

Seminar on Faith and the Academic Profession: Personal Recollection and Reaffirmation

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Abstract

In this invited essay, Scott B. Key, PhD, emeritus professor of philosophy at California Baptist University, reflects on the development and implementation of the Seminar on Faith in the Academic Profession (SOFAP). This seminar provided faculty development in thinking Christianly and developing faith integration practices.

Key words: SOFAP; faith integration

Introduction

I began meeting regularly with Dr. Gayne J. Anacker, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, at California Baptist University, during the 2004 to 2006 school years. As our conversations developed one central issue began rising to the surface. I can express our concern as an open-ended question: What can we do to help create a more robust process to help newly hired faculty understand more deeply how to think about their faith as Christian academics in such a way that it would impact their classes, their engagement with students, and their research?

A personal note will help answer why this is the question I passionately pursued. Beginning in 1971 my post-baccalaureate academic journey was a consistent effort to learn how to understand the assumptions that propel thinking toward the conclusions that we reach. Under the guidance of a series of highly educated Christian thinkers I began to understand the ways the Biblical text challenges contemporary assumptions about reality. I also came to understand how the intellectual developments of Modernity are driven, in large measure, by the conviction that autonomous human reason and experience, within a “disenchanted” natural world of material forces, could fashion an environment for human flourishing superior to any approach to reality still encumbered by theism.

The personal focus of my post-baccalaureate education was to dismantle the influence of Modernity on my thinking and begin the conscious effort to learn how to think from within the framework provided by the Biblical revelation. Although that effort is still ongoing, I became increasingly aware of the philosophical journey of Modernity and the deep ways those ideas influenced the American church and how, in turn, the influence of

Modernity contributed to the fragmented theology of ordinary Christians in the pew.

After my post-graduate education, a pastorate, and campus ministry experience, in 1988 I came to California Baptist College. I soon began to realize that even at CBC the ongoing effort to encourage faculty to approach their courses from the vantage point of the Biblical worldview and “integrate” (the catch phrase used at the time) faith and their discipline in the classroom was under threat. Mentoring new faculty was occurring through an informal process, but it was “fraying” at the edges. The rapid growth of CBC, justifying university status, challenged the informal process of “integration.” By 2004 it was clear to me that a new structure was needed to address these issues.

As we talked, I learned that Dr. Anacker, although he traveled a different path both academically and theologically, had come to the very same conclusions about CBU’s informal “integration” process. This realization served as the catalyst for the emergence of a new effort to stem the tide of secularism and provide a means by which faculty could learn how to “think Christianly” about their discipline and their world.

The Problem

For the sake of clarity, it is important to sketch more fully the dimensions of the problem we were trying to solve. As I centered my work on the sub-disciplines of the History of Philosophy, Axiology, and the various dimensions of 20th Century Philosophy, I came to realize, ever more clearly, that philosophical assumptions lay at the core of the “faith decay” evident in the story of Christian Higher Education in America. I was deeply moved by the analysis of James Burtchae II in his work *The Dying of the Light: The*

Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Roots and the excellent work of the historian George Marsden.

These works (and others listed below in the attached bibliography) provide the support for the conclusion reached by Dr. Anacker in his proposal, dated January 29, 2007, to Dr. Jonathan Parker, Provost of CBU: "In short, secularism is now the default setting of the various academic disciplines and their graduate programs." This conclusion is amply supported by Charles Taylor's massive analysis entitled: *A Secular Age*.

If our analysis of the problem was correct, and I believe it was, then it is important to understand the practical impact of this academic and cultural shift on the thinking of highly educated Christian academics beginning their tenure at a Christian University. My personal conversations with some of the new faculty that began their CBU academic careers between 1995 and 2006 suggested to me significant dimensions of the problem. My observations here are based upon informal conversations at the beginning of their service as CBU faculty and later conversations that developed in "Faculty Learning Communities" in subsequent years. I will list the issues in ascending level of complexity and difficulty related to the capacity of individual faculty members to learn how to "think Christianly" within their area of academic specialty. I will use the phrase "thinking Christianly" in this "recollection." Although "integration of faith and learning" was the code word used for encouraging Christian academics to approach their various disciplines from the vantage point of the Christian worldview when I began serving at CBC in 1988, I soon began to doubt the metaphor's power to convey either the problem or the solution to "faith drift." The metaphor suggests that if you have a beaker of poison and a beaker of the finest wine possible then you can mix the two liquids in a third beaker without causing any harm. When I used this word picture with faculty, they immediately acknowledged the issue and understood that, for example, merely praying at the start of class does not entail a mature understanding of the solution. Based upon St. Paul's call for believers in Romans 12:1-2 to be transformed by the renewal of your mind (nous or reason) merely mixing two beakers of liquid is not sufficient. "Thinking Christianly" is intended to convey the willingness to begin the life-long process of re-thinking the assumptions of your discipline and the methodology emerging within your discipline in light of the deepest insights provided by the revelation of God contained in the Bible and the whole life of the church concerning the nature and purpose of "reality." New wine requires new wineskins. This is hard work. This is necessary work if Christian Higher Education is going to

