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**Advancing Biblical Higher Education
for Kingdom Impact**

Flourishing Institutions  Missional Graduates

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This nineteenth issue of the *Biblical Higher Education Journal* continues to support the mission of biblical higher education by providing a venue for publication of related research and a forum for thought and dialogue regarding the issues, trends, opportunities, and challenges facing biblical higher education. This volume contains two articles and four book reviews. The first article was contributed by Sarah J. Bracey of Welch College. She summarizes and highlights key points of the educational philosophy of Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch theologian, philosopher, and politician of the 19th century whose ideas remain influential and relevant to this day. The second article was contributed by Jason B. Palmer of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He shares the results of research he conducted among Baptist colleges and universities in Texas about the nature and content of their mission statements. Although his study did not focus specifically on ABHE schools, the information he provides can offer guidance for ABHE schools as they seek to comply with Standard 1, Essential Elements 8-10, which relate to the development, publication, and implementation of mission statements.

The four book reviews in this volume cover a range of important topics and issues related to biblical higher education, including the need for a Christian worldview in a secular culture, the New Testament evidence for women in leadership, the development of multinational teams to work in cross-cultural settings, and cultivation of mentors in Christian higher education. The reviewers summarize the contents of the books and advise readers on their potential usefulness.

The editorial board (James Estep, Kevin Hester, Rob Lindemann, and LaTanya Tyson) evaluates article submissions and offers helpful feedback to authors so that their final products can inform, inspire, and challenge the reader. I appreciate their willingness to invest their time in advancing the cause of biblical higher education. Aaron Proffitt of God's Bible School and College, the Book Review Editor, assisted in preparing the book reviews for publication. And the editorial board expresses its appreciation for Carol Dibble, Chief of Staff and Director of Communications at ABHE, who consistently produces high-quality, attractive publications for ABHE such as this journal.

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Editorial Policy

The articles in the *Biblical Higher Education Journal* reflect the opinions of the authors and reviewers and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Publisher.

ARTICLES

- *The Educational Philosophy of Abraham Kuyper*
Sarah J. Bracey
- *Strategic Drivers in the Mission Statement of IABCU Colleges and Universities in Texas*
Jason B. Palmer

The Educational Philosophy of Abraham Kuyper

Sarah J. Bracey

Abstract

Abraham Kuyper was born in 1837 in Holland where he would spend his entire life until his death in 1920. He became a major figure in several “spheres” including the church, education, and politics (Berg, 1978). Although Kuyper was sometimes considered controversial, he rose as a national figure in Holland’s history. He is often described as a neo-Calvinist who established the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. He was also a prominent political figure, eventually rising to the position of Prime Minister. Kuyper is probably best known for his views on “sphere sovereignty,” but he spent much of his political career advocating for parents’ rights to educate their children according to their family’s values rather than the modern worldview of the state schools. Kuyper had strong convictions about how certain spheres of life should not generally dictate to other spheres of life. Over all the spheres, though, lies the sovereignty of God in everyday life. This concept is best illustrated in Kuyper’s (1880/n.d.) most famous quotation: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human life of which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” (p. 26). His recently translated works, originally written in Dutch, now provide Kuyper’s rich teachings not only to a whole new generation but also to the wide world of English-speaking Christians.

T

o appreciate Abraham Kuyper’s educational philosophy, it is important to start with Kuyper’s history of education. As a

young boy in Middelburg, Holland, he never attended grade school because his mother was a former governess, and both of his parents taught him at home. He was an avid reader and would get in trouble with his father for stealing away to the attic to read the newspaper (Berg, 1978).

Kuyper's father was a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church (Wagenman, 2019). In 1849, the family moved to Leiden (in South Holland) for him to take up a new pastorate. It was in the university town of Leiden that "Bram" went to school for the first time at the gymnasium (Berg, 1978). His early studies centered around literature and classical languages, but he began studying theology in the divinity school housed within the state university, Leiden University (Wagenman, 2019).

Where Reformed theology had once reigned, Leiden University was then ruled by three prominent liberal theologians: Lodewijk Willem Ernst Rauwenhoff, Abraham Kuenen, and Joannes Henricus Scholten (Berg, 1978). Unfortunately, the divinity program at Leiden was moving further and further from Reformed orthodoxy. In one lecture, Professor Rauwenhoff announced he no longer believed in Jesus's bodily resurrection, which students, including Kuyper, followed by applauding (Berg, 1978). During his doctoral studies, Kuyper's philosophy of education was taking a considerable liberal turn.

Abraham Kuyper graduated with his Doctor of Theology degree in 1862 and was admitted into the pastoral ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church. The liberal education of Kuyper's youth shaped his early ministry considerably. Berg (1978) writes: "To Kuyper, Jesus was still not the Savior and Mediator as the Scriptures reveal Him but

rather a noble martyr who had died at the hands of His enemies for the courage of His convictions” (p. 29). Kuyper especially struggled to write his sermons and, consequently, discovered congregants who were unwilling to sit under his teachings. Kuyper’s encounters with this group of “malcontents” brought about a time of inward self-examination, not uncommon for many young ministers in their first pastorate (Wagenman, 2019).

Earlier in his conversion, Kuyper saw how his background (son of a pastor, baptism as an infant, and lifelong involvement with the church) was a type of cultural Christianity as we would define it today. For Kuyper, the world of the Dutch Reformed Church was a part of his Dutch heritage and identity, but it was “spiritually dead and lifeless” (Wagenman, 2019, p. 13). However, Kuyper’s early interests in socio-political issues (e.g., stealing his father’s newspapers) would ultimately lead to his departure from this cultural Christianity.

The Allure of Modern Philosophy

When Kuyper attended university and seminary, he became powerfully influenced by the notions of modernist Christianity, which sought to understand the world through a system of fixed laws perpetuated by reality and reason (Knight, 2006). Modernism promised a truth that mirrored reality, and, like the scientific method, it was a reality that was objective, neutral, and pragmatic. Such modern notions of theological debate were compelling for young clergymen, like Kuyper, who believed that these advances would help save the church from marginalization.

However, not until his encounters with his congregation of “malcontents” did Kuyper begin to see the flaws of modernist

Christianity. At its best, modernist Christianity was a type of weak integrationalism where the fields of science, medicine, and technology were sources of authority and the teachings of the Church were an afterthought. This approach resulted in a distortion of the basic doctrines of Christianity combined with the godless tenets of modern science and philosophy.

Kuyper discovered that modernist Christianity shifted authority away from Christ and his teachings to individuality and modern cultural trends (Wagenman, 2019). For modernists, Jesus is sovereign only over spiritual, religious, or ethical issues. Kuyper (1899/2019a) explained that modernists still believed in the reality of sin “but they do not see it as evidence of apostasy and guilt . . . [but] that sin points to inadequate development” (p. 76). Additionally, the modernist holds that God reveals himself only through nature.

The discontented parishioners of Kuyper’s first congregation saw through the shallow faith of this modernist approach and challenged Kuyper to reflect on his identity—that is, his identity in Christ. Acknowledging Christ as Lord of all and the center of all was the existential breakthrough that led to Kuyper’s Christian worldview, which would shape his theology for the rest of his life. From his early days as a *cultural* Christian to his university years as a *modernist*, he eventually arrived in his ministry as a *confessional* Christian. In Kuyper’s (1904/2020a) writing on the church and state, he purposed to caution believers against the modern worldview that he fell prey to as a young man:

An entirely atheistic life and worldview [arose] that seduced the nations, undermining the whole of Christian life and triumphing with the help, tragically, of so many Christians

in virtually every area of life. Modern life is simply an entirely *de-Christianized life*. The driving force of the state has now become fundamentally *un-Christian* and *anti-Christian*. It still tolerates Christians, but the state is no longer allowed to be Christian. (pp. 168-169)

Sphere Sovereignty in Education

Breaking free from the allure of modernism and acknowledging the lordship of Christ was the starting point for his most well-known theory, *sphere sovereignty*, which reflects Kuyper's understanding of how God has organized human society. The freedom we have in Christ includes a world where different spheres of human activity are arranged. These spheres are governed under the lordship of Christ, and no sphere is given more priority over another (Wagenman, 2019). The state sphere is unique in that it may serve as a referee between others; however, it is not meant to control the internal workings of the other spheres of life. Rather, societal norms within each sphere come from Christ alone, and each sphere is to function according to the way God has created it to flourish (Wagenman).

