

**ACCEPTING CHRISTIAN  
FAITH IN THE ACADEMY:**  
A CRITICAL STUDY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR  
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AMONG UNIVERSITY FACULTY

by

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Submitted in part-fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of MTh in Applied Theology (University of Oxford)

School of Humanities  
Westminster College, Oxford  
September 1, 2001

**DECLARATION THAT THE DISSERTATION  
HAS NOT BEEN PLAGIARIZED**

I confirm that this dissertation is entirely my own work, and that where it depends upon, or otherwise uses, the work of others, all such dependencies and uses have been fully acknowledged.

Signed .....

Name (Block Capitals) .....

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

*Abstract*

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This study is an original investigation of Christian ministry to American university professors. There is a significant overrepresentation of atheist and agnostic professors in academia compared to the general American population. This poses a significant challenge to those seeking to bring the gospel to institutional higher education. Little is known how to effectively reach this group of nonbelieving intellectuals.

Theology of mission and sociology provide the rationale for the documentation of and field research into academic culture as it encounters the gospel. While evangelicalism is not the only model that can sustain a ministry to academia, it is the foundation for the ministry of Christian Leadership Ministries (CLM), the faculty outreach of Campus Crusade for Christ. This ministry in the university is controversial, especially when issues of inculturation of the gospel and teaching religion in state universities are raised. However, CLM does not seek a new religious imperialism, but a culturally sensitive outreach in today's diverse academic environment.

The number of believers and nonbelievers in academia has remained relatively static over the twentieth century, though the degree of belief varies discipline to discipline. Apostate professors, those who have no faith, have decided matters of faith before entering the university and certainly before their undergraduate days are over. Their apostasy is undergirded by many cognitive and societal concerns. No professor in this study found God the best explanation for the universe and how it works. Additionally, most of these professors were disturbed by the poor, hypocritical witness to God by the Church and Christians. However, if these concerns are satisfactorily addressed by Christians whom they respect, most of these apostates would seriously consider faith in Jesus Christ. The keys to successful ministry likely include the pursuit of integrative scholarship and the adoption of an ethos of service and social concern.

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my devoted wife, Pam. She has stood by me in my ministry and in my studies all these years. I would never have finished this without her patience, encouragement, prayers, and great love.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan Rowland, my director of studies. You helped me keep my objectivity, and pointed me to some areas that really needed to be in this paper. It is so much better than I ever thought it could be. This dissertation may be of valuable service to many Christian academics because of you. A big thank you to Dr. Rod Stark for many hours of consultation and encouragement on this project. He enabled me to better grasp the scope of the scholarship that exists on this largely unexplored topic. His help was invaluable, especially in locating the 1984 Carnegie data, after I had confirmed its existence. Thanks to him, the data is now in the American Religious Data Archive at Purdue University for others to use.

I am grateful to Mike Duggins and Mike Sorgius for allowing me the freedom to pursue this project to its conclusion. They and all of Christian Leadership Ministries are its beneficiaries. A special thanks to Stan Oakes, who prodded me into embarking on this course of study. I almost missed a huge opportunity! My classmates David Wiley and Rusty Wright were a great encouragement to me, especially when it seemed I would never get a handle on this project.

Thanks also to Robin North and Debbie Fennell for their sacrifice in transcribing all the interviews. My thanks, too, to Dr. Jorge Valdes, Fran Plunkett, Patti Reynolds, and Pam Richardson for help proofreading and editing the manuscript. I could never have finished this course without the financial backing of many friends, particularly Tom and Sylvia Wade. Thank you! I especially thank all the professors, staff, administrators, and researchers in the Christian Faculty/Staff Forum at the Georgia Institute of Technology. They are my friends and fellow ambassadors for Christ in academia, and they are the inspiration for this project.

Lastly, I wish to thank my Lord, Savior, and friend, Jesus Christ for arranging this special gift just for me. Only he knows how much it means to me to have studied at the University of Oxford meant to me. It is a dream come true.

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*“One has to seek one’s salvation somewhere, and I chose the title of professor to be my saviour.”*

— Sigmund Freud (Freud, 1970:254)

## *Introduction*

In the idiom of mission studies, university professors are a large “unreached people group” in the United States. Nearly 1 million people teach and research in our colleges and universities. A large number of them are not Christian, with many being atheist and agnostic. Most churches and ministries avoid evangelizing professors, considering them too difficult to reach. Yet, this group of people is extremely influential in our culture. Universities are major wellsprings of culture, and professors are its gatekeepers. They need to be reached with the gospel.

This study centers on how Christians can convey the gospel in such a way that these nonbelieving professors would consider faith in Christ. This is particularly important because the university is a major contributor to the secularizing of American culture. Professors exert a strong influence on our society. If more professors live and teach from a Christian worldview, their influence can have a redemptive effect on society. This requires the gospel to be assimilated into academic culture so that it may be disseminated to the larger culture.

Much of the university’s cultural influence tends toward secularization. America is developing a culture of disbelief (Carter, 1993). Our society is not hostile to religion, but trivializes it. In a postmodern milieu, no one’s values are supreme.

McFague (1987) is correct that Christians need to develop contemporary, imaginative, and creative means of communicating Christ and His Kingdom to our world. Ministry among university professors certainly qualifies. Can Christians reach professors without capitulating to today’s postmodern relativism and subjectivism that may make them unreachable? “Dean Inge once remarked that a man who marries the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower” (Berger, 1970:37).

The background of Christian Leadership Ministries (CLM) comprises the first chapter. CLM's theology and practice will be central to this paper. Their history, purpose, and practice are summarized. Since part of their practice is to evangelize non-Christian professors, their effectiveness in evangelism is ascertained so that proper recommendations can be made considering the field research in this dissertation. Also, their current perception of these professors is detailed.

The second chapter explores the issues of infusing the gospel into academic culture. Several mission models can apply to faculty ministry. Christian Leadership Ministries approaches ministry to professors from one of these models. An analysis of contextualization and inculturation of the gospel situates CLM in the discussion of Christians' role in culture and how to infuse the culture with the gospel. The idea of bringing the gospel to academic culture raises criticism that this paper addresses. Also, if converting professors is part of faculty ministry, an understanding of some of the issues surrounding conversion and belief change is important.

The third chapter constructs a picture of atheistic and agnostic professors. These professors are a significant part of the academy, and the majority in some institutions. If Christians want to reach them it is important to know what they are like. Also, many factors that influence and define academic culture are important to consider. Nonbelieving professors have some particular beliefs and mindsets that undergird their unbelief and impede consideration of Christian faith.

The fourth chapter is an exploratory study with atheist and agnostic professors. Qualitative methodology is used in semi-structured interviews with these professors. Specific beliefs that support their nonbelief and hinder Christian faith are identified. Also, the subjects' perceptions of Christians whom they respect, and Christians in general are surveyed.

The results of this research evoke explicit conclusions and recommendations in the final chapter. It is argued that traditional evangelicalism is inadequate to the task of evangelizing professors and bringing the gospel to campus. CLM is urged to adopt deliberate commitments to Christian integrative scholarship and an ethos of service and social concern. These commitments added to CLM's evangelicalism would give it what it needs to accomplish its mission to academia.

## **MINISTRY TO ACADEMIA**

### **Christian Leadership Ministries' Work Among University Faculty**

America's universities are encountering the winds of a new evangelicalism. For decades, student ministries such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, The Navigators, and the Baptist Student Union have been among the leaders in reaching college students for Jesus Christ, and discipling them in the faith. However, in the wake of the campus cultural revolt of the 1960s and emergent postmodernism, traditional student ministry became more difficult. Universities, which had increasingly questioned religion through most of the twentieth century, became outwardly critical of religion and Christianity in particular. The church had neglected ministry to intellectuals for several generations, and was reaping the result. A prevailing anti-intellectualism in fundamentalist and evangelical churches did not help matters.

Recognizing their dereliction among intellectuals, Inter-Varsity and Campus Crusade successfully launched ministries to university faculty and graduate students in the 1970s. Evangelicals are finding ways to minister to the whole person and the whole culture, not just the spiritual dimension. They have achieved a modicum of success since that time. A recent poll (Witham, 2000) found that Americans no longer see evangelicals as just wanting to save souls, but that the majority of evangelicals also want to save institutions such as schools, government, and entertainment.

Christian Leadership Ministries (CLM), the faculty outreach of Campus Crusade for Christ, is on the forefront of reaching professors for Christ. Founded in 1980, it is headquartered in Dallas, Texas. CLM has a national staff team consisting of about 120 who serve about 12,000 university professors, staff, researchers, and administrators on roughly 1,200 campuses in the

United States. I am a member of their staff working in Atlanta, Georgia. CLM also has a presence in nearly 40 countries, though most of those national ministries are not as developed as the United States. The mission of CLM is “Professors Proclaiming Christ to the University and the World.”

Christian Leadership Ministries has two primary emphases. First, CLM wants to see the social structures like the university transformed into positive cultural influencers for God’s Kingdom. Christian Leadership Ministries seeks to encourage professors to integrate their faith with their professional work. The Christian worldview is different from the prevalent materialism and secularism of the university. A thoughtful application of this worldview may lead a professor to make a unique contribution in their field. Since universities are a fountainhead for culture, reintroducing a rigorous Christian worldview can help change destructive cultural influences, as well as help reform a significant social structure.

While CLM has interest in social structures, they do not have much involvement in social concerns. They have many position papers on numerous social issues written by Christian professors and other scholars. These papers reside at one of their websites, [www.leaderu.com](http://www.leaderu.com), and reflect a conservative evangelical perspective. However, beyond writing on these topics, CLM has few programs that address social issues. They have faculty seminars on life management and getting tenure, and a seminar for students on how to get better grades. However, CLM has no community outreach, for instance to the poor or the homeless.

The second emphasis is to help Christian faculty be the primary missionaries to the campus. Professors are in a much better position than are outsiders to reach their students and colleagues. CLM encourages professors to take initiative in introducing their students and colleagues to a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Campus Crusade for Christ, the parent organization for Christian Leadership Ministries, summarizes their mission method as **Win –**

**Build – Send.** They are to win people to Christ, build (disciple) them in the faith, and send them out to do the same. This formulation is not too far removed from the Catholic understanding of the Christian mission. The Catholic view (CTS, 1976a) affirms that evangelization is more than the silent witness of an excellently lived life. It also includes proclamation, acceptance of the message, and the new convert evangelizing others. Perhaps this is why in recent years, evangelicals, including Campus Crusade for Christ, and Catholics have forged cooperative alliances for the purpose of evangelism. (Colson and Neuhaus, 1995).

Over the 20-year history of CLM, they have successfully helped Christian professors reach their students for Christ. However, few non-Christian professors, particularly apostate professors have responded to the gospel. (For the purposes of this dissertation, *apostates are those who have no faith or belief in God, and especially in Jesus Christ*). This is partly due to lack of initiative in reaching other professors. Christian professors perceive that students are easier to reach for Christ than are colleagues. Another reason could be lack of training in reaching non-Christian professors. This problem could be solved with deliberate training and emphasis on outreach to atheist and agnostic faculty.

It is also probable that the minimal response is due to lack of understanding of their ministry audience. If one does not know the obstacles, objections, and other reasons why these non-Christians have rejected the faith, attempts to evangelize them are going to be futile. Consequently, lack of understanding breeds lack of initiative, even for those who are equipped to share their faith. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17), so these professors will remain outside the Kingdom of God until believers figure out how to communicate with them. Most of what CLM knows about the attitudes, beliefs, and motivations of apostate professors is anecdotal. Some of it comes from what other professors have said about their nonbelieving colleagues, but this is filtered through those Christian professors’ epistemological grid. CLM also has derived some knowledge through books and

articles that decry the condition of the university, and the secularists that dominate it. However, CLM has never actually questioned those they are trying to reach.

Yet, even with improved understanding, it will take time to bring these apostate faculty members from hostility and indifference to belief. It will require love and persistence on CLM's part, and the power of the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of people.

Seeing some apostate professors become Christians will not change the university very quickly. Sometimes evangelicals are caught up in grandiose visions without paying the price of love and hard work year after year. Institutions take time to change.

*“I’m amazed to hear how ministries sometimes talk about their plans to reach some specific group or discipline within our culture: We are going to take back the university, we are going to revolutionize the film industry. Who are we kidding? We still speak in the revolutionary jargon of the sixties, as if deeply entrenched institutions can be seized and overthrown overnight. It didn’t work in the sixties, and it won’t work that way today. When attempting to influence any institution or discipline, Christians first need to do a reality check. How long did it take this discipline to get the way it is today?” (Downs, 1999:186).*

Christian Leadership Ministries has a long-term commitment to the university, so perhaps they will see some significant breakthroughs because of this study. With 20 years already invested in Christian faculty, another investment in non-Christian professors may prove fruitful. Taking time to understand their ministry audience may enhance CLM's ability to reach them.

#### **CLM Staff Perceptions of Apostate Professors**

When evangelicals talk about changing institutions, they often adopt an attitude that is not conducive to long-term effectiveness. Frequently, they adopt a battle mentality, and use war metaphors to describe their ministry and communicate the gospel. They are trying to “break down entrenched secularism.” They want to “take back the university.” Christian Leadership Ministries has not been immune to this attitude.

Yet, evangelicals are the invaders from the insider's perspective. Those who are besieging the city, not those who are in it, adopt a battle stance. Naturally, those defending the city will feel threatened by those who are attacking them. Most evangelical ministries are people outside the institution trying to influence it. CLM is different, as professors in their native environment do most of the actual ministry. Most of CLM's staffers have advanced academic degrees, so they fit in the university culture. If CLM truly is a ministry to insiders by insiders, then there is no need for the typical evangelical war posture. CLM should make friends with university secularists, and find constructive ways to reach them. "We must embrace any ministry method that will allow us to interact with those who most oppose us" (Downs, 1999:195). Better progress with apostate faculty can be made if they see CLM is on their side of the fence. Adopting a collegial attitude to apostate professors will help as CLM inquires about their attitudes, beliefs, and concerns. People are more open with their friends than their enemies. They may even be more receptive to the gospel.

Before asking apostate professors how to reach them, I wanted to see if CLM's understanding of non-Christian faculty correlated with what I might learn in my research. I asked CLM's national staff team via e-mail two questions about their ministry knowledge of nonbelievers. The responses I wanted were operational, not strictly theological. I wanted to distill their current level of knowledge and expertise in reaching atheists and agnostics. Forty-two of over 110 staff responded.

The first question was, "What do you think is the best way to reach an atheist or agnostic professor for Christ?" Many assume that because professors are academics that an intellectual approach is the most effective. If a skeptic's tough questions are answered and the faith is defended well, then he will be persuaded and become a Christian. None of my colleagues,

however, advocated this approach. While admitting that many intellectuals need good answers, this is not sufficient cause for conversion.

My colleagues believe that the best way to reach apostate faculty is relationally. They conclude that a professor reaching other professors is the preferable model, though acknowledge a CLM staff member could also cultivate such a relationship. A true friendship that loves the other person, seeks common interest, and meets personal needs is the environment for reaching the nonbeliever. It is assumed that friendly believers consistently living out their faith will gain the attention of an apostate. In this context, skeptics may seek answers to their difficult questions.

CLM staff mentioned that a personal crisis or difficult time of life frequently triggered nonbelievers to ask questions about God. When a person is in crisis, intellectual questions are shelved, and existential questions come to the fore. This is a time of heightened receptivity to the gospel. Many of my colleagues suggested that this is perhaps the only time when apostates may listen. They should, therefore, include nonbelievers in their lives, pray actively for them, and be ready when hard times come along. When nonbelievers see CLM staff and professors walking through the darkness with them, faith motivating love for nonbelievers, and sustaining them through life crisis, perhaps nonbelievers might find faith themselves.

One issue that none of my colleagues addressed but may be significant in reaching apostate professors is meaning and significance. People want to know that their life has meaning, and that what we do in life is significant. The Christian faith gives us that sense of meaning. We are all custom creations (Psalm 139:13-16), made in God's image, who have value because God made us. God has a unique plan for each of us (Jeremiah 29:11). This answers, "Where did I come from and why am I here?" Who we are and what we do means something when we are in Christ. Those who are not believers have a hard time answering these questions. They may

doubt that their lives mean anything, or that their work is worthwhile. It is possible that the lack of meaning and purpose could be an issue with some apostate faculty.

The second question I asked our team was “What do you think is an atheist or agnostic professor’s main obstacle to faith in Christ?” Some staffers believe the chief roadblock is some misunderstanding of Christianity or Christians. Some misconceptions are due to lack of knowledge. Their upbringing and academic socialization did not include belief in God. Other misconceptions arise because Christianity seems implausible. It is irrational or does not fit reality, therefore, it does not warrant belief. These misconceptions are fueled when Christians are incapable of answering the probing questions intellectuals ask. In addition, when those who call themselves Christians do not exhibit the faith they believe, they give rise to another misunderstanding. Christian hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and unloving attitudes and actions drive many from the faith. Many skeptics reason, “If that is Christianity, who wants it?”

Other CLM staff maintain that the principle impediment to faith is a will set on unbelief. Professors are susceptible to the sin of pride. They likewise tend to be independent minded. Also, their lifestyles may be incompatible with being a Christ follower, and they may be unwilling to change. They do not want to be accountable to a God who makes the moral rules instead of themselves. Many times, apparent intellectual problems are used as a shield to keep probing Christians from getting at the real heart issue. This may be the true obstacle of some apostate professors, but it will be difficult to demonstrate. No one likes to have his or her motives questioned, especially when there is so much at stake.

A final obstacle mentioned by our staff is the emotional, irrational impediments to faith. These include an inadequate father and the inability to reconcile personal evil with a loving God. Something happened to them or someone they care about, and God seemed unwilling or unable

to do anything about it. Christ or Christians were incapable of answering these existential questions. Consequently, they developed repugnance for God. Other apostates had absent, weak, or dysfunctional fathers that hampered their ability to relate to God as their Heavenly Father. It is hard to trust God when your own father cannot be trusted. How can one depend on God if your other father was not around when you needed him? These emotional factors may not be the ultimate hindrance to the gospel, but may make hearing the truth more difficult.

### **CLM's Experience in Reaching Non-Christian Professors**

Dr. Ron Carter, one of the faculty leaders of CLM's national ministry, conducted a recent e-mail survey of CLM's evangelism activity. He surveyed both CLM field staff and professors who are involved with CLM. The professors surveyed were the national faculty leadership, not the entire CLM network. Approximately 70% of these responded to the survey, while only about 10% of CLM staff responded. