I have always been struck that at least three great statements of Christian orthodoxy suddenly appeared precisely when the secularization of culture gathered force in the early twentieth century. This was the moment when modernism, with both its promise and its horror, was in full bloom. There was a need, in the minds of Christian intellectuals, in the face of dramatic shifts in culture, for clarifying engagement of the essentials of the Christian tradition. First, early in the century, G. K. Chesterton presented his marvelous *Orthodoxy* in 1908. C. S. Lewis followed mid-century with his influential *Mere Christianity*, first broadcast on British radio during World War II from 1942 through 1944. A bit later, Dorothy Sayers issued her emphatic statement *Creed or Chaos* in 1949. These three books fit squarely within a distinct pattern for thoughtful Christians: When things begin to unravel in the surrounding culture, Christians feel compelled to get the essentials right for a new
moment in time. The two books under review seem driven by this same motivation.

What intrigues me most about the three British apologists, in addition to their bracing statements of what matters in Christian thinking, is the need they felt to make such statements at that particular time. The historical moment, of course, was defined by the relentless pressure of modernism against all traditional thought, including sometimes fierce antagonism against Christianity. We recognize these dramatic changes in literary works like T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” or in the philosophical writings of Nietzsche. What happened in the early twentieth century was a huge cultural shift, what the philosopher Charles Taylor calls a “titanic change in our western civilization,” where “the presumption of unbelief has become dominant.” What came out of this shift was our “secular age,” as Taylor tells the story, a story that had been unfolding since at least the seventeenth century. To be Christian within this cultural context requires of us the ability to speak into that presumption of unbelief in compelling ways.

But here is the important point for our purposes in relation to David Dockery’s extraordinary mission and the two books under review: In order to speak into the culture of unbelief, we must discover again what it is we believe. We must equip ourselves to make the case, winsomely and effectively, for our time. To do this we must tap into the long and rich stream of Christian thinking throughout history. We must be translators of that intellectual tradition into a language for our day. We must do, as the great Lesslie Newbigin has said, “what the Church Fathers and Augustine had to do in the age when classical culture had lost its nerve and was disintegrating. We have to offer a new starting point for thought.”

It is against this backdrop that I come to praise the work of David Dockery and Timothy George in their overview called *The Great Tradition of Christian Thinking*. They have Newbigin’s notion exactly right. And then, David Dockery, as the President of Union University, along with his faculty and various administrators, in this fascinating collection of essays *Faith and Learning: A Handbook for Christian Higher Education* seeks to illustrate exactly this effort
of finding a Christian voice at the very heart of the university of our day.

The partnership behind *The Great Tradition of Christian Thinking* between David Dockery and Timothy George goes back some twenty years. We find in these two fine scholars and leaders a persistent mission to focus on the life of the mind within the Christian community and especially within the Christian academy. They have been consistent, over so many years, as articulate champions of thinking Christianly about our world. For their work, and the model of their lives, I am immensely grateful.

It seems to me there are two important intellectual drivers behind these efforts. First, the writers know their cultural moment. They know that we live in the “secular age,” a post-Christian moment in time, a postmodern moment where all stories, and in particular the Christian story, are called into question. But they also know that Christians find themselves so often ill-equipped to “make the case,” as 1st Peter says, “for the hope we find within.” They want to meet “the challenge to prepare a generation of Christians to think Christianly, to engage the academy and the culture, and to serve church and society.” But, and here is the heart of the matter for this work by Dockery and George, they “believe that both the breadth and the depth of the Christian intellectual tradition need to be reclaimed, revitalized, renewed, and revived for us to carry forward this work” (12).

And so Dockery and George outline, with winsome passion, that great Christian intellectual tradition. We take a marvelous tour of the major thinkers through the centuries, this “chain of memory,” from the early apostolic encounter of the Graeco-Roman world, through the School of Alexandria, Athanasius, through Augustine and Aquinas, the Reformers, and to our own age. I concur with these devoted scholars; this is a tour badly needed in the Christian community of our day. I have come to believe, even in my own current reading and study, that there is a great hunger to engage more deeply with this rich tradition of Christian thinking. The need is huge, the hunger is evident, and the work of Dockery and George help us take a vital step forward to lay new foundations for our own time.
Finally, as I took another tour through the twenty-some essays in *Faith and Learning: A Handbook for Christian Higher Education*, written almost wholly by Union University faculty, I find myself impressed again by the persistent effort, not only to acknowledge the Christian intellectual tradition, but to offer fresh perspective out of respective disciplines within the academy. We hear, competently and clearly, from biblical studies, philosophy, history, political philosophy, the arts, music, media, the sciences, business, student life, and others. We find in these essays committed scholars and teachers carrying on their craft, their vocations as Christian intellectuals, fully attuned to their time. We find here a deep care that the Christian university steps up to the challenge of engaging the academy and the culture with the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I end with an appropriate statement from one of the great Christian apologists of our own time, the prolific and respected British theologian N. T. Wright. At the end of his marvelous book *The Challenge of Jesus*, Wright summarizes the kind of vision talked about in these books: “Our task,” says Wright, “as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ and shaping our world, is to announce redemption to the world that has discovered its fallenness, to announce healing to the world that has discovered its brokenness, to proclaim love and trust to the world that knows only exploitation, fear, and suspicion” (184).

For me this is the critical note that must be sounded. We must, as Dockery and George and these writers all understand, pursue our learning in the Christian academy with the end goal of announcing redemption and healing and love and trust to a world that has lost its way. We find a new starting point for thought, for our time, because we seek to engage our chaotic culture with the splendor of the gospel. Wright must have the Christian academy in mind as he goes on to say that “the gospel of Jesus points us and indeed urges us to be at the leading edge of the whole culture, articulating in story and music and art and philosophy and education and poetry and politics and theology and even, heaven help us, biblical studies, a worldview that will mount the historically rooted Christian
challenge to both modernity and postmodernity, leading the way into the post-postmodern world with joy and humor and gentleness and good judgment and true wisdom” (196).

This is our charge as Christian intellectuals and Christian universities. This is the charge heard clearly and communicated forcefully by David Dockery, Timothy George, and the faculty at Union University. I commend these volumes, with enthusiasm, as central to the direction we must pursue in the Christian academy for our time, central as well to the broader Christian community as we seek to make our world a better place for all of God’s children.

Philip W. Eaton, Ph.D.
President Emeritus, Seattle Pacific University
Author of Engaging the Culture, Changing the World: The Christian University in A Post-Christian World
James Patterson’s study on the life of J. R. Graves is more than a recounting of a historical figure – it is a lesson in historiography. Patterson’s account of the man who made his mark by setting Baptist boundary markers is written clearly enough for the layperson to enjoy and yet it includes critical reflections that will educate even the professional historian. This combination of crystal clarity and intellectual heft enables the story of Graves to be appreciated by those living within earshot of Landmark churches while at the same time refusing the legacy of Graves to be hijacked by those who equate any form of separation with separatism (197-199).

Due to the absence of personal papers or private diaries left behind by Graves, Patterson’s work is admittedly more thematic than biographical in nature (xv). Thus the details of his early life, including his birth in 1820 and the death of his father that same year, his conversion and baptism in 1834, his licensure and ordination in 1842, along with his marriage and move to Tennessee in 1845, are all woven into the larger story of ecclesiological developments in the pre-SBC era. By the time Graves turned 25 years old, Patterson notes, the groundwork of Baptist dissent had already been laid by Isaac Backus; the idea of Baptist localism had been promoted by Francis Wayland; and the notion of Baptist boundary marking had recently formed in reaction to Alexander Campbell (7-29).

Graves’s next 17 years in Nashville were the most momentous according to Patterson, since it was during this time that he became editor of the Tennessee Baptist, the vehicle through which Graves promoted his Landmark perspective. Patterson observes that Graves was controversial from the beginning, envisioning himself as a “watchman on the wall” stationed to warn God’s people of imminent danger (43). That he had mettle for the task became clear
as he openly targeted the causes of Baptist distress – namely, the theological encroachment of Paedobaptists, Roman Catholics and Restorationists. Graves not only held a view of the church contrary to that of the aforementioned groups, he also adopted a contrarian perspective in light of their presence: “There, where several denominations aggressively competed for adherents in a pluralistic setting, he brazenly staked out the lines that separated Baptists from their rivals” (3).

In addition to describing how Graves interpreted the Bible’s teaching on the church, Patterson explores why Graves understood the Bible as he did. His emphasis on the local church to the exclusion of the universal church coalesced nicely with the political currents of his day, where individualism was not merely cherished but prized in such a way that even hierarchical church structures were seen as a threat to republican government (86-89). This double-edged concern enabled Graves to double-down on his warnings about wolves in sheep’s clothing while at the same time providing him with the added bonus of promoting Baptists as the true church. Graves conveniently cited their record of defending religious liberty as that which breathed life into the American experiment (93).

Patterson further describes how Graves’s “unequivocal penchant for stirring up religious controversy” contributed to disputes among Baptists, in particular his public feud with R. B. C. Howell, the pastor-statesman who had first opened the pastoral and editorial doors for Graves (123-128). Their clash was prompted by Howell’s return to First Baptist Church, Nashville, and was ignited by disagreements over the newly formed Southern Baptist Sunday School Union, a Landmark leaning agency. The competing visions between these two larger than life personalities typified the ongoing struggle for Southern Baptist identity, which included the question of denominational mission entities and the binding authority of local church discipline (150-154).

Although Southern Baptists eventually took a different path than the one advocated by Graves, his impact was felt in many areas, including pulpit affiliation, alien immersion, and closed communion (174). Patterson also details the lingering but waning influence
of Graves’s legacy through issues like the Whitsitt controversy and the establishment of the Cooperative Program, both of which ultimately undercut Graves’s successionist claims and isolationist tendencies (191-196).

Patterson concludes his study with the following observation: “The problem was not that he set borders for Baptist faith and practice, for that legitimate enterprise has been an ongoing one since the early seventeenth century. Graves’s shortcoming was that he ultimately skewed some of those boundaries because he relied on flawed historical markers” (203). Patterson’s judgment can be viewed as definitive, coming as it does from one so well-versed in the writing of history.

Anthony L. Chute, Ph.D.
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Associate Dean, School of Christian Ministries
California Baptist University
Author of Father Mercer: The Story of a Baptist Statesman
Norman Wirzba’s most recent book is a most ambitious work, as it sets out to put into conversation two rather disparate discourses. On the one hand, Wirzba has read voluminously in the rapidly expanding world of food studies, an as yet uncodified but nonetheless coherent cluster of subjects comprising agrarianism, locavorism, food security, food safety, and food culture, just to name a few. On the other hand, Wirzba’s books also spring from a deep engagement with the breadth of Christian theology—ancient and modern, eastern and western, Protestant and Catholic. Thus he is exceptionally well-positioned to bring these two larger discursive worlds together, to integrate faith and learning, if you will, on the subject of food. While this book will not suit every palate, it is replete with delights for the reader who savors it.

The book has a three-fold structure. The first two chapters set the trajectory for the book by posing a question and then offering an initial gesture toward an answer. Chapter 1, “Thinking Theologically about Food,” asks a deceptively simple question: “Why did God create a world in which every living creature must eat?” (1). Any charitable reader who pauses long enough over this question will realize how little thought most of us give to why, much less what and how, we eat. Chapter 2, “The ‘Roots’ of Eating,” then sketches the basis for a theological response to the question of Chapter 1 with reference to the prelapsarian relation of humanity to both God and the world, a relation which is characterized by deep interdependence, mutual respect, and instinctive hospitality. Here Wirzba draws on the history of Trinitarian thought to cast creation as an act of hospitality—a gratuitous gift—flowing from and mirroring the perichoresis of the three Persons. His evocation of Sabbath as the goal of creation allows him to sketch the norm for creaturely interdependence and mutual delight from which we have fallen.
This chapter plants many essential seeds which bear much good fruit later in his argument.

The third chapter, “Eating in Exile,” introduces the other partner to this conversation: the vast and growing literature on food studies. In a breathtaking distillation of a diverse body of material, Chapter 3 presents the ‘bad news’ of our contemporary (and fallen) food culture by weaving a narrative of collective self-destruction through our customary practices of producing, distributing, and consuming food. While many Christians enjoy scoffing at latte-sipping hipsters who stroll through farmers’ markets while chatting about the ethical treatment of this evening’s main course, an attentive reader will find here a comprehensive and perhaps even compelling case that we should be concerned about the deleterious effects of globalized, industrialized food production. (These two chapters would make excellent reading for even an atheologically-minded reader who wanted a succinct yet thorough introduction to the current literature on the subject.)

The remaining four chapters constitute not only a thoroughly theological response to the food crisis described in Chapter 3 but also a salutary reframing of historic Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy in light of these challenges. Chapter 4, “Life through Death,” rethinks not only our own “living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1) but also Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross in light of the utter and startling dependence of any creature’s life upon the death of other creatures. This notion of sacrifice as self-offering for others also informs Chapter 5, “Eucharistic Table Manners,” in which Wirzba demonstrates how the Lord’s Supper not only takes seriously the death-in-life character of creaturely existence but also models how to do so without exploiting those on whom our life depends. Chapter 6, “Saying Grace,” provides an excellent reflection on how the simple act of thanksgiving before a meal teaches us to receive the fruits of the earth as a gift that cannot be mastered or taken for granted and should not be manipulated. The final chapter centers upon the question in its title (“Eating in Heaven?”) and is fittingly eschatological: Here Wirzba brings the threads of all the previous chapters together to argue that both OT and NT prophecy point to
a new creation in which eating remains a mark of our creatureli-
ness and a sign of our communion with God, one another, and the
renewed creation.

An ambitious book, indeed, if judged only from the explicit
task it sets for itself. However, there is also an implicit task that
Wirzba has laid out for himself in this work: How should theological
practice, and theological writing in particular, be reshaped in light
of the radically dependent and interdependent nature of human-
ity? If human beings, like all other creatures, are deeply dependent
on nature, one another, and God, how should this affect the way
we contemplate, teach, and write about the Truth? One answer
that Wirzba implicitly offers to this question is simple: Take seri-
ously any and all reflection which takes the created order seriously,
whether pagan or Christian, scientific or theological, popular or
highbrow, familiar or unfamiliar. As I understand it, Wirzba’s
own ecclesial background is broadly Reformed, yet his patterns of
thought never confine themselves to the tracks worn by that tradi-
tion. He draws upon Anglicans such as Rowan Williams and Robert
Farrar Capon; Roman Catholics, including Hans Urs von Balthasar
and Nicholas Lash; Eastern Orthodox such as Alexander Schme-
mann, John Zizioulas, and David Bentley Hart; representatives of
Radical Orthodoxy Graham Ward and William Cavanaugh; and
Anabaptists such as John Howard Yoder. At the same time, Wirzba
draws heavily upon the tradition of Christian thought, enlisting
church fathers including Irenaeus, Basil the Great, Athanasius,
John Chrysostom, and Augustine, as well as medievals such as
John of Damascus, John Scotus Eriugena, Bernard of Clairvaux,
Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas. (Fascinating that a Protestant
theologian makes no reference to the Reformers in such a work as
this, though he does draw lightly upon Karl Barth and Dietrich Bon-
hoeffer.) Wirzba’s work is also thoroughly informed by his original
area of professional expertise, contemporary Continental philoso-
phy, as manifest in his references to Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel
Levinas, and Jean-Louis Chrétien. And all of this says nothing about
the ecological, scientific, social scientific, and journalistic resources
marshaled in Chapter 3!
To my mind, the stunning breadth of Wirzba’s intellectual and theological resourcefulness is both the strength and the weakness of this book. It is a weakness only because I think the average reader, even a fairly well-read one, will have a hard time finding his footing in such a diverse array of discourses and traditions. Like it or not, most of us have developed habits of thought that prefer to run in well-worn ruts rather than strike out overland, and this book will allow most readers the comfort of a familiar line or pattern of thought only on occasion. But for the more adventurous reader, this book will prove to be a feast. Wirzba’s theological method instanciates the very thing it recommends: dependence upon others with whom we share a common concern—namely the relation of human beings to God and to our planet—and a serious effort to find a way back from the brink of universal self-consumption. In doing so, Wirzba has recovered long dormant themes in the Christian theological and practical tradition and put them to good use in aiding the church, and all humanity, to face the unique challenges of the twenty-first century.

Scott Huelin, Ph.D.
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This is a handbook dedicated to assisting physicians, health professionals, and the general public—to all who must make ethical decisions associated with medical and health care. The author’s expressed hope is “...to assist people of faith as they seek satisfactory resolution of difficult ethical dilemmas.”

The first two parts of the book provide synopses of the ethical and theological foundations of the analyses of the cases he presents. These two introductory sections occupy 29 of the book’s 483 pages, making this a casebook derived principally from the author’s vast clinical and ethical experience. The author is more than amply qualified for the task he set himself. He has been a respected contributor to the field of Christian bioethics as a teacher, practitioner, and author for many years.

The author has chosen a wide variety of cases illustrating the major ethical challenges presented by serious illness in every major organ system of the body, as well as addressing issues of the neonatal period, children, pregnancy, reproductive technology, organ transplantation, and cultural and religious beliefs. Each case is presented in clear, reader-friendly language, and analyzed in an unusually orderly manner. Thus, each case is discussed under six headings: 1) posing a central question; 2) a case history; 3) a discussion of the issues; 4) the author’s recommendations; 5) a follow-up of the clinical course; and 6) a closing comment. Crucial points are often printed in boldfaced type.

The author’s opinions are personal and open to further discussion. They clearly reflect the author’s long and broad experience as a compassionate, faith-inspired physician-ethicist. He often expresses his opinions informally in such terms as “ethically
appropriate,” “ethically problematic,” “morally obligatory,” “a morally valid decision,” “ethically troublesome,” etc.

The author’s faith commitment as a Protestant is set forth from the beginning. There is little formal argumentation, however. Reference to his particular Christian perspective is intermittent and more by indirection than formal argument. The book can be approached for its impressive clinical wisdom and responsible ethical analyses, as well as its faith-centered orientation.

This reviewer will make no attempt to subject the author’s case analyses or his ethical opinions to criticism. Many of his opinions would be congenial to this reviewer; others might not, particularly in the sections relating to pregnancy, reproductive technologies, or organ transplantation. These differences do not in any way depreciate the value of a volume dedicated to careful clinical and ethical analysis, one which could be read with profit by anyone interested in careful ethical reasoning.

A few suggestions for making this book more useful seem to be in order: 1) an index would make this case book more accessible as a ready reference for clinicians; and 2) a closer connection between a particular resolution and a particular case would assist in clarifying the author’s reasons for his recommendations. These reasons could advance his aim of assisting people of faith to appreciate the way the author’s faith commitment shapes his recommendations. This book will be valuable to clinicians as well as bioethicists. The combination of careful ethical analysis, and unusually orderly discussion, with a foundation in extensive clinical experience, should be a valuable reference for all who confront ethical issues in medical and health care.

Edmund Pellegrino, M.D.
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Questions about religion and politics nearly always promise lively debate. At no point is this truer than when considering whether the United States was founded as a Christian nation. John Fea, a historian who teaches at Messiah College, certainly adds to the debate with a book that will likely fail to make many readers completely happy. Such a failure, though, is neither the fault of the book nor of the author. Ultimately, as Fea demonstrates quite convincingly in *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, answering such a question is not a simple task; rather, it is one that forces his readers to think seriously about the nature of questions, as well as the task of historical scholarship.

A review of this book really must begin with Fea’s brief introduction on thinking historically. In less than seven pages (xxi-xxvii), Fea sets the stage brilliantly for the remainder of his study by treating the work of the historian or of anyone who would claim such a title. Making it clear that historians “do not approach the past with the primary goal of finding something relevant,” Fea contends that true historians look to things like change over time, context, causality, contingency, and complexity as they investigate the past (xxiii-xxiv). These sorts of things, in Fea’s estimation, matter, because being guided by such things, rather than by present-mindedness, helps produce work that “has the amazing potential to transform our lives” (xxvii).

Fea then models such potentially transformative scholarship by launching into the often-heated discussion of Christianity and the founding of America. Fea divides his historical primer into three distinct but connected parts—each of which approaches the question from a slightly different perspective. Part One documents some of the ways in which Americans since the late eighteenth
century have explained the nation’s relationship to Christianity. Such an approach allows Fea to trace several strains of Christian nationalism voiced in different ways by evangelicals, fundamentalists, liberal Protestants, and Roman Catholics. Fea accomplishes much in this short intellectual history, making it clear that the idea of the United States as a “Christian nation” is both an old notion and a rather fluid one.

Of course, having an idea does not necessarily make it true. So, after establishing that many Americans have argued for variant forms of Christian nationalism, Fea then turns his attention in Part Two and Part Three to whether or not such proponents of a Christian America “have been right in their belief that the founders set out to create a nation that was distinctly Christian” (xviii). First, he examines the extent to which the American Revolution and the formation of the Constitution were primarily Christian events—or at least motivated by Christian principles. In the end, Fea finds that while Christianity was a significant factor in the lives of many of the leaders of these moments in American history (see especially Chapter 7), so were other things, such as economic factors and influences from Enlightenment philosophies and ideologies. Then, in his final section, Fea focuses explicitly on several key “founding fathers”: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Witherspoon, John Jay, and Samuel Adams. By briefly examining the roles of these seven leaders, Fea clearly demonstrates what he argued in Part Two, namely, that for some individuals, especially Witherspoon and Samuel Adams, Protestant Christianity was often one of the motivating forces, though not the only one, in their thought, while in many other cases it played little to no role whatsoever. In fact, in some cases, such as Washington’s praying during the winter at Valley Forge, things we know to be “true” are actually stories created by later generations of Christian nationalists (such as those treated in Part One) who hoped to tell a particular, present-minded story about the United States and its leaders (172).

In the end, Fea’s Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? is a wonderful study not only of a particular question in American
history, but also of the hard work that goes into historical scholarship. Not everyone, of course, will choose to do the hard work of the historian herself, but that does not excuse one from doing equally diligent work when reading and critiquing history. “We owe it to ourselves,” Fea concludes, “to be informed citizens who can speak intelligently and thoughtfully about our nation’s past” (246). Resources like *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* offer everyone the tools necessary to be such an active and thoughtful reader and citizen.

Richard A. Bailey, Ph.D.
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Canisius College
Author of Race and Redemption in Puritan New England
Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Business Ethics
Walton Padelford
223 pages, $18.95

Reviewed by: Mark DeVine

Dissatisfaction with his own lectures prompted economics professor Walton Padelford’s research, resulting in the book, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Business Ethics*. Though convinced that the content of a course on business ethics taught from a Christian perspective ought to differ in significant ways from one taught from alternative standpoints, Padelford doubted that his own course did so. The work of pastor, theologian, and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer emerged as a rich source of insight and guidance even though he had produced no comprehensive work on ethics and no direct statement on business ethics at all.

Yet, as Padelford shows, the promise of Bonhoeffer’s thinking for the world of business was impressive. No one doubts that the business world is thoroughly enmeshed in this fallen world. And though Bonhoeffer had much to say regarding the “be ye separate” mandate of Holy Scripture, few voices in the history of the church articulate a more serious affirmation of the “go ye” counterpart. To follow Jesus Christ who “tabernacled” among us, one must “plunge into the tempest of living” because, though this whole world is fallen, it still belongs to its creator, judge, and Lord.

Padelford seizes on the Christo-centrism that pervades Bonhoeffer’s thinking. Bonhoeffer’s convictions parallel those of the great theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper: “there is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, ‘This is mine! This belongs to me!’” Thus, in the business world, disciples find themselves on hostile, but not foreign soil—on terrain claimed by the same Lord who claims each of them. Precisely within this context the disciple is called to live unreservedly as witness to the hidden Lord who reigns there.

Ethical crossroads shaped by this reality provoke a unique question: not “How will this decision affect me” or even “What will
make me holy?” (as in a kind of consequentialist/Egoist ethics of Bentham) or “What universal, timeless principle applies?” (as in the non-consequentialist ethics of Kant), but rather, “What does Jesus Christ himself require of me here and now in this concrete situation?” The decision-maker’s eye is directed to Jesus Christ and those for whom he died and lives to redeem. No advanced knowledge of Jesus Christ’s concrete mandate, which will always demand a specific action, is available. Yet Bonhoeffer does not advance a Joseph Fletcher-style situation ethics in which there are no rules whatsoever and where the situation itself essentially determines necessary moral obligation. Rather, for Bonhoeffer, Jesus Christ, clothed with his gospel and bearing his word, speaks to the disciple within a particular situation, calling for specific, costly action here and now.

Through such command and obedience Jesus Christ spiritually forms the disciple into his own likeness and sanctifies the situation by exposing and exerting his lordship there. Padelford explores the fascinating ethical implications of Bonhoeffer’s insistence upon the ongoing presences, activity, and lordship of Jesus Christ in every sector of this world. Divine mandates are directed to four divinely-created and sustained spheres of human existence and relationship: government, marriage, labor, and the church. Jesus Christ is Lord of all four. But it is the church that recognizes this and finds itself, and each of its members, called to and liberated for obedience that bears witness to that hidden lordship.

Ethical behavior in such a context, shaped by such a distinct and thoroughgoing Christian reality, takes on a character at once personal, concrete, relational and other-directed. It is personal because every disciple finds himself confronted with the living word and command of the living Jesus Christ. It is concrete because Jesus Christ still issues commands as specific and unambiguous as he did when he walked on this earth: “take up your pallet and walk” or “sell everything and give to the poor.” It is relational because the whole ethical scene is characterized by actual interaction between actual people; Jesus Christ commands, disciples are commanded and act in relation to others. It is other-directed because, the disciple, himself
already taken care of through union with Jesus Christ, is free to concern himself completely with Christ and others. He is free for the happy duty of service and witness.

