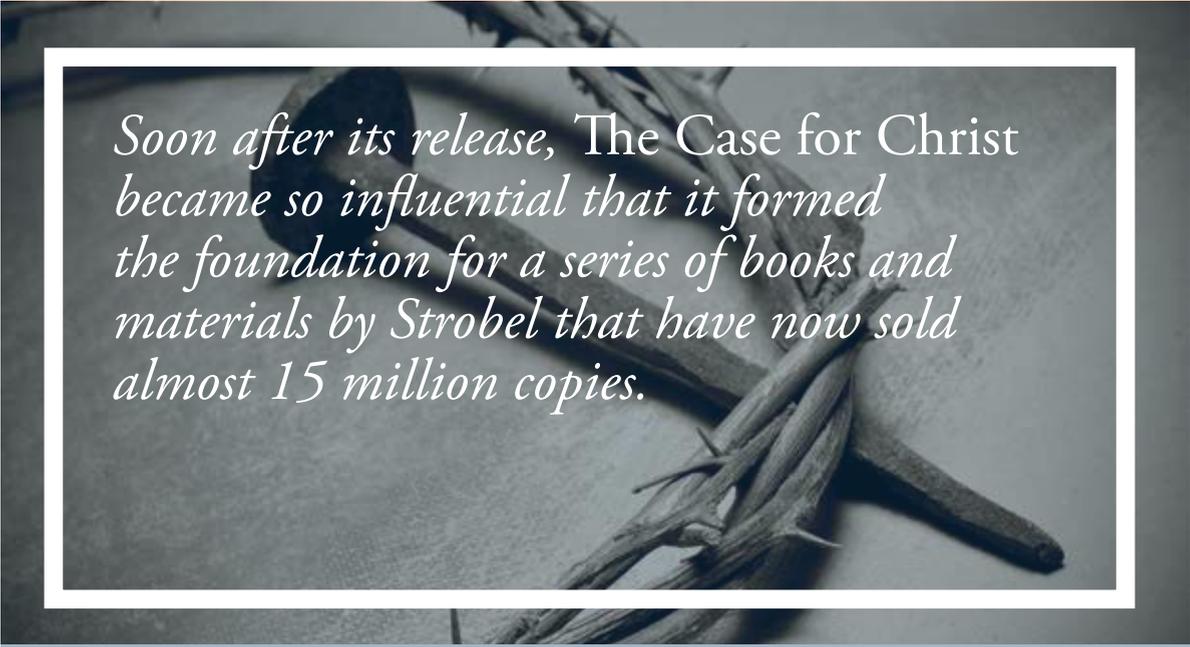
It is fitting that our overview of the history of Christian apologetics through the end of the twentieth century concludes with Strobel's book. We began with Luke's two-volume history of the origins of the Christian faith, written at least in part as a defense of Paul, and noted Luke's emphasis on the use of eyewitness testimonies (Luke 1:1-4). With Strobel's defense of Christianity consisting of interviews of scholarly "witnesses" on the historical reliability of the Gospels' accounts, we have come full circle.²

Soon after its release, *The Case for Christ* became so influential that it formed the foundation for a series of books and materials by Strobel that have now sold almost 15 million copies — including *The Case for Faith*, *The Case for a Creator*, *The Case for Christmas*, *The Case for Easter*, *The Case for the Real Jesus* (now titled, *In Defense of Jesus*), *The Case for Grace*, *The Case for Miracles*, *The Case for Christ Daily Moment of Truth* devotional, and a new small-group video curriculum Strobel and I developed together called *Making Your Case for Christ*.

In addition, we recently launched the exciting Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University, with new online classes, including one based on *The Case for Christ*, starting in the fall of 2020. For information on what's coming, see: ccu.edu/strobelcenter.

I'll end by quoting from the book itself, where Strobel concludes (pages 288, 290-291):

My journalistic skepticism toward the supernatural had melted in light of the breathtaking historical evidence that the resurrection of Jesus was a real, historical event.



Soon after its release, The Case for Christ became so influential that it formed the foundation for a series of books and materials by Strobel that have now sold almost 15 million copies.