survive in a Post-Christian and Post-Modern world driven by the assumptions of throughgoing secularity.

With this in mind, I must clarify the dimensions of the problem faced by first-year faculty. For brevity's sake I will list and succinctly state the issues without elaboration. Much more can be said and must be explored if these issues are to be fully understood but I am trying to articulate the impetus for the initiation of the Seminar on Faith in the Academic Profession (SOFAP) process and provide justification for its subsequent development.

1. Many faculty, but not all, struggle with the disparity between the level of understanding provided by a terminal degree in their discipline and a High School level understanding of Biblically rooted theology. The tension caused by this discrepancy tends to be "resolved" by applying discipline specific methods and assumptions to adjust or explain questions arising from an insufficient understanding of theology rather than digging deeply within the theological resources of the church.
2. Academic "silos" inhibit deep conversation with colleagues and exacerbate the struggle to address theological or philosophical issues embedded within the challenge of "Thinking Christianly." Pedagogical traditions within the fragmented academic culture of the contemporary university also create barriers to the development of new teaching skills based upon a growing understanding of the learning process and a recovery of Christian contributions to the understanding of education and learning.
3. Some faculty have been hurt by the inability of the Church to understand the struggles of academics in high-level programs in pursuit of a terminal degree and the explicit or implicit critique that such a pursuit is not within the calling of a Christian believer. The personal pain caused by these experiences produces a "scarring" that makes the call to "thinking Christianly" about their discipline difficult to hear and almost impossible to navigate without assistance by caring colleagues.
4. High-level graduate programs often produce individuals driven to succeed in their discipline at all costs. This attitude makes service to students difficult, service to teaching challenging, and service to a Christian university committed to a Kingdom vision rather than purely academic goals almost incomprehensible. When individual academic success within a discipline under the totalizing sway of post-modern and post-Christian secularism becomes the ultimate goal of one's

professional pursuits then learning how to “think Christianly” is impossible.

5. The expectations and anxieties of the first year of teaching in a new institution can become for faculty so daunting and overwhelming that all efforts to help them consider “Thinking Christianly” about their discipline and their students seems impossible. This “existential” crisis can derail all efforts to guide the construction of a stronger foundation, philosophically and theologically, for a lifetime of teaching within Christian Higher Education. In some cases, neither introductory discussions of the tasks of “thinking Christianly” nor carefully constructed examples of classroom learning methodologies had any effect on the paralyzing anxiety about institutional expectations.
6. The understanding (critically examined or assumed) of the nature of the human is the touchstone issue or fulcrum point on which both the philosophical/theological assumptions and pedagogical assumptions rest. For some professors the view of the human determines all the functional assumptions of their philosophical and theological “furniture” and all aspects of their pedagogical skill-set, to such a degree, that neither philosophical nor pedagogical presuppositions can be illumined by Biblical insight until their notions about what it means to be human are “transformed by the renewal of your (our) mind” by the work of the Holy Spirit in submission to His Word.
7. When the disparity between disciplinary expertise and theological understanding is most impactful it illumines a set of theological understandings that inhibit the steps necessary to learn how to “think Christianly” and communicate a Biblically informed perspective in the classroom. On this particular issue, I am only going to list the concerns that most frequently emerged in my conversations with faculty. These are complex dimensions of the theological conversation and a full examination of each one of these lies outside of the scope of this paper. However, the list is a crystallization of the depth of the challenge and points to the urgency to act wisely in the present to help secure the future of Christian Higher Education. The seven-year process is not just tied to tenure requirements, it reflects a sober and careful assessment of the task set before us. The list includes the following theological concerns:
 - a. The nature of **faith** in a post-modern and post-Christian world is still animated by

various forms of philosophical naturalism.

- b. The problem of **evil** and **suffering** continues to be intellectually challenging but is often approached as a mystery that “counts against” God rather than a mystery in which we “walk with God.”
 - c. **Freedom** and **providence** are often set against each other especially when providence is understood as essentially philosophical determinism.
 - d. The “**silo**” phenomenon proliferates into all spheres of thought and practice, and it often leads faculty to separate the call to “think Biblically” in their discipline from personal piety.
 - e. In a skeptical age, **doubts** about the historicity and the intellectual value of the Bible are so strong that real theological engagement becomes impossible.
 - f. Deep questions often surface concerning the “**goodness**” of God and the “**power**” of God as related to “imagining” a Biblically shaped vision of life in the Kingdom of God.
8. I am not a neutral observer, but I am convinced that a set of philosophical questions concerning the process of “thinking Christianly” lies at the highest level of difficulty and complexity. The fragmented nature of the contemporary university has prevented even the best thinkers in any discipline from fully examining the assumptions that undergird the methodologies of their field of study. Often the coursework demands within various programs of study have eliminated the careful examination of our shared cultural history so that there is little or no appreciation of what has preceded our moment. We are generally guilty of what C. S. Lewis called “Chronological Snobbery.” As a result, faculty often lack the resources to recognize or critique a set of philosophical challenges that are particularly relevant to our situation. My list of central philosophical challenges follows.
 - a. **Philosophical Naturalism** is the position that everything is reducible to natural processes embedded in the natural order over which we have little or no control. Such a position cannot be proven by the application of those natural processes. Neither human reason nor self-consciousness can be established in this way.

- b. **Materialism** is a sibling of naturalism which argues that all natural processes are reducible to matter or material causation functioning without any goal. If reality does not have a goal or end, then there is no ultimate meaning to our life.
- c. **Empiricism** argues that we can only know anything through sense experience yet the principle which serves as the basis for empiricism is not itself knowable through sense experience.
- d. Modernity fundamentally claims a “**disenchanted**” view of reality based upon the previous three points in this list. Such a worldview cannot allow the possibility that phenomena within the natural world can have a cause located outside of the natural world. Nothing exists outside the natural world and everything can be reduced to “calculation.” Human reason and experience working upon a natural and material reality is the only source of knowledge.
- e. **Scientism** is the assertion that the natural sciences provide the only viable epistemological system of knowing reality and all assertions whose foundations lie outside of scientifically grounded epistemology are literally “non-sensical” and meaningless. An examination of this assertion reveals that the claims made by proponents of Scientism lie outside of the epistemological boundaries established by Scientism and are themselves “non-sensical.”
- f. Modernity pursues a project that seeks to sever the relationship between “**fact**” and “**value**.” In so doing, it relegates value judgments to expressions of emotive reaction devoid of cognitive content. All ethical and aesthetic judgments are seen merely as expressions of emotion and are relative to our individual moods and bear no relationship to reality. This form of reductionism makes the judgments about good and evil and right and wrong impossible. Assessments concerning beauty are also rendered impossible by this process.
- g. All these philosophical assumptions raise profound doubt and suspicion about the nature of **faith**. If a person fundamentally questions the possibility of non-coercive goodness, the possibility of universal truth embodied in a person, and the possibility of an experience of beauty unsullied by manipulation, then a Biblically informed faith lies beyond their grasp. Of course, the Gospel message asserts that apart from the work of the Holy Spirit none of us can experience the kind of faith that unites goodness and power in a transcendent personal reality.

The problem is complex and multi-layered. Two years of analysis and discussion based upon years of personal conversation with new faculty provided the basis for the description above. Subsequent involvement in the SOFAP process deepened and confirmed my understanding of these issues. Despite the changes that were occurring with the growth of the institution and the profound secularization occurring in the culture there was a certain amount of institutional inertia. These realities compelled Dean Anacker to present a new program to the Provost that began with a large goal but a small financial and structural footprint.

The Structure for a Change in the Ethos

The initial structure of the Seminar on Faith and the Academic Profession was simple. It was a “baby step.” First, a two-day August seminar, connected with new faculty orientation, designed to introduce the basic ideas of SOFAP. Second, one day-long seminar prior to the beginning of the second semester in January to review the fall semester and introduce new material to guide thinking during the spring semester. Third, a two-day summary seminar, after grades were submitted in May, to “debrief,” provide guidance for assessing the first year of teaching and indicate the next steps. In August 2007, we launched the first SOFAP seminar with fifteen new faculty attending.

