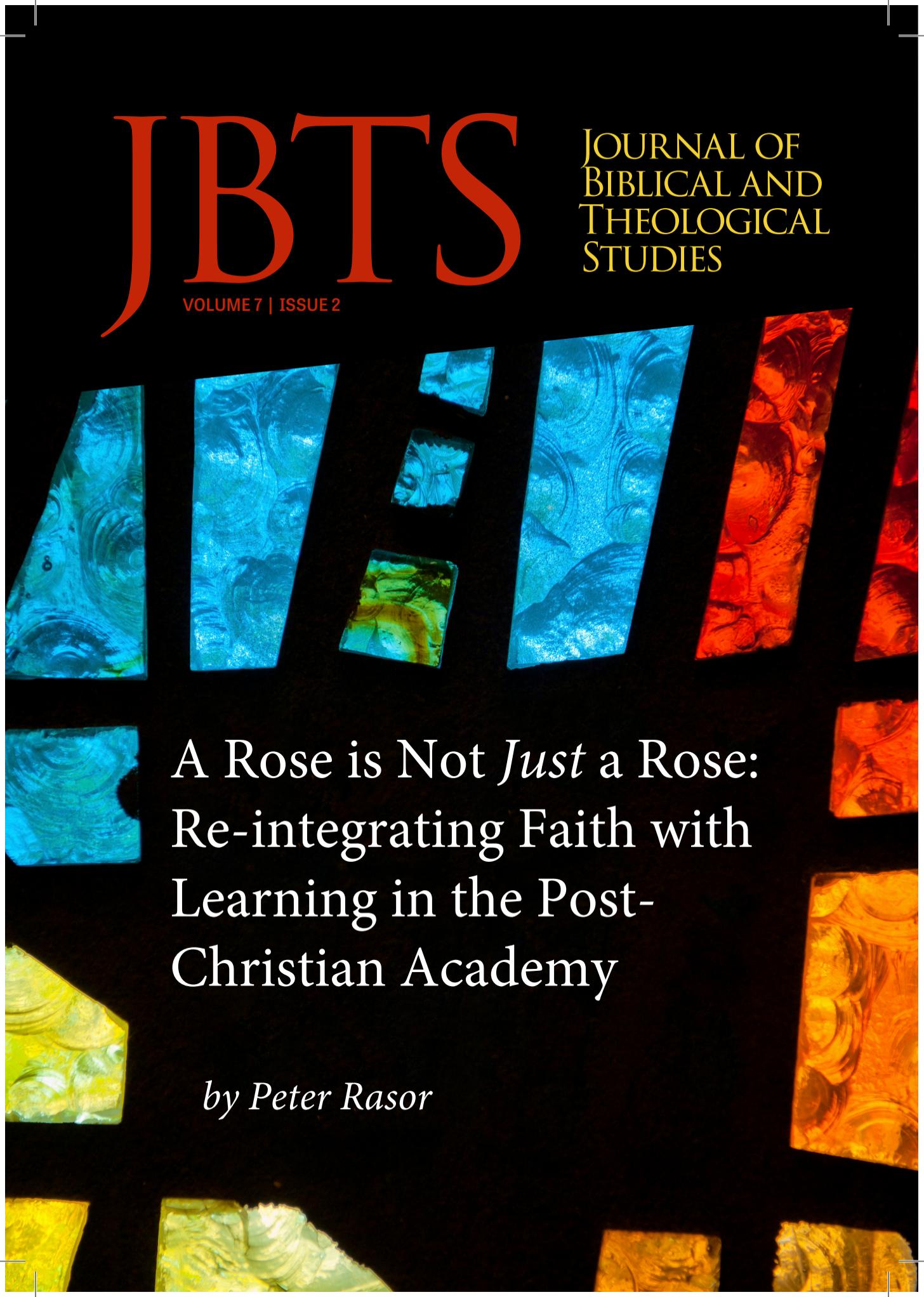


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A Rose is Not *Just* a Rose:
Re-integrating Faith with
Learning in the Post-
Christian Academy

by Peter Rasor

A Rose Is Not *Just* a Rose: Re-integrating Faith with Learning in the Post-Christian Academy¹

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Abstract: The integration of the Christian faith with learning has been a subject of discussion in Christian higher education for several decades. One pressing question is exactly how to accomplish this integration in every discipline of the Christian university, from the humanities to the sciences. This has proven to be somewhat difficult. A primary reason for this difficulty is due to the acceptance of what George Marsden calls “methodological secularism.” This paper offers four suggestions for overcoming methodological secularism seemingly entrenched in Christian universities in order to integrate successfully Christian faith with learning across all disciplines.

Introduction

In commenting on Bonaventure’s view of education, Arthur Holmes states, “A rose is not just a rose when it exists to praise its maker.”² From a Christian perspective, a rose is much more than its physical attributes to be studied. It is a work of God, and its beauty reflects and points to the triune Creator of the universe. This stands in contrast to the naturalist’s perspective, which views a rose as merely a material object to be studied for its extension, color, and other like physical attributes. In short, when Christians study the natural world, they view it through the prism of the Christian worldview.

This approach to education is what is meant by the contemporary dictum “the integration of faith and learning.” Although this phrase is rather recent, Christian thinkers have long held that education is a *worldview* issue (although the term “worldview” is a rather recent invention), that is, that Christians approach education *as Christians*, not as naturalists or from some other worldview. Throughout much of the history of the church, Christians would have thought it unnatural, perhaps even unthinkable, to bracket Christian theological presuppositions and understandings of

1. The phrase “a rose is not *just* a rose” is taken from Arthur Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 44. Emphasis added.

2. Holmes, *Building*, 44.

the world when studying God's creation. Theology has something to say not just about God, sin, redemption, and restoration, but something about the rose God created and, indeed, *all* creation.

This, however, is where a problem is encountered in contemporary education. As the phrase "integration of faith and learning" itself indicates, a uniquely Christian approach to learning has largely fallen by the wayside. As human history marched forward, particularly in the West, education became primarily secular, devoid of any Christian worldview. Science became a study of merely the physical universe apart from any pursuit of discovering implications it might have for Christian theology. Mathematics increasingly became viewed as merely "crunching numbers" and leaving out all religious and moral opinions. Even much of the humanities became disconnected from the Christian worldview.

How can this problem be resolved? This is the question of integrating faith with learning that has been a focus of conversation among Christian educators for several decades. How can a Christian university be successful at integrating (or shall we say *reintegrating*?) faith with learning? Numerous answers have been given, but they have largely left unaddressed a primary problem and how to overcome that problem, namely, methodological secularism.³ In this brief study, the intent is to

3. For example, see Elizabeth C. Sites, Fernando L. Garzon, Frederick A. Milacci, and Barbara Boothe, "A Phenomenology of the Integration of Faith and Learning," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 37, no. 1 (2009): 28-38; Joshua D. Reichard, "From Indoctrination to Initiation: A Non-coercive Approach to Faith-Learning Integration," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 17, no. 1 (2013): 285-99; James Riley Estep, Jr., "The Church and College in Culture: A Paradigm for Faith-Learning Integration in the Bible College Curriculum," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 2, (Fall 1999): 191-208; Bruce Narramore, "Barriers to the Integration of Faith and Learning in Christian Graduate Training Programs in Psychology," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 20, no. 2 (1992): 119-126; Ken Badley, "Clarifying 'Faith-Learning Integration': Essentially Contested Concepts and the Concept-Conception Distinction," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 13, no. 1 (2009): 7-17; Perry L. Glanzer, "Why We Should Discard 'the Integration of Faith and Learning': Rearticulating the Mission of the Christian Scholar," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 12, no. 1 (2008): 41-51; Lawrence Ressler, "The Integration of Athletics and Faith," *Direction* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 91-102; Laurie R. Matthias, "Professors Who Walk Humbly with Their God: Exemplars in the Integration of Faith and Learning at Wheaton College," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 12, no. 2 (2008): 145-57; Michael Sherr, George Huff, and Mary Curran, "Student Perceptions of Salient Indicators of Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL): The Christian Vocation Model," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 16 (2007): 15-33; William Hasker, "Faith-Learning Integration: An Overview," *Christian Scholar's Review* 21, no. 3 (1992): 234-48; Ken Badley, "Where Does Faith-Integration Happen?" in Marsha Fowler and Maria A. Pacino, eds., *Faith Integration and Schools of Education* (Indianapolis, IN: Precedent Press, 2012), 57-69.

One notable exception is Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen who addresses this concern but refers to it as the ABC rule, "Anything but Christianity." See M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, Richard L. Gorsuch, H. Newton Malony, Jr., S. Bruce Narramore, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, "Dialogue, Embodiment, and the Unity of Faith and Learning: A Conversation on Integration in a Postmodern Age," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 25, no. 4 (2006): 331-37, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, "Five Uneasy Questions, or: Will Success Spoil Christian Psychologists?" *Crux* 34, no. 3 (1998): 30-38. See also Corina R. Kaul, Kimberly A. Hardin, and A. Alexander Beaujean, "Predicting Faith Integration of Faith and Learning," *Christian Higher Education* 16, no. 3 (2017): 172-87.

suggest that the problem with integrating faith with learning is due to Christians, knowingly or unknowingly, accepting what George Marsden calls “methodological secularism,” and this method must be jettisoned first to be successful at reintegrating faith with learning.

A Rose is Just a Rose: Secularization of the Academy

How did the problem of integrating faith with learning arise in the first place? Christians have not always seemed to have had this difficulty. Education was at one time robustly Christian, whether studying biology, math, astronomy, or theology proper. In maintaining the rose metaphor, it can be said that Christian learning went from seeing that a rose is *not* just a rose to a rose is *just* a rose.

A Brief History of Christian Education

In a very real sense, higher education was birthed by Christianity. It is true that the ancient philosophers of Greece, especially Plato and Aristotle, are to be recognized for their academies, but it was the Christian church which brought higher education into its prime. Many books and studies trace these roots with incontrovertible historical evidence, and so this is not really a controversial idea.⁴

What is most striking, however, is that many scholars, including Christian academicians, have forgotten about this rich history which made education a uniquely *Christian* endeavor. George Marsden notes that “the peculiarity of the contemporary situation” is that “Protestants have forsaken a long tradition of leadership in higher education” and more “striking” is that “they have forsaken it so recently and forgotten it so completely.”⁵

In early colonial America, for example, Christians founded universities, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, as training grounds for pastoral leadership in the local church. In particular, Harvard was founded in 1636 to instruct students “to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottome, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.” Harvard’s motto reflected this mission as well: *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*.⁶

4. See, for example, James Hannam, *God’s Philosophers: How the Medieval World Laid the Foundations of Modern Science* (London: Icon Books, 2009); Jonathan Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us? How It Shaped the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001); Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).

5. George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11.

6. Harvard University, “GSAS Christian Community Shield and ‘Veritas’ History,” March 14,

Such an emphasis was not relegated merely to pastoral training; the entire educational endeavor was viewed to be a study of God and his works. This was seen by the fact that, as Marsden points out,

for centuries in Protestant countries, including the Protestant colonies in America, the clergy typically were the best-educated persons in a town or village. In this country, until well into the nineteenth century higher education remained primarily a function of the church, as it always had been in Western civilization. Most educators were clergymen, and the profession of professor was not clearly differentiated from that of minister. . . . Until recently Protestants and their heirs were overwhelmingly dominant in setting the standards for American universities.⁷

Such an observation may seem somewhat foreign or striking to some. Such a reaction, however, as Marsden notes elsewhere, is “one index of how secular the current scene has become.”⁸

Secularization of the University

How did higher education become a secular endeavor? To be sure, exactly how education ought to be designed, whether secular or Christian, has always been disputed in America.⁹ The overwhelming view, however, has been to approach learning from a Christian view, especially in light of the fact that education was primarily birthed by Christians. How did this change?

The answer to this question is not monolithic. Changes in approaches to education have numerous and complex factors. This is just the nature of history, philosophy, and ideas of any kind. This does not mean, however, that primary influences cannot be discerned. Many have been observed: technological advancements, belief in non-sectarianism, industrialization, pluralism, and theological liberalism, among others.¹⁰ There are, however, two primary and significant influences: the Enlightenment and modern science.

The Enlightenment. Probably the foundational influence of the secularization of the academy was the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was many things, but one of its major features was a shift of human thought to epistemology, in particular the

2022, <http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~gsascf/shield-and-veritas-history/>. Michael Hamilton gives a brief overview of the secularization of a number of universities and argues that Harvard led the way. See Michael S. Hamilton, “A Higher Education,” *Christianity Today* 49 (2005): 31-2.

7. Marsden and Longfield, *Secularization*, 10.

8. Marsden and Longfield, *Secularization*, 4.

9. The Founding Fathers, for example, did not seem to agree upon this. Thomas Jefferson was for a secular, state education while others, like John Adams and Benjamin Rush, were for a religious, state education. For a short, good discussion on such differences, see, for example, Marsden, *Soul*, 68ff.

10. See Marsden and Longfield, *Secularization* and Marsden, *Soul*.

search for the correct method to ascertain certitude of knowledge. This search had two main streams: the continent of Europe primarily focused upon human reason while Britain focused upon empiricism.

At the risk of sounding simplistic and reductionistic (but for the sake of brevity), the Enlightenment overall resulted in jettisoning revelation, or theology, as a legitimate source of knowledge. For our purposes, the relevant school of thought is British empiricism for which American education is largely based upon. British empiricism concluded that certitude of knowledge is gained by using sense experience (which tied itself nicely with the rise of modern science as we will see in the next subsection). Therefore, it was concluded that if humans desired to learn anything, it must be by empirical evaluations and observations, not by theological axioms that have no connection to the physical world, or so it was thought by many.

Since theology was no longer viewed as a legitimate source of knowledge, religion (as well as metaphysics) came to be viewed as a subjective inquiry and thus a dead end. As such, there was no room for such an endeavor in American universities. Education came to be viewed as the search for certitude of knowledge upon which the only method that such could be obtained was empiricism. If it could not be empirically observed or evaluated, then it was not knowledge. In short, then, “the relegation of religion to the periphery of American universities was justified on essentially Enlightenment grounds.”¹¹ A secular approach to learning rather than a Christian theological approach was, therefore, more appropriate, which was conducive to the burgeoning field of modern science.

Modern Science. Science as we know it today blossomed during the seventeenth century. In particular, the influence of Francis Bacon’s *Novum Organum* (1620) cannot be overstated as he laid out the importance of induction rather than deduction when studying the physical world. This method, which later would become highly influential to the development of the so-called “scientific method,” was consonant with Enlightenment empiricist epistemology. It was also viewed by many to overthrow the “dogmatism of deduction,” which was often associated with the traditional approach to science, learning in general, and the method in theological studies. As such, some came to blame theology for curtailing scientific and technological progress. Deductive theology had to be disposed of.

Although this view of Christian theology, or religion, is historically incorrect,¹² this view that Christianity bogged down learning became a highly accepted and

11. Marsden, *Soul*, 429.

12. For a historical analysis of the incorrectness of the war thesis, see the following works: Hannam, *God’s Philosophers*; Stark, *Victory*; David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); Gary B. Ferngren, ed., *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* 2nd ed (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2017); Jeff Hardin, Ronald L. Numbers, and Ronald A. Binzley, eds., *The Warfare between Science and Religion: The Idea That Wouldn’t Die* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2018); David C. Lindberg

enduring one over time in academia. In fact, the Christian worldview came to be understood as impeding science. No other works exemplified this view more than John William Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874) and Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896).¹³ It could be argued that these works are what laid the ground for the idea that religion and science are at war.¹⁴ Draper proclaimed, prematurely, "Religion must relinquish that imperious, that domineering position which she has so long maintained against Science."¹⁵ The acceptance of this thesis is arguably the decisive factor for putting a wedge between the Christian worldview and learning.¹⁶

If science, and learning in general, were to be profitable, then the method of science had to be adopted to avoid the entanglements of any kind of theological or worldview system. This meant that science had to avoid any religious ideas whatsoever to maintain its objectivity and to obtain knowledge of the world. By definition, then, science became secular and adopted a method which Marsden calls "methodological secularism." He explains this method and contrasts it with religious beliefs this way:

Many tasks are done most efficiently by isolating and objectifying them. . . . In effect, one creates a mechanism for addressing the issue and applies this to a practical problem. Religious considerations play little if any role in the mechanism itself. Hence if one is considering how to improve the efficiency of the steam engine, information derived from religious belief would not be expected to affect the construction of the mechanism. . . . New universities were especially devoted to the service of this technological ideal. . . . Thus, when entering the laboratory, pious Christians were expected to leave their

and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *When Science and Christianity Meet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Scott E. Hendrix, *Gods, Philosophers, and Scientists: Religion and Science in the West* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Oxford Southern, 2019); Richard G. Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900 From Copernicus to Darwin*, Greenwood Guides to Science and Religion (Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004).

13. John William Draper, *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (Farnborough, Hants: Gregg International Publishers, 1970), and Andrew Dickson White, *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (N.p.: Hansebooks, 2017).

14. See, for example, Marsden, *Secularization*, 14-15 and Theodore J. Cabal and Peter J. Rasor II, *Controversy of the Ages: Why Christians Should Not Divide Over the Age of the Earth* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2017), 17-20.

15. Cited in Cabal and Rasor, *Controversy*, 17.

16. This continued "war thesis" is illustrated today by Jerry Coyne's book *Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion are Incompatible* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015). As the title implies, faith is merely subjective, or perspectival, and has nothing to do with facts or knowledge. Science, on the other hand, deals with facts and gives knowledge. This is the "secular-sacred split" which Francis Schaeffer described last century: reality consists of an *upper story of value* and a *lower story of fact* and never the twain shall meet (for a contemporary discussion of this, see Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004). *Value* is that which is only opinion whereas *fact* is that which is objective, unbiased, and neutral. Science is thus knowledge; theology (or worldview) is mere opinion.

religious beliefs at the door. . . . Diversities of religious beliefs also made it particularly important for scholarly cooperation that their substance be kept out of the laboratories. Since the laboratory became a key metaphor and model for all advanced intellectual work, this ideal was extended throughout the university.¹⁷

To state it another way, methodological secularism is the approach to learning that brackets anything religious. As Marsden succinctly states elsewhere, methodological secularism “takes place when, in order to obtain greater scientific objectivity or to perform a technical task, one decides it is better to suspend religious beliefs.”¹⁸

With the help of Enlightenment epistemology and the rise of modern science viewed to be at war with theology, learning became a secular endeavor. No longer was the Christian worldview allowed to be incorporated into learning. It, along with all religious perspectives, had to be checked at the classroom door. The Draper-White war thesis became established orthodoxy in the university (and in culture generally). Christianity and religious views were understood to be “unscientific” and even “socially disruptive.”¹⁹ In effect, today a rose is *just* a rose and nothing more.

Assumptions About the Rose: Obstacles to (Re)Integrating Faith With Learning

The adoption of methodological secularism (MS) in learning, and specifically in universities, was monumental. It was a *paradigm shift* in education, or what we could call today a “worldview shift.” The adoption of MS transformed education into a secular endeavor. Learning was no longer about learning from a Christian perspective; it was about learning from a secular perspective.

Approaching learning with this method has led to serious consequences for Christian education which now presents obstacles to the idea of “integrating faith with learning.” Marsden comments that the “triumph” of MS was universities being segmented into multiple disciplines in which most people view to have nothing to do with the big questions in life.²⁰ In other words, the Christian university has little understanding what mathematics, psychology, biology, chemistry, etc. have to do with the Christian worldview. Hence the struggle of “integrating faith with learning.”

In fact, MS has become so entrenched in the university culture that many Christians do not know where to begin to integrate faith with learning, or what obstacles that must be overcome in order to *re-integrate* faith with learning. At this

17. Marsden, *Soul*, 156.

18. Marsden, *Secularization*, 18.

19. Marsden, *Soul*, 429.

20. George M. Marsden, “The Soul of the American University: A Historical Overview,” in George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, ed., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 33.

point, it will be helpful to elucidate some of these obstacles, or the consequences of universities accepting MS. To be sure, the discussion that follows is not exhaustive; it will merely highlight what appears to be some of the primary obstacles. The final section will turn to some possible suggestions on how to overcome these obstacles, and MS in particular, so that faith can once again become a part of learning.

Obstacle One: Admitting the Problem

The first step in overcoming any problem is recognizing and admitting it. We must first understand that MS and its presuppositions are impeding the integration of faith and learning, yea, making it impossible in many cases.

This obstacle of recognizing and admitting the adoption of MS may seem obvious to some (perhaps many), but to others it may not be noticeable at all, perhaps and especially for those in STEM programs. MS has become so entrenched in the university that faculty and students are often not aware of it.²¹ This is why many find it difficult to “integrate faith and learning” and oftentimes even talk about it. Secularism has become the reigning paradigmatic method to learning, and thus it is no longer questioned or even identified as such. It is simply *assumed*. This should come as no surprise in some sense, considering that numerous faculty are often educated from an MS perspective in state universities where they received their terminal degree, not to mention that many faculty have been trained most of their lives from a MS perspective in the public school system.

The effect of accepting MS and not recognizing it has given rise to the assumption that the Christian worldview and learning are two separate (even disparate) worlds, or “paradigms.” In a real sense, much of contemporary education and the Christian worldview *are* two different paradigms, considering that the use of MS is really an assumption that the worldview of secularism is true. What has resulted is what the twentieth century philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, called “incommensurability.” To be sure, Kuhn’s work dealt specifically with science,²² but what he says there in this regard can be easily applied to the philosophy of education. For example, just as the Aristotelean paradigm of the world is incommensurable with the Newtonian paradigm (it speaks a different language, uses similar terms with different meanings, and holds to different presuppositions and even challenges old assumptions), so is the present reigning MS paradigm of education with the Christian worldview. They begin with different assumptions and presuppositions

21. This is just how worldviews work as James Sire pointed out in his work. See James Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 18-22 and James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 121-36.

22. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1996).

about the nature of the world, humanity, ethics, the meaning of life, and other big questions of life.

The Christian worldview and the secular approach, therefore, are often viewed not to go together, and indeed, we need to recognize that they do not and *cannot* go together. Hence, we have the problem of “integrating faith with learning.” This is the root of the problem: *one cannot integrate the Christian worldview with learning when learning is now assumed to be a secular task.*

What does mathematics have to do with Christianity? The answer is difficult when mathematics is viewed to have nothing to do with theology, or religion, that is, when mathematics, by default, is viewed as secular. What does the Christian worldview have to do with crunching numbers and solving equations? What does biology have to do with one’s faith? What do physics, medicine, nursing, psychology, or physical education have to do with Christianity? In short, nothing—when MS is the reigning paradigm. MS demands that we look at the world through a non-religious lens. What needs to be admitted, then, is that there is a problem—a *worldview* problem. Many Christian faculty have accepted an incommensurability (MS) into their Christian worldview which demands them to see a rose as *merely* a rose. Only by admitting this problem can steps begin to be made to *re-integrate* faith with learning.

Obstacle Two: Faith is not Knowledge

MS, by definition, is learning with no reference to religion or faith. As such, faith has no place in an educational environment in which MS is employed. Faith is something *other* than knowledge. This is the logical consequence of adopting MS, and it is an inheritance from Enlightenment epistemology. David Dockery makes this observation,

The rise of the Enlightenment thought was a watershed in the history of Western civilization; it was a time when the Christian consensus was broken by a radical secular spirit. The Enlightenment philosophy stressed the primacy of nature, a high view of reason and a low view of sin, and an antsupernatural bias; and it encouraged revolt against a faith-affirming perspective on education.²³

That faith is separate from knowledge (and by implication has nothing to do with education) is illustrated well by the late Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould. In his work *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, he comments,

I do not see how science and religion could be unified, or even synthesized, under any common scheme of explanation or analysis, but I also do not understand why the two enterprises should experience any conflict. Science

23. David Dockery, *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society Through Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 7-8.

tries to document the factual character of the natural world. . . . Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different, realm of human purposes, meanings, and values. . . . These two magisteria do not overlap.²⁴

Although there should be no conflict between the two separate realms according to Gould, negatively, religion and science are two different worlds studying entirely different things. By implication, science is knowledge and faith is not.

A problem with this view, however, is that both science and religion (and Christianity in particular) study, observe, and have something to say about the same subjects. For example, physics and astronomy study origins and the Christian worldview has something to say about this as well. Psychology and sociology attempt to explain the human mind and social relationships, but so does the Christian worldview.

Therefore, contrary to Gould, the two magisterial do in fact overlap. The Christian worldview makes knowledge claims about all of reality, physically *and* metaphysically. The Christian worldview is not merely about “how one feels” but also about “what is actually the case.” “Christian integrative thinking,” states Duane Litfin, “views all of that created order as Christ’s handiwork and thus insists that the reach of such thinking be pervasive and systemic. It will not settle for an unreflective acceptance of any proposed ‘facts’ without attempting to think Christianly about the system of thought that generated them.”²⁵ The obstacle to viewing faith as not knowledge is a logical consequence of MS that must be overcome if the Christian faith is to be re-integrated with learning.

Obstacle Three: Metaphysical Naturalism

Another fallout of MS and its underlying Enlightenment epistemology is the assumption of the verity of the naturalistic worldview, or metaphysical naturalism. MS does to all of the disciplines of the University what methodological naturalism does to science, namely, assume the philosophy of materialism (or naturalism).

By definition, methodological naturalism, which is employed in science, is the bracketing of supernatural explanations. Only materialistic explanations and conclusions are allowed in science. Such a methodology, however, intrinsically assumes that naturalism is true and theism is false. As the evolutionary biologist Michael Ruse states, “My impression is that generally in important respects [evolutionists] are inclined to agree with their opponents: they do think that naturalism, somehow

24. Stephen Jay Gould quoted in A. Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 151.

25. Gould, quoted in Litfin, 156.

defined, is indeed an important underpinning to their [scientific] positions.”²⁶ Evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin is more direct:

We take the side of science *in spite of* the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, *because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism* [emphasis added]. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for *we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door*.²⁷

MS acts in a similar way. Secularism brackets religious views in education, thus limiting conclusions of inquiry to only secularism. Ultimately, what is “put in” inevitably “comes out.” And what cannot “come out” is anything theistic because the inquiry only allowed secularism in the door to begin with, and thus making it impossible to incorporate the Christian worldview. This obstacle, however, is much more serious than methodological naturalism since it is more far-reaching: it is applied across *all* disciplines rather than just science.

Obstacle Four: Moral Relativism

The final obstacle that has resulted from accepting MS in education to be mentioned here is moral relativism. This idea may seem shocking, controversial, or perhaps an overstatement. How can the acceptance of MS lead, or provide aid, to the rise of moral relativism? The answer lies in the fact of the previously mentioned obstacle of faith viewed as antithetical to knowledge. In his work, *Awakening Wonder*, Stephen Turley notes this connection, saying,

With the advent of the modern age, and more specifically the advancement of modern science, knowledge has become increasingly redefined in such a way so as to exclude any divine moral order. With the breakup of Christendom and the subsequent secularization of the university in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it became increasingly plausible to view knowledge as limited solely to what could be verified by a *method*, namely, the application

26. Michael Ruse, “Methodological Naturalism Under Attack,” in *Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Robert T. Pennock (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), 364.

27. Cited in Philip E. Johnson, “The Unraveling of Scientific Materialism” *First Things* 17 (1997): 23; emphasis mine.

of science and mathematics. . . . This new conception of knowledge in effect exposed *all value systems* as mere cultural fabrications.²⁸

Turley, in effect, is re-stating Schaeffer's "secular-sacred split" in which "values" and "facts" are entirely separate and have nothing to do with each other. If worldviews and religious beliefs are mere opinion, as discussed earlier, then ethics are as well. As such, the adoption of MS leads, or at least provides aid, to moral relativism.

Why is this important? The reason is that, historically, Christians viewed ethics to be part-and-parcel of education.²⁹ It was necessary for discipline, honesty, integrity, and discovering truth. If ethics is simply opinion, then conclusions and outcomes of scientific experiments and philosophical inquiry may be distorted or used for one's own purposes or agenda. No longer is there a need, or perhaps even a demand, to practice science or any other discipline by reporting accurate data and not skewing it for one's own advantage. After all, if ethics is just opinion, then one scientist may believe it is permissible to be dishonest for personal gain, like political, social, or academic favors (e.g., tenure), while another may believe contrary to this.

In short, it needs to be understood that the integrity of education and learning depends upon objective morality. Moreover, the very *existence* of education and learning relies upon assuming objective moral values and duties exist, such as honesty and integrity. Without them, the integration of faith and learning is impossible because the Christian worldview provides the moral foundation for learning.

A Rose is *not* just a Rose: Re-integrating Faith with Learning

The four obstacles discussed above provide a beginning point for a discussion on how to re-integrate faith with learning. For these obstacles, four suggestions will be offered in this section on how to overcome them. The first suggestion may seem somewhat discomfoting, namely, awaiting the arrival of a new generation to question former secular assumptions in order for a paradigm shift to occur. The second, third, and fourth suggestions turn more directly to how to overcome methodological secularist assumptions that "faith" is different than "knowledge," metaphysical naturalism is true, and morality is relativistic. Ultimately, what needs to be overcome is the overarching idea that a rose is merely a rose. For the re-integration of faith and learning to occur, faculty and students need to understand that a rose is *not* just a rose, contrary to the secularist worldview.

28. Stephen R. Turley, *Awakening Wonder: A Classical Guide to Truth, Goodness, and Beauty* (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2015), 4-5; emphasis mine.

29. See Kaul, et al., "Predicting Faculty Integration," 173, and the works referred to there: Derek Bok, *Beyond the Ivory tower: Social Responsibilities of the Modern University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Larry Lyon, Michael Beaty, and S.L. Mixon, "Making Sense of a 'Religious' University: Faculty Adaptations and Opinions at Brigham Young, Baylor, Notre Dame, and Boston College." *Review of Religious Research* 43 (2002): 326-48.

Anomalies and Paradigm Shift

It was discussed above that one of the obstacles to integrating faith and learning is admitting the problem of MS. Such an admittance, however, is no easy feat. Just as a worldview is part-and-parcel of who one is, so is the method by which one approaches learning. In short, the difficulty of realizing the problem and then taking steps to overcome it may be nearly impossible for the present generation which is entrenched in such a paradigm. What is required, then, is (almost) nothing short of a revolutionary mindset in education that questions previous secular assumptions and methodologies. What is needed is what philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn calls a “paradigm shift.”

How does a paradigm shift occur? In Kuhn’s work in the philosophy of science, he notes that new scientific theories do not occur until present theories do not adequately predict or explain the present reigning paradigm. There is what Kuhn calls “anomalies,” data (if you will) that cannot be explained.³⁰ In order to explain the phenomena observed, an entirely new approach must be investigated along with questioning old assumptions. Scientists who are willing to do this will challenge the current scientific paradigm, even if this means overthrowing it. But this is the catch: not many are willing to challenge current reigning paradigms and to think outside the box. There is social pressure to support the highly effective paradigm that seems to have stood the test of time. Those unwilling to pursue a different course hold out hope that the old paradigm will eventually account for the anomalies. Those who are revolutionary in thought, however, ultimately end up finding resolutions to the anomalies, usually by adopting an entirely new paradigm or radically modifying the current one.

An example of occurrences of anomalies in the history of science that led to a paradigm shift is Ptolemaic astronomy. This paradigm, although highly successful in predicting star and planetary positions, could not account for all the astronomical observations. There were too many anomalies which it could not account for, which led revolutionary thinkers like Copernicus and Galileo to challenge the reigning paradigm. Because they were willing to do this, the Ptolemaic system was eventually toppled and replaced by Copernicanism (that is, heliocentrism).

What does this have to do with re-integrating faith with learning? Precisely this: in order to overcome the reigning secular paradigmatic approach to education, there will be a need for some faculty to recognize that MS creates anomalies in the pursuit of knowledge that cannot be solved, and then they must be willing to pursue resolutions using a different approach.³¹ Unfortunately, such a recognition

30. Kuhn, *Structure*, 97.

31. As an example, the existence of consciousness has perplexed neuroscientists and naturalists for decades. Perhaps the key to unlocking this mysterious anthropological phenomenon and resolving this anomaly will be the jettisoning of MS. For a good discussion from a naturalist perspective, see Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is*

and pursuit will be just as difficult as it is in the discipline of science. It will take a new generation of faculty, perhaps quite a bit younger, who are not as committed to MS. It will take educators who are willing to be trailblazers and revolutionaries, much like (but possibly not to the exact same level) as Copernicus, Newton, and Einstein. Thus, to ultimately overcome secular methodology and integrate a more Christian approach to learning, patience for the rise of a new generation of faculty may be partially the answer. It just may take a new generation of Christians not as committed to and not as embedded in secular methodology to be able to see a rose not as merely a rose but as a creation of the divine with objective beauty, living according to a designed purpose.

Faith as Knowledge

Earlier it was noted that the bifurcation of faith and knowledge is one major obstacle to integrating faith and learning. Another way forward to reintegrating faith with learning is, therefore, to rediscover that faith is a kind of knowledge. Faith is not a privately held system of beliefs and opinions based solely upon personal experience that stands totally apart from knowledge.

This rediscovery begins with understanding the concepts of faith and knowledge. Faith is belief that something is true and trusting and committing one's self to such truth. Knowledge, on the other hand, is justified true belief (in keeping with the long held philosophical definition). As we can see, faith and knowledge have a point of contact: believing what is true. A legitimate strong faith is one that believes (and commits to) what is *true*; to have knowledge is to believe that which is *true*. Faith and knowledge, therefore, have as their object that which is *true*. As such, faith is a kind of knowledge. It is not totally "other" than knowledge.

This idea of faith has implications for the concept of "truth." It means that faith is about believing what is objectively true, not subjectively true. Thus, statements of faith (just like knowledge) are statements meant to convey how the world really is, not just merely how an individual perceives the world. Faith, then, is just as much about truth as claims to knowledge. This is illustrated well by the long-held position by Christian philosophers and theologians that "all truth is God's truth." Or, to put it another popular way, there are two books of truth: nature and Scripture.

It is true, as Litfin comments, that the idea that "all truth is God's truth" seems to have lost its punch because of its pervasiveness among theologians. He does, however, lay out some helpful ideas of what this aphorism is meant to convey: (1) God exists; (2) through the agency of the Son, God created the universe; (3) we can therefore entertain an intellectual construct called "reality"; (4) reality is multidimensional and complex; (5) reality is also coherent and unified, centered upon Christ; (6) God has created humans with the capacity to apprehend, however fallibly

almost Certainly False (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35-69.

and incompletely, this reality; (7) genuine knowledge is feasible for humans; (8) human knowledge stems from special revelation and discovery; (9) we can, therefore, maintain a distinction between truth and error; and (10) all that is truthful, from whatever source, is unified, and will cohere with whatever else is truthful.³² Litfin summarizes this approach this way:

Precisely because the Christian thinker works from a Christocentric reference point, and nothing can be irrelevant to the person of Christ, by the same token Jesus Christ cannot be irrelevant to anything we study. Nothing evades his touch, and so nothing should escape ours. Not even the natural sciences.³³

The Assumption of Theism

The third obstacle discussed above was the assumption of metaphysical naturalism, which rides on the coattails of MS. Thus, in order to re-integrate faith with learning, theism and all that it entails must become the presupposition of the Christian scholar and teacher. Re-establishing theism as an assumption, however, is not easy in a culture which faculty find themselves trained in MS. Hopefully, the following discussion will help faculty be more successful.

First, although it could be left unstated, faculty must be committed Christians. Additionally, Christian faculty need to practice continually spiritual disciplines so that their approach to education is, by second nature, Christian.

A study which examined how faculty successfully integrate faith with learning at an evangelical Christian liberal arts university found that Christian faculty who are growing in their faith do not really “integrate” faith with learning. Rather, their faith is a part of who they are, and it overflows into their teaching. In other words, it is an *ontological idea*. The study comments:

The emergence of ontological foundation as an IFL construct has implications for professors wanting to integrate effectively with students. *Integration does not start with scholarly acumen; rather, it starts with each faculty member’s personal spiritual depth as expressed in their ontological foundation.*³⁴

In other words, those who were viewed to have integrated faith with learning successfully, did so because they were Christians who already implemented their faith into every aspect of their lives, so much so, that it simply came naturally.³⁵

32. Litfin, *Conceiving*, 87-94.

33. Ibid., 158.

34. Sites, et al., “A Phenomenology,” 37; emphasis mine.

35. Kaul’s study indicates also that faith integration occurs mostly in institutions where faculty are “full-time” employed, earned a “degree from an institution that shares [their] denominational affiliation,” and work at an institution that shares their denominational convictions. Kaul, et al., “Predicting Faith Integration,” 172ff.

This study certainly calls into question the validity of the entire enterprise of “integrating faith with learning,” as even the authors note. But it must be kept in mind that the present educational milieu is secular, and so there will be times (perhaps numerous) when Christian faculty will have to be more intentional and consciously aware of their commitments. As the authors conclude, “Occasions do arise when one must intentionally think about who they are as followers of Christ and what that will mean in a given context.”³⁶ The reason why, again, is because MS has become a part of many Christian faculty’s worldview. As such, a presumption of theism will need to be more focused and intentional.