In fact, my mind could not conjure up a single explanation that fit the evidence of history nearly as well as the conclusion that Jesus was who He claimed to be: the one and only Son of God.

The atheism I had embraced for so long buckled under the weight of historical truth. It was a stunning and radical outcome, certainly not what I had anticipated when I embarked on this investigative process. But it was, in my opinion, a decision compelled by the facts. ...

So on November 8, 1981, I talked with God in a heartfelt and unedited prayer, admitting and turning from my wrongdoing, and receiving the gift of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus.³

It was a decision Lee would never regret. Nor will you if you embrace not only the evidence presented in *The Case for Christ*, but the living Savior Himself.

FOOTNOTES

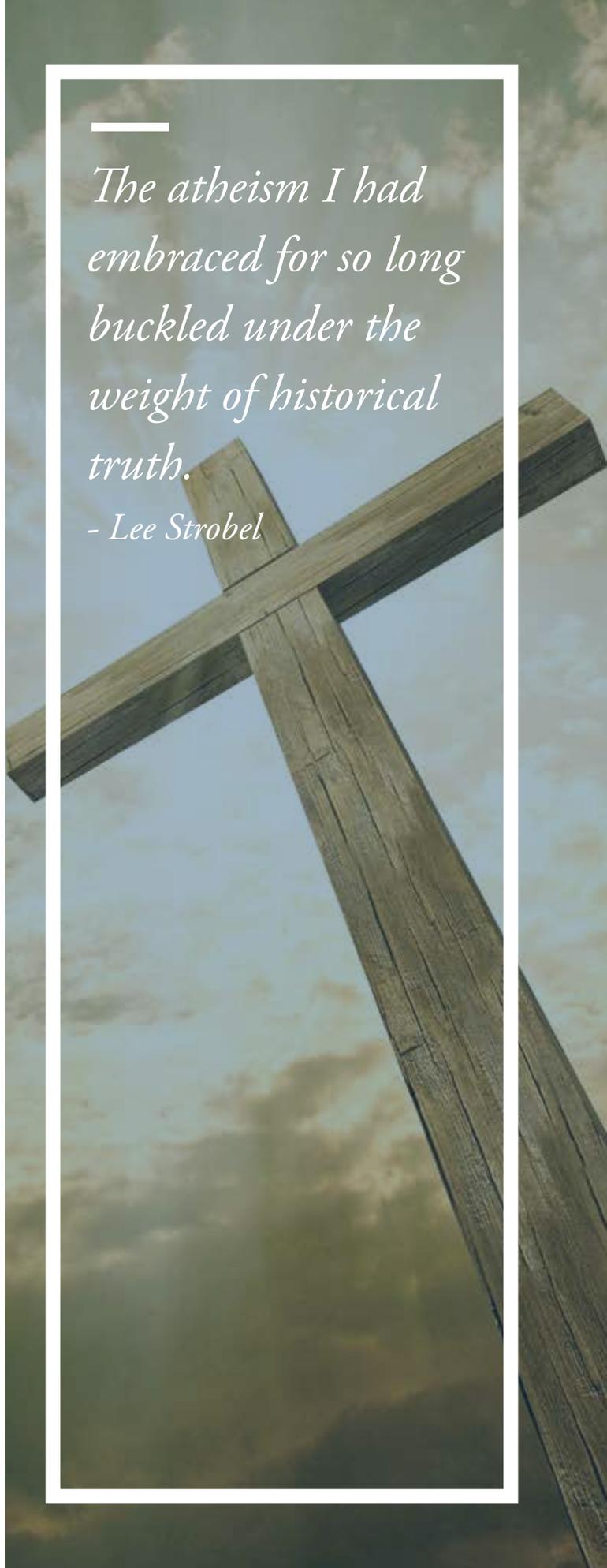
- 1 Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) 287.
- 2 Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, 131.
- 3 Ibid, 288, 290-291.

REVIEWER BIO



MARK MITTELBERG

Mark Mittelberg is the bestselling author of the *Becoming a Contagious Christian* training course and *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask (With Answers)*. He serves as the executive director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University.

A large, weathered wooden cross stands against a sky with soft, white clouds. The cross is made of two thick wooden beams, one horizontal and one vertical, meeting at a central point. The background is a light blue sky with wispy white clouds. The entire image is framed by a white border.

*The atheism I had
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- Lee Strobel

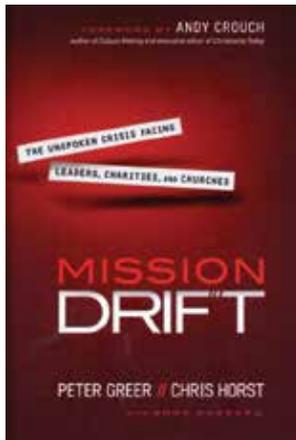
Mission Drift:

The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches

by Peter Greer and Chris Horst with Anna Haggard

REVIEW BY DR. JERRY NELSON

Trustees, Colorado Christian University



WHAT DOES “MISSION DRIFT” LOOK LIKE?

In her 2019 book, *Bet on Talent*, author Dee Ann Turner, vice president of talent for Chick-fil-A, wrote that the purpose of the company is, “To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that has been entrusted

to us.” In that same year, Chick-fil-A — under pressure from the LGBTQ community — ceased donating money to three Christian organizations that supported the definition of marriage as between a man and a woman, and also donated money to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Nationally syndicated columnist Cal Thomas observed, “Chick fil-A’s donation to the SPLC is as strange as a pro-life organization donating money to Planned Parenthood.” Is that what the initial stage of “mission drift” looks like?

Most of us have heard of or even observed colleges and universities, charitable organizations, entire denominations, and even individual churches which have drifted from their original mission. In recent months several Christian colleges have been under intense pressure to accommodate certain groups that find the colleges’ faith positions to be antithetical to their own. Will these schools drift or hold firm to their biblical convictions?

MISSION DRIFT IS EVERY CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATION’S CONCERN

The opening sentence of *Mission Drift* is,

“Without careful attention, faith-based organizations will inevitably drift from their founding mission.”

Throughout their book, authors Peter Greer and Chris Horst give numerous examples of faith-based organizations which have drifted. Most of them are familiar to readers of *CCU Review*; they include Harvard University, Yale University, the YMCA, ChildFund International, Pew Trust, and “Veggie Tales.” But the purpose of the book is not to do a historical review of such failures but to give leaders tools to resist drift. The authors began with the premise that pressure toward mission drift is guaranteed. “It is the default, the auto-fill. It will happen unless we are focused and actively preventing it.”¹ They also realized it is not primarily an organizational issue but a human one. Organizations have leaders and leaders are responsible for mission faithfulness.

The meat of the book is in chapters 3-15, giving 13 ways for leaders to understand and resist mission drift.

- Mission True organizations believe the Gospel is their most important asset.

- Mission True organizations make hard decisions to protect and propel their mission.
- Mission True leaders assume they will face drift and build safeguards against it.
- Mission True Organizations have clarity about their mission.
- Mission True board members understand their top priority is to remain loyal to the mission.
- Mission True leaders set the cultural tone for the organization.
- Mission True leaders hire first and foremost for heart and character.
- Mission True organizations partner with donors who believe in their full mission.
- Mission True organizations track metrics reflective of their full mission.
- Mission True organizations understand the Gospel demands excellence in their work.
- Mission True organizations are fanatics about rituals and practices.

- Mission True organizations boldly proclaim their core tenets to protect themselves from drift.
- Mission True organizations realize the local church is the anchor to a thriving ministry.

LEADERS ARE KEY

As noted earlier, the leaders of an organization are the key determiners of mission faithfulness. The CEO, the president, or the pastor and the boards over them allow organizations to drift or remain faithful. Greer and Horst argue that a clear Christ-centered purpose supported by boards, administrators, and faculty (staff) who have been carefully vetted for character and competence and who regularly reaffirm their commitment to the purpose provide the best deterrents to mission drift.

In the December 6, 2019 edition of *The Briefing*, Al Mohler said, “Trustees and search committees who elect academic administrators (and I would add, trustees and faculty) who are poorly equipped to deal with biblical theological and ethical



Mission True organizations make hard decisions to protect and propel their mission.

A board that hires the right leader and gives him or her the authority to act may have highest success in restoring the organization to its mission.

issues have basically committed the suicide of their own institutions. And they do so, again, because they are looking for the wrong qualifications. . . . They are concerned with team building and all the rest, but the only team worth building is a team committed to historic biblical Christianity, otherwise, they're playing for the wrong team.”²

IS IT TOO LATE FOR SOME?

The book gives very helpful ideas and examples of how to *avoid* drift but not as much about what to do *after* drift occurs. The one brief example given of a turn-around is Southern Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention. Nearly 50 years ago many in the SBC were greatly concerned about the direction (drifting?) of their institutions and practices. One leader wrote, “Neo-orthodox faculty would have been considered too conservative.” In the early 1970s an SBC employee suggested a 10-year plan to elect conservative presidents who, by SBC policies, had almost full authority to appoint committees, etc. Over 10 years those conservative presidents and their appointees restored the convention and its schools to their theological roots.

Another example, not in the book, is Colorado Christian University. By the 1990s the University’s ship had begun to list port. By God’s grace administered through a determined board and a strong leader, the vessel was righted.

If significant drift has occurred, it seems that strong measures are necessary. A board that hires the right leader and gives him or her the authority to act may have highest success in restoring the organization to its mission.

In addition to the main content of the book there are a few very helpful resources. Greer and Horst provide a good model for tracking outcomes *other than money*; citing both the Crowell Trust and Compassion International, they provide illustrations of corporate policies designed to avoid mission drift; and there is also a mission-drift survey to analyze an organizations’ fidelity to its mission.

Board members and leaders of every Christ-centered organization would do well to read this call and primer to mission faithfulness.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches* (Baker Books, 2014) XX.
- 2 Albert Mohler, “Christian Colleges and the LGBTQ Revolution: The Pattern of Disaster Looms Before Us,” *The Briefing*, Dec. 6, 2019, retrieved: <https://albertmohler.com/2019/12/06/briefing-12-6-19>.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. JERRY NELSON

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Pensées

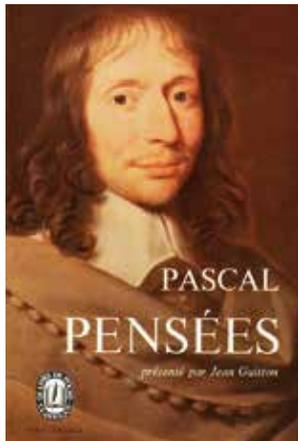
by Blaise Pascal

REVIEW BY DR. DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS

Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary

“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace?”

This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself” — Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*.¹



Books have been my companions and mentors as a Christian philosopher. *Pensées* is securely placed in that inner circle. Its French title means thoughts, and it records the thoughts of a genius of his day — or of any day, Blaise Pascal (1625-64). More than 40 years ago, I discovered Pascal’s writings. As a new

convert with a restless mind, I needed to find my intellectual bearings for the journey through college and beyond. Since then his *Pensées* have never been far from my *pensées*.

Genius is the right word for Pascal, who was one of the last true Renaissance men.

As a mathematician, scientist, theologian, and philosopher, the sickly Frenchman brilliantly contributed to all the major disciplines of his day, and broke new ground in mathematics and experimental science. The early computer language, *Pascal*, is named after the man who invented the first working calculator. But here I will laud and celebrate the profound and quotable insights on the Christian faith found in his unfinished manuscript, known as *Pensées*.

After Pascal’s death, a note was found that recounted his profound experience of the living God, which has been called “the night of fire.” It is dated November 23, 1654. In light of this, which is called his “second conversion,” Pascal began to compose a defense of Christianity. That is, it is a work of *apologetics*, a discipline we find throughout the Bible and church history. For example, the Apostle Peter writes, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,” (1 Peter 3:15-16 NIV).

However, ill health and other factors kept Pascal from finishing his *magnum opus*. After his death, his family discovered many pages of notes written for the project. Some notes were complete thoughts or short essays, others were more fragmentary. Scholars have debated over the proper order and classification of the *fragments* (as each information unit is called). I will refer to and quote the Penguin edition, which has a stellar pedigree.