Spiritually and intellectually rich discussions marked the seminars. The university provided books for the new faculty that challenged their thinking and encouraged further discussion. In the early years, faculty asking pedagogical questions were referred to their department chair. The seminar addressed general questions concerning course evaluations and the annual faculty self-evaluation.

In 2010, Dr. DawnEllen Jacobs joined the provost's office. Her new responsibilities included faculty development. Dr. Jacobs joined the team leading SOFAP. At the same time, at the invitation of the School of Nursing, Dr. Anacker began an intensive engagement with the nursing faculty. During the next several years through team-teaching and one-on-one conversation Dr. Anacker sought to influence the way the School of Nursing was building upon the SOFAP model to help faculty to gain greater understanding of the ways the Biblical worldview could enhance the quality of the Nursing program.

Under Dr. Jacobs' leadership and with the blessing of the Provost, SOFAP expanded its schedule of engagement with the new faculty. In addition to the August, January, and May seminars we added bi-monthly meetings with the new faculty. The additional time allowed the SOFAP leadership to tackle three major concerns that had become increasingly visible.

First, the additional time allowed the SOFAP process to assist new faculty more fully with the various kinds of transitions necessary for a new faculty member in a fast-growing university setting. Addressing the "nuts and bolts" of university expectations during the first-year seminar reduced faculty stress. For many new faculty, the discussions concerning grading, student evaluations, faculty portfolio development, syllabi development, and student needs were instrumental in reducing the level of anxiety that attends the first-year experience.

Second, SOFAP became a laboratory for exploring a variety of teaching techniques and "Best practices" to help new faculty gain both confidence and competence in the classroom. For new faculty, especially in new and fast-growing academic units, the exposure to a variety of teaching methods was the first time in their academic careers that they experienced a sustained emphasis upon the "scholarship of teaching and learning." These active lessons combined the timeless content of the Biblical worldview and the care for students. For most of the new faculty in SOFAP the bi-monthly meetings and the one-day and two-day seminars throughout the school year became times of intense philosophical and theological reflection couched in various teaching segments that demonstrated useful methods that they could use in their own classrooms. This combination, although not perfect, provided the new faculty a lifeline of encouragement to grow as Christian thinkers and as teachers in rapidly growing academic departments saddled with rising pressure to excel within an emerging curriculum and changing circumstances. It is important to emphasize that the spiritual and intellectual task of addressing the theological and philosophical assumptions of the Biblical

worldview and the engagement with the assumptions of Modernity continued to lie at the center of the First Year SOFAP program.

Third, Dr. Jacobs and I began "fleshing-out" the rest of the vision for the kind of faculty development that builds committed Christian thinkers equipped to sustainably serve a "University committed to the Great Commission." Spiritual maturity is required to sustain a commitment to deeply merge Biblically rooted thinking, academic excellence, and a missional global vision. Through intense conversations with faculty and administrators the "seven-year" plan for SOFAP took shape. I will highlight features of the plan in the following way:

1. **Faculty Learning Communities** are one semester, cross-disciplinary, text-centered groups that challenge faculty to think more deeply about how to "think Christianly" in ways that directly impact the classroom and research.
2. **"Perspectives"** for faculty is a one-year long study of the history of missions and missiology that can profoundly reorientate one's understanding of the Biblical story, the history of missions, the latest insights from cultural anthropology, and the most recent developments in the global church. CBU was the first university sanctioned by Perspectives to provide this program for faculty.
3. **International Service Projects** for faculty groups or faculty led ISP groups provide an intense context for spiritual growth and practical application of academic insight to places of need around the world.
4. **Professional review** of yearly progress in "Thinking Christianly" in and through the annual self-assessment is an outstanding way to chronicle one's personal growth as a thinker and teacher.
5. **Re-shaping of syllabi** by faculty is a measurement of Biblical thinking through their courses. This process is especially beneficial when it is the product of a discipline-wide effort to align every class and every syllabus with the commitments outlined here.
6. **Mentoring** of first year faculty by more seasoned faculty in their fifth or sixth year of teaching is a powerful way to solidify the growth triggered by the SOFAP process. As all teachers know, we learn even more when we are teaching others.
7. **Biblically rooted approaches to research, to course formation, and to curriculum structure** are creative ways to begin to see the fruit of the "Thinking Christianly" process. Part of the joy of SOFAP for me has been the impact of this process

on individual professors who developed new courses, new directions of research, and new teaching methods that fit their discipline. I have also been invited to share in the discussion that reshaped the entire curriculum of departments and schools within the university structure.

With the addition of the seven-year plan, SOFAP is now the basis for a total process of faculty development. The “First-Year” experience is augmented with a series of possible ways in which a faculty member can continue to engage the process of “thinking Christianly” as they move toward tenure. The seven-year plan provides the time necessary to engage this process within the context of the rotation of courses assigned to a professor in a way that deepens understanding.

These SOFAP “benchmarks” are increasingly being used to assess readiness for advancement and tenure. The individual faculty member is extended freedom and creativity in the pursuit of these goals. Although there is work to be done to allow this process to work fully it holds great promise to build an ethos to fortify the institution against “faith drift.”

The issues of Implementation

In this section I will briefly highlight the challenges of implementing this process. There are always issues that strengthen resolve for improvements. For an institution that had managed this process in an informal and ad hoc way for decades the changes wrought by SOFAP have been significant. The results of our efforts have been dramatic in the lives of faculty members. This process has changed the classroom experience for hundreds of students. This emphasis has reinvigorated faculty involvement in campus evangelism and student clubs. This process has produced creative scholarship that is changing the face of Christian Higher Education. Yet, there are always struggles. Again, for the sake of brevity I will list a sample of the struggles and successes.

1. Securing and maintaining **institutional support** for the entire process of faculty development is essential. This must be an institutional commitment. Every academic area must be engaged. Deans must provide new faculty the time to be fully engaged in the First Year Experience. Budget support must be given to the Teaching and Learning Center, the features of the seven-year plan, and other related tasks.
2. **Academic policy** must reflect the goals and the process of SOFAP. Promotion and tenure policies must be consistent with the goal of a clearly defined commitment to a Biblical Worldview being actively incarnated in the lives, teaching, and research of faculty members. This is not a

violation of academic freedom. It is the way to realize full academic freedom in the service of the Kingdom.

3. The kind of work necessary for SOFAP to serve as the catalyst of change requires “face-to-face” **time**. The conversation, the engagement, the personal encounter is critically important. It is for this reason that we increased the amount of “contact hours.” Every minute is important. Schedules must be arranged so that first-year faculty can participant. The long-term benefits outweigh the short-term scheduling challenges.
4. In the last three years, Dr. Ted Murcay, initiated a **Fellows Program**. The Fellows are recruited from both newer faculty and seasoned faculty. Additional training is provided. Financial support allows for expanded expectations for mentoring new faculty, training of faculty outside their discipline area, and scholarship. This development has expanded the reach of the Teaching and Learning Center and intensified the guidance available to all faculty in “thinking Christianly.”
5. The first California Baptist University approved academic journal is a product of the SOFAP process. *Journal of Faith in the Academic Profession* provides a forum in which faculty can celebrate the new insights that come from a commitment to “think Christianly” within a context of teaching competence.

The Promise for the Future

The Seminar on Faith and the Academic Profession process in total and the first-year experience in particular is changing the ethos and character of faculty engagement in the perplexing task of “thinking Christianly.” It is my experience that faculty are the critical element in preventing “faith drift.” The survivability of Christian Higher Education within a post-Christian and post-modern secular culture depends upon robust commitment from faculty to teach from within the Biblical worldview as Christian believers/scholars within their particular field of study.

Although it is impossible for anyone to predict the future, it is possible to learn from the past. In my recollection of the formation and development of the SOFAP process I have emphasized both the nature of the challenge and the ways in which SOFAP developed to face the needs of Christian faculty as they learn to “think Christianly” about their discipline and the learning process. The California Baptist University experience provides good evidence that engagement with the challenge to think through the assumptions of each discipline and the assumptions of the

teaching and learning process can be critical in the effort to resist the pressure posed by naturalistic and materialistic secularism on the university.

My review of SOFAP's development suggests three conclusions. First, the effort to help faculty learn how to assess the assumptions that undergird both the theories and methods of each discipline within the university in light of the Biblical worldview requires sustained institutional commitment. The institution must understand that this investment in faculty is essential to the spiritual health of the institution and the future of its missional purpose. This commitment must involve the Trustees, the President's vision, the academic oversight of the university, and the commitment of each academic unit.

