



UPPER ROOM GATHERING

Redeeming the University and the Professions

I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments.... See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. (Colossians 2: 2-4, 8-10)

The university is the single most powerful social force shaping the cultures of America, Europe, and by extension the world. With very few exceptions, the university has become the gate through which all social, cultural and political leaders must pass whether they are in science, law, business, medicine, policy, government, media, education, religion, or the arts.

Urgent appeals for Christian scholars to become more active in defining and redeeming their various fields in the sciences, social sciences, the arts and humanities have been made over the past two centuries while secularism aggressively overtook university research, teaching, theorizing and publishing. In his now classic lectures (1852) Cardinal John Henry Newman warned scholars of the dangers of separating the content and context of the various disciplines from God's wisdom and moral law.¹ Abraham Kuyper, founder of the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880, warned that there must be a staunch line drawn between Christian and secular education.

In 1981, Orthodox Lebanese scholar and 13th head of the U. N. General Assembly, Charles Malik, delivered a series of lectures on the university. In these he suggested that the central question the Christian scholar must ask is – What does Jesus think of the university? He outlined the tasks of Christian scholars as both spiritual and intellectual.²

The university is the clear-cut fulcrum with which to move the world. The problem here is for the church to realize that no greater service can it render ... than to try to recapture the universities for Christ on whom they were all originally founded.... The university more than any institution dominates the world, and we can allow no fear, no trembling, no difficulty to weaken our resolve....If there is Jesus Christ and if there is his Holy Spirit and if we are open to him, he will, at his pleasure, correct our error and guide us into the truth. (Charles Malik, 1987, 100-103)

Almost 20 years ago historian George Marsden published, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* calling on Christians in colleges and universities to boldly and unapologetically engage their fields with faith-informed scholarship. After Mark Noll had served a heavy critique of the failures of the Protestant evangelical mind (1995), he published *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* where he declares, “coming to know Christ provides the most basic possible motive for pursuing the tasks of human learning.” He suggests that “intellectual labor rooted in Christ” is a slow process “connected organically to the great narratives summarized by the Christian creeds.” He called for scholars “to pursue academic projects that draw self-consciously on their Christian faith” knowing that “life in Christ is a gift that makes all things new, including the vocations of learning.”³

During his term as Pope, Benedict XVI frequently addressed scholars; he reminded young Christian scholars in Spain that the university must always be “the house where one seeks the truth”. The young, he said, must have teachers “in the various branches of knowledge, persons who listen to and experience in their own hearts that interdisciplinary dialogue; persons who, above all, are convinced of our human capacity to advance along the path of truth.... If truth and goodness go together, so too do knowledge and love...[though] it will always lie beyond our grasp, we can

seek it and draw near to it.” As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he had held a number of strategic meetings with high-level secular European philosophers resulting in several publications whereby these secular scholars were moved to admit that Judeo-Christianity alone was the origin of all that has been productive in both philosophy, science and culture in the West. Top continental philosopher and self-proclaimed atheist, Jürgen Habermas of Germany, wrote: “everything else was post-modern chatter.”⁴

In 2009 Dallas Willard defined the challenges in a series of questions:

Is reality secular? Is adequate knowledge secular? And is that something that has been established as a fact by thorough and unbiased inquiry? Is this something that today’s secular universities thoroughly and freely discuss in a disciplined way? Certainly not! Nowhere does that happen. It is now simply assumed that every field of knowledge or practice is perfectly complete without any reference to God. It may be logically possible that this assumption is true but is it true? ⁵

While each of these forerunners clearly defined the problems and sounded a *call to arms* for Christian scholars to engage our disciplines with the truth, wisdom and understanding in Christ, their dreams remain largely unfulfilled. Thus far an effectual *strategy* for accomplishing this enormous task has remained elusive and yet has never been more urgent. While increasing numbers of Christian scholars (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) as well as Christian culture-makers around the world are keen to rethink their disciplines through the unfathomable possibilities in Christ, these high-level Christian culture workers are largely disconnected from one another, scattered sparsely and widely internationally across secular and Christian institutions, primarily educated in Western secular graduate programs, and are often marginalized in their universities and workplaces. They have few outlets for publishing work related to Christ, and virtually no opportunities to think and work together for any extended period of time. Christian views of truth are not even acknowledged enough to be contested.

The Power of the University

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. - Colossians 1: 15-20

Not only is the university the single most powerful social force shaping the cultures of America, Europe, and by extension the world, but today there are concerted efforts to guarantee to the greatest degree possible that everyone will receive some college or university training. Between 2002 and 2012, enrollment in higher education in the U S grew 24% from 16.6 million to 20.6 million.⁶ Some states are even beginning to offer free college. When truth, goodness and beauty were the primary aims of higher education, this would not have been so troubling. However, today much of the activity in the various disciplines or fields of study is consumed by the pursuit of ever more so-called “progressive” or radical ideologies. Christian, historical, classical, or even empirical work is rarely engaged.