Kuyper's theory of sphere sovereignty establishes the groundwork for his philosophy of education. He remarks that a variety of spheres exist, but he specifically mentions the family, the state, the school, the church, and the arts (Kuyper, 1880/n.d.). The spheres should operate in mutual harmony with one another so that one sphere of life does not dominate the others. Kuyper challenged the Dutch state, which had begun exercising more control over its subjects, especially in the sphere of education:

And thus, finally, our fight was concentrated in the fight about the public school, when in that school the sovereignty of conscience, the sovereignty of the family sphere, the sovereignty of the pedagogical sphere, and the sovereignty of the spiritual sphere were threatened. (Kuyper, 1880/n.d., p. 12)

Kuyper argued that Christian schools should operate internally within their own sphere and were an example of *confessional multiformity* (Wagenman, 2019). For Kuyper, this confessional multiformity, in the realm of education, meant that religious worldviews should have the freedom to develop schools within their own unique confession. If Christ is Lord over all, he is Lord of the home, of family life, of parenting, and of education.

During the early 19th century in the Netherlands, state universities and theological seminaries each supported the Christian faith (Wagenman, 2019). However, the sway of the modernist movement within a 19th-century culture began to influence Dutch education, and, consequently, many modernists began ridiculing historical Christianity and the authority of Scripture. Modernism became an increasing concern for those who were referred to as the “little people” in the Netherlands, namely, the conservative, rural population (Wagenman, 2019, p. 55).

Since this proportion of the population was often much poorer than the other classes, it was underrepresented in government and excluded from the educational opportunities that others could afford. Therefore, the voices and views of this religious minority were not heard in Dutch Parliament and went largely unnoticed as

more modernist views permeated the education of their children. Gradually, parents removed their children from state schools, and the little people became even more stigmatized for their faith (Wagenman, 2019).

At the so-called mixed school, which was to be accessible to all, nobody feels at home except the modern Christian, nobody feels at ease but the modern Jew. In actuality, the mixed, common, public school is inaccessible for the believing Christian, be he Reformed, Roman Catholic, or Mennonite. (Kuyper, 1875/2019d, p. 257)

Kuyper was concerned for this marginalized people group and how Dutch education was indoctrinating the larger population into a secular worldview. He argued that the people of each religious, denominational perspective had the right to educate their children according to their beliefs, i.e., confessional Christianity. If parents wanted their children to be taught at a modernist school, that was acceptable. However, if parents desired their children to be taught in a school that supported confessional Christianity, then those schools should be just as legitimate.

Worldview Thinking and Child Development

Also undergirding Kuyper's philosophy of education was his understanding of worldview and theory of knowledge. He viewed learning as a process of giving meaning to facts and events. If meaning is derived from a person's combination of reason and his or her own subjective experiences, then a different worldview is simply a different interpretation of facts and events motivated

by individual experiences and core beliefs (Naylor, 2019). While Kuyper's theory of knowledge seemed very postmodern (especially for his time), he argued that objective truth exists and that human knowledge is flawed. Naturally, every major religion argued that its particular worldview was the one true interpretation, and, rather than arguing for this view or that view on the political stage, Kuyper offered the most equitable solution for everyone: The government would not fund just one specific worldview but all schools rooted in their various worldviews.

Besides worldview thinking, a philosophy (and psychology) of education grows naturally from a person's theory of human development. For Kuyper, healthy development in children requires balance between the instruction the child receives at home, school, and church. When children are taught from the same core beliefs, they develop strength of character (Naylor, 2019). When taught from conflicting worldviews, children develop a disunity that harms their character development. In Kuyper's (1904/2020b) chapter, "Upbringing (3)," he argues that an educational system that teaches views that are contrary to the tenets of the home violates the rights of both the parents and children.

Kuyper believed that education is a means of fostering and extending the knowledge that is being taught at home (Naylor, 2019). Given humanity's innately curious nature, humans begin learning about the world from a very early age through observation and experience. When encountering a perspective or worldview different from the one in which a child is raised, the information should be adjusted in a way that fits with their prior knowledge (not unlike Piaget's concepts of *assimilation* and *accommodation*). However, a child's worldview can become confused when he or she is raised

in a home where knowledge is rooted in a religious worldview but attends a school where knowledge is based solely on autonomous experience. As a result, many schools in Kuyper's day resorted to teaching in abstraction where personal experiences were not a source of knowledge and instead relied primarily on the scientific method as the basis for all knowledge. Kuyper (1880/2015) argued that "a cancer has insinuated itself into our educational system that we have branded with the not too strong label of intellectualism" (p. 206).

Kuyper did not believe the purpose of education is sheer intellectualism, but neither is it simply for religious training. Rather, Kuyper believed Christian education should teach children how to be salt and light to the world. God gives Christians special grace and calls upon them to serve him and others in their cultures and societies by God's common grace. Children could learn through education to practice humility and respect other cultural worldviews, which would prepare them to communicate with and influence larger society (Naylor, 2019). Religious schools could train and develop children to be active, educated participants in politics and society rather than people who retreat into their own Christian circles. In Kuyper's (1904/2020c) fourth chapter on "Upbringing," he encourages everyone (parents and educators) to ask, "Not only, 'How do I help my children through the world?' but also the other question: 'How can I help the world through my child?'" (p. 464).

The Home vs. The State vs. The Church

Kuyper's educational philosophy was also a reaction to a growing 19th-century ideology, which spread throughout parts of

Europe, that children belonged first to the state and second to the family (Naylor, 2019). With the gift of hindsight, contemporary observers have seen the potential consequences of this philosophy (e.g., Hitler Youth). If a country's educational system is founded on the notion that the home is merely meant to serve the child's physical needs while the state informs the child's intellectual development, then a large population of religious families will educate their children at home, holding that the state's indoctrination of beliefs is contrary to their religious beliefs. Kuyper (1880/2015) fought for parents' rights in the education of their children saying, "the father is the only lawful person, called by nature and called to this task, to determine the choice of school for his child" (p. 203).

While Kuyper argued for parents' right to choose (or establish) a school that aligns with their particular worldview at home, he also did not believe parents should be granted sovereign rights over the school or direct curriculum (Naylor, 2019). School, as an independent sphere, is to be composed of educators who design the curriculum to reflect the shared beliefs of that particular school's worldview. While teachers are accountable to the parents for instruction that supports the core beliefs of the community, parents should not influence how this instruction is delivered.

Within the Catholic and Calvinist traditions, parents are recognized as having a duty to raise their children according to the teachings of the Church. This responsibility is expressed especially in the doctrine of infant baptism, as well as baby dedication ceremonies. In the editor's introduction to Kuyper's collected works on education, Naylor (2019) explains that Kuyper's Calvinist views held that parents were making "a binding vow to raise their children

in the fear and admonition of the Lord, a vow considered as holy as the marriage vow” (p. xxxi). To fulfill this vow, which parents have made in the sight of witnesses, Kuyper argued that they must provide a Christian education to their children.

Therefore, Kuyper viewed the local church as having a duty to admonish parents who have neglected their obligations to raise their children according to the views of the Church. However, this responsibility would apply only to a family that is willing to submit to the lordship of Christ and thereby his representatives on earth. Parents had a special responsibility in the spiritual upbringing of their children, which the state was beginning to take away by means of the indoctrination of a modern worldview that ran contrary to the Church’s belief system.

Educational Reform

Kuyper’s educational reform began to take shape in 1880 when he established a Christian university outside of state control called the Free University of Amsterdam (Wagenman, 2019). His goals were to revitalize Christian education, make it available to those who objected to the modernist worldview, and develop leaders who could mold the culture according to the Lordship of Christ. Graduates of Free University could work toward the good of society in their respective disciplines while still observing their Christian faith.