Second, the intellectual and spiritual process envisioned by SOFAP requires time. Time must be given to first-year faculty so that they begin the process well. Time must be given to sustain the process during the full seven-year period. Faculty must engage the task on multiple levels if insight and perspective is achieved. It is a life-long endeavor.

Third, remarkable changes can occur when faculty take this process seriously. I have watched as individual faculty altered the structure of their classes, developed new courses, and re-shaped their research. I have also witnessed entire academic units as they re-thought the whole curriculum of their major or school so that students were clearly introduced to the implications of the Christian worldview for their discipline. This is related to innovative teaching approaches and course arrangements that needed to emerge to successfully convey the deeper understanding to be gained by critiquing the prevailing assumptions governing the discipline. Rather than weakening the academic quality of the instruction and the program of study, this process served to deepen and expand the quality and range of the discipline offerings.

I will end with a brief examination of future implications. The developments I have outlined in this essay have confirmed the understandings that Dr. Anacker and I reached years ago. The missional identity of Christian Higher Education depends upon the commitment of the institution and the faculty to the basic assumptions upon which this process is based. The historical review of Christian Higher Education often relies upon the documented evidence derived from the record of Board of Trustee actions to assess the nature of "mission drift." It is my conclusion that formal institutional action to solidify "mission drift" rests upon the erosion of faculty commitments which precede formal statements. A sustained and formally structured process that encourages

the development of the intentional application of the Biblical worldview to the teaching and learning process will forestall "mission drift." It must be an intentional process and lovingly nurtured.

Second, the philosophical and theological resources of orthodox and historically centered Christianity are more than adequate for the challenges of a post-Christian and post-modern world. The central questions of our time are axiological in nature. The value questions are central: what is good and what is beautiful? The examination of the assumptions of each discipline within the university uncover these common questions. Christian thought provides clear and compelling paths which engage these questions. The systematic effort to explore the presuppositions of academic disciplines lead inextricably to the human quest for goodness, truth, and beauty. These questions invite the uniting of reason and imagination, truth and value, and faith and reality. The Christian call to live out our faith with integrity and humility within a community shaped by worship and faith is the best way to respond to the deep suspicion of our age. Authentic Christian presence incarnated in community serves as a Biblical anecdote to the loss of trust and the relativizing of all values.

Third, Christian university communities can serve as a critical element in meeting the generational challenge of passing faith and fidelity from one generation to the next. The nurture of the Christian imagination is central to this task. The call of the Kingdom of God demands that we cultivate an imagination of hope and relationship in the face of despair and isolation. The intentional Christian university has an essential role to play in this process as an active partner in the life of the church.

I must add a final important note to this personal remembrance. I am deeply thankful for and indebted to the vision, wisdom, and active engagement of Drs. Gayne J. Anacker and DawnEllen Jacobs in the development, involvement, and support of the Seminar on Faith and the Academic Profession. Without their constant encouragement and involvement this exciting process would have never become a reality. I am humbled and honored to have a role in the exciting and hope-filled events of the last eighteen years. May God continue to bless these efforts under the able guidance of Dr. Ted Murcay.

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Spiritual Disciplines: For the committed Christian professor, the task to which we are called requires the cultivation of full Christian discipleship and growing sanctification. This is the life-long process, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, in which the Christ-follower grows "in Christ," develops the "mind of Christ," allows the Triune God to "renew" their mind so that we may "follow in His steps." Clearly, the Biblical revelation is the deep resource that God has provided His church for this life-long task. Becoming Biblically centered Christ-followers requires a growing ability to read wisely so that we can interpret the Bible in its context for our context. For this task we need to access the wisdom of the whole and faithful church through history. In this way the history of the church's dialogue about faith, the theological dialogue, can serve as a resource for each of us. But it is clear that the long and often complex theological discussion is a "big bite" that most of us cannot easily make. Good solid resources are available that are accessible and encouraging. They can take two basic forms: a basic theological approach that helps each of us understand the "arc" of the Biblical story of salvation and how we fit into that eternal story and, secondly, practical help to live out our daily devotional life in such a way that we are guided to grow. The combination of both approaches allows us to reach our real goal: a mature faith in which our spiritual understanding of our living faith can engage our intellectual grasp of our academic discipline.

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