I commend Padelford’s fine work in this volume as a much-needed and indeed urgent use of Bonhoeffer in precisely the kind of application his theology best informs. Padelford advances an ethical vision that avoids the abstraction characteristic of so many philosophical and utilitarian approaches, precisely by taking Bonhoeffer’s utterly theological and Christ-centered convictions with full seriousness.

Mark DeVine, Ph.D.
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Author of Bonhoeffer Speaks Today: Following Jesus at All Costs
Any book authored by Mark Noll is worthy of serious consideration. He is one of America’s leading church historians and theologians with many valuable and relevant volumes to his credit. Oxford University Press has developed a widely heralded series of small books under the intriguing umbrella “A Very Short Introduction” or VSI. Within this series, there are hundreds of titles covering an exceptionally wide range of topics by very capable authors. Dr. Noll’s VSI takes on the incredibly complex subject of Protestantism. It measures up fully to the publisher’s original intent of brevity while at the same time providing the scholar’s approach of genuine substance in overview. What you have in this book are the major historical and theological developments that produced one of history’s great turning points as well as a genuinely helpful outline of contemporary Protestantism around the world.

The author emphasizes the influence of Martin Luther and John Calvin as the primary leaders of Protestantism. He demonstrates that the concurrent influences of both the German and Swiss political atmospheres were vital factors in the rebellion against medieval Catholicism. Luther’s primary emphasis upon the authority of the Bible, his and Calvin’s stress upon “justification by faith alone,” as well as “the priesthood of the believer” are all detailed. That there were significant differences between Lutheranism and, ultimately, the Reformed approach to church life, surface quickly in the book. The colorful and irritating developments of the Anabaptists are a part of this enduring saga of the 16th through 17th centuries in northern Europe. Luther’s masterpiece of endeavor was, of course, his translation of the Bible into German. Coupled with the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg, Luther’s Bible made it possible for the Scriptures to come to the common folk of that day. Noll follows closely the continued
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translation of the Bible into multiple languages around the globe, concluding that this is a fundamental reason for worldwide evangelical strength in the current century, particularly in Third World countries. In addition to Bible translation, other strengths in early Lutheranism include the new place in worship for hymn-singing, as well as Luther’s production of the famed Small Catechism, resulting in “a Christ-centered form of instruction” (17) in the local church.

Noll traces the amazing missionary movements of the Protestant denominations over the past two centuries. Beginning with the Moravian outreach to the American Indians and the work of the black Baptist and Methodist preachers in America before the Civil War, Noll introduces the multiple and fruitful missionary advances of a Protestant outreach around the world. Special attention is given to the English Baptist Missionary Society founded by William Carey in his groundbreaking mission to India, an effort which had a major influence on Adoniram Judson and the American Baptist move into Burma, China, Africa, and Latin America eventually were touched by similar movements. Noll gives special attention to the amazing modern-day growth of Anglicanism in Nigeria and Lutheranism in east Africa.

Noll sees theological liberalism, beginning with Schleiermacher and continuing through von Harnack, as one of the main reasons for the gradual diminution of Protestant influence in Europe. He traces the additional contributions of Darwin’s discoveries and as well as Bible scholars in “the higher criticism.” The incalculable stress of two horrendous major wars in the 20th century, plus the impact of pacifism and communism, provided a staggering challenge to the fading glory of Luther’s Reformation. But concurrently, Noll focuses on one of Christian history’s most amazing developments: 20th century Pentecostalism. An outgrowth of Wesleyan theology, this movement is a worldwide phenomenon almost beyond belief. Pentecostalism is growing, with hundreds of millions of adherents in Africa, Central and South America, China, Korea, and to some measure in America, and even in leading European cities as well as Russia.
Noll concludes the book with the chapter “Whither the West?” Interestingly, he attributes part of the European Protestant decline to the loss of loyalty on the part of women in the church. He holds out hope for Protestantism from an unusual source: the growing strength of churches holding the historic values of Protestantism in Africa, Asia, and South America. Their vitality may issue in a missionary movement from the East to the West. The serious student of religious history has grounds for a solid optimism about the future of Protestantism.

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