To accomplish these goals, the Christian school curriculum had two tasks: to explore God’s world for truth and to prepare students for service in his world (Wagenman, 2019). At Kuyper’s school,

exploring the world for truth means that students may study any subject so long as it is examined within a Christian worldview where Christ is central and Scripture is authoritative. While some may argue that a Christian worldview limits a student's understanding of the world, Kuyper (1868/2019e) argued that the modernist worldview is much more restrictive because it considers only natural causes, leading to "theological liberalism" (p. 13). Therefore, since the student should examine all creation, Christian education is designed to prepare students to serve Christ in a variety of capacities, which could create more educational and vocational opportunities for this marginalized group to go out and publicly serve Christ and his world.

One university, of course, was not enough to satisfy Kuyper's educational vision for all Dutch Christians. Between 1869 and 1917, Kuyper's political party, the Antirevolutionary Party (ARP), worked for almost 50 years to amend the Dutch constitution so that it would allow parents the right to provide an education to their children that aligned with their family's beliefs and values. The amendment developed into a new education bill that passed in 1920, the year that Kuyper died (Naylor, 2019). His educational reform would become one of his greatest political achievements.

The education bill continues to this day to provide complete funding for Dutch children to receive elementary and high school education regardless of management (state vs. private) or religion. Granted, certain regulations exist concerning whether a school qualifies to receive such funding, including policies concerning whether a similar school exists in that geographic region, the minimum number of students required, teacher salaries, and the standards of achievement that are to be met (Naylor, 2019). However, none of

the regulations are allowed to direct the underlying belief system (and consequent curriculum) of the school, except for forcefully aggressive ideologies like violent jihad or white supremacy.

As previously mentioned, Kuyper's ideological seedling took almost 50 years to bear fruit. Kuyper's political opponents could not understand the need for such restructuring when "neutralist" schools existed for all school children at no cost. Surely a system of separate religious schools was a backward concept and would serve only to promote discord and disunity throughout the Netherlands. One such opponent was Johannes Kappeyne van de Coppelo who served as prime minister from 1877 to 1879. Kuyper recalled a speech Kappeyne gave as prime minister concerning the integration of public education with modernism where Kappeyne commented that a minority opinion that objects to the modern public school "will just have to be oppressed, for then it is the fly that spoils the ointment" (Kuyper, 1905/2019c, p. 289).

Kuyper, however, argued that the opposite would occur and that allowing each community of faith to instruct its children according to its own beliefs would provide union among the groups. National unity was in danger when the state limited the freedom of its people and required all subgroups of people to be educated according to one particular worldview. Limiting the freedom of the people "sows bitterness in the hearts and that divides a nation" (Naylor, 2019, p. xxxviii).

Kuyper's philosophy of education also fit the post-war (Eighty Years' War) culture in which the Netherlands had become a refuge for oppressed religious minorities from other countries (Naylor, 2019). Reformers, Catholics, and Jews all found religious liberty

in the Netherlands that was not available in other parts of Europe. Having the opportunity to educate their children according to their own religious views accorded with the religious freedom already available in other parts of Dutch culture.

While Kuyper had several challengers in Parliament, the country's people were largely with him and the ARP. In a petition that he presented to the king in 1878, Kuyper, along with the leader of the Catholic party, Herman Schaepman, gathered 469,869 parent signatures (Naylor, 2019). This amount was quite significant given that the Netherlands had only 127,000 actual voters. Unfortunately, the king refused to acknowledge the petition, and another 11 years would pass before a Protestant-Catholic coalition could make any headway until, in 1889, they passed an educational bill allowing for religious schools to receive a small amount of government aid. During that time, Protestants and Catholics had obtained a majority in Parliament, which then allowed the more rural, religiously conservative citizens to have representation in their government (Glenn, 2019).

By organizing and uniting Catholics and Protestants, Kuyper began to see the first fruits of his efforts. Of course, to appease many of Kuyper's opponents, his party eventually put certain exceptions in place that prohibited schools from being founded that are based on violent ideologies or those that have based their identity on "class, race, language, political ideology, or gender" (Naylor, 2019, p. xii). Consequently, local schools, and thus communities, were distinguished by their shared religious and philosophical beliefs rather than their social class or race, thereby upholding Kuyper's original vision for education in the Netherlands and the symbol of Dutch culture in Europe to promote national unity.

Conclusion

Looking back to the 19th century, we can clearly trace the development of Kuyper's educational philosophy from stealing his father's newspapers to the temptations of modernist philosophy in his graduate studies, his congregation of malcontents, and finally to his confessional Christianity and his most famous theological argument for sphere sovereignty. This series of events led Kuyper to the major problem that was occurring in education in The Netherlands. He states:

Among the Protestants the majority of the lower classes for whom we opened primary schools do not subscribe to the modern notions and prefer a school with the Bible to one without the word of the Lord. . . . Yet they want to compel us to help erect, with our taxes, schools that are desired neither by us nor by the majority of the lower classes for whom they are being erected in the first place. . . . And many parents continue to send their children to public school only because necessity compels them. . . . The school law advocates know of only one school: the religiously neutral school; and because they love this school they want to compel us to help pay for it. Is this not tyranny? Does this not speak of hatred of religion?. . . Instead of accusing us of lust for power, should they not rather accuse themselves? (Kuyper, 1875/2019d, p. 254)

In Kuyper's prolific writings on education, there can be no doubt of the seriousness of his convictions for an appropriate balance

between the spheres of state and education and for parents' rights to choose the worldview of their child's education. His convictions not only applied to primary school but also throughout the life of the child into higher education. Kuyper's founding of Free University accomplished several goals related to these convictions including higher education that was free from the modern worldview, an integration of faith and learning, students who believe that Christ is central and Scripture is authoritative, and graduates who will serve and represent in the public sphere.

Many institutions of biblical higher learning can share Kuyper's educational philosophy. In his address to the Christian Teachers Association in 1904, Kuyper applauded the hard work and sacrifices the educators had made in their 50 years as an organization. With his last words, he also challenged the teachers: "With the child in your arms you have taken your stand at the foot of the cross. Don't ever let go of that child, and don't ever let go of that cross!" (Kuyper, 1904/2019b, p. 360).



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Strategic Drivers in the Mission Statements of IABCU Colleges and Universities in Texas

Jason B. Palmer

Abstract

Mission statements are one of the vehicles commonly used by organizations to differentiate themselves from others in their field. The present research builds on that of Woodrow (2006) and Firmin and Gilson (2010) and identifies the strategic drivers that are observable in the current mission statements of the eleven International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities (IABCU) member schools in Texas. This examination serves as a case study with elements of application germane for a broad array of Christian institutions of higher education.

ughes, Beatty, and Dinwoodie (2014) use the term *strategic drivers* to convey “those relatively few determinants of sustainable competitive advantage for a particular organization in a particular industry of competitive environment” (pp. 26, 143). They argue the selection of strategic drivers is a key decision because they distinguish an organization from others in their industry. Strategic planning instruments such as mission statements should reflect the selected strategic drivers. This article will examine the mission statements of International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities (IABCU) member schools in Texas to see how they differentiate themselves from one another.

Within the industry of Christian higher education, the IABCU is a consortium of 43 member schools located in sixteen states of

the United States, Canada, and Haiti. Table 1 overviews the eleven member schools that call Texas home: Baylor University (BU), Criswell College (CC), Dallas Baptist University (DBU), East Texas Baptist University (ETBU), Hardin-Simmons University (HSU), Houston Christian University (HCU), Howard Payne University (HPU), Jacksonville College (JC), Stark College and Seminary (SCS), University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB), and Wayland Baptist University (WBU). Texas has more member schools in IABCU than any other state or country. The four states with the next closest number of member schools have three each. According to National Center of Education Statistics data collected on August 30, 2023, and supplemented by direct communication with the four member schools whose data was not posted to the aforementioned database, the eleven IABCU colleges and universities in Texas have a total student enrollment of 41,047, which constitutes 31 percent of the 133,076 students enrolled in IABCU colleges and universities. The breadth of options for Baptist higher education in Texas provides options to prospective students but also contributes to a considerable degree of industry saturation, which magnifies the importance of institutions being able to set themselves apart.

Table 1. IABCU Member Schools in Texas

Institution	Total Enrollment	Undergraduate Enrollment	IABCU	CCCU
BU	20,709	15,213	Member	Collaborative Partner
CC	163	122	Member	
DBU	4,348	2,971	Member	Governing Member
ETBU	1,771	1,579	Member	Governing Member
HSU	1,765	1,347	Member	Governing Member
HCU	4,257	2,823	Member	Governing Member
HPU	838	773	Member	Governing Member
JC	471	471	Member	
SCS	172	26	Member	
UMHB	3,575	3,072	Member	Governing Member
WBU	2,978	2,275	Member	Governing Member
TOTAL	41,047	30,672		

Previous researchers have surveyed the missions of various types of institutions of higher education including Catholic institutions, four-year colleges and universities, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU)-affiliated schools, baccalaureate colleges, seminaries in the American South, and Protestant schools (Velcuff & Ferrari, 2006; Morphey & Hartley, 2006; Woodrow, 2006; Firmin & Gilson, 2010; Taylor & Morphey, 2010; Brunn & Long, 2013; Weeks, Winningham, & Winningham, 2017). Other studies have analyzed the mission statements of international institutions and globally ranked universities (Finley, Rogers, & Galloway, 2001; Kibuuka, 2001; Özdem, 2011; Breznik & Law, 2019; Cortés, Rivera, & Carbonell, 2022).

The present researcher did not identify any literature that concentrated on the mission statements of IABCU institutions. Building on the work of Woodrow (2006) and Firmin and Gilson (2010) who explored the mission statements of CCCU-affiliated institutions, the current research is a qualitative study that aims to partially address this gap in the literature and contribute heuristically to the field by answering this question: What strategic drivers are observable in the mission statements of the eleven IABCU colleges and universities in Texas? The researcher delimited the scope of investigation by excluding two Baptist institutions of higher education in Texas from the survey group because they were not members of the IABCU: Baptist University of the Americas and Texas Baptist College. The researcher is employed as a full-time staff member at one of the eleven surveyed schools and attempted to mitigate bias by researching a subject outside his scope of professional duties. Understanding how these surveyed organizations utilize strategic instruments to position themselves with respect to similar

institutions may identify trends worthy of consideration by higher education audiences as well as other industry sectors operating in saturated contexts.

Theoretical Foundation

Institutions of higher education have a trove of well-worn strategic drivers from which to draw; however, the process of discovery, prioritization, and selection reveals each school's areas of stated emphasis—the points where they aim to invest, demonstrate excellence, and differentiate themselves (Hughes, Beatty, & Dinwoodie, 2014). Identifying strategic drivers is an ongoing and discriminatory undertaking that can naturally lead to tension and conflict as leaders pursue consensus regarding where they have the capacity for organizational success (Hughes, Beatty, & Dinwoodie, 2014; Collins, 2001). These relatively few capabilities labeled *strategic drivers* constitute essentials that leaders believe will propel the institution toward strategic victory when fulfilled (Hughes, Beatty, & Dinwoodie, 2014).

The operationalization of strategic drivers is part of the strategic planning process that includes clarification of the group's mission, vision, and values (Hughes, Beatty, & Dinwoodie, 2014). Özdem (2011) suggests a similar list of strategic planning components: “vision, mission, strategy, and action” (p. 1888). McCaffery (2019) distills the essence of strategy as “ensuring there is alignment between three key elements: aims, capabilities and opportunities” (p. 115), each of which must be mutually integrated. According to Morrill (2007), fleshing out concepts such as mission and vision calls for strategic leadership—not management—to come to the fore if commitment is to be effectually mobilized to the end of “shared

purposes and goals” (pp. 135, 137). Building on the individualized notion of differentiation proffered by Steinke (2019), organizational differentiation by mission and type contributes to a sense of purposefulness that cultivates community. Firmin and Gilson (2010) argue that the role of mission statements in differentiating colleges and universities makes their study “an important construct worthy of investigation at the research level, due to their salience in higher education and the many implications that flow from these statements” (p. 61).

A mission provides an organization with a *raison d’être* or purpose for existence (Kibuuka, 2001; Woodrow, 2006). The missions of Christian colleges and universities, according to Woodrow (2006), must avoid aloofness and impersonality while offering to “change lives; to make a distinctive difference in people’s lives; to offer deep meaning; to be something everybody can really believe in—to be something they know is right” (p. 315). McCaffery (2019) posits that, to achieve this end, every mission must possess four discrete components: purpose, strategy, values, and standards and behavior. According to Iorg (2018), the missional elements combine to serve as a reference point for resolving conflict.

A mission statement serves to express the institution’s mission, describe the group’s perceived societal role, and form a foundation for building a vision and strategic plans (Ward, 2015; Kibuuka, 2001; Velcoff & Ferrari, 2006). The United States Army (2023) defines a mission statement as “a short sentence or paragraph that describes the organization’s essential task(s), purpose, and action containing the elements of who, what, when, where, and why” (par. 1-15). Effective mission statements, according to Ireland and Hitt (1992), describe the organization’s “fundamental, unique purpose” (p. 35) while

functioning as both a guide to strategic planning and an agent for motivating organizational constituents to own the infused concepts (Fugazzotto, 2009; Özdem, 2011; Woodrow, 2006; Morphey & Hartley, 2006; Iorg, 2018). Mission statements embracing a positive and aspirational view of the future are generally postured to resonate with the heart and head of hearers and, therefore, more often realize success (McCaffery, 2019; Hughes, Beatty, & Dinwoodie, 2014).

Mission statements have internal and external audiences (Morphey & Hartley, 2006; Woodrow, 2006; Velcoff & Ferrari, 2006; Fugazzotto, 2009; Weeks, Winningham, & Winningham, 2017; Morrill, 2007; Firmin & Gilson, 2010; Findley, Rogers, & Galloway, 2001). Research demonstrates that a shared mission and values strengthen enjoyment for practitioners and establish healthy boundaries in communal enterprises (Irving & Strauss, 2019). A shared mission provides accountability to leaders (Iorg, 2018; Meacham, 2008; Ledbetter, Banks, & Greenhalgh, 2016; Irving & Strauss, 2019). Mission statements can drive institutional practice and contribute to external marketing efforts including recruitment of faculty, staff, and students as well as donor engagement. Organizational culture and needs influence the levels of consideration given to internal and external audiences.

Christian organizations prioritize God's mission and use a theological framework to focus on their mission (Iorg, 2018). As Glanzer, Alleman, and Ream (2017) claim, Christian theology is the lifeblood of Christian colleges and universities, unifying the institution's "disparate parts by nourishing the whole body (curricular and cocurricular)" and sustaining "the university's soul—our shared identity, story, and purpose" that contributes to a shared understanding regarding "human flourishing and the human

purpose” (pp. 11, 155). They warn about the predictable progression from a rejection of the theological fabric that historically undergirded all academic disciplines to the natural selection of a new object of faith—typically science. Despite a college or university’s location on the spectrum of Christian institutional identity, Wilson’s (1996) contention that the mission statements produced by religious organizations manifest in daily application through practical reflection and religious leadership appears plausible.

The prevalence of mission statements in higher education borders on ubiquity (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Firmin & Gilson, 2010; Ward, 2015). According to Cortés, Rivera, and Carbonell (2022), worldwide implementation of mission statements by universities started in the 1980s. McCaffery (2019) traces the emerging efforts of institutions of higher education to “articulate their institutional missions in the 1990s” (p. 112) and points out some of the resulting confusion, apathy, dissent, and skepticism. He also critiques higher education’s slowness to adapt and lack of agility compared to the private sector and offers support for notions of mission and vision despite their treatment in management literature.

Rival perspectives on the effectiveness of mission statements in higher education persist, and the requirements for mission statements by accreditation agencies do not guarantee that the strategic intent behind the statements will be met (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Firmin & Gilson, 2010; Ward, 2015; Morrill, 2007). Morphew and Hartley (2006) note that some consider mission statements to be “strategic expressions of institutional distinctiveness” (p. 459), while others, like Detomasi (1995), see them as vague “organizational window dressings that are normative necessities.” Some see them as a pivotal component of strategic planning, useful in communicating and

organizing people around common purposes, while others remain skeptical (Kibuuka, 2001; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Fugazzotto, 2009).

Many higher education mission statements are criticized for being virtually indistinguishable from one another; however, this homogeneity is less observable in private institutions (Finley, Rogers, & Galloway, 2001; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Morrill, 2007; Lombardi, 2013; McCaffery, 2019). Lombardi (2013) credits this greater diversity in private school mission statements to a combination of institutional history and the alignment of goals and governance structures. Woodrow (2006) finds the mission statements of CCCU member institutions to be “extraordinarily unique and distinctive” when analyzed against the backdrop of roughly 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States; however, when CCCU member school’s mission statements are compared to other CCCU peers, “their missions are more homogeneous” (p. 324). The “rather pessimistic perceptions” about mission statements appear less warranted when the nuanced factors regarding private colleges and universities are more fully understood. The literature tends to support the case for mission statements delivering “communicative and performance value” (Fugazzotto, 2009, p. 288).

The findings of Weeks, Winningham, and Winningham (2017) regarding expressions of “faith maturity in the mission statements of religiously affiliated institutions of higher education” (p. 160) are particularly noteworthy for the present investigation. They analyze Protestant institutions of higher education from multiple denominations for faith maturity in two dimensions. The vertical dimension describes “adherence to religious beliefs concerning God and the divinity of Jesus, incorporating one’s faith into life,

and spiritual growth,” while the horizontal dimension identifies “components of service, social justice, and acceptance of others, all demonstrated through one’s actions toward others” (Weeks, Winningham, & Winningham, 2017, p. 160).

The researchers prioritize “indicators of faith” over abstract faith and find that Southern Baptists are the only denomination of the six surveyed whose colleges and universities average higher on the vertical dimension than the horizontal dimension (Weeks, Winningham, & Winningham, 2017, pp. 160, 167, 168). On the vertical scale, Southern Baptists post the highest average and score “significantly higher than four of the other five denominations” (Weeks, Winningham, & Winningham, 2017, p. 167). Rather than commend this feat, Weeks, Winningham, and Winningham (2017) conclude that surveyed institutions whose mission statements devalue the horizontal components (i.e., “social advocacy and change”) compared to the vertical dimension (“traditional aspects of religious Christian faith”) are on a trajectory “diametrically opposed to the concept of a mature faith” (p. 167). This criticism of Southern Baptist colleges and universities deserves a response. Do the mission statements of IABCU colleges and universities in Texas support their findings regarding a lack of emphasis on horizontal elements of faith?

Morphew and Hartley (2006) contend that the practical implications for studies of this nature are immense. Those tasked to construct and periodically refine mission statements can benefit from a growing understanding of their purpose. Mission statements can be a catalyst for unifying effort because they provide individuals with a “sense of direction” and an avenue for a more meaningful life through participation “in a morally powerful purpose of service”

(Woodrow, 2006, pp. 314, 315). Mission statements play a role in determining organizational structure, define measurable objectives, and provide a type of organizational glue that binds elements of an organization (Fugazzotto, 2009; Irving, 2011). A practical benefit of effective mission statements raised by Meacham (2008) is a direct contribution to “stability and continuity across changes in administration” (p. 22). Other practical implications, according to Fugazzotto (2009), are an increased tangibility of structural and cultural components of the organization and, “a causal relationship with institutional effectiveness” (p. 291).

Iorg (2018) contends that “every church or ministry organization needs a short, one-sentence mission statement (written without commas or conjunctions) that succinctly declares its reason for existence” (p. 39). Both things matter: the content and the fact the institution has a mission statement at all (Fugazzotto, 2009). In fact, some scholars question the validity of institutions of higher education that do not have a mission statement (Fugazzotto, 2009). Nevertheless, the value of a college or university having a written mission statement pales in comparison to the value of institutional members having a “a sense of mission” (McCaffery, 2019, p. 128). Ownership of the mission promotes congruency between “espoused theory” and “theory in use” that can be validated through assessment (McCaffery, 2019, p. 129). A perceived lack of congruence between stated and lived mission is sure to attract just, but unwanted, criticism (McCaffery, 2019).

Given the necessity, potential strategic gains, and avenues for vulnerability found in articulating a mission statement, perhaps Ledbetter, Banks, and Greenhalgh (2016) are right when they suggest “stating a mission is an act of faith” because it “expresses

a commitment to being as well as doing something” while also establishing a standard against which leader conduct will be evaluated (p. 97). The quality and clarity of this communication of goals, targets, and standards vary widely, but quality mission statements have the power to engender positive performance (Fugazzotto, 2009; Weeks, Winningham, & Winningham, 2017).

Research Design Methodology

The researcher collected the mission statements of all surveyed institutions from their respective publicly accessible website on September 9, 2023, and compiled them in Table 2. Mission statement content was analyzed inductively, which identified salient features (e.g., word count, key terms, primary missional tasks, and stated audiences). The key terms were categorized using the general typologies published by Woodrow (2006) and Firmin and Gilson (2010). While acknowledging the statistical challenges with small survey groups, the analysis showed the frequency with which institutions use certain terms in their mission statements. Those usage rates were compared to the data from CCCU schools collected by Woodrow (2006) and Firmin and Gilson (2010) to demonstrate trends and test the validity of Weeks, Winningham, and Winningham’s (2017) findings vis-à-vis the tendency of Baptist colleges and universities to prioritize vertical versus horizontal development of students’ faith maturity. The researcher gathered enrollment data from the National Center of Education Statistics to contextualize the research results. When enrollment data or the approval year of the present mission statement were not available online, the researcher communicated directly with the institution to secure the data.

Table 2. Mission Statements of Surveyed Institutions

Mission Statement		
Institution	Approved	Mission Statement
BU	1994 (E. Rivera, personal communication, October 10, 2023)	The mission of Baylor University is to educate men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community.
CC	2014 (D. Reynolds, personal communication, October 17, 2023)	The mission of Criswell College is to provide ministerial and professional higher education for men and women preparing to serve as Christian leaders throughout society, while maintaining an institutional commitment to biblical inerrancy.
DBU	1993 (L. Evans, personal communication, October 5, 2023)	The mission of Dallas Baptist University is to provide Christ-centered quality higher education in the arts, sciences, and professional studies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels to traditional age and adult students in order to produce servant leaders who have the ability to integrate faith and learning through their respective callings.
ETBU	2017 (K. Sparks, personal communication, October 11, 2023)	As a Christ-centered institution, East Texas Baptist University educates students by integrating biblical faith and learning to develop mind, body, and soul through community engagement to prepare graduates to be Christian servant leaders in their calling to God and humanity.
HSU	2005 (A. Goodwin, personal communication, October 18, 2023)	The mission of Hardin-Simmons University is to be a community dedicated to providing excellence in education enlightened by Christian faith and values.
HCU	2009 (K. Francies, personal communication, October 18, 2023)	The mission of Houston Christian University is to provide a learning experience that instills in students a passion for academic, spiritual, and professional excellence as a result of our central confession, "Jesus Christ is Lord."
HPU	2010	Howard Payne University is a Christ-centered academic community dedicated to excellence by developing and equipping the whole person for intellectual inquiry, personal and professional integrity, and service to God and humanity.

JC	2022 (D. Erickson, personal communication, October 5, 2023)	We provide Christ-centered teaching and training that prepares students to lead meaningful lives that transform the world.
SCS	2014 (J. Dunn, personal communication, October 5, 2023)	Stark College & Seminary exists to equip educationally under-served followers of Christ for service in the church and community.
UMHB	2006 (C. Williams, personal communication, October 5, 2023)	The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor prepares students for leadership, service, and faith-informed discernment in a global society. Academic excellence, personal attention, broad-based scholarship and a commitment to a Baptist vision for education distinguish our Christ-centered learning community.
WBU	2015 (C. Trevino, personal communication, October 12, 2023)	Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging, learning-focused and distinctively Christian environment for professional success and service to God and humankind.

Results

Considering the literature's conflicted advocacy for succinct, memorable, and comprehensive mission statements, the word count of each institution's mission statement served as the first assessment. Statements ($N = 11$) ranged in length from 17 to 52 words. The median word count was 31. The arithmetic mean was 30.7 words. The standard deviation was 10.2.

The second assessment looked for key terms in the mission statements that could be used to identify institutional drivers. Five concepts appeared in more than half the surveyed mission statements. The most prevalent idea, *education*, appeared in ten of the eleven statements (91%). Service was the second most frequently mentioned construct presenting in eight statements (73%). The third-ranked expression was the broad category titled *intellectual*,

which manifested in seven statements (64%). Two notions tied for the fourth most observed—*community* and *leadership*—with six schools each (55%).

Nine concepts appeared in less than half but more than one-quarter of the surveyed mission statements. Three related terms tied for the sixth most popular: *Christian*, *Christ-centered*, and *provide*. Even when the use of the term in institutional names alone was ignored, the concept of *Christian* was invoked in five mission statements (45%). Likewise, *Christ-centered* and *provide* were employed by five schools each (45%). Three terms tied for ninth place by being mentioned in four institutions' statements (36%): *faith*, *world*, and *prepare*. There were three additional categories each found in three surveyed schools (27%): *commitment*, *integrate*, and *God*.

Several ideas were noted in less than one-quarter of the surveyed schools. Six categories are represented in two mission statements (18%): *curriculum*, *Christ*, *calling*, *biblical*, *develop*, and *dedicated*. There were several ideas represented in one school (9%). That list included *Baptist*, *church*, *environment*, *inerrancy*, and *confession*. Table 3 summarizes the frequency with which each of these key terms is used and the categorization of alternative words.

Table 3. Key Terms in Mission Statements of IABCU Colleges and Universities in Texas

General Category	Other Included Terms	Frequency
Education	Educate, Educationally, Learning, Learning Experience, Learning-Focused, Teaching	91%
Service	Serve, Servant, Under-Served	73%
Intellectual	Academic, Academically, Excellence, Scholarship, Quality	64%
Community		55%
Leadership	Leaders, Lead	55%
Christian		45%
Christ-Centered		45%
Provide		45%
Faith		36%
World	Worldwide, Global, Society	36%
Prepare	Preparing, Prepares	36%
Commitment		27%
Integrate	Integrating	27%
God		27%
Curriculum	Arts, Sciences, Studies, Undergraduate, Graduate, Graduates	18%
Christ	Lord	18%
Calling	Callings	18%
Biblical		18%
Develop	Developing	18%
Dedicated		18%
Baptist		9%
Church		9%
Environment		9%
Inerrancy		9%
Confession		9%

A third assessment determined the primary missional task in each mission statement. *Provide* was the most popular selection being reflected in four statements (36%). *Educate*, or *educates*, was the central idea of three statements (27%). Two universities (18%) used the verb *be* to communicate their missional efforts. The remaining two schools described their intent with *equip* (9%) and *prepares* (9%).

Discerning the direct objects in each mission statement comprised a fourth area of investigation that aimed to reveal each school's intended audience. Five institutions focus their mission on *students* with one of those specifying *traditional age* and *adult students*. Two institutions aim their efforts generically at *men and*

women. Perhaps the most distinct audience in the survey group identifies their missional audience as *educationally under-served followers of Christ*.

Discussion

Mission statements serve as channels for expressing institutional identity. The length of the statements demonstrates the efforts of schools to achieve economy of language while balancing the mutually competing goals of brevity and comprehensiveness (Woodrow, 2006). Eight of the eleven schools have a mission statement whose word count is within one standard deviation of the mean. Only three schools fell outside one standard deviation: JC (17 words), SCS (19 words), and DBU (52 words).

All five of the top strategic drivers identified in the survey pool—those terms mentioned in more than half of the institutions investigated—presented at a higher incidence rate compared to the CCCU institutions surveyed by Woodrow (2006) and Firmin and Gilson (2010). While 91% of surveyed schools highlighted *education* in their mission statements, CCCU institutions used that category at slightly lower rates: Woodrow (59%) and Firmin and Gilson (70%). The prevalence of *service*-related terms was higher in IABCU colleges and universities in Texas (73%) than in the broader array of CCCU institutions, which were located by other researchers at 49% and 61%. The *intellectual* grouping was represented in surveyed schools at a higher rate (64%) than the general landscape of CCCU colleges and universities (46% and 44%) when Firmin and Gilson's *academic* category was included. *Community* showed up in the survey group more often (55%) than in CCCU schools (32% and 36%). As for *leadership*, this idea is presented in 55% of surveyed

IABCU schools and less frequently in CCCU institutions (23% and 30%).

At first glance, IABCU institutions in the present research appeared to highlight their espoused *Christian* identity less frequently (45%) than the collective network of CCCU-affiliated schools (67% and 68%); however, the IABCU schools use a *Christ-centered* descriptor around 30% more frequently than the CCCU peers as a group. This comparison is complicated by inconsistent data reporting in this area of Firmin and Gilson's study. When the total usages of *Christian*, *Christ-centered*, and *Christ* are aggregated together, all eleven surveyed schools use at least one of those terms demonstrating their unequivocal desire for recognition as distinctly Christian institutions. *Provide* presented in the survey group at a higher rate (45%) than it did in CCCU research (29%). *Faith* was observed in 36% of the surveyed statements, a rate similar to scattered data from CCCU peers (43% and 31%). *World* was observed in 36% of the surveyed statements, a rate less than CCCU partners and members (49% and 55%). *Prepare* was identified in 36% of surveyed institutions but only 29% of CCCU schools.

This data suggests that Weeks, Winningham, and Winningham's (2017) assertion about mission statements of Baptist colleges and universities placing insufficient priority on developing the horizontal dimension of faith maturity may rest on an unstable foundation. The surveyed institutions noticeably outpaced their CCCU peers in areas of *service* and *community*, while the CCCU schools reflected a higher prevalence of the referencing *world*. The present analysis, while narrow in scope, casts some doubt on the applicability of Weeks, Winningham, and Winningham's (2017) conclusion to the Baptist higher education landscape in Texas.

As a group, IABCU member schools in Texas show considerable differentiation when compared to the diverse makeup of the 185 CCCU institutions but somewhat less distinctiveness when compared to other surveyed schools. Nevertheless, substantial differentiation was observed within the survey group. While surveyed statements revealed significant homogeneity in five categories used by over half of the schools, elements of uniqueness were demonstrated in the utilization of 20 different word categories by less than half of the survey pool. The key missional tasks and slight variation observed in the missional audiences demonstrated nuanced differences in approach to higher education.

All six of the word categories most frequently found in the survey group appear in the mission statement of BU, the IABCU member school with the largest enrollment. The mission statements of the two surveyed schools with the highest undergraduate enrollment figures—BU and UMHB—were the only surveyed schools that included verbiage in all the top five most-used categories among the institutions in the survey group. The school with the third highest undergraduate enrollment, DBU, used four of the top five word categories. Such congruence is unlikely to be anomalous and calls for further research on how this relative homogeneity came to be. How has BU influenced the mission statements of small Baptist universities in Texas? Conversely, to what extent are the smaller schools in the survey group intentionally trying to use their mission statements to show they offer something different than BU?

Conclusion

Morpheus and Hartley (2006) argue that reflections of institutional diversity in mission statements should lead to inquiries about their role in making strategic decisions, while statements failing to articulate organizational uniqueness should be labeled as having other purposes. Rather than conforming to a conveniently binary proposition, the present research demonstrates that IABCU colleges and universities in Texas communicate certain elements of distinctiveness and homogeneity through their mission statements. These strategic documents help articulate unique identities among themselves and as compared to other CCCU peers, private schools, and public schools. In this way, mission statements are imperfect but critical components of strategic leadership.

Further research is needed to understand how the mission statements of surveyed schools are similar to and different from those of other IABCU institutions. Extrapolated further, how do the mission statements of all 42 IABCU member schools—20 of which participate in CCCU—compare to the mission statements of current CCCU-affiliated institutions? If Dockery (1999) is right and “the goal of Christian education” has historically been the “integration of faith and knowledge” (p. 13), then Christian colleges and universities must position their institutions for maximum effect. This remains true regardless of the density of similar institutions in each area.



