



# themelios

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**THE GOSPEL COALITION**

# themelios

## DESCRIPTION

*Themelios* is an international evangelical theological journal that expounds and defends the historic Christian faith. Its primary audience is theological students and pastors, though scholars read it as well. It was formerly a print journal operated by RTSF/UCCF in the UK, and it became a digital journal operated by The Gospel Coalition in 2008. The editorial team draws participants from across the globe as editors, essayists, and reviewers.

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## ARTICLES

Articles should generally be about 4,000 to 7,000 words (including footnotes) and should be submitted to the Managing Editor of *Themelios*, which is peer-reviewed. Articles should use clear, concise English, following *The SBL Handbook of Style* (esp. for abbreviations), supplemented by *The Chicago Manual of Style*. They should consistently use either UK or USA spelling and punctuation, and they should be submitted electronically as an email attachment using Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx extensions) or Rich Text Format (.rtf extension). Special characters should use a Unicode font.

## REVIEWS

The book review editors generally select individuals for book reviews, but potential reviewers may contact them about reviewing specific books. As part of arranging book reviews, the book review editors will supply book review guidelines to reviewers.

# Three Reflections on Evangelical Academic Publishing<sup>1</sup>

— Andrew David Naselli —

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**Abstract:** In light of John A. D’Elia’s *A Place at the Table* and Stanley E. Porter’s *Inking the Deal*, this article shares three reflections on evangelical academic publishing. (1) Evangelical scholarship is a gift to evangelicals for which they should be grateful. (2) Evangelical academics should aim to be academically responsible more than being academically respectable. (3) Evangelical scholarship is ultimately about glorifying God by serving Christ’s church.

\*\*\*\*\*

I recently read two books back-to-back that provoked me to think about my philosophy of publishing:

1. John A. D’Elia. *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. xxvi + 271 pp.
2. Stanley E. Porter. *Inking the Deal: A Guide for Successful Academic Publishing*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010. xi + 191 pp.

I recommend both books to fellow evangelical academics but with some caveats. (By “evangelical academics,” I refer to those who are evangelicals in a theological and not merely a sociological sense<sup>2</sup> and who serve in the academic world, especially professors who teach exegesis and theology.) The books precipitated three reflections on evangelical academic publishing.<sup>3</sup>

Before I share those reflections, five qualifications are noteworthy:

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<sup>1</sup>Thanks to friends who examined a draft of this essay and shared helpful feedback, especially Mike Bird, Don Carson, Nathan Finn, Wayne Grudem, Scot McKnight, Dane Ortlund (who originally encouraged me to write this essay), Owen Strachan, Justin Taylor, and my colleagues at Bethlehem College and Seminary, particularly Jason DeRouchie, Travis Myers, John Piper, Tom Steller, and Brian Tabb. Thanks also to John D’Elia and Stan Porter for cordially and critically corresponding with me after I shared a draft of this essay with them.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Andrew David Naselli, “Conclusion,” in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (ed. Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen; Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 209–10.

<sup>3</sup>This focuses specifically on *publishing*. About sixteen years ago *Themelios* published an essay on evangelical scholarship in general: Graham Cole, “The Evangelical and Scholarship—Personal Reflections,” *Them* 24, no. 1 (1998): 3–12.

1. This isn't a review article, nor do I comprehensively summarize and evaluate each book.<sup>4</sup> Here is the gist of each book: (a) D'Elia focuses on Ladd's motivation for his publishing strategy as an evangelical academic. He traces Ladd's life primarily with reference to that one issue. (b) Porter gives practical and philosophical advice about academic publishing to two groups of people: those whose publishing career is primarily future (i.e., students who aspire to be academics as well as young academics) and veteran academics who are currently stagnant in their publishing.

2. The two books both address academic publishing, but they are very different. By addressing them together, I am not suggesting that Stanley Porter is a modern-day parallel to George Ladd.<sup>5</sup>

3. I don't have sufficient credentials to share vast amounts of wisdom about academic publishing. (a) I didn't earn a PhD from a prestigious secular university (more on that in §3.3.1 below). (b) I'm green. I'm only thirty-four years old. So God willing, most of my publishing is forthcoming. (c) Although I've written some books and articles and reviews, I haven't published multiple books and articles with the most academically prestigious university presses and theological journals.<sup>6</sup>

4. My target audience is two groups: (a) my evangelical academic peers and (b) those who aspire to be scholars, especially PhD students.

5. This is a personal reflection, so it is somewhat autobiographical.

So on to those three reflections on evangelical academic publishing.

### ***1. Evangelical Scholarship Is a Gift to Evangelicals for Which They Should Be Grateful***

Evangelicals should be grateful for evangelical scholarship. It is a gift from God.

Before noting the scholarly contributions of George Ladd, Stanley Porter, and others, it is important to begin by clarifying what scholarship is, especially with reference to publishing.

#### **1.1. What Is Scholarship?**

In America *scholarship* typically refers to high-level academic study or achievement, and *scholar* refers to a distinguished academic. I'm not a scholar, but I've worked closely with many scholars and have a good idea of what one does.<sup>7</sup> The British historian Carl Trueman explains that in England, unlike in America, academics do not call themselves scholars; that is a title that others give to only the most accomplished academics:

[T]he title 'scholar' is not one that you should ever apply to yourself, and its current profusion among the chatterati on the blogs is a sign of precisely the kind of arrogance and hubris against which we all need to guard ourselves. Call me old-fashioned, but to me the word 'scholar' has an honorific ring. It is something that others give to you

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Steven E. Gump's review of Porter's book in *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 42 (2011): 539–44, and Owen Strachan's review of D'Elia's book in *Them* 35 (2010): 163–65.

<sup>5</sup>My reading of D'Elia's book did not influence how I read Porter's book. I read Porter's book first and wrote out my thoughts before reading D'Elia's book. I'm treating them in reverse order in this article since (1) Ladd preceded Porter and (2) D'Elia's book was published before Porter's.

<sup>6</sup>See <http://www.andynaselli.com/publications>.

<sup>7</sup>E.g., I recently spent eight years working as D. A. Carson's research assistant, six of them full-time.

when, and only when, you have made a consistent and outstanding contribution to a particular scholarly field (and, no, completion of a Ph.D. does not count).<sup>8</sup>

I learned the kind of true and noble scholarship that Trueman commends from a thoughtful fundamentalist theologian. In 2008 Kevin Bauder wrote a series of twelve short essays on scholarship in his seminary's periodical.<sup>9</sup>

Bauder argues that earning a PhD provides scholarly training but does not make one a scholar: "The Ph.D. is to scholarship what a driver's license is to NASCAR. Finding a scholar who hasn't earned it would be pretty difficult, but simply possessing the degree is merely a step along the way toward scholarship. To put it bluntly, I've known many a dim bulb who claimed a Ph.D."<sup>10</sup>

Nor does simply publishing make one a scholar: "Granted, scholars *do* publish, but not all publication is scholarly in nature. Scholars *as scholars* do not write for popular readers."<sup>11</sup> Nor does serving as a professor automatically make one a scholar: "Most professors are not scholars and some scholars are not professors."<sup>12</sup>

Scholars advance the academic conversation through publications for the scholarly community based on specialized research: "their goal is to persuade other scholars. Whatever popular writing a scholar may print is simply irrelevant to her or his standing as a scholar."<sup>13</sup> "Scholarly writing is careful, meticulous, dispassionate, and usually quite tedious for the general public. Like it or not, however, such writing is what shapes the thinking of the academy, and whatever shapes academic thinking will sooner or later find its way into the popular mind."<sup>14</sup>

This doesn't mean that scholars do not write popular-level books and articles. Bauder notes that two scholars he has known and observed

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<sup>8</sup> Carl R. Trueman, "The Way of the Christian Academic," *Them* 33, no. 3 (2008): 6. Cf. D. A. Carson, "The Scholar as Pastor: Lessons from the Church and the Academy," in *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry* (ed. David Mathis and Owen Strachan; Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 71.

<sup>9</sup> I share the gist of these essays in the rest of this section for two reasons: (1) I think Bauder is correct, clear, and concise; (2) this "reflection" article is autobiographical, and Bauder has significantly influenced my view of scholarship. Bauder's series is titled "Fundamentalism and Scholarship," and I've compiled the essays into a single PDF at <http://andynaselli.com/kevin-bauder-fundamentalism-and-scholarship>: Kevin T. Bauder, "Part One: Not Me," *In the Nick of Time* (January 4, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Two: What Is a Scholar?," *In the Nick of Time* (January 11, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Three: Hazards of Scholarship," *In the Nick of Time* (January 18, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Four: Does Fundamentalism Need Scholars?," *In the Nick of Time* (January 25, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Five: Does Fundamentalism Have Scholars?," *In the Nick of Time* (February 1, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Six: How Do We Get Scholars?," *In the Nick of Time* (February 8, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Seven: To Make a Scholar," *In the Nick of Time* (February 15, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Eight: The Scholarly Life," *In the Nick of Time* (February 22, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Nine: Models of Scholarship," *In the Nick of Time* (February 29, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Ten: Scholarship and Separatism," *In the Nick of Time* (March 14, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Eleven: The Dual Responsibility of a Christian Scholar," *In the Nick of Time* (March 21, 2008): 1–3; Bauder, "Part Twelve: The Christian Scholar's Christian Responsibility," *In the Nick of Time* (March 28, 2008): 1–3.

<sup>10</sup> Bauder, "Part One: Not Me," 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Bauder, "Part Two: What Is a Scholar?," 2.

<sup>14</sup> Bauder, "Part Eight: The Scholarly Life," 2.

also engaged in popular writing, and in both cases their writings were enormously persuasive. The power of their popular work, however, derived from the depth of study and thinking that they did in order to produce their scholarly work. They did not become scholars by publishing persuasive, popular books. Rather, their popular books were persuasive precisely because they were already engaged in the work of genuine scholarship.<sup>15</sup>

Christian scholars in particular not only *may* but *should* write popular-level works in order to serve Christ's church:

Christian scholars are responsible to expound the faith for the people of God. Christian teaching includes many matters that are difficult to grasp, and God's people are not greatly edified by affirming a faith that they do not understand. Christian scholars have the duty to explain the faith so that ordinary Christians are able to comprehend it and to respond rightly. . . . [T]heir primary role within the churches is to use their gifts in support of pastoral ministry.<sup>16</sup>

Scholarship is a noble and necessary calling.<sup>17</sup> So what attitude should evangelicals have toward evangelical scholarship? It is a gift to evangelicals for which they should be grateful.

### 1.2. Grateful for Ladd's Publications

George Ladd (1911–1982) earned his PhD at Harvard University in 1949, and he later taught at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, for thirty years. In addition to many articles and reviews, he wrote fourteen books. He is one of the most prominent evangelical NT scholars of the twentieth century since he blazed a path for evangelicals to critically and respectably engage with the highest levels of scholarship.

In a 1984 survey that Mark Noll sent to members of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) and the Institute for Biblical Research (IBR), Noll asked, "Please list the three individuals, living or dead, who have exerted the dominant influence on your scholarly work. You do not have to share the conclusions of these individuals but they should be the ones whose work influences you most." For ETS members, the number one individual was John Calvin. Number two was George Ladd. For IBR members, number one was George Ladd.<sup>18</sup>

So I was eager to read the first book-length biography of Ladd.<sup>19</sup> It's a riveting story that I could hardly stop reading.

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<sup>15</sup> Bauder, "Part Nine: Models of Scholarship," 2.

<sup>16</sup> Bauder, "Part Twelve: The Christian Scholar's Christian Responsibility," 2–3.

<sup>17</sup> Bauder, "Part Four: Does Fundamentalism Need Scholars?," 2. For more on evangelicals and scholarship, see Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). For an accessible introduction to what it takes to become a Bible scholar, see Ben Witherington III, *Is There a Doctor in the House? An Insider's Story and Advice on Becoming a Bible Scholar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 221–22.

<sup>19</sup> John A. D'Elia, *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Ladd has influenced most academics through his NT theology.<sup>20</sup> But my first exposure to him was in classes where professors who held to traditional dispensationalism severely criticized Ladd for his (a) already-not-yet view of the kingdom of God and (b) posttribulationism.<sup>21</sup> Overall, I've come to find his arguments for both of these positions compelling, and my respect and gratitude for his work have increased.

### 1.3. Grateful for Porter's Publications

Stanley Porter (b. 1956) earned his PhD at the University of Sheffield in 1988, and he currently serves as president, dean, *and* professor of New Testament (yes, you read that correctly) at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario.<sup>22</sup> "I moved through the ranks," Porter explains, "from instructor to professor and even research professor, before becoming head of my own academic institution by the time I was forty-five."<sup>23</sup> Porter is an academic publishing "insider" since he served as the senior academic editor for Sheffield Academic Press and has authored or edited dozens of academic books and hundreds of academic articles and reviews. He is the most published living NT scholar I know of; his *curriculum vitae* should come in hard cover.<sup>24</sup> Porter has already contributed enormously to NT studies and beyond.

So I was eager to read his thoughts on academic publishing. If anyone is qualified to write such a book, he is. I'm glad I read his book. It's helpful, insightful, and motivating.

My first exposure to him was reading his published dissertation, an incredibly dense and erudite argument for verbal aspect theory in the Greek of the NT.<sup>25</sup> And ever since then, I've noticed that he is the author or editor of publications on just about every significant area of NT studies. The breadth of his publications is remarkable.

### 1.4. Grateful for Publications by Other Evangelical Academics

Ladd and Porter are just two examples of *hundreds* of evangelical academics in the last seventy-five years who have made significant contributions to scholarship.<sup>26</sup> Many evangelicals have diligently

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<sup>20</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (ed. Donald A. Hagner; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). Noll's 1984 survey also asked, "List the five academic books which have had the greatest impact on your own scholarship or the direction of your academic work. Again, you do not have to agree with these books, but they should be ones that exerted a formative influence on your work in biblical studies or theology." For ETS members, the number one work was John Calvin's *Institutes*. Number two was George Ladd's *Theology of the NT*. For IBR members, number one was George Ladd's *Theology of the NT* (Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 224).

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956); Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

<sup>22</sup> For more about Porter, see <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/faculty/core/stanley-e-porter>.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Inking the Deal: A Guide for Successful Academic Publishing* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>24</sup> See [https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/faculty-cv/PorterS\\_CV.pdf](https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/faculty-cv/PorterS_CV.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: With Reference to Tense and Mood* (Studies in Biblical Greek 1; New York: Lang, 1989). Cf. my attempt to summarize it: Andrew David Naselli, "A Brief Introduction to Verbal Aspect Theory in New Testament Greek," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 12 (2007): 17–28, [http://andynaselli.com/wp-content/uploads/2007\\_verbal\\_aspect.pdf](http://andynaselli.com/wp-content/uploads/2007_verbal_aspect.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> E.g., see Walter A. Elwell and J. D. Weaver, eds., *Bible Interpreters of the Twentieth Century: A Selection of Evangelical Voices* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

earned their PhDs and then gone on to produce publications that have significantly influenced hundreds of thousands of people—including me.

Some of these evangelicals have influenced me to the core of my being. These include John Piper (DTheol, University of Munich, 1974), D. A. Carson (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1975), Wayne Grudem (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1979), Douglas J. Moo (PhD, University of St. Andrews, 1980), Thomas R. Schreiner (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), and Mark Dever (PhD, University of Cambridge, 1992). And the list goes on.

Evangelical scholarship is a gift to evangelicals for which they should be grateful. Evangelical academics who write informed, responsible works for pastors and lay people (in addition to more technical writings) are a gift to Christ's church (more on this below in §3.3.2).

## ***2. Evangelical Academics Should Aim to Be Academically Responsible More Than Being Academically Respectable***

### **2.1. Ladd's Apparently Idolatrous Quest for Academic Respectability**

Before describing Ladd's quest, I should explain two words in this section's subheading:

1. *Apparently*. I include the word "apparently" because we cannot infallibly know Ladd's heart. (a) It is hard enough to discern your own motivations for why you do certain activities. It is more difficult to discern someone else's motivations, even when you speak with them face to face. That difficulty multiplies when that person lived in a previous generation and you never interacted with him personally. (b) People are complex. They can have multiple motivations, and there are all sorts of complicating factors involved. One of Ladd's driving motivations was missional: he wanted everyone in the world to hear the gospel. His historical context was very different from evangelical academics today; he was reacting to cultural and academic disengagement.<sup>27</sup> And he was a broken man, which is related to his upbringing, family dynamics, personality, and many other factors.

2. *Idolatrous*. Many theologians such as Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards have pointed out that idolatry is behind all sin. More recently, Tim Keller penetratingly defines idols from multiple angles:<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For a recent study of America's academic milieu in the 1950s, see George M. Marsden, *The Twilight of the American Enlightenment: The 1950s and the Crisis of Liberal Belief* (New York: Basic, 2014)."

<sup>28</sup> Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (New York: Dutton, 2009). See endnotes 116–17 (pp. 202–3), which cite Luther, Augustine, Calvin, and Edwards, and endnote 5 (pp. 178–79), which begins, "The use of idolatry as a major category for psychological and sociological analysis has been gaining steam again in the last fifteen years in the academic world." See also David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair,'" *Areopagus* 2, no. 1 (1991): 2–21; Powlison, "Revisiting Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 27, no. 3 (2013): 37–68; Brian S. Rosner, "The Concept of Idolatry," *Them* 24, no. 3 (1999): 21–30; Rosner, "Idolatry," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 569–75; Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Christopher J. H. Wright, "The Living God Confronts Idolatry," in *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 137–88; G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008); Julian Hardyman, *Idols: God's Battle for Our Hearts* (Leicester: IVP, 2010); Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2012).



The human heart is an “idol factory” . . . . [that] takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them.<sup>29</sup>

An idol is something we cannot live without.<sup>30</sup>

We think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case. . . . Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life.<sup>31</sup>

[An idol is] anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. . . . If anything becomes more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity, then it is an idol.<sup>32</sup>

Idolatry is not just a failure to obey God, it is a setting of the whole heart on something besides God.<sup>33</sup>

While I enthusiastically affirm that evangelical scholarship is valuable, it is all too easy for evangelical academics to make their scholarship an idol. Humans have been turning good things into idols ever since Adam and Eve fell. So if a Christian wife can make her husband an idol or a Christian pastor can make his church an idol or a Christian man can make his job an idol, it shouldn't be surprising that an evangelical academic can make their scholarship an idol. That's apparently what George Ladd did.

D'Elia's well-crafted biography focuses specifically on how Ladd responded to what Ladd perceived as a crisis:

In Ladd's estimation, evangelicals had stopped publishing scholarly literature that was worthy of consideration by the great universities. . . .

How did George Ladd attempt to rehabilitate evangelical scholarship in America? His evolving strategy can be divided into two main elements. [1] First, Ladd sought to raise the level of discourse within evangelicalism—to improve the quality of its scholarly content. He was disciplined—at times obsessed—in his study of the Bible and of critical works from scholars across the theological spectrum. . . .

[2] But there was an external component to his strategy as well. Ladd believed that, in order for evangelical scholars to be accepted as equals in the best institutions and societies, he and others like him had to earn their way in and prove their worthiness to participate. To this end Ladd submitted articles to prestigious journals, joined the academic organizations that would have him, and had his magnum opus printed by a publishing house outside the evangelical world. He encouraged the brightest of his

<sup>29</sup> Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, xiv.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii–xix.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

students to pursue doctoral work themselves, mentored them in their studies, and supported their applications to universities around the world. Ladd devoted his life to this two-pronged strategy for rehabilitating modern evangelicalism both in content and in image.<sup>34</sup>

D'Elia explains, "The purpose of this book is to examine the *motivation* for George Ladd's contribution to evangelical scholarship." Ladd was on "a *quest* to create a work of evangelical scholarship that the rest of the world could not ignore."<sup>35</sup>

Ladd worked tirelessly on his magnum opus. When Harold J. Ockenga was corresponding with Ladd in 1949 about teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary,<sup>36</sup> Ladd explained what he hoped to make his "chief contribution": "a scholarly history of the Kingdom of God."<sup>37</sup> "At one point," D'Elia recounts, "he was so frustrated with the competing demands of research and sleep that he threw a book against the wall of his home with such force that it left a gaping hole. Ladd allowed the hole to remain there for years as a monument to his passion for excellence in scholarship."<sup>38</sup> But later developments raise questions, as D'Elia shows. Was this passion entirely healthy? Did it point to undue concern for how seriously non-evangelical scholars would regard his work?

After working on his magnum opus "for more than a decade" (and dreaming of it for much longer), "Ladd felt that he had finally arrived" as a scholar when Harper & Row, "a publisher outside the evangelical world," published it.<sup>39</sup> It released in 1964 with the title *Jesus and the Kingdom*.<sup>40</sup> Ladd built his entire career on this book, and he eagerly waited to see non-evangelical scholars nod in approval that he did first-class work that they could not ignore.

But Norman Perrin became the instrument that dashed Ladd's dreams. Perrin was a British theologian who had recently become a professor at the University of Chicago and who had just the year

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<sup>34</sup> D'Elia, *A Place at the Table*, xi.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii (emphasis added).

<sup>36</sup> On the history of Fuller Seminary, see George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). This story reads like an engaging novel filled with unexpected turns. Marsden attempts to write as an unbiased historian though he is sympathetic with Fuller Seminary, which asked and funded him to write the book (xviii). The 1995 paperback edition adds a new preface in which Marsden recounts his visit to Bob Jones University in the early 1990s and distances himself from such "conservatives" who "have seen the volume as aiding their cause" (xii–xiii). Fuller Theological Seminary was new evangelicalism's theological think-tank, and Marsden's history provides a window through which to view its development.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Owen Strachan, "Reenchanted the Evangelical Mind: Park Street Church's Harold Ockenga, the Boston Scholars, and the Mid-Century Intellectual Surge" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2011), 144. Strachan has updated his dissertation into a book that should release in fall 2015: Owen Strachan, *Reawakening the Evangelical Mind: Harold Ockenga, the Cambridge Scholars, and the Rise of the Neo-Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

<sup>38</sup> D'Elia, *A Place at the Table*, 122–23.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, xix–xx, 126. While the publisher was considering whether to publish the manuscript, Ladd wrote to a friend, "if Harper's will not take it, I am going back to the preaching ministry" (*ibid.*, 124).

<sup>40</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

before published his dissertation on the kingdom of God.<sup>41</sup> Perrin reviewed Ladd's book in the journal *Interpretation*, and in the first major non-evangelical published review, Perrin severely criticized Ladd for shoddy scholarship and showed no respect for Ladd as an academic peer but instead shunned him as an outsider.<sup>42</sup>

Perrin's review *devastated* Ladd:

Ladd received his copy of Perrin's review in May of 1965, when he had been away from Fuller [on sabbatical] for almost a year. David Wallace, Ladd's former student and the first Fuller graduate to earn a PhD, was in Basel on his own sabbatical and was visiting Ladd with several friends when the review arrived. The impact of that first reading was evident immediately. According to Wallace, Ladd was "stricken right down to the core" and "on the edge of being manic and out of control." He "had a strange look in his eyes, as though he had been mortally wounded," and paced the room with his guests still there, no longer aware of their presence. Wallace recalls that Ladd repeatedly said that "he was an academic failure" and "a scholarly wipeout." Wallace tried to console him by encouraging him to wait for other reviews, but his words "had absolutely no effect on him." When Wallace left Ladd in his Heidelberg apartment that evening, he remembers thinking that his teacher and mentor looked "destroyed."

That same day Ladd wrote to Dan Fuller . . . still in some shock from Perrin's review: "I am being forced to rethink my entire program of scholarship . . . [because] my noble ideal of trying to achieve a sympathetic interaction with other circles of theology is a fool's dream." It "is very obvious," Ladd complained, "that my major life work (which this book embodied) is a complete failure." Within just a day or two after his first reading of Perrin's evaluation, Ladd was already interpreting it as a death blow to his goal of earning a place for evangelical scholarship in the broader academic world. It is no exaggeration to say that this was the turning point for Ladd's life and career; his already fragile emotional makeup was damaged beyond repair as a direct result of this single review.<sup>43</sup>

Ladd returned to Fuller Theological Seminary "a broken man, drinking heavily, bitter over his treatment by Perrin, humiliated—at least in his eyes—in front of his friends and colleagues, and suddenly unsure of the direction his career should take."<sup>44</sup> Most of the other reviews of his magnum opus were favorable, but he couldn't shake Perrin's review. He wrote at least 100 letters "to scholars all across the theological spectrum, telling them of his unfair treatment at the hands of Norman Perrin."<sup>45</sup> He descended "into a time of bitter depression and alcohol abuse from which he would never fully recover.

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<sup>41</sup> Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: A Discussion of the Theological Views on the Subject from Schleiermacher Onwards* (New Testament Library; London: SCM, 1963).

<sup>42</sup> Norman Perrin, "Against the Current," *Int* 19 (1965): 228–31. See the analysis in D'Elia, *A Place at the Table*, 136–40.

<sup>43</sup> D'Elia, *A Place at the Table*, 140–41.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 147; cf. 223n134.

In the aftermath of the review Ladd lashed out indiscriminately, even at friends who tried to console him, and decided to abandon the quest that had driven his career from the earliest days.<sup>46</sup>

The idol for which Ladd had apparently devoted so much energy left him in despair:

The last fifteen years of Ladd's life [1966–1982], while giving the appearance of being productive, saw the man tumble through a process of emotional, physical, and spiritual disintegration. The gambles he had made during the course of his academic career had failed to pay off, and he found himself on the one hand a towering figure in the world of evangelical scholarship, while on the other a failure at reaching the only real goal he had ever set for himself. He would not set the world of mainstream biblical scholarship on fire. For all of Ladd's intents and purposes his quest was over; he was left with a far smaller and more parochial audience than he had sought at the start of his career. As a result, this final chapter in Ladd's life was marked by an overwhelming sense of surrender—of his quest for acceptance, of his familial relationships, and even of his longest-held friendships—to the darkest impulses of his character.<sup>47</sup>

Ladd's academic quest was so single-minded that his wife, Winnie, and his two children, Norma and Larry, were lifelong casualties. His relationships with his wife and children were strained at best because he neglected them; he prioritized fulfilling his academic quest over his responsibilities as a husband and father.<sup>48</sup> After a six-month sabbatical in 1961, Ladd returned to Fuller Theological Seminary "impaired": "With his marriage and family in increasing disarray, his work took on even greater significance for his self-image. The relationships closest to him were failing, but he could still—in his eyes—*prove his worth by creating quality scholarship*."<sup>49</sup> "The union between George and Winnie had been an increasingly unhappy one, and in these final years it functioned as a marriage in name only. . . . By the 1970s the situation had deteriorated to the point that Ladd was making plans to divorce his wife, a serious matter in the world of conservative evangelicalism."<sup>50</sup> In 1970, David Hubbard (then president of Fuller) and Daniel Fuller (then dean of the school of theology) reviewed Ladd in light of rumors and complaints about his drinking problem, and "Ladd abruptly asked whether he could divorce his wife without losing his position on the faculty. Hubbard informed Ladd that a divorce under these circumstances would be grounds for dismissal, and they argued the point for some time."<sup>51</sup> Ladd's wife later suffered some strokes; in 1977 "Ladd maintained his speaking schedule while Winnie was ill, and she passed away while he was at an out-of-town speaking engagement."<sup>52</sup> The next year "he assembled a gathering on Fuller's campus" to announce "his engagement to be married to a 'Miss Proctor,' but the wedding never took place."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., xx.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 149–50.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 11, 16, 35–36, 84, 94, 150, 155, 162.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 94 (emphasis added).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

The story of George Ladd is sad. He seems to tragically illustrate how an evangelical academic can place such a premium on academic respectability that it becomes an idol.

## 2.2. Porter's Encouragement to Pursue Academic Respectability

Before I share how Porter encourages scholars and aspiring scholars to pursue academic respectability, it is important to understand Porter's book on its own terms. Porter's publisher is Baylor University Press, and his audience is academics. Porter explains in the second sentence of his introduction that his book "is expressly designed and written for you who wish to become successful academic authors especially in the areas of biblical studies, theology and religion, and the arts and humanities."<sup>54</sup> Porter is not addressing specifically *evangelical* academic authors but *all* academic authors in those fields.

Nevertheless, since Porter is well-known as a NT scholar, I suspect that a disproportionate percentage of his readers are young, aspiring NT scholars and that many of those readers are evangelicals. My main concern about Porter's advice is with reference to those readers. I recall the line in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* where King Lune tells his son Corin, "Never taunt a man save when he is stronger than you: then, as you please."<sup>55</sup> I certainly don't intend to *taunt* Porter but instead to respectfully supplement what he wrote and push back in a few places. From what I know about Porter, he would agree with much of my pushback in §§2.3 and 3.3 and would probably say that he did not articulate those viewpoints because it was not the purpose of his book. Nevertheless, I'm concerned that evangelical academics may read Porter's book and adopt it as a holistic approach to their academic publishing. So this article makes a few of my concerns more explicit.

A motif in *Inking the Deal* is that a primary goal of academic publishing is to *make a name for yourself*. Note especially the phrases I've italicized in the following excerpts:

If . . . you are interested in how to begin to publish successfully in the academic market, and possibly even to *establish a widespread, well-earned, and deserved reputation for yourself* as an acknowledged expert in your field, then I have written this book to try to help you.<sup>56</sup>

At the beginning of my career, I was looking for an opportunity to contribute to such a project *so as to get my name known . . .*<sup>57</sup>

As *your scholarly reputation* grows, you will probably receive other opportunities to deliver scholarly papers by invitation. You may be invited to give a paper at a conference organized around a particular theme, or you may be the featured speaker at a given conference. These invitations provide tremendous opportunities both to *develop your scholarly reputation* and, more importantly, to use the occasion to prepare a manuscript for presentation.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Porter, *Inking the Deal*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (The Chronicles of Narnia; New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 216.

<sup>56</sup> Porter, *Inking the Deal*, 2 (emphasis added).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 35 (emphasis added).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 38 (emphasis added).

I have given over a dozen conference papers in each of several years. I was very busy writing on average one publishable paper a month, but the experience was also very rewarding and helped to *advance my research profile*. My policy, at least for a while in the early days of my career, was to initiate and accept every scholarly paper-giving opportunity that I could. I could not sustain this, but *it started my career on the right track*.<sup>59</sup>

Once *you become known* as a scholar who can produce the goods on demand, other invitations will come.<sup>60</sup>

I say “yes” to virtually every project I am asked to contribute to. Now, I may take it a bit further than others do, but there are many good reasons I have for doing so—besides the obvious one that I continue to *build up my publishing profile*.<sup>61</sup>

In *Inking the Deal*, this motif of making a well-deserved name for yourself is a controlling factor for calculating how to live as an academic. The greater your scholarly name recognition, the better.

This motif could mislead some impressionable, aspiring evangelical scholars. I presume that Porter means that academics should prize a good reputation in the sense of Prov 22:1a (“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches”) or Eccl 7:1a (“A good name is better than precious ointment”).<sup>62</sup> Like a carpenter or baker or business executive, an academic earns a reputation on the basis of their integrity and the quality of their work. And ideally more opportunities come to those with “a good name.”

### 2.3. Pursuing Academic Responsibility over Academic Respectability

Evangelical academics should aim to be academically responsible more than being academically respectable. Nine qualifications are noteworthy:

1. This is what I mean by academic respectability and responsibility: (a) *Academic respectability* is a status that academics achieve when others (especially fellow academics) deeply admire them for their scholarly work. There are various degrees of academic respectability. (b) *Academic responsibility* is a characteristic that academics maintain by doing quality work with integrity. There are various degrees of academic responsibility. For evangelical academics, academic responsibility is a characteristic that they maintain by faithfully doing quality work with integrity for the glory of God by serving Christ’s church (more on this in §3).

2. It is possible to pursue both academic respectability and responsibility, but academic responsibility has priority. The general rule is that the more academically responsible you are, the more academic respectability you should receive. Academic respectability is not inherently bad (recall Prov 22:1a; Eccl 7:1a), but evangelical academics would be wise to focus primarily on pursuing academic responsibility over shrewdly strategizing about how to increase their academic respectability. I don’t mean to commit the fallacy of the excluded middle since it’s possible for faithful evangelical academics to do both. But evangelical academics must proceed cautiously when consciously strategizing about pursuing academic respectability. It is far more important to pursue academic responsibility. “The point of Christian

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 138 (emphasis added).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 147 (emphasis added).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 158 (emphasis added).

<sup>62</sup> Scripture quotations are from the ESV.

scholarship,” concludes Mark Noll, “is not recognition by standards established in the wider culture. The point is to praise God with the mind. Such efforts will lead to the kind of intellectual integrity that sometimes receives recognition. But for the Christian that recognition is only a fairly inconsequential by-product.”<sup>63</sup> I think that both Ladd and Porter would agree with this principle.<sup>64</sup>

3. The ethics of how an academic pursues academic respectability is essentially a matter of motivation. This is a piercing diagnostic question for evangelical academics with reference to their publishing: *What is your motivation for pursuing academic respectability?* Is it so that non-evangelical scholars will listen more carefully and respectfully to conservative evangelical teachings and that you might even persuade them? Is it to increase the prestige of your institution or denomination or movement? Is it to increase the likelihood that prestigious universities will accept your graduate students into their PhD programs? Is it to advance your research profile so that you can climb the academic ranks and perhaps secure a teaching post at a more prestigious school? Is it to earn respect that you desire from certain people?

The issue is not merely whether an evangelical academic writes for (a) non-evangelical academics, (b) evangelical academics, or (c) evangelical lay people. An evangelical academic could write for any of those three groups with a motivation that honors God or does not.

4. Evangelical academics should not give undue weight to the importance of non-evangelicals giving them a place at the table. One of Ladd’s motivations was that he desperately wanted non-evangelicals to view him as a respectable scholarly peer, to give him a place at the table. How does that goal sound in light of 1 Cor 1:18–2:16? “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing” (1 Cor 1:18a). “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). Merely affirming what the Bible teaches can itself be sufficient warrant for non-evangelical academics not to grant an evangelical academic a place at their table.<sup>65</sup>

5. Evangelical academics can sinfully seek academic respectability *inside* evangelicalism or within certain “tribes” of evangelicalism. Ladd apparently gave undue priority to academic respectability *outside* evangelicalism, but “seductive applause” may come from

the conservative constituency of your friends, a narrower peer group but one that, for some people, is equally ensnaring. Scholarship is then for sale: you constantly work on things to bolster the self-identity of your group, to show it is right, to answer all who disagree with it. Some scholars are very indignant with colleagues who, in their estimation, are far too attracted by the applause of unbelieving academic peers, yet

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<sup>63</sup> Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 248.

<sup>64</sup> Porter affirmed this in an email to me on August 11, 2014 after he read a draft of my essay (quoted with his permission): “I am advocating a well-earned respectability that comes from hard work, perseverance, taking the tougher path, etc., etc., rather than opting for the soft option and the accolades that often go with that. This respectability does not necessarily mean approval by others. I believe that responsibility goes hand in hand with respectability—you are right—and I clearly do not think that getting the approval of non-evangelical scholars should be prioritized.”

<sup>65</sup> E.g., in today’s cultural climate, merely affirming what the Bible teaches about homosexuality can be enough to lose one’s “place at the table.” On academic intolerance in the name of tolerance, see D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

these indignant scholars remain blissfully unaware of how much they have become addicted to the applause of conservative bastions that egg them on.<sup>66</sup>

6. Evangelical academics can be guilty of thinking that their value as persons is based on what they have published and what publications they are currently working on. And that could lead them toward the sort of sad fate that Ladd suffered. “Scholars have a tendency to define the value of persons according to their intellectual contributions. This attitude has no place in Christian scholarship.”<sup>67</sup> It can lead to undue pride or even arrogance. Carl F. H. Henry asked precisely the right question: “How on earth can anyone be arrogant when standing beside the cross?”<sup>68</sup>

7. Evangelical academics should prioritize living in a way that honors God above academic respectability. Jesus asked, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36). He might ask academics, “What does it profit an academic to publish prestigious books and lose his wife and children?” Ladd apparently sacrificed his wife and children (and character) on the altar of academic respectability. He seemed to care more about what non-evangelical academics thought of him than the devotion he owed his closest family members. Academic responsibility includes living in a way that honors God. An evangelical academic must balance all of their responsibilities in a healthy way before the Lord. (For more on this, see §3.3.3 below.)

8. It can be beneficial for evangelical academics to responsibly interact with non-evangelical scholarship. (a) Evangelical academics may learn from such interaction. For example, some non-evangelicals do superb philological, text-critical, and historical work. (b) Some destructive scholarship asks good questions but offers bad answers. To engage such work may redirect it. (c) Interacting intelligently and calmly with non-evangelical scholarship, even if it does not convince many (or even any) non-evangelicals, may provide a model for evangelical PhD students and others who are wavering. (d) More broadly, such interaction contributes to some elements of the ongoing Christian apologetic task.

The academic publishing strategy that Porter advocates may be precisely what God calls some evangelical academics to do. My wife, Jenni, and I don’t think that God has called me to focus on working primarily with academically prestigious publishers like Porter has. But I say that with deep respect for what Porter and those like him have accomplished. I have friends who faithfully live in that academic world, and I thank God for them.<sup>69</sup> We should be grateful for scholars who have the opportunity and ability to do what we cannot. God has called these evangelical scholars to a more scholarly vocation. They faithfully interact with scholars from other religious viewpoints at professional conferences such

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<sup>66</sup> Carson, “The Scholar as Pastor,” 89–90.

<sup>67</sup> Bauder, “Part Twelve: The Christian Scholar’s Christian Responsibility,” 3.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1996), 58.

<sup>69</sup> E.g., two are members of my church in Minneapolis, Bethlehem Baptist Church: W. Edward Glenny (professor of New Testament studies and Greek at the University of Northwestern in St. Paul) and Daniel M. Gurtner (professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul). Another example is Robert A. J. Gagnon (associate professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), who has been ruthlessly honest with the biblical and extrabiblical data regarding homosexuality while engaging scholarship at the highest levels (see especially Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2001]).



as the annual one for the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).<sup>70</sup> Personally, I find it more stimulating and edifying to attend the ETS and IBR conferences, but I affirm the value of interacting with non-evangelical scholarship at conferences and in print.

9. Pursuing academic respectability by interacting with non-evangelical scholarship may seduce evangelical academics to compromise. They may compromise truth in order to have “a place at the table.” But our goal is not to have “a place at the table” at any price. It is to be academically responsible, which for evangelicals entails being doctrinally faithful.

I first learned the distinction between being academically respectable and academically responsible from a “novel” that D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge coauthored.<sup>71</sup> In this fictitious account, Professor Paul Woodson (i.e., *Woodbridge + Carson*) writes letters to Timothy Journeyman as Timothy progresses from college to seminary to serving as a rookie pastor. After Timothy transfers from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School to Yale Divinity School, Dr. Woodson writes this:

At the risk of sounding pedantic (though realizing I sometimes come across that way), I doubt very much that evangelicals are wise to pursue academic respectability. What we need is academic responsibility.

There is a world of difference. Elevating academic respectability to the level of controlling *desideratum* is an invitation to theological and spiritual compromise. I do not find Jesus angling to become a member of the Sanhedrin in order to gain a more public voice; I do not find Paul pursuing academic respectability in the categories of his day, for then he could not have written the kinds of things he did about rhetoric (e.g., 1 Corinthians 2:1ff.). Academic *responsibility* is something else. This means that we pursue integrity in debate, that we eschew harangues, that we seek to give an answer to everyone for the hope that is in us, that we persuade people with the truth. Academic respectability, in my vocabulary, has too much self-interest in it for me to trust it; academic responsibility, on the other hand, calls me to discipline and work. . . .

If God were to call you to a life of scholarship, then pursue academic responsibility with your whole heart—not as a new god, but as an offering to God. It may well then be that your work will influence your times and make a difference in the intellectual climate. At very least you will then serve the interests of some younger scholars coming along behind, who will model themselves after you and learn the way of discipleship as scholars. Pursue academic responsibility, and trust God to work out the details of who hears you and what influence you have. Responsible scholarship has far more potential for discovering and buttressing truth and for winning people’s minds than mere respectability anyway. If instead you take the lower road and pursue mere academic respectability, you may gain more plaudits from the world, but it is far more doubtful that you will have the approbation of Heaven. Once in a while there have been scholars who have gained both; it is doubtful if they have ever done so by pursuing respectability.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> For how the SBL views biblical scholarship, see Frank Ritche Ames and Charles William Miller, eds., *Foster Biblical Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Kent Harold Richards* (Biblical Scholarship in North America 24; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), especially the eight essays in “Part 1: Fostering Biblical Scholarship” (3–133).

<sup>71</sup> D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, *Letters Along the Way: A Novel of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993), [http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/carson/1993\\_letters\\_along\\_the\\_way.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/carson/1993_letters_along_the_way.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 174, 176 (emphasis in original); see 173–78, 200–207.

That is why Andreas Köstenberger, one of Carson's former PhD students, wrote a book in order "to discharge a burden: pleading with zealous young theological students not to sacrifice their scholarly integrity for the sake of attaining academic respectability. My message to these individuals is that believing scholarship is not only possible but in fact is more virtuous than critical, unbelieving, or supposedly objective academic work."<sup>73</sup>

And that is why Carson warns,

Beware the seduction of applause. . . . [I]t can come from an academic direction. To be seduced by applause means that for you it becomes more important to be thought learned than to be learned. The respect of peers who write erudite journal articles becomes more immediately pressing than the Lord's approval. Obviously there is no grace in simply irritating academic colleagues, in confusing contending for the faith with being contentious about the faith. Yet if it becomes more important to you to be published by Oxford University Press or Cambridge University Press than to be absolutely straight with the gospel, if you shy away from some topics for no other reason than that these topics are unpopular in your guild, then you are in the gravest spiritual danger.<sup>74</sup>

I had to wrestle with this right out of the gate when I tried to find a publisher for my PhD dissertation on Paul's use of the OT in Rom 11:34–35. A prestigious European monograph series agreed to publish it on the condition that I revise it so that I didn't argue that the prophet Isaiah was the sole author of the book of Isaiah. It was tempting to do that. I almost rationalized to myself that it wasn't entirely crucial that I include that argument for my main thesis to stand, but the argument was significant enough that my thesis would be weaker without it. So I decided to go with a less prestigious publisher (though still a good one).<sup>75</sup> I don't regret it.

Evangelical academics should aim to be academically responsible more than being academically respectable. This directly relates to my third and final reflection.

### ***3. Evangelical Scholarship Is Ultimately about Glorifying God by Serving Christ's Church***

Evangelical scholarship is not about establishing your reputation as a respected scholar. Ultimately, it is about glorifying God by serving Christ's church. That should have implications for an academic's attitude toward popular-level books.

#### **3.1. Ladd's Attitude toward Books for Evangelicals**

In Ladd's first decade as a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, he became well-known among evangelicals as the NT scholar who refuted dispensationalism and defended historic premillennialism. But he was not passionate about writing those books and articles. He wrote them out of exasperation.

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<sup>73</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Excellence: The Character of God and the Pursuit of Scholarly Virtue* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 24.

<sup>74</sup> Carson, "The Scholar as Pastor," 84–85.

<sup>75</sup> Andrew David Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012).

He was frustrated that he had to (a) address such petty issues at all and (b) postpone research and writing for what he really cared about, namely, writing his magnum opus. And this magnum opus would have two distinctives from his previous books: (1) rather than targeting evangelical academics or evangelical lay people, it would target non-evangelical academics, and (2) rather than having an evangelical publisher, it would have a secular publisher.

On June 28, 1952, Ladd wrote a letter to Harold Ockenga, then president of Fuller Theological Seminary. The faculty had planned to contribute to a book on the inspiration of the Bible, a controversial issue at the time on which evangelicals needed clarity. But Ladd wrote to Ockenga in order to explain why the project derailed again. This portion of Ladd's letter reveals his philosophy of evangelical academic publishing:

One of the greatest contributions to Evangelical Scholarship which the Seminary can make is the production of monographs which will gain the recognition of technical scholars of all schools. I think you will agree with the Committee that few of the productions of the Faculty have been of this magnitude. Witness to this fact the failure to gain recognition of any of the major publishing houses. We have, to be sure, "arrived" so far as a good part of the Evangelical world is concerned, but hardly so far as American Biblical Theological Scholarship as a whole is concerned. We are not producing articles which are appearing in the standard theological journals to any appreciable degree. We seriously question the strategy of asking men to lay aside projects which are aimed in this direction and which would bring general scholarly recognition to the Seminary, for a project whose result is at best uncertain.<sup>76</sup>

"Ladd's work in moderate and liberal circles was designed to build the stature and respectability of evangelicals beyond their parochial borders and to help them regain their place in the world of ideas."<sup>77</sup>

All of Ladd's books prior to his 1964 magnum opus target evangelicals. In a letter that Ladd wrote in 1963, this is what he calls those books: "*only a by-product of my more important studies*, which involve interaction and dialogue with the broad stream of Biblical criticism."<sup>78</sup> D'Elia adds, "The engagement with dispensationalism had been a detour at best, but in reality it was more of a negative distraction."<sup>79</sup>

### **3.2. Porter's Attitude toward Academics Who Do Not Share His Academic Publishing Philosophy**

Porter argues, "The nature, type, and number of publications in recognized monograph series and prestigious refereed journals are what truly establish a research profile."<sup>80</sup> So Porter recommends that scholars say "yes" to virtually every invitation to contribute to monograph series, prestigious journals, and professional conferences.<sup>81</sup> "I am a bit obsessive-compulsive," he admits, "and so I am obsessed with

<sup>76</sup> D'Elia, *A Place at the Table*, 41.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 127 (emphasis added).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Porter, *Inking the Deal*, 9.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 142, 147, 157–60.

the challenge of writing and publishing one more thing, especially in a new area.”<sup>82</sup> How does Porter feel about academics who do not share his academic publishing philosophy?

### 3.2.1. *Porter’s Attitude toward Academics Who Write Popular-level Books*

Porter shows little respect toward academics who write popular-level books:

Writing this book does not *necessarily* mean that I do not have respect for those who write for a popular audience (I do have an opinion, but that’s another story). The criteria for publishing popular writing, however, have much more to do with finding subjects that are hot at the time, knowing the right people in the publishing business, timing the market, *dumbing down the content of one’s work, and then dumbing it down again*. Most of all, whereas it may pay you well as an author, it makes little to no contribution to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of a subject. If you are interested in learning how to write for the popular book market, or the popular press, I suggest that you . . . forget your most challenging and provocative ideas, develop a slick prose style, and cultivate your media image. If, instead, you are interested in how to begin to publish successfully in the academic market, and possibly even to establish a widespread, well-earned, and deserved reputation for yourself as an acknowledged expert in your field, then I have written this book to try to help you.<sup>83</sup>

Once scholars have written popular-level books, they cross the line and lose Porter’s respect. Popular-level books are “ephemeral” and a waste of time and effort:

[L]et me mention a regrettable downward spiral occurring in some academic areas. The unfortunate movement is the inclination to downgrade a subject area to the level of popular interest, either as part of a career move or in response to populist (and monetary?) pressures. In many fields, there is a tendency for a young scholar to make an initial academic contribution and then to revert soon after to publishing popular-level treatments of the subject. There are, of course, some justifiable reasons for writing popular works of this sort, but much of the time it marks *the passing of a point of no return regarding serious scholarship*. A series of popular treatments, one after another, can easily result in a scholar becoming a popularizer, and serious and lasting scholarship is the victim. The justification that the “person on the street” needs high-quality exposure to such work is no justification at all when we notice that such curiosity is never satisfied but always demands more such treatments, not for knowledge’s sake (otherwise intellectual levels would be elevated) but simply out of prurient interest. Another consequence is that it is often hard for such a person to make the hard return to scholarly research, to say nothing of *the time and effort wasted on such ephemeral publications*. Such publications often do not even stay in print long enough to be reviewed, and even if they are, they appeal to the lowest common level of knowledge and do not advance scholarship. I must admit that I have written several popular volumes. It is wonderful to have the adulation and recognition that often accompany such efforts—one such book of mine was sold for movie rights and made

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 1 (emphasis in original).

into a documentary for public television!—but this is to be *cursed by the commonplace*. Certainly such efforts should not be encouraged or rewarded by such things as tenure or scholarly recognition.<sup>84</sup>

Academics who regularly write popular-level books “have sold out”:

One of the odd things about recent scholarship in some fields is that there is a small number of guru figures whose names are commonly known but who may not be that expert any more (if they were to begin with), since *they have sold out* to writing trade books or writing for very popular audiences or even writing on anything and everything that comes along, whether they have a legitimate or worthwhile opinion or not.<sup>85</sup>

Popular-level books have “little lasting value”:

There are some who believe that popular appeal is the measure of success. I seriously doubt that this is true, because very little of the popular so-called scholarship is really innovative or creative scholarship. It is instead usually a summary of received opinions, often toned down for more general consumption, and it *has little lasting value*.<sup>86</sup>

Popular-level books have virtually no scholarly value. They are barely worth adding to an author’s *curriculum vitae*:

I divide the publications [on my *curriculum vitae*] into the following categories: authored books, edited books, journal articles, chapters in books, dictionary and encyclopedia articles, Web site articles and protocols, translations, book reviews, and conference papers and lectures. *You can add a section for popular-level publications, if you wish*. This list essentially reflects the order of *decreasing importance . . .*<sup>87</sup>

Porter seems to present two broad categories of publication: academic and popular-level. Porter prefers the former: “I personally focus on writing hard-core academic articles that appear in technical journals or books, and books in monograph series that mostly only academic libraries can afford.”<sup>88</sup> This may give readers the impression that he places all other types of publication in the popular-level category, especially since he does not define what he means by popular-level publications but merely contrasts them with academic-level publications. Although Porter does not make this explicit, I presume that he has in mind not evangelical academics who write books that are accessible for the church but rather academics who sacrifice academic integrity for money by playing to the cynical popular-level publishing culture.

Porter is not entirely against popular-level books since he has written some himself. And it is important to remember that *Inking the Deal* is explicitly about academic publishing. But it is not difficult to understand why evangelical academics might wonder, “Does Porter have a category for academics strategically and nobly writing for the church and not for the scholarly guild?” Porter surely must have such a category since he has written such publications himself, but it is difficult to reach that conclusion

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 19 (emphasis added).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 141 (emphasis added).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 154 (emphasis added).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 172 (emphasis added).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 1.

solely on the basis of reading *Inking the Deal*, where his attitude toward academics writing popular-level books is overwhelmingly negative.

Nothing Porter writes in *Inking the Deal* explicitly demonstrates that he is a Christian who writes to serve the church. Everything he writes could come from the pen of an academic atheist. This is not to say, of course, that Porter does not desire to serve the church through his publications, but readers would not discern that from *Inking the Deal*. Again, it is important to evaluate *Inking the Deal* for what it is (see the opening two paragraphs of §2.2 above). My concern is that evangelical academics not read this book as a holistic approach to their publishing strategy. The target audience is academics in general, not *evangelical* academics.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.2.2. Porter's Attitude toward Academics Who Do Not Publish Much

Why do some academics not publish much? “The first reason that I have uncovered,” Porter shares, “is that the scholar is simply lazy. There are all sorts of factors that may contribute to this laziness, but, at the end of the day, such a scholar simply is not interested enough—because of holding a secure position or whatever—to get motivated enough to do anything of significance.”<sup>90</sup> Porter is definitely right about *many* academics; they simply need to work with more diligence and discipline.<sup>91</sup> But he doesn't present a category for academics who have good reasons for not publishing much.

Porter is a publishing machine, and he doesn't expect other academics to match his prolific output. But he has high publishing standards for what being an academic entails, and he reveals his attitude toward academics who do not publish much:

The ones who really do not want me to reveal what I am about to write are your fellow academics *who would prefer to sit on the sidelines and enjoy their comfortable, nonpublishing academic lives.*<sup>92</sup>

There is probably some truth to the notion that only 20 percent of the scholars in a profession produce about 80 percent of the significant published scholarship. I would

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<sup>89</sup> After reading a draft of my essay, Porter shared this feedback with me via email on August 11, 2014 (quoted with his permission): “You are right that I did not address my *Inking the Deal* to evangelicals in particular, but I think that that is one of the problems that I have with many of my fellow evangelicals—not that so much writing is so consciously and overtly evangelical in orientation but that it tries to claim (or appears to try to claim) to be the same kind of scholarship and to make the same contribution. I have also written some popular things that have been well-received (books, study Bible commentaries, etc.), but am still able to do what I think is solid work in a wide range of settings. Regarding some of the popular writing that others may generate, I think the enduring contribution of such writing to the church is probably minimal—as we witness in much of what goes on in contemporary evangelical church life—but that is really beside the point. My book was not really trying to address that particular issue—but simply the one where some people wish they were doing more, find it hard to do so, have a variety of second-best options for them, and then wonder why they have not accomplished more of what they really wanted to. I am not necessarily saying that writing for popular markets is always second best—but it is if the person could have done first-rate scholarship but never does and never figures out why they didn't.”

<sup>90</sup> Porter, *Inking the Deal*, 161.

<sup>91</sup> See the manuscript for Scot McKnight's motivating talk “The Professor as Scholar: Exiled to Eden,” Address for All-Faculty Colloquium at North Park University, 2005, <http://wp.production.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/files/2014/08/ExiledEden.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Porter, *Inking the Deal*, 4 (emphasis added).

have thought that most graduate schools would want their students to aspire to more than *mediocrity*, however.<sup>93</sup>

I am constantly amazed at how many young scholars will beg off on publishing opportunities because they say they are too busy. *Too busy with what?* I interpret this to mean that they are *unwilling to give up a few hours of edifying television or jogging or paintball in order to secure a publication*—often one that even pays a little money.<sup>94</sup>

Porter also thinks little of professors who become academic administrators:

There is an unfortunate tendency for a number of scholars whose careers stall somewhere around associate professor level—because they probably recognize that they may not readily achieve full professor and that they certainly will not receive the kind of academic fame and renown that they believe that they deserve—to slide over into academic administration. This is virtually always represented as a promotion, or an important career shift, or an answer to a call to an equally productive task. *Let's not kid ourselves.* The vast majority of such “scholars” (*I use the term guardedly*) are admitting that *they cannot cut it as major players in the academic and intellectual world, and so they shift to an area where the working hours are saner, the intellectual pressures are lighter, and they can have power even if they do not perform well in terms of contribution to scholarship.*<sup>95</sup>

Porter is surely on target for *some* professors who become administrators. But is there not a category for academics whom God has gifted at administration and whom God has called to serve him that way?

### 3.3. Glorifying God by Publishing What Serves Christ's Church

#### 3.3.1. Writing for Evangelicals

Ladd thought that writing for evangelicals was not nearly as important and strategic as writing for the broader academic world. That attitude has spread among evangelical academics. I've observed it in evangelical academics a generation later.

Some years ago I invited an evangelical scholar who teaches at a leading evangelical liberal arts college to contribute to a book I was editing. A large evangelical publisher would publish the book. The professor replied with kindness and warmth but respectfully declined my offer, noting that he was working on a monograph for a prestigious academic publisher. The professor added, “Moreover, I am more and more in my scholarship trying to commend evangelical, orthodox, historic Christianity to those outside the camp rather than join in-house disputes.”

I understand that strategy and respect that God calls some evangelical scholars to excel at it. For example, I thank God for evangelical academics like Kevin Vanhoozer (who is not the professor I refer to above). I'm so grateful that I'm on the same “team” as Vanhoozer. He engages with non-evangelicals brilliantly and winsomely. That's valuable. There's a place for that. It can be strategic for evangelical

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 56 (emphasis added).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 146 (emphasis added).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 168 (emphasis added).

academics to work with academically prestigious publishers like Cambridge University Press or Oxford University Press.

Some evangelical academics shrewdly adopt a both-and approach: sometimes they write primarily for evangelicals, other times primarily for non-evangelicals, and sometimes for both at the same time. Not every evangelical academic is gifted at this degree of diversity.<sup>96</sup> In other words, if some evangelical academics write almost exclusively for non-evangelical academics and if others write almost exclusively for evangelicals, there should be no problem with that if (a) neither group despises the other and (b) they preserve the ultimate goal, namely, that evangelical scholarship is ultimately about glorifying God by serving Christ's church.

So should evangelical academics adopt Ladd's attitude toward publishing for evangelicals? No. There is something much bigger than making a name for yourself or even making a name for evangelicalism. God is making his manifold wisdom known to the angels "through the church" (Eph 3:10). Publishing for the church is a delight because serving the church is a way to glorify God.

Where does an attitude like Ladd's come from? My guess is that evangelical students pick it up from evangelical academics whom they deeply respect as well as from being in non-evangelical academic environments, especially while earning their PhD. I've heard several professors at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School lament that some of their brightest students graduated with a master's degree and then discarded doctrines like the Bible's inerrancy while working on their PhDs at prestigious universities. Ben Witherington testifies,

I have seen young Christian scholars, striving so hard to be recognized not merely in their school but in their guild, that they completely lose focus on what led them to pursue such a calling in the first place. Sadly, I have even seen young conservative scholars largely give up their orthodox faith in order to be better accepted by other scholars and colleagues whom they admire.<sup>97</sup>

The educational landscape looks very different now than it did when Ladd was a student at Harvard. Ladd didn't have many (if any) options to pursue a high-level PhD from an evangelical school. Nor did men like John Piper and D. A. Carson a generation later. But today it is very different. There are several evangelical schools with robust PhD programs in which students can get every bit as good of an education as they can outside evangelicalism.

In the introduction to this article, I qualify, "I didn't earn a PhD from a prestigious secular university." I earned two PhDs, but in the secular world those degrees aren't terribly impressive. In God's providence my first PhD is a theology degree from Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. And I'm not embarrassed; I'm grateful for that school. My second PhD is in New Testament exegesis and theology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. My mentor was D. A. Carson.<sup>98</sup> From the standpoint of prestige in the evangelical academic world, going from BJU to Trinity was like going

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<sup>96</sup>E.g., N. T. Wright, one of the most influential biblical scholars today, writes with exceptional skill at all three levels.

<sup>97</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Is There a Doctor in the House? An Insider's Story and Advice on Becoming a Bible Scholar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 83. Cf. G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 20–21.

<sup>98</sup> Carson was one of Porter's professors for his MA at Trinity, and he later served as Porter's external examiner for his PhD dissertation at Sheffield. Carson accepted Porter's revised dissertation as volume 1 of the Studies in Biblical Greek series that he edits (Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the NT*).



from high school to Harvard. But Trinity is still an *evangelical* school; it's not Cambridge or Oxford or Harvard or Yale or Princeton or Duke. And I'm not embarrassed about that either. I am thoroughly satisfied with my formal education, and I don't think I lost out on much at all. And one attitude I'm grateful I didn't pick up along the way is that writing for a primarily evangelical audience is a waste of time.

### 3.3.2. *Writing Popular-Level Books and Articles*

I warmly affirm the value of writing works at the highest academic level—the sorts of books and articles that Porter has written. No argument there at all. I also agree with Porter that many popular-level books have very little value because they are not grounded in solid research. Publishers are increasingly publishing books not based on the merit of their content but on what will sell.<sup>99</sup>

But the “academic publishing only” approach is an emperor wearing no clothes. John Piper testifies about this after earning a DTheol from the University of Munich in Germany:

What I saw in the theological educational system and state-church life in Germany confirmed most of what I did not want to become. Here were world-class scholars, whom everyone on the cutting edge in America were oohing and ahing over, teaching in a way that was exegetically nontransferable, insubordinate toward the Scriptures, and indifferent to the life of the church. I attended university classes where nineteen-year-old ministerial students were soaked in every form of faddish criticism, while the tools for mining the gold of Scripture were untouched and the taste buds for enjoying its honey were unawakened. . . . [T]he exegetical methods I saw in Germany could not come close to the theological and methodological goldmine that I had found in seminary. I used my Fuller-taught method of observation and analysis to research and write an acceptable dissertation, and then left Germany as quickly as I could. I did not have to work hard to protect myself from this system. I saw it up close, and from the inside, and found early on that this global king of biblical scholarship had no clothes on.<sup>100</sup>

Ultimately the point of evangelical scholarship (as with anything else) is to glorify God. And producing publications with academically prestigious publishers is not the only way for evangelical academics to glorify God.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, they glorify God by serving Christ's church. This includes writing technical academic works, *and* it includes more accessible works that people without advanced formal training can understand. Popular-level (and semi-popular-level) books and articles are not a

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<sup>99</sup> Scot McKnight wrote this to me in an email on July 26, 2014 (shared with his permission): “Publishing has changed dramatically. Publishers never asked about platform in my early years; nor did they have as much in-house review—they farmed out manuscripts to professors to judge the merits of a book (I read probably 20 manuscripts for publishers in my early years at TEDS; then they went internal, and it made a huge difference). Now Publishers want to know what will sell, and if it sells, they'll publish it (not all, of course, but that's the general drift).”

<sup>100</sup> John Piper, “The Pastor as Scholar: A Personal Journey and the Joyful Place of Scholarship,” in *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry* (ed. David Mathis and Owen Strachan; Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 41–42.

<sup>101</sup> I wish that in *Inking the Deal* Porter would have at least expressed the attitude that Paul does with reference to singleness and marriage: “I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another” (1 Cor 7:7).

waste of time for academics. Evangelical academics are uniquely qualified to serve Christ's church by sharing God's truth in a way that God's people can understand.

I appreciate the attitude of I. Howard Marshall, an evangelical New Testament professor at Aberdeen University since 1979 (emeritus since 1999):

I have also tried to write on a level that would be helpful to people in the church; sometimes one has to write things on an academic level and that is what counts in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), but at the same time it seems to me that those of us who are Christians studying the Bible have a very strong responsibility towards the church to produce what will be helpful particularly to preachers, and also to the church generally.<sup>102</sup>

I also appreciate how Ben Witherington III embraces a both-and approach to writing for both the academy and the church:

The question is: What sort of scholar do you want to be? Do you want to be a scholar who is mainly capable of talking to other scholars in your field? Or do you feel called to a broader ministry, writing for [1] laypeople and [2] students as well as [3] scholars? I have personally tried to engage at all three levels of writing, but it takes skill to write with clarity at all levels of discourse. Blessed are those who know both the possibilities and the limitations of their writing gifts and callings.

. . . [I]f I were teaching mainly in secular universities, a good deal of my publishing would *not* be viewed as "serious scholarly work," even though such an evaluation would be wrong and unfair—and frankly pejorative. . . . I have known situations where a person was denied tenure not because he had not done some "serious academic publishing," but because he had *also* done more popular level writing.

. . . Research by a Christian is never done just for its own sake, or even just to advance knowledge in a given field. It is done in service to the Lord *and to his church*.<sup>103</sup>

I thank God for the many evangelical academics who have written academically informed popular-level books and articles that God has used to change my life. In §1.3 above, I mention that God has used John Piper, D. A. Carson, Wayne Grudem, Douglas J. Moo, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Mark Dever (among others) to strongly influence me. They initially influenced me through their popular-level books. I am grateful that they didn't (and don't) follow Porter's advice in *Inking the Deal* in this respect.

For example, here is how Tom Schreiner recently exhorted a room full of evangelical academics:

We can begin to do our scholarship for the sake of the scholarly community instead of for the glory of God and for the good of the church of Jesus Christ. Satan is very clever. He can take a good thing like scholarship and turn us away from ministering to the church. I'm not saying that every scholarly endeavor has to be immediately relevant to what is happening at church. Most churches wouldn't understand a dissertation on textual criticism. But such work must still be understood as a ministry to the church of Jesus Christ. Samuel Tregelles, the great textual critic, viewed his work "in the full belief

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<sup>102</sup> Carl R. Trueman and I. Howard Marshall, "Interview with Professor Howard Marshall," *Them* 26, no. 1 (2000): 49. For an explanation of the RAE, see Porter, *Inking the Deal*, 7–9.

<sup>103</sup> Witherington, *Is There a Doctor in the House?*, 82–83 (emphasis in original).

that it would be for the service of God, by serving His Church.” I believe that the best scholarly work is needed for the sake of the church. I have seen bright young people from our churches attracted to what is contrary to Scripture because they believed that scholarship contradicts what we teach. So, we want to teach our students that the best scholarship, the most persuasive scholarship, demonstrates the beauty and the truth of the biblical message. We can get distracted, though, by desiring the praise of the scholarly community instead of thinking of the edification of the church. Jesus indicted the Pharisees of his day with words that have always spoken very powerfully to me by saying in John 5:44, “How can you believe? While accepting glory from one another, you don’t seek the glory that comes from the only God.” If we seek the praise that comes from our peers, we will no longer seek the praise that comes from God. And when that happens, we are no longer serving God and the church of Jesus Christ but ourselves.<sup>104</sup>

After finishing my PhD at Trinity, I had some options to teach full-time. But instead I spent four years working full-time on the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*.<sup>105</sup> Its audience is as general as the target audience for the NIV itself: the English-speaking world. The main reason I agreed to give four years full-time (and a fifth year part-time) of my life to this project is that my work with the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* may influence more people than the rest of my other publications combined. It is a worthy, strategic cause. And God willing I plan to contribute more popular-level and semi-popular-level works in the future if I sense that it would glorify God by serving Christ’s church.

### 3.3.3. *Shalom*

In §3.2.2 above, I quote Porter remarking, “I am constantly amazed at how many young scholars will beg off on publishing opportunities because they say they are too busy. *Too busy with what?* I interpret this to mean that they are *unwilling to give up a few hours of edifying television or jogging or paintball in order to secure a publication*—often one that even pays a little money.”<sup>106</sup>

“Too busy with what?” One of my gifted and godly friends illustrates an answer to that question. After much thought and prayer, he recently asked to be released from a highly desirable publishing opportunity: writing a detailed exegetical and theological commentary for a well-known publisher on the book of the Bible that is his primary area of expertise. He declined for good reasons. “Too busy with what?” Too busy with other important responsibilities: (a) loving and leading his wife like Christ does the church; (b) investing in his six children (three of whom he and his wife recently adopted) to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord;<sup>107</sup> (c) investing in his students by shepherding

<sup>104</sup> Schreiner delivered this at a reception on November 19, 2013 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. I am quoting from Schreiner’s manuscript (shared with his permission).

<sup>105</sup> Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming in fall 2015. It has completely fresh content from new contributors. D. A. Carson is general editor; the associate editors are T. Desmond Alexander, Richard S. Hess, and Douglas J. Moo; and as the assistant editor, I’ve managed the project and helped copyedit all of the notes and essays for content and style.

<sup>106</sup> Porter, *Inking the Deal*, 146 (emphasis added).

<sup>107</sup> Porter is a remarkably disciplined and prolific author and editor. I don’t want to take anything away from that. He has done this while serving full-time as President of McMaster Divinity College since 2001, and shortly before that he served for six years as a head of department in a growing theology and religious studies department in a British university. But perhaps one of the reasons for (1) his attitude toward other academics who don’t pub-

them outside of class and giving them high-quality instruction in class; (d) serving his local church, especially by using his teaching gifts each week; (e) serving other churches in the United States and internationally; and (f) working on other strategic publications. And he plans to write a commentary on that book of the Bible in due course.

We need *shalom*. “*Shalom* experienced,” describes Tim Keller, “is multidimensional, complete well-being—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual; it flows from all one’s relationships being put right—with God, with(in) oneself, and with others.”<sup>108</sup>

We are finite creatures, so we can only do so much. And not every academic is wired to be a publishing machine: “God assigns hugely different gifts,” D. A. Carson observes, “so that one of the things this book must not do is give the impression that there is only one legitimate path to working out pastoral and scholarly vocations.”<sup>109</sup> Not everyone can say “yes” to every single invitation to write a book or article or review or conference paper. There are more important things in life than publishing. Praise God for fellow evangelical academics who are publishing machines, but that is not what God calls every evangelical academic to be.

More importantly, it may not be wise stewardship for every evangelical academic to focus single-mindedly on publishing more and more and more. “I believe,” shares Dane Ortlund, “academic publishing easily becomes a sort of soul-nicotine that gets us up out of bed in the morning and makes us extremely productive but which is not functioning out of spiritual health.”<sup>110</sup> When you stand before the Lord, he is not going to ask you how many academic books and articles you published—though your faithfulness as a *responsible* academic will certainly be part of the equation. What you will want to hear is simply, “Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt 25:21, 23).

### 4. A Closing Prayer

Thank you, Father, for evangelical scholarship. It’s a gift to your people, and we’re grateful for it. Thank you for gifting us with such a wealth of published books and articles, especially compared to what was available just 75 years ago.

For us Christ-followers who are academics, would you help us aim to be academically responsible more than being academically respectable? Save us from ourselves—from our vanity and pride. Give us grace not to be seduced by “a place at the table.” Help us care most about what you think, not what other scholars think. We want to work heartily and sincerely as for you, not other people. Help us not to idolize our work. We want to be good stewards. Give us grace to work hard without being lazy or overworking.

And would you help us always remember that our scholarship is ultimately about glorifying you by serving Christ’s church? We want to use the gifts and training you’ve given us to make much of you. We want to build up the body of Christ, for whom your

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lish nearly as much as he does and (2) his lack of putting publishing in perspective to more important responsibilities like rearing one’s children is related to his personal context: in the providence of God, Porter did not marry until his mid-thirties, and he has no children.

<sup>108</sup> “Shalom,” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

<sup>109</sup> Carson, “The Scholar as Pastor,” 73.

<sup>110</sup> Email to Andy Naselli, July 18, 2014, shared with the author’s permission.

Son died. We want to spread a passion for your supremacy in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

Amen.