We have to literally piece together Pascal’s apologetic, since we do not have its final form. He offers several arguments for Christianity, such as fulfilled prophecy and the uniqueness and supremacy of Jesus. On Jesus, Pascal addresses his miracles, character, and resurrection. Consider this compelling fragment:

He alone had to produce a great people, elect, holy and chosen, lead them, feed them, bring them into the place of rest and holiness, make them holy for God, make them the temple of God, reconcile them to God, save them from God's anger, redeem them from the bondage of sin which visibly reigns in man, give laws to his people, write these laws in their hearts, offer himself to God for them, sacrifice himself for them, be a spotless sacrifice, and himself the sacrificer, having himself to offer up his body and blood, and yet offer up bread and wine to God.²

Pascal eliminates non-supernatural interpretations of the Church's belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

Follow it out to the end and imagine these twelve men meeting after Jesus' death and conspiring to say that he had risen from the dead. This means attacking all the powers that be. The human heart is singularly susceptible to fickleness, to change, to promises, to bribery. One of them had only to deny this story under these inducements, or still more because of possible imprisonment, tortures and death, and they would all have been lost.³

The argument that the apostles were deceived is equally implausible.

The apostles were either deceived or were deceivers. Either supposition is difficult, for it

is not possible to imagine that a man has risen from the dead. While Jesus was with them he could sustain them, but afterwards, if he did not appear to them, who did make them act [as if Jesus were resurrected]?⁴

Much of Pascal's appeal lies in his trenchant account of what it means to be a human being, in its glory and in its misery. He made the case that only Christianity could rationally account for both the goodness and evil in humanity. It does so through the doctrine that people are made in the divine image (Genesis 1:26), but have fallen into sin (Genesis 3). Other worldviews either exalt us at the expense of our depravity or debase us at the expense of our dignity. We are, as Pascal put it, "deposed kings," who must look to Christ to be reinstated into fellowship with God and our neighbor. Only Christ can fill "the God-shaped vacuum" that Pascal described in the quote that began this essay, although he never used that phrase.

As a long-time reader of Blaise Pascal, I commend *Pensées* to you as a source of apologetic insight, psychological profundity, and Christian devotion. You will not be disappointed to commune with this great soul.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, Alban Krailsheimer, trans. (New York: Penguin, 1966), p. 75.
- 2 Ibid., p. 232
- 3 Ibid., p. 125.
- 4 Ibid., 127.
- 5 See Douglas Groothuis, "Deposed Royalty," in *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011).



Blaise Pascal is a French mathematician, mechanic, physicist, writer, and philosopher.

REVIEWER BIO



DR. DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS

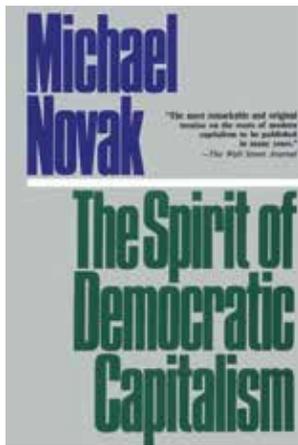
Douglas Groothuis (Ph.D., University of Oregon) is Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary and the author of *On Pascal* (Wadsworth, 2003).

The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism

by Michael Novak

REVIEW BY DR. CHUCK KING

Dean Emeritus of the School of Business and Leadership



“Well, I guess you’re going to have to re-explain — yet again — all the problems with socialism. Apparently, someone has to do it every single generation.”¹

These were the words from Michael Novak’s last conversation with the Acton Institute’s Samuel Greg before

Novak’s death in 2017. The words ought to ring in our ears today and will likely be true for generations as long as our Lord continues to tarry.

In the cycle of human inquiry into the morality of politico-economic systems, we have again arrived at a time when the “political hot potato” being tossed among the political candidates raises the question of the morality of politico-economic systems. The discussion is given lip service, but not seriously examined. Novak asserts, the biggest failure of democratic capitalism is that it has failed to make a moral presentation of itself to the world. While Catholic liberation theology and its counterpart, the collectivism of Protestant theologians, boldly assert their moral superiority, advocates of the free market seem to be willing to concede, or worse yet, not even address the morality of the market economy.

At CCU we strategically strive to teach in support of limited government and the free market, while being true to the Christian faith. It

is imperative that we make an argument for the morality of the market economy. Novak’s amazingly well researched 1991 book (note that there are 51 pages of endnotes), *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, provides a sound moral argument in favor of the market economy. Novak provides a well-reasoned and easily understood compendium tracing the history of philosophical, theological, and economic considerations of dealing with scarcity.

Novak argues that the idea of seeking a moral system for dealing with scarcity misses the mark.

Indeed, all such systems are at best amoral. The inquiry should be about which system produces the most moral result. Many advocates of socialism attribute a semblance of Christian morality to their system that purports to provide equal outcomes for all. Paul Tillich once said, “Any serious Christian must be a socialist.”² On the other hand, capitalism is not and makes no claim to be the City of God. Novak argues, though, that it provides the most moral result in dealing with the issue of scarcity:

Democratic capitalism, then, rests on a complex theory of sin. While recognizing ineradicable sinful tendencies in every human, it does not count humans depraved. While recognizing that no system of political economy can escape the ravages of human sinfulness, it has attempted to set in place a system which renders sinful tendencies as productive of good

An important element of this is understanding that the role of the church is as an influencer, not a commander.

as possible. While basing itself on something less than perfect virtue, reasoned self-interest, it has attempted to draw from self-interest its most creative potential. It is a system designed for sinners, in hopes of achieving as much moral good as individuals and communities can generate under conditions of ample liberty.³

In part one of the book dealing with the ideal of democratic capitalism, Novak posits that it is composed of three separate independent but interdependent structures: the political system, the economic system, and the moral-cultural system.

A key understanding here is that without a political system that provides plurality and liberty, democratic capitalism cannot exist.

The role of the moral-cultural system — which includes a broad range of influences from the church to the free press — is to provide a check on sinful nature of man to steer his self-interest in a direction that yields the maximum amount of good. An important element of this is understanding that the role of the church is as an influencer, not a commander. This seems to this reviewer to be a reflection of the role delegated to Christians in the Bible. If either the government or the moral influencers assume the role of commander, then the liberty and pluralism required for success of the free market are destroyed and market participants are unable to seek their own self-interest thereby generating the benefits contemplated by Adam Smith. Understanding Smith's theory and the complex theory of sin referenced above requires a healthy deference to the doctrine of unintended consequences, and to this Novak dedicates a significant amount of attention:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantages.⁴

Part two, “The Twilight of Socialism,” gives a detailed discussion of the attempts by various nations and non-nation groups to impose a system which denies the ownership of private property and the concomitant liberty to make choices regarding its use. These were to Karl Marx⁵ anathematic characteristics of the bourgeoisie that must be eliminated. It should be noted that Novak makes no serious reference to gradations of socialism or capitalism. He leaves such nuances for another discussion. In his work here he simply distinguishes between democratic capitalism and socialism on the basis of the ownership of the means of production and private property. Novak assumes some level of government intervention in the economy and even concedes some redistribution without destroying the underlying tenants of capitalism.

In part three, “The Theology of Economics,” Novak makes the final case for the moral justification of democratic capitalism based on the premise that no successful experiment in socialism has ever withstood the test of time. From a theological perspective, and as a one-time subscriber to socialism, Novak traces the evolution of Reinhold Niebuhr⁶ over his lifetime from devout Marxist to eschewing the unrealistic and its idealism and admitting some of the ideals achieved by capitalism.

Any serious student of economic theory is obliged to read the eloquent moral defense of democratic capitalism provided in Novak’s work, but it seems to this reviewer that it is even more important that those who haven’t given any serious thought to the morality of markets owe it to

themselves and their academic and social progeny to consider what Novak has to offer. While statistics and examples are dated, the underlying theory is soundly persuasive.