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BOOK REVIEWS

- ***Christians in Culture: Cultivating a Christian Worldview for All of Life***
Matthew Steven Bracey and Christopher Talbot, eds.
Reviewed by Christopher N. Dickerson

- ***The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership***
Dorothy A. Lee
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- ***Teamwork Cross-Culturally: Christ-Centered Solutions for Leading Multinational Teams***
Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Julie A. Green
Reviewed by Carl B. Bridges

- ***Cultivating Mentors: Sharing Wisdom in Christian Higher Education***
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Christians in Culture: Cultivating a Christian Worldview for All of Life

Matthew Steven Bracey and Christopher Talbot, eds.
Welch College Press
Gallatin, TN, 2023

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The point where two roads cross each other is called an intersection. But when multiple roads come together to form a single road, the result is a merger of roads. When Christians think of culture, they often view it as two roads that cross. But what the book *Christians in Culture* suggests is that these roads should merge, not simply cross. Christians must learn how to live within the culture: two worlds merged. The Apostle Paul exemplified this in Acts 17 as he engaged the people of Athens at the Areopagus. Editors Matthew Steven Bracey and Christopher Talbot set out in their book *Christians in Culture: Cultivating a Christian Worldview for All of Life* to show that Christians can engage in the various areas of culture from arts and entertainment to technology, sports, and labor. The key is to understand how a Christian view of life *should* impact how we live within that culture.

The book is divided into two sections. Part One establishes a Christian worldview. Matthew Pinson opens by discussing the concept of Christian believers' being in the world but not of the world. Unfortunately, many Christians have not achieved this goal, but they have allowed the culture to penetrate them instead. Pinson

states: “We need to be creators of literature and art and architecture and music and science and gardening and technology and cinema and cuisine and politics—all in a manner that reflects kingdom values” (p. 14). Part two of the book applies such kingdom values to various areas of culture.

The other chapters in Part One serve as a foundation for the remainder of the book. Talbot aptly describes modernism, postmodernism, and their key theorists to help the reader better understand the worldviews of recent history and their impacts on Christian engagement. Then Bracey addresses the concept of being a Christian conservative. He summarizes a Christian conservative as “one who seeks to conserve that which accords with the good, the true, and the beautiful, which God has revealed in space and time (i.e., history), including, significantly, in the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures” (p. 33). Matthew McAfee concludes the opening section by walking through Genesis 1–3, offering a theology of creation, sin, and renewal. Because God has called Christians to serve as viceregents on the earth, we are mandated to “renew culture through the gospel” (p. 77). This renewal is the “merge” of Christians in culture.

Part Two applies the Christian worldview to specific cultural issues. The book covers each of the following in separate chapters: tradition and history; principles of the Christian tradition; arts and entertainment; the Christian and pop culture; language and literature; labor and vocation; technology and innovation; Christianity and science; the state and public life; economics, wealth, and poverty; and sports and recreation. Each of these eleven chapters addresses the topic, giving insightful clarity to the cultural issue at hand

by experts in the field. Then, each chapter concludes by offering specific applications of how Christians can live within that cultural area with kingdom values.

Christians in Culture is well-researched but simple. The authors bring a wealth of knowledge to their chapters. However, their approach offers a sense of simplicity. For example, Talbot's chapter on "The Influence of Ideas" addresses the topics of modernism and postmodernism, and he details the influences of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Julius Wellhausen, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. However, my understanding was enriched significantly by each person and their influence according to the insights Talbot brought forth. As a reader not well-read in this field, this tactic was a welcomed relief.

Another strength of the book is its focus on the direct application of each chapter. The book does not read as knowledge transfer alone. Instead, each chapter offers specific ways to merge the cultural idea with a Christian worldview for greater kingdom impact. I was edified by this approach to the book. Other readers, particularly students, will find this application helpful as they seek to merge their own Christianity with culture.

A final strength of the book is the non-linear approach to Part Two. While Part One builds logically from a foundation of philosophical ideas to what it means to be a Christian conservative to a theology of Creation/Sin/Renewal, Part Two is more topical. This approach allows a more flexible read, picking and choosing chapters based on preference. If teaching through the book, this approach allows the professor to change the order to run parallel with another book or schedule. It also offers the reader a chance to pick up the book and

lean into a particular issue immediately without having to read the entire book first. Granted, the concepts in Part One are essential to a proper understanding of Part Two.

Christians in Culture is the product of a worldview course. Thus, its most logical audience will include faculty and students—likely in a worldview course. Faculty looking to give clear, concise, and application-focused reading to their students will find this book helpful. The book could serve as a primary textbook or as a secondary text in a graduate course. Part One of the book addresses key foundational issues, while Part Two gives more topical focus. With fifteen chapters, the book can easily be surveyed in a semester-length course. Students will also benefit from the book. Its accessibility and readability make it a strong choice for an applicable course.



The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership

Dorothy A. Lee

Baker

Grand Rapids, MI, 2021

Reviewed by Anna Marie Lockard

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The purpose of Dorothy Lee's *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership* is to highlight new research that has emerged from different theological traditions across the church. The evidence highlights the role of women in leadership in the early centuries of the church's life and demonstrates the significant place women held within and beyond the ministry of Jesus (p. 2). She posits a theological discussion of women in ministry and whether they are capable of being icons of Christ—that is, representatives of Christ who are able to embody in some way his living presence (p. 173). She carefully examines these arguments through tradition and Scripture.

Convincingly, Lee revisits the current arguments against women's full participation in ministry and leadership within the church. Her study explores two points for arguments against women's leadership. On one hand, some claims are based on Scripture: that the Bible itself does not endorse women's leadership, except in relation to other women and children. The second argument arises from tradition: that church teaching has never endorsed women's

ministry at the level of ordination. Therefore, the purpose of her study is to revisit the arguments against women's participation in ministry and church leadership (p. 10).

She does so from a clearly biblical and theological point of view. For example, she notes a key theological argument that claims the twelve apostles are the inheritors of Christ's ministry and that no woman is included among them and therefore cannot function in formal ministry. In contrast to this position, Lee argues that the key challenge for today's church is the recognition of women's equality and mutuality with men in the proclamation of the gospel. She contends that there is a need to create key structures protecting the weak and vulnerable (p. 12).

The real issues she examines are theological and Christological, concerning the nature of God and the significance of Christian identity in relation to Christ. She argues from a New Testament perspective that women should have full access to the church's ministry, whether in lay or ordained ministries, and that this access needs to depend *not* on gender but rather on a sense of vocation and the church's discernment of calling. She affirms that all Christian women, like all Christian men, be considered in this important theological discussion (pp. 10–11).

Lee exegetes many of the key texts that most theologians argue regarding the place of women in ministry. Although women are not mentioned as frequently as men and their role is less visible than the Twelve, their ministry role goes far beyond their cultural context. Women are followers of Jesus and are committed to his message, and their following of Jesus and service to him are exemplary.

Lee addresses the claim that those who advocate for women in ministry are giving in to a liberal agenda arising from Western secularism that is implicitly alien to the Bible and the traditions of the church. She addresses these key issues in the historical context of the New Testament (p. 154). An alternative view argues that the appropriate way to translate the Greek word group is “quietness” rather than “silence,” given that I Timothy 2:2 also speaks of living a quiet and peaceful life as citizens. The context suggests possible conflict within the community around misleading teaching, therefore giving rise to the appeal for peaceable living. According to Lee, women are not called to keep silent in church but rather to be quiet, avoiding disputes and false teaching; they are also permitted to learn in a culture that often frowned on education for women (pp. 123–124).

Lee’s exploration has strengths. Wisely, Lee does not attempt to place women on pedestals as if their gifts and graces surpass those of men. Rather, she acknowledges that idealizing women is as dangerous as demeaning or dismissing them. Lee further posits that, certainly, women are as capable of sin as men and can misuse authority and leadership as well as men (p. 188). Where women and men are genuinely equal is precisely in their common need of grace and their access to gifts given to them by the Spirit of the upbuilding of the church.

Although the ancient world was complex in its value system, and although it was patriarchal and had a clear and distinct gender bias, women’s leadership, including over men, was not unknown in the ancient world. It is important to remember that Paul and his disciples were people of their time, and the values they assume reflect a very different social order and value system from our own today (p. 126).

There are also weaknesses to the book. While Lee upholds her purpose for writing the book—to demonstrate evidence of Scripture, historical context, and theological tradition of women in leadership—she also includes extra-biblical literature outside the canon of Scripture. Some of these texts stand outside the orthodox Christian faith and present a view of the world and matter as negative, if not actually evil.