Faculty must assume more than just the verity of Christian theism in general. The above study assumes that those faculty who successfully integrated faith with learning understand *all* that the Christian worldview entails. This would include the nature of God as creator, ruler, and redeemer, divine providence, the nature of man, ethics, sin, and much more. To ensure that faculty across all disciplines have a basic Christian worldview foundation may entail faculty theological training, especially for those outside the theological disciplines. This also has strong implications for those Christian universities which attempt to integrate faith with learning while at the same time employing non-Christian faculty: it simply cannot be done. Christian universities need to consider hiring not only Christians exclusively, but those who also hold a seminary degree in addition to their degree in the hard sciences and so forth.

One particular Christian worldview belief which has special significance that faculty would require training in is meaning, whether of life in general or humanity in particular. C. S. Lewis pointed out years ago that if education is approached from a materialist perspective (in our case, from a MS approach), meaning is entirely lost. The reason why is because materialists only “see all the facts but not the meaning. . . There *is* nothing else there.” As a result, continues Lewis, the materialist is “in the position of an animal. You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand *pointing*. You point to a bit of food on the floor; the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning.”³⁷ The materialist, or methodological secularist, is able to see only hard facts. To understand the purpose, design, or meaning of anything, the Christian worldview must be consulted. MS simply cannot do this. It sees only a rose, not the purpose, design, and meaning of the rose. This is another reason why it may become necessary for all faculty to hold a theological degree.

Objective Moral Realism

A pervasive thought today is that morality has nothing to do with education. More often than not, morality is viewed as culturally relative or personally subjective. As

36. Sites, et al., “Phenomenology,” 37.

37. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 113-14.

such, it is often viewed as having no place in education, especially since morality is intimately related to religious beliefs. Thus, just like religious beliefs, morality is argued to be antithetical to education. The Christian worldview, however, views morality as real and objective—there really are right and wrong objective values and duties that ought to be followed by everyone. As such, if faith is to be re-integrated with learning, it is imperative to make ethics foundational to and interwoven into education like thread in a quilt.

A legitimate Christian education is impossible apart from ethics. Without the values of discipline, integrity, honesty, among other things, education becomes dangerous—it is a ship without a rudder. Dabney explains,

With regard to right human action, the will and the conscience must be purified and enlightened. To enhance the vigor of the soul's other actions by training is nothing but superfluous mischief. If in a ship the compass is broken and the pilot is blind, it is better that there should not be a great force to move her machinery. The more energetic its motion, the greater is the likelihood the ship will speedily be upon the breakers. Surely this is sufficient to who the reflecting mind that right moral instruction cannot be separated at any point, or for any time, from intellectual training, without great mischief being done.³⁸

Education without objective morality, in effect, becomes tyrannical or enslavement. It imparts knowledge to the student but does not instruct him or her how to use it for its proper ends, which is ultimately for the love of God and others. Without such moral instruction, knowledge can become a tool to demand obedience (enslave) or rule with an iron fist (tyranny). As Lewis once stated, “A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery.”³⁹

Additionally, integrating ethics into education is about the development of the *soul*. Certainly, education ought to be about developing the mind, but Christians have recognized historically the need to develop the whole person, not just the intellect. MS disallows such a development since it denies (or at best ignores) the existence of the soul. But the soul is in desperate need of being molded and shaped to have the virtues required to live the good life as well as to be more like Christ. The reason for this is because humanity is inherently sinful since the fall of Adam and Eve. Humanity's most pressing need is moral redemption. As such, moral instruction is absolutely necessary, not just to study and research rightly, but to shape and mold students' souls. This has even been noted by the atheist Allain de Botton,

Christianity is focused on helping a part of us that secular language struggles even to name . . . and to which we may as well refer, following Christian

38. Robert L. Dabney, *On Secular Education*, ed. Douglas Wilson (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996), 19.

39. C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 73.

terminology, as the *soul*. It has been the essential task of the Christian pedagogic machine to nurture, reassure, comfort and guide our souls. . . . A good soul was one that had managed to find appropriate answers to the great questions of existence, a soul marked by such godly virtues as faith, hope, charity and love.⁴⁰

What courses have integrated the development of the soul in the Christian University? For sure, a course on ethics may accomplish this, but what about, say, psychology, sociology, or engineering? Is there any inclination to incorporate such throughout every degree program and course in the University? More than likely there is not, and it is the contention of this paper that this is primarily due to the acceptance of MS, which makes moral values and duties subjective and the soul non-existent (or, at least, irrelevant). What hath ethics and values to do with subjects outside ethics proper? Such a question reveals the difficult task of re-integrating faith with learning that still lies ahead. Unfortunately, too many still view humanity as merely material—a rose as just a rose.

Conclusion

A brief survey of the history of education shows that Christians once engaged learning from a uniquely Christian perspective, or worldview. It was not until primarily the rise of Enlightenment epistemology and modern science that the Christian approach to education began to erode and eventually a secular approach to take over. This methodological secularist approach to learning and its epistemological assumptions brought with them several obstacles that must be overcome. First, it separated faith from the idea of knowledge. Second, it assumed the worldview of naturalism. Third, it presumed the verity of moral relativism. In order to overcome this secular methodological approach to education and re-integrate the Christian worldview successfully, faith must once again be understood as knowledge, theism must be assumed, and moral objective realism must be re-incorporated in all studies. In short, all studies must be Christ-centered: “an education that rigorously and without apology insists upon looking through and beyond the created order to see the Christ-centeredness of all things.”⁴¹ This will not and cannot be accomplished until a rose is viewed once again as more than just a rose.

40. Allain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 113, 115.

41. Litfin, *Conceiving*, 67.