The origins of the university emerged from Christendom, and Christianity was not only understood to be about faith and salvation but also about knowledge, virtue, beauty, truth, understanding, and wisdom. Prior to the 20th Century there was a shared understanding that, while the various disciplines within the sciences, social sciences and humanities had their own specializations, there was ultimately a unity that held all truth together. That unity was located in *Christ by whom all things in heaven and earth were created, in whom is hidden all wisdom and knowledge, and in whom all things hold together.*⁷ Thus, Christian theology formed the core of the early university. Presidents and board members were largely Christian priests, ministers or religious lay.⁸ This was to assure that at the

heart of every discipline there would be a well-educated and virtuous people seeking to live and work according to the wisdom and character of Christ.

However, for much of the past century the university has been not only resolutely secular but also increasingly anti-Christian.⁹ Secularists claim they can and have significantly advanced knowledge and the common good while eliminating God, and that as cultures advance in knowledge, people lose their religious beliefs. After writing eleven volumes on world history, prolific 20th Century historian, Will Durant had a very different observation:

“The Movement of liberation rises to an exuberant worship of reason, and falls to a paralyzing disillusionment with every dogma and every idea. Conduct, deprived of its religious supports, deteriorates into epicurean chaos; and life itself, shorn of consoling faith, becomes a burden alike to conscious poverty and to weary wealth. In the end a society and its religion tend to fall together, like body and soul, in a harmonious death” (1976, p. 71).

Nothing better describes the state in which we find ourselves. The concept of truth is now deeply troubled not only in higher education but throughout the culture. In the sciences, secularism (in the form of materialism) has disassociated the facts of science from God as

If we truly see Jesus as the premier thinker of the human race – and who else would be that? – then we are also in a position to honor Him as the most knowledgeable person in our field, whatever that may be, and to ask his cooperation and assistance with everything we have to do.
Dallas Willard, *Jesus the Logician*

the Creator who established the laws of human flourishing and the natural order. Often, in the midst of scientific exuberance over new discoveries and technologies, moral questions are pushed aside. Given what science can do, the weightier questions are – What then should we do? What is the just and right thing to do with our knowledge? This is clearly why the Apostle Peter recommended that faith and virtue must precede knowledge (1 Peter 1: 5-7). Without the moral tether once provided by Christianity, science, like the rest of culture, is morally rudderless, adrift among competing human ideas, greatly contested. This leaves questions of “the good” in scientific inquiry to be settled by those with the most political

power.¹⁰

While scholars and practitioners in the physical sciences do believe their work involves observing aspects of the material universe in order to discover *truth*, those in the social sciences and many professions (e.g., psychology, anthropology, sociology, political science, government, and education) have all but given up the search for truth. Secular humanism in the social sciences teaches that, rather than seek what is true, students and scholars should “engage” the various ways “humans have constructed meanings” across the centuries. We are told that these “meanings” are idiosyncratic human constructions based on a

Our neighbors inhabit a world in which they are no longer bothered by the God-Question because they are exclusive humanists, a way of being-in-the-world that offers significance without transcendence. They don't feel anything is missing. Religious belief is just one option among others.
- JKA Smith, *How Not to Be Secular*

person's time in history, their culture, race, gender, and/or socio-economic status and that the dominant ideas, at any point in time, were simply determined by those with the most political power who had the most to gain from them. So, for example, what

the founders meant as true and best government was only true for them, in their time, as white privileged men. The concept of evolution, now fully enmeshed in the social sciences and humanities, fuels the conviction that ever-evolving mankind, free of any divine moral authority, is increasingly able to ‘make himself and his world’ as the influential 20th Century French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre had insisted.

The arts and humanities originally emphasized the exploration, interpretation and creation of works that were good and beautiful. Today works are not chosen or created with goodness, truth or beauty in mind but for their ability to represent the “privileged high-culture's tastes”. Thus it is their tastes, preferences, ennui, desires, arrogance, and even their hopelessness, lasciviousness, depression and disorientation that is often manifested in their works. Students are taught to

interpret old and new works through the filters of today's culture, gender, sexuality, race, language, nationality and class. What the original author, artist, or historian knew and/or intended is no longer relevant, the "author (and the artist) is dead," and what is important is simply the "reader's response", their own contemporary construction of meaning from the text. No text can be given priority, and none can be inerrant. Thus the Bible becomes just like any other text and is to be read also through the contemporary lenses of gender, race, culture, history and social class. For example, in an elite college seminar a couple of years ago, two religion professors suggested that students should read the Bible by "queering the text".

The arts (visual, music, film, photography) in the university also are now more about current cultural trends and political topics than about the good, true and beautiful. Sexuality, violence, death and the occult are frequently depicted in art and literature. Even in popular culture skulls and skeletons have become a popular and prolific motif, even decorating young children's clothes and toys. Today's public art, motion pictures, novels and other artistic expressions often seek to provoke, shock and mimic the darkest aspects of culture, without any attention to the redemption of that which is false, broken, painful and absurd. The details are so often graphic that they lure and seduce the reader, viewer or listener into the same darkness, witness the epidemic of students (and adults) addicted to pornography and worse. When Dickens or Solzhenitsyn wrote of the dark sides of human nature they included attention to the redemption of this darkness, not its exaltation or its tantalizing details. Paul, on the other hand, tells us to keep our minds and hearts set on excellence - the good, the true and the beautiful.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8-9

Redeeming the Fields Versus Integrating Christian and Secular Knowledge

Every discipline or field of study is currently in dire need of redemption. In such an environment one cannot simply integrate faith with scholarship because Christianity is not just about faith but also about wisdom, understanding, truth, and knowledge. Secularists are as dependent on their particular faiths as are Christians but are much less aware of their own assumptions. Highly regarded and accomplished, early postmodern proponent, Stanley Fish, wrote in 2018, “Secularism is the air we breathe: it is invisible and sustaining and terribly limiting all at the same time. This most powerful of modern ideologies derives its power from the claim to be above or below or to the side of ideology.” Importantly, Christian truths cannot be simply integrated into what is true or into what is already at least partially false to produce truth. To add pure water to poison water does not produce pure water, it produces diluted poison. We need instead to come together, serious orthodox Christians (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox), both university professors and high level culture shapers for intensive periods of time to discern, develop and build strategies to redeem our work and offer alternative visions of the good works and the virtuous life. We must determine in every field what research must be conducted to reveal the false versus the true principles and publish the findings broadly. Fortunately, there is much research revealing the superiority of following Christ, for example in life longevity, marital satisfaction, and the physical and mental health and educational achievement of children. However, these findings rarely reach the popular media.

The Good News

There is a sizeable remnant of faithful “mere” “orthodox” Christian scholars and culture makers, as well as graduate students and apprentices, who are active in the various disciplines in the culture and in colleges and universities around the

world. Though these Christian scholars are often 1) marginalized, even shamed for their faith, 2) educated almost exclusively in secular graduate universities, 3) scattered sparsely across universities and places of work, and 4) unaware of one another's presence – nevertheless, they do exist.

More importantly, there is a smaller, but substantive, subset of this remnant that deeply understands that all the disciplines (and theirs in particular) have been greatly distorted and limited by secular doctrines. Some secular principles in our fields are compatible with Christian principles, yet some lie far outside truth as defined by Christ. There is and always will be evidence, including empirical evidence, for the truth. Christian truths that add a higher rationality to the fields languish undetected, ignored and/or rejected.

While there have been and are short-term opportunities for these scholars and working professionals to meet, most of these opportunities are: 1) very short in duration, 1-2 days, 2) specific to denominations, 3) cloistered inside small special interest groups inside larger secular professional groups,¹¹ 4) sometimes more inspirational than task driven, and 5) many have been discontinued or diminished by the Christian organizations who once sponsored them.¹² Clearly there are a few Christian colleges and universities that still seek to teach from an orthodox Christian and Biblical perspective; many others have lost their distinctness because they tend to use the same texts and teach the same content as secular universities.

The Hope of our Calling – Christian Basis for the Work

Jesus exhorted us to understand the limits of secular knowledge as a kind of lower rationality. For example, in Matthew 16 and Luke 12, he challenges the Pharisees and Sadducees regarding their limited understanding, versus the higher rationality that is possible: *He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It*

will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, 'it will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times."

Paul's letters instruct Christians to *renew their minds* so that they are not *deluded by plausible arguments*. The false principles now inherent in our secular university disciplines are expressed variously in the dialogues of this apostle. In places Paul calls these *weak and worthless elementary principles of the world*,

possibly a reference to the principles of materialism that reject all but material phenomena. In another letter, Paul refers to *deceitful spirits and teachings of demons*. Perhaps this is a reference to the spirits of some pantheist and pagan religions such as those that seduced the early Israelites

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before Him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. Hebrews 4:12-13

from time to time and are today seducing Christians and non-Christians into gnostic and pantheistic understandings of spirit. To the Colossians, Paul exhorts, *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition*, most likely the errors of secular humanism focusing on human imaginations, designs and desires. Other references he makes to principles that humans have concocted which err against Christ's teachings include *myths and endless genealogies, speculations, irreverent silly myths, cravings for controversy, irreverent babble, and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge*.

Jesus taught that the signs of the end of the age will be a dramatic *increase in knowledge*, as well as times when people *will call good evil and evil good*. Of knowledge Paul cautions that *knowledge puffs up* and warns that some are *always learning yet never able to come to the truth*.¹³ Peter suggests that the

development of knowledge is part of a sequence that begins with faith and virtue not intellect – *add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance brotherly love, and to brotherly love, love.*¹⁴

Perhaps the clearest Biblical explanation of the limitations on human reason without God is outlined in the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* The problem here becomes obvious: not only does our knowledge become distorted, but also these distortions lead both to intellectual, spiritual and moral blindness. Yet, there is clearly empirical data that validates the principles laid out by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1; however, in today's media you will find that the empirical data is far from the public media arguments that attempt to make evil sound good and good evil.

A Revolution Via Spiritual Knowledge

We need to affect in every field what Thomas Kuhn, in his classic book on the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, called *paradigm shifts*. Though a secular scholar, Kuhn traced the stages of a scientific field's transformation from one way of understanding a body of knowledge to a radically different understanding. He noted the stages of this change process move from strong resistance to a very slow but gradual acceptance of the new paradigm once it has been shown more capable of matching the actual facts found in research. In our context, the new paradigm will be found to be closer to the *truth* of what God, nature, conscience and the Bible reveal.¹⁵ As most secular scholars, Kuhn saw this as purely a progressive human evolutionary task across history. For Christians the “revolution” in the sciences and social sciences and arts and humanities will be defining the truths that can never be foreign to Christ. Since our hope is set on shifting the fields' paradigms to focus on discerning true wisdom, this will not be some short-term, quick fix to shore up a few small parts of our discipline but a clear long-term call on our lives to discern, reveal and thoroughly redeem the disciplines and our work in them. Our first task will be simply causing doubt in the direction and dominant theories and propositions each field now holds by asking the right questions and proposing alternatives.

If you can get your head around the fact that light is both a particle and a wave, then Jesus being the Word/Man/God is not so far fetched.
Robert Eagleton, Physicist

Our Divine Advantage – The Higher Rationality

Lesslie Newbigin, British missionary to India, returned to England toward the end of his life only to discover that the West needed a new missionary encounter. He spent much of the latter part of his life describing the wider rationality available to Christians. Newbigin likens this to physicists' experiences

The Christian claim is that though the Christian worldview can in no way be reached by any logical step from the axioms of [the other worldviews], nevertheless the Christian worldview does offer a wider rationality that embraces and does not contradict the rationality of [these other worldviews].¹²
- Lesslie Newbigin

learning Einstein's theory when they had to hold both Newton's and Einstein's laws together in unity because Newton's laws are still true in most of the instances we will encounter - for large objects in slow motion. Newbigin writes, *Seen from one side there is only a chasm; seen from the other there is a bridge. By analogy, one could suggest that the radical conversion ... implies a discontinuity that cannot be acknowledged [by the secular world] Yet it does not imply a surrender to irrationality, since the new understanding of the converted person might make it possible ... to find a place for the truth that was embodied in the former vision and yet at the same time offer a wider and more inclusive rationality than the older one could. Saul the Pharisee can only see Jesus of Nazareth as a saboteur of the law. Paul the Christian can see the law as the [tutor] that brought him to Christ; and he can see Christ as the fulfillment of the law.*¹⁶ This is the kind of transformation of mind that Newbigin called "the higher rationality" in Christendom. As he states here, Einstein's work did not wipe away Newton's theory; it expanded and made more complete our understanding of time, space and gravity. Nor did Christ wipe out the Judaic law; Christ expanded our understanding of God's laws and opened the way of salvation to all who believe. These paradigm shifts do take place with very great struggles, as will the success of these projects.

Using the resurrection, Newbigin gave us a perfect example of how the Christian mind can understand truths that are simply implausible and inaccessible to secularists. "The community of faith makes the confession that God raised Jesus from the dead and that the tomb was empty thereafter. Within the plausibility structure of the modern [secular] world, this will become something like the following: *The disciples had a series of experiences that led them to the belief that, in some sense, Jesus was still alive and therefore to interpret the Cross as victory and not defeat. This experience can be accepted as a fact. People do have such psychological experiences. If this is what is meant by the Easter event it*

qualifies for admission into the world of fact. The former statement (i.e., that the tomb was empty) can be accepted as fact only if the whole plausibility structure of contemporary Western culture is called into question.” (p.62)

C. S. Lewis offered a simpler metaphor of the higher rationality available in Christ – *man is a tower in which the different floors can hardly be reached from one another but all can be reached from the top floor.* From this point of view both the weather and the times are comprehensible. Christian scholars in close relationship with Christ and willing to seriously reconsider our disciplines and our work will be able to better discern the truth with the Holy Spirit acting in the lives and minds of professors and other cultural leaders who can understand the Scriptural, empirical, spiritual and social reality in the various disciplines. So how might this enormous challenge be met?