Toward the end of her work, Lee often digresses to the discussion of there being too much patriarchal authority in the contemporary home and church. In her efforts to discuss the male headship in the home and church, she often demeans the place of male headship. This, arguably, weakens the premise of her work. Nevertheless, she affirms that the Gospel is an ancient text arising from a culture very different from our own. Thus, for example, John's Christology is grounded in ancient family configuration.

Lee's position as an accomplished research professor at the University of Melbourne's Trinity College Theological School strengthens her contribution to an objective discussion of church tradition to show that Christian women were valued as disciples in the early church and given leadership roles. Importantly, the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds were patriarchal and had a clear bias toward maleness. Nevertheless, the cultural realities of life in the ancient world were considerably diverse. A few elite women were able to resist patriarchal restraints and negotiate the complexities of the cultural norms to make important contributions to public life and their church community.

Lee's work will help readers grasp a better understanding of the important role that women played in the New Testament and how that

role can offer contemporary Christian women a place of effective ministry. I believe this book would assist complementarians in gaining a better understanding of the egalitarian perspective on ways in which God used women in ministry roles throughout the New Testament. Her work is scholarly, relevant, and makes a valuable contribution to the field of contemporary theological research in women's studies in higher education today.



Teamwork Cross-Culturally: Christ-Centered Solutions for Leading Multinational Teams

Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Julie A. Green
Baker Academic
Grand Rapids, MI, 2022

Reviewed by Carl B. Bridges
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T*eamwork Cross-Culturally* explores “multinational team dynamics” (p. xvi), the art of carrying on cross-cultural missions led by multicultural teams. Mission agencies these days often find themselves in situations like that of SIM Ghana, whose leadership team in 2021 included people from Great Britain, South Korea, India, and Canada (p. 107). While a multinational team may offer advantages, it raises a serious question: How can mission leaders carry out a cross-cultural mission while they themselves must operate cross-culturally with each other?

This volume is the fourth in a series by Sherwood Lingenfelter, including *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, *Teaching Cross-Culturally* (co-written with his wife Judith), and *Leading Cross-Culturally*. Its target audience consists of “leaders and team members who have accepted the challenges of twenty-first century ‘mission with’—rather than ‘mission to’—members of the body of Christ within the global church” (p. xvi).

Lingenfelter, provost emeritus and professor of anthropology at Fuller Theological Seminary, brings an extensive background in

cross-cultural missions to the discussion. His co-author Julie Green, a former student and colleague of both Sherwood and his wife Judith, did much of the research for the book before her death in 2020. These three, along with five additional contributors, comprise the authorial team.

The co-author and the contributors amply illustrate how multicultural mission teams work, or don't work. The examples include the following:

- Julie Green's leadership of the Southeast Asia Team (SAT) for language development under the umbrella of SIL International (formerly Summer Institute of Linguistics, a Wycliffe Bible Translators affiliate).
- Penny Bakewell's experience in Ghana with SIM (formerly Sudan Interior Mission).
- "Robert and Elizabeth McLean's" efforts in Central Asia with the "Global Pentecostal Mission." (The mission and personal names are pseudonyms.)
- Matthew Crosland's work with the Pacific Institute of Languages, Arts and Translation (PILAT) and the Bible Translation Association (BTA) of Papua New Guinea, SIL affiliates.
- Martins Atanda's organization, Zion World Prayer and Missions, which began in Nigeria and now operates in both Francophone and Anglophone Central Africa.

A pair of motifs run through the book: "wicked problems" and "clumsy solutions." A wicked problem resists all efforts not only to solve it but even to understand it. Something is clearly going wrong, but no one knows exactly what or why. Some team members may

react negatively to every proposal; others may use silence as a protest tactic, refusing to engage in discussion. The team is dysfunctional. To use a medical analogy (mine, not the authors'), these wicked problems do not resemble diseases to be cured but conditions to be managed.

Similarly, clumsy solutions, which the book recommends, do not solve the problem neatly or necessarily show any internal consistency. These differ from the "elegant solutions" that may attract because of their elegance but do not actually help with the problem (p. 46). Throughout, the author contrasts common-sense, management-type solutions with "in-Christ solutions." The book illustrates the value of deep communication between team members: asking questions and listening well to the answers; using research tools such as card sorts and surveys; and above all, treating team management as a spiritual and not a this-worldly task.

This worthwhile book earns only two criticisms here, neither of them more than a quibble. First, Part 2 of the book ("In the World' Deceptions and Disagreements"—six chapters) makes piecemeal use of the case studies that the reader will not see until Part 3. Reversing the parts might improve the flow. Also, the book deals with power imbalances between leaders from different cultures but does not focus closely enough on imbalances of wealth.

This volume belongs on the reading list of mission board directors, national and area executives, and team leaders. Team members should get some benefit from it as well. In the ABHE context, *Teamwork Cross-Culturally* would add value to missions faculty members, who may find it useful as a textbook in their courses.

Cultivating Mentors: Sharing Wisdom in Christian Higher Education

Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Christopher J. Devers, eds.

IVP Academic

Downers Grove, IL, 2022

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Editors Ream, Pattengale, and Devers have compiled a book with some well-established and quite prestigious authors who have a vast array of experience in Christian higher education, including the president of Samford University, Beck Taylor, and the current dean of Duke Divinity School, Edgardo Colón-Emeric. Anyone on the board of or employed by an institution of higher education, particularly a Christian institution of higher education, can likely benefit from reading this book. A key message of the book applies broadly: People in various stages of career development can benefit immensely from having a mentor when allowed the time, energy, and investment required.

Authors and editors of *Cultivating Mentors* write seven distinct chapters plus an introduction and conclusion on the concept of mentoring within Christian higher education. A few chapters focus on the current generations entering and establishing careers as faculty members in higher education. The authors discuss the stereotypes of Millennials and Gen Z, the two most recent generations to enter the American workforce, who are defined differently by different authors and social scientists—both within this text and outside

of it. Other authors discourage readers from focusing too much on the generational stereotypes and instead encourage focusing on common elements of a formal mentoring program for faculty members and others in leadership at higher education institutions. And yet a couple of the authors seem to address mentoring programs for undergraduate and graduate students as well.

A well-intentioned and well-purposed mentoring program can provide enormous and career-altering opportunities and benefits across a variety of university leaders, including faculty members, student life deans, and athletic coaches for the leaders themselves and even more so for the students whose lives they will influence throughout their careers. I would suspect the benefits of a well-intentioned, well-run employee mentor program would extend beyond higher education and to businesses and churches as well. The authors point to the purpose and mission of a mentoring program and the communication of that purpose as a definite contribution to the success of mentoring programs.

A great emphasis among several authors is an effort to have honest, intentional, and extended conversations among different leaders at an institution and truly focus on the “blessings arising from a diversity of gifts in the one Spirit.” Sprinkled throughout the book are very practical suggestions for successful mentoring programs, such as these.

1. Offer a mentor within one’s own department when possible. This helps cultivate and strengthen a relationship that will likely be established anyway.

2. Have a voluntary book club and allow those who want to participate in a mentoring program to attend and cultivate mentoring relationships among group members. Making the book club voluntary often encourages the desired effect rather than requiring action and demotivating people. This is a great way to disseminate great reads among the higher education community rather than reading or summarizing book reviews at a faculty meeting.
3. Have a cohort of leaders on campus who meet together to discuss, pray, and plan for the future. One author began his career journey as a faculty member five years after graduating from his alma mater and eventually became a university president. He wrote openly and appreciatively of those leaders who invested in him through time, conversation, and prayer throughout his career journey.

The book does not have to be read in any particular order as the chapters vary in content from the philosophy and purpose of a mentoring program to the nuts and bolts of establishing such a program.

It can be somewhat distracting to the reader when the spiritual viewpoint with which the authors write swings like a pendulum from chapter to chapter. Some authors write from a deeply spiritual perspective on the mentoring of a cohort journey in becoming an “us” and “we” rather than a “they” or “them,” while other authors write about the generational gaps between “boomers” and “zoomers.” The fact that some share deeply spiritual aspects of a mentoring program and others do not is not necessarily a weakness of the book; however, reading from different authors gives the feeling that not all

are on the same philosophical page when it comes to leading and carrying out a mentoring program.

One interesting aspect of this book is that it can be used by a variety of groups of people—employees and students at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This text could also be used for mentor relationships outside of academia.