FOOTNOTES

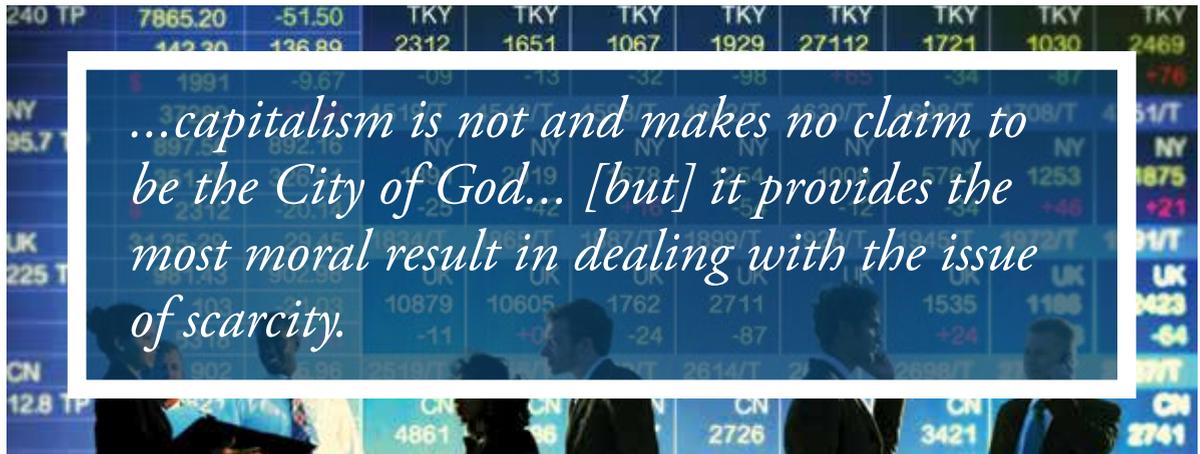
- 1 Gregg, S. (2019, May 2), Michael Novak’s *Christian Capitalism* [Review of the book *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*], Paragraph 1. *National Review*, Retrieved from: <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2019/05/20/michael-novaks-christian-capitalism/>
- 2 Novak, P. (1991). *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. New York: Madison Books, p.242.
- 3 Ibid, 95.
- 4 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature & Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Vol 1.
- 5 German philosopher whose works featured prominently in the 19th and 20th century socialist movements (1818-1883).
- 6 Prominent American Protestant theologian (1892-1971).

REVIEWER BIO



DR. CHUCK KING

Chuck King, (J.D., University of Denver; MBA, The Kellogg School of Business at Northwestern University) is Dean Emeritus of the School of Business and Leadership at Colorado Christian University. He has taught courses in law, business, finance, and economics for over twenty years,



The Green New Deal: Why the Fossil Fuel Civilization Will Collapse by 2028, and the Bold Economic Plan to Save Life on Earth

by Jeremy Rifkin

REVIEW BY DELANA DUROUGH

Foreign Expert and English Teacher at Yangtze University



Headlines of raging wildfires and UN-admonishing teenagers have created a frenzy around the issue of global climate change. As a Christian, I am compelled to steward the earth because our Creator said it is good, but I have been stymied by the complicated science and the

emotional clamor of climate activism which often seem short on economic analysis.

Enter Jeremy Rifkin's latest book, *The Green New Deal: Why the Fossil Fuel Civilization Will Collapse by 2028, and the Bold Economic Plan to Save Life on Earth*, a refreshing addition to the discussion.

Yes, Rifkin thinks the “sixth mass extinction event” is imminent and that saving the planet is a moral imperative, but he eschews shaming and sermonizing.

His intent is not to persuade the unconvinced of the science, but rather to communicate his comprehensive plan to combine market forces and government policies into an allegedly win-win partnership that curbs climate change and promotes economic growth. *The Green New Deal* is as much about job creation as it is about decarbonization.

The solution, according to Rifkin, is “the infrastructure, stupid!” All historical economic transformations have occurred because of major leaps in “a communication medium, a power source, and a transportation mechanism.” The 19th century's First Industrial Revolution was driven by steam, telegraphs, coal, and railroads, leading to increased mechanization and urbanization. In the 20th century the telephone, electricity, internal combustion engines, and oil spurred the Second Industrial Revolution and the resulting suburbanization of the U.S.

The Third Industrial Revolution has already begun, in large part via spontaneous market activities. It is defined by the convergence of three “internets” (Rifkin's confusing term for integrated networks):

- (1) A digital communications internet, where easily developed digital content is disseminated at near-zero marginal cost;
- (2) A decentralized “smart” electric internet dominated by renewable sources, where every home or business becomes a solar or wind generator; and

- (3) A logistics and mobility internet populated by connected warehouses and electric-powered (even self-driving) vehicles.

These are built upon an “Internet of Things,” a web of sensors embedded in everything from buildings to cars to electric transmission lines that can send real-time data to decision makers.

The Third Industrial Revolution technologies are in their infancy, and Rifkin believes that governments must develop policies to hasten the build-out in time to arrest global climate change.

As a consultant he has spent decades promoting this vision, and it is gaining traction. He is the key architect behind the European Union’s green infrastructure blueprint, the driving visionary for China’s “Internet Plus” initiative, and a prominent advisor to many of the world’s largest energy and logistics companies on green strategies. Rifkin mines these experiences to link his theories to the real world, perhaps the best feature of the book. In Texas, for example, his clients are leaders in that state’s wind-generated electricity, creating networks of cattle and cotton farmers now receiving additional income from their wind projects.

Some of Rifkin’s examples falter. China’s Hanergy, a leading solar thin-film manufacturer, is offered as proof of the profit-making potential of green technology. Yet Rifkin fails to mention the 2015 crash of Hanergy’s shares and their later suspension by Hong Kong securities authorities during an investigation into the company’s accounting practices. Such omissions expose Rifkin’s penchant for a somewhat uncritical optimism.

The free market lover will balk at Rifkin’s insistence that market forces alone cannot provide the rapid decarbonization that many climatologists recommend. His “23 Key Green New Deal Initiatives” rely on national governments to set greenhouse gas emission standards, issue tax subsidies, implement carbon taxes, and provide the start-up funds for basic infrastructural changes. In

the U.S. alone, he prescribes \$115 billion a year in new federal government expenditures over the next 10 years.

However, Rifkin places greater emphasis on the role of state and local governments over national control. He believes distributed networks are more efficient and resilient than centrally controlled systems. In addition, privately-owned energy service companies operating under innovative performance contracts form the backbone of Rifkin’s new paradigm. These would be financed by shifting some of the world’s \$40 billion in pension fund capital from fossil fuel investments to green energy, helping to address recent financial industry concerns about “stranded” fossil-fuel assets. Many of these ideas are based on sound economic rationality and worth considering further.

Perhaps its biggest flaw is *The Green New Deal’s* strong utopian streak. Rifkin glosses over data security and privacy concerns, despite the fact that his plan calls for every home, business, and vehicle to be data-generating nodes in the vast “Internet of Things.” He overstates the scalability of the “sharing economy” concept which prizes access to goods and services over outright ownership. Uber and Airbnb are unlikely to replace car and home ownership in most communities anytime soon. Nor is the nonprofit collaborative commons success of Wikipedia a reasonable model for other industries where the need for physical raw materials necessitates a profit-generating bottom line.

Rifkin also trusts governments too much, displaying a worrying naiveté regarding China and its leadership in the Third Industrial Revolution.

He ignores that government’s centralized control over user data and the strenuous defense of its “great firewall,” which denies Chinese users access to much of the internet’s content.

The Green New Deal provides an imperfect narrative, at times too cluttered with statistics and technical jargon to make sense to the uninitiated

or those unfamiliar with Rifkin's previous works. Though Rifkin may be idealistic at times, his predictions are not all grandiose. We should expect to see many of the Third Industrial Revolution's technological and economic shifts to happen with or without his coordinated vision. This makes *The Green New Deal* a useful primer for CCU students (particularly those interested in business and development) and anyone interested in the economic changes afoot. More importantly, I recommend this book because the world's decision makers are listening to Jeremy Rifkin. If Christians want to intelligently join the global conversation on climate change, it is imperative that we understand what they are talking about.

REVIEWER BIO



DELANA DUROUGH

Delana Dorough (M.A., Johns Hopkins University) is a foreign expert and English teacher at Yangtze University. Formerly an assistant professor of economics at CCU, she enjoys exploring the joys and challenges of sustainable development. She currently lives in Hubei, China, with her husband, Robert, where she eats dumplings often.

To the ends of the earth:

The Gospel Ministry of

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Spring 2020

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

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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.

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- Teach students to trust the Bible, live holy lives, and be evangelists
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