The Upper Room Gatherings

The Upper Room Gatherings will be the catalyst. Its purpose will be to provide a structure and place for carefully vetted scholars and high-level practitioners in each discipline, with select graduate students and apprentices who are orthodox in their Christian faith (Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox) to meet together to study, plan and carry out a cultural shift. Applicants must be deeply concerned, committed, able and willing to work with others to redeem the various disciplines in higher education and culture (e.g., economics, government and law, math and science, education, medicine, history, literature, the visual and musical arts, business, architecture). The ultimate goal will be to effect a climate change in the academic and domestic world whereby scholars and other culture-shapers define and promote new paradigms that emerge from Christian truth. The strategy will be methodically guided by addressing questions such as these in each discipline:

- What are the basic principles and assumptions upon which your field currently functions?
- Who are the faithful forerunners historically and currently? What were/are their basic principles and assumptions?
- Which of these principles/assumptions may be true based on the best available empirical data and Biblical understanding?
- Which of these principles are false based on Biblical understanding and the best available empirical data?
- What higher rationality is missing that would be suggested by a Christian framework?
- What empirical research and theoretical work must be conducted to reveal true principles?
- What empirical research and theoretical work must be conducted to reveal the false principles and assumptions?
- In what publications (academic and mainstream, print and media) will it be important to publish findings and insights?
- What research and theoretical work must be produced to reveal and proclaim the Christian principles that would make the discipline more true, productive and whole?
- What tasks must be accomplished to create a climate in the university and the larger culture whereby the fields simply have to acknowledge and engage (even if contest) the “new/albeit timeless” paradigm?
- Which culture makers and scholars and journalists will take responsibility for each task?

Each disciplinary team will develop and execute long-term strategic plans for research, theory, and practice, keeping in mind mainstream publications that will have an increasing and lasting impact on redeeming the discipline. In addition, the disciplinary teams will acquaint themselves with the work of other Upper

Room groups so as to become more aware of the larger picture of how all truth is united in Him.

The Upper Room participants in each these disciplinary groups will include 1) a group of contemporary forerunners to set examples, encourage, advise and guide, as well as 2) senior, mid-career, early and post-doc, and graduate student scholars, 3) high-level practitioners and apprentices in each field, and 4) print and media journalists.

Why the Upper Room Gathering?

The first New Testament Upper Room was a place where the followers of Christ sequestered themselves, both with Him and after His death, resurrection and ascension. It was a strategic place. Here Jesus initiated the last supper, which forms the center of Christian worship.¹⁷ It is the place where He revealed His betrayer; we must also identify “the powers and principalities” holding our minds captive - those ideas that have distorted the truth.

It is in the Upper Room where Jesus last instructed His disciples and prayed for them and for us, asking the Father to help us to live in the world and yet not be of the world. In the second Upper Room, the disciples strategically planned the spread of Christ’s message and the expansion of His Kingdom.¹⁸ These are our tasks as well, as followers of Christ who live in the academic, social and international world – to come away with Him, to live out His prayer, to work together, to discern and lift up the good, the true and the beautiful.

The origin of the word “Gathering” is the name of the garden where Plato taught. While we are not Platonists, we are teachers, and the garden has tremendous significance as a place of growth. Here in a garden God first created and instructed mankind, here we first began our fascination with the knowledge of good and evil. It is this separation of good and evil that we must discern in our

disciplines and to the greatest extent possible identify in order to redeem through Christ the good, the true and the beautiful in every discipline.

Foundational Values of the Upper Room Gathering

Orthodoxy - Inter-Tradition and Inter-Denominational – “Mere” or “orthodox” or confessional Christians from every denomination will be part of the Upper Room Gathering - Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, denominational and non-denominational, confessional, evangelical, charismatic. This unity of “orthodox” believers will add richness and greatly enhance the opportunities for success in changing the university and the culture. 1 Corinthians 12: 12 - *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.*

International – There are scholars around the world ready to participate. This increases the opportunity for the work to be informed by the entire body of Christ and to spread more rapidly. 1 Corinthians 12:13 *For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

Foundational – Historical and Scriptural - Scholars will share a commitment to studying their forerunners, Scriptures and relevant foundational works prior to the summer Gatherings, praying that God’s Spirit will reveal any wisdom that will apply to the particular discipline. Hebrews 4:12 - *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Faithful – Prayer will be offered for all aspects of the work: intercessory groups within and outside the working groups will be organized and kept informed of

prayer needs. There has been a group of intercessors that began a couple of years before we receive our 501c3. Each Gathering has a group of on-site intercessors. Daily worship at the Gatherings will create a community of scholars whose minds are constantly focused on Christ, as we honor, praise and seek God together. *1 Thessalonians 5: 16-19 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.*

Interdisciplinary – There will be many times when scholars across disciplines will work together to define insights that are common and will bring unity to the disciplines. The presentations at the URG will cover various fields. *Colossians 1:16-18 In him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.*

Cooperative. The Gathering will be inter- and intra- disciplinary and have both scholars and culture shapers outside the university because it takes a diverse body to work as the body of Christ. *Ephesians 4:14-16 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.*

Forerunners and Models

There are a good number of scholars and others who we can look to as forerunners of the work that needs to be done. Ones that are on our Board include Mark Regnerus, Carol Swain, Mark Bauerlein, Michael Uhlmann, Douglas Matthews, Daniel Chua, and Gregory Dongkore. Others who are models of the work include, but are not limited to: Paul Vitz (psychology), Byron Johnson (social science), Anne Hendershott (sociology), J. Budziszewski (political science), Steven Smith (law), Joseph Bessette (political science); David Skeels (law), John Inazu (law), Harry Hutchinson (law), Eric Halvorsen (law, business, academe) Jean-Claude Larchet (psychology), Eric Johnson (psychology); David Aikman (Journalist), Ross Douthat (journalist), Eric Metaxas (journalism); Scott Minnich (science), Michael Denton (science), Robert Eagleton (physics), Hugh Ross (science), Michael Behe (science), Robert George (ethics); William Jeynes (education), Christy Moran (education); Pierre Manent (philosophy), Alvin Plantinga (philosophy), Marcelo Pera (politics), Alan Jacobs (philosophy); John Lennox (math and science), Thomas Sowell (economics); Françoise Lemoine (humanities, languages); Mako Fujimura (art). (Underlining indicates they have spoken at one of the first Upper Room Gatherings.)

The Upper Room Gatherings Board

Mark Bauerlein, Director: earned his doctorate in English at UCLA in 1988. He has taught at Emory since 1989, with a two-and-a-half year break in 2003-05 to serve as the Director, Office of Research and Analysis, at the National Endowment for the Arts. He is Senior Editor of First Things Magazine. Apart from his scholarly work, he publishes in popular periodicals such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Washington Post*, *TLS*, and *Chronicle of Higher Education*. His latest book, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future; Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30* was published in May 2008. He recently co-edited a collection of essays entitled *The State of the American Mind: 16 Leading Critics on the New Anti-Intellectualism*, published in 2015.

Daniel Chua, Director: Daniel KL Chua earned his PhD in musicology from Cambridge University and is currently professor of music at the University of Hong Kong. Before joining Hong Kong University to head the School of Humanities, he was a fellow and the Director of Studies at St John's College, Cambridge, and later Professor of Music Theory and Analysis at King's College London. He was a Visiting Senior Research fellow at Yale (2014-15), a Henry Fellow at Harvard (1992-3), and a Research Fellow at Cambridge (1993-7). He is the recipient of the 2004 Royal Musical Association's Dent Medal. He is the President of the International Musicological Society (2017-2022). He has written widely on music, from Monteverdi to Stravinsky; his publications include *The 'Galitzin' Quartets of Beethoven* (Princeton, 1994), *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge, 1999), and *Beethoven and Freedom* (Oxford, 2017).

Rev. Dr. Gregory Betuore Dongkore, Director: was born in Nandom of the Upper West Region of Ghana. After his elementary education in the village he did his secondary education at St. Francis Xavier Minor Seminary from 1976 to 1982. He entered St. Victor's Major Seminary in 1982 and was ordained in 1990. He was then appointed to minister at Our Lady of the Nativity Parish in Ko-Nandom from 1990 until 1995. His return to the academic environment started in 1995 when he was sent to Rome to study Church History. He obtained a Licentiate in Ecclesiastical History from the Gregorian University, Rome in February, 1998. On his return home he was appointed to the formation team of St. Victor's Major Seminary until 2005 when he pursued an Advanced Master's in Theology from the University of Leuven, Belgium. Between 2006 and 2009, Fr. Gregory Dongkore pursued a PhD in Education at the Claremont Graduate University in California. His PhD was devoted to research into rural education policy in Northern Ghana. The research interests of Fr. Greg include Islam's dialogue with indigenous cultural values as a key to Muslim-Christian dialogue; martyrdom in the Church of

North Africa, Carthage to be precise; and the Church and State in partnership for rural education. Since obtaining his PhD Fr. Greg has returned to his Diocese of Wa and is currently devoted to teaching at Saints Peter and Paul Pastoral and Social Institute.

Johnelle Donnell, Director – Community leader and liason.

The great Roman statesman Cicero wrote, “The crowning grace of old age is influence.” Johnelle Donnell believes that God has given her influence and a meaningful retirement with a purpose. She will share how God expanded her sphere of influence by taking her on an unexpected adventure she would never have planned. Through her ministry at the county jail, Johnelle has established relationships with some of the hardest criminals in North Texas. Johnelle is a Wichita County Jail Chaplain affiliated with the Gideons and has served as a community representative on the Wichita Falls Times Record News Editorial Board. She served as a court reporter for 16 years, has done mission work with Native Americans for 10 years, has been involved in jail ministry for over 12 years, and has been a student and teacher of the Bible for 40 years. She was the visionary and spearheaded the fundraising that was behind the building of Faith Refuge, a 124-bed facility for homeless women and children, which draws women from all over North Texas and surrounding states who are serious about walking away from their addictions. She is presently focusing on creating a community for ex-prisoners who are struggling with the challenges of reintegrating into society. Her personal mission is “to quietly represent Christ so authentically that the marginalized will want to know more.”

William Forti, Director, Chair

Bill and his amazing wife have seven children and over 24 grandchildren. Bill received his undergraduate degree in economics and a Masters degree in finance from University of Richmond. He has worked for three different Congressional Committees doing analyses and writing reports on tax legislation, the concentration of economic power in the U. S., and the Penn Central bankruptcy. Afterward he worked for the Bendix Corporation and International Paper Company in various management positions typically involving business development and mergers and acquisitions. With General Dynamics, Bill was responsible for the company’s strategic planning and business development involving fifteen operating divisions and one hundred ten thousand employees. In addition to developing strategic plans, Bill was responsible for establishing numerous businesses in about a dozen countries amounting to billions of dollars. For business and/or pleasure, he has traveled to more than ninety countries. In 1989, Bill was one of seven founding members of a company, called Emetrics, formed to develop and market a new invention that could recognize patterns. Today, pattern recognition technology is everywhere. In 1992, he and his

son, Mark, while a junior at Baylor University, invented a flying cylinder that could fly extraordinary distances. They productized the prototype for commercial sale, co-founded the William Mark Corporation and started in business. He chooses to be involved with the Upper Room because he knows from his business perspective he could be of value. He is enthusiastic about the project because Bill believes it is probably the most important thing we can do for our country and for the future of our children. More than that, bending the Academy toward a proper understanding of reality is an important task to the Lord for the sake of salvation.

Vicki Garza, Director, Secretary-Treasurer: As CEO and co-founder of Garza Creative Group in April 1991, Vicki took the company from a start-up, fledgling business to a nationally-acclaimed, award-winning, multi-million dollar advertising agency within seven years. Her career accomplishments include winning an Overcoming Obstacles Award from Working Woman Magazine and serving as a Board Member for both the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Women-Business Owners. She also served as the only female trustee of a 2500-member church in Dallas. In 2009, she became a Board Member for the Downtown Pregnancy Center and sub-committee Chairperson for the establishment of the Uptown Women's Center in Uptown Dallas, which opened in 2011. In 2012, she established U ARISE, a campus care organization to help college students through difficult times. The ultimate goal of all U Arise activities is to transform college campuses with the love and hope of Jesus. She is currently a Board Member of Hope for the Heart, an international counseling ministry located in Plano, TX. Most recently, she has also been chosen to serve as a board member for Biblica, the International Bible Society.

Douglas Matthews, Director: Professor Matthews earned his PhD in Psychology from Miami University in 1996, and held a NIH post-doctoral fellowship in Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. He has held faculty positions at the University of Memphis, Baylor University, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore) and is currently faculty and department chair of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. Matthews primarily studies addictions and has published over 70 book chapters and journal articles. His work has received over \$2.4 million in funding. He was also the founding President of Global Banjara Baptist Ministries, International, an organization focused on evangelism and humanitarian aid among the Banjara people group in south-central India. He is a frequent speaker in at scientific conferences focused on alcohol addiction or experimental behavioral neuroscience. Finally, he is a frequently speaker at Christian faculty conferences.

Mary Poplin, Director: Professor Poplin, Ph.D. from the University of Texas, is a professor in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University. Her work spans K12 to higher education. She has studied over 70 highly effective teachers in the most vulnerable neighborhoods and schools in LA over the last 10 years. The results of which is *Highly Effective Teachers of Vulnerable Students: Practice Informing Theory* (Peter Lang 2019), a volume she co-edited with former graduate students. Poplin’s work in higher education has included administration; at various times, she served as dean and director of teacher education. After a late conversion to Christ in 1993 (age 42), Professor Poplin worked for two months with Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta in 1996 to understand why she said their work was “religious work and not social work” and wrote of that experience in *Finding Calcutta (IVP, 2008)*. Academically, she explores the contemporary intellectual trends dominant in the various academic disciplines: the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. In 2014, she published *Is Reality Secular? Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews* (InterVarsity Press). She is co-editor of *Christianity and the Secular Border Patrol: The Loss of Judeo-Christian Knowledge* (P. Lang, 2017). She is a frequent speaker in Veritas Forums and other venues throughout the United States and abroad.

Carol Swain, Director: As a professor of political science and professor of law at Vanderbilt University, she is an author, public speaker, and popular media commentator. Dr. Swain’s first book, *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress*, won the Woodrow Wilson prize for the best book published in the U. S. on government, politics or international affairs in 1994, and was cited by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in *Johnson v. DeGrandy*, 512 U.S. 997 (1994) and by Justice Sandra Day O’ Connor in *Georgia v. Ashcroft*, 539 U.S. (2003). Dr. Swain has been published in *CNN Online*, *The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Times*, and *USA Today*. She has appeared on ABC Headline News, *BBC Radio*, *NPR*, *INT News*, *CNN’s AC360*, *Fox News’ Hannity*, *Fox and Friends*, *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, *Judge Jeanine*, *Michael Smerconish*, *The PBS NewsHour*, *The Washington Journal*, and *ABC’s Headline News*. Carol served on the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Carol has retired from Vanderbilt and is currently running for mayor of Nashville.

Mark Regnerus, Director: is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. His research is in the areas of sexual behavior, family, marriage, and religion. Mark is the author of over 40 published articles and book chapters, and three books: *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think about Marrying* (Oxford, 2011), which describes the norms, behaviors, and mating market realities facing young adults, and *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford, 2007), which tells the story of how religion does—and does not—shape teenagers' sexual decision-making. His latest book is entitled *Cheap Sex and the Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy* (Oxford, 2017), in which he describes the world that has come to be due to influence of technology on sex and sexuality. His work has been widely reviewed, including in *Slate*, the *Dallas Morning News*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and *The New Yorker*, and his research and opinion pieces have been featured in numerous media outlets.

Michael Uhlmann, Director: Professor Uhlmann has been teaching in the Department of Politics and Policy at Claremont Graduate University since 2002, where his courses cover the American Presidency, executive-congressional relations, the federal judiciary, the federal administrative process, and national security decision-making. Immediately prior to joining the Claremont Graduate University faculty, Professor Uhlmann had been a senior vice-president of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has also been a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., and was for many years a partner in the Washington office of Pepper, Hamilton, & Scheetz, a large international law firm, where he specialized in federal antitrust and administrative law. He has also had numerous positions in the federal government, including counsel to a U.S. Senate committee, Assistant General Counsel of the Federal Trade Commission, Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs in the Department of Justice, and associate director of the White House Office of Policy Development in the Reagan administration. He has written for many leading newspapers and journals of opinion, including *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *First Things*, and *The Claremont Review of Books*. For many years he wrote a monthly column on law and judiciary for the Catholic magazine, *Crisis*.

For further information:

Mary Poplin
The Upper Room Gathering
P O Box 4850
Wichita Falls, Texas 76308
maryp@upperroomgathering.com
mary.poplin@cgu.edu
909-525-5090 cell

The Upper Room Gathering is an official 501c3 organization

¹ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University* 1852.

² Charles Malik, *A Christian Critique of the University*, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1982. Malik writes that his book should have been more properly be titled *What Does Jesus Christ Think of the University?* Malik also wrote *Two Tasks* where he outlined the tasks of the Christian intellectual, both of which are derivatives of talks given at North Waterloo University in 1980.

³ Mark Noll, (1995, 2011). *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind; Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

⁴ Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) greatly influenced philosopher Jürgen Habermas and Italian philosopher and senator Marcelo Pera writing books with each of them (See for example *Christianity and the Crisis of Culture* and *Without Roots* with Pera and *The Dialectics of Secularism* with Habermas).

⁵ Dallas Willard, *Knowing Christ Today*. (NY: HarperOne) p. 138.

⁶ <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>

⁷ See Colossians 1, Hebrews 1, John 1, Genesis 1.

⁸ In the 20th Century, theologians in universities slowly promoted even a secularized Gospel. Theologians suggested we needed to “demythologize” Christ so that more could believe.⁸ This resulted in the opposite; why believe a Gospel that is no different than human efforts to be good? Thus, orthodox Christian principles lost their place as the centrifugal force holding all the disciplines of the university and became increasingly complicit in secular intellectual trends, even bending Biblical teaching to conform.

⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. Barry Kanpol and Mary Poplin (Eds.) *Christianity and the Secular Border Patrol: The Loss of Judeo-Christian Knowledge* (2108).

¹⁰ As John Henry Newman predicted in the 19th Century, biologists are now consulted on questions that have moral implications yet those biologists have no training or knowledge of moral law. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of the University*. The takeover of these considerations by those with the most political power was prefigured by Nietzsche’s claim that God is dead.

¹¹ For example there may be special interest groups on religion in organizations such as the American Educational Research Association, American Academy of Religion, American Psychological Association, etc.

¹² Campus Crusade and InterVarsity both once held a conference for Protestant faculty for 1-3 days every third year. The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, largely dedicated to the teachings of the Catholic faith, also meet annually for two days.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 8:1.

¹⁴ 2 Peter 1:5-7.

¹⁵ Thomas Kuhn's work did somewhat relativize truth in the sense that he saw these changes as not necessarily leading to truth and the fact of these changes as suggesting this was an ever-evolving process. He limited the idea of paradigm shifts to science and overestimated the degree to which the new paradigm would completely replace earlier understandings. This problem is exemplified later in the discussion of Newbigin's notion of the higher rationality of Christ. Christian scholars can expect there are truths currently existing in secular knowledge because evil cannot create; it can only distort and destroy so that all current secular knowledge must have some truth else it could not stand.

¹⁶ Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1986), Kindle edition, p. 680-681 of 2027.

¹⁷ Mark 14; Luke 22

¹⁸ Acts 1:6-14; Acts 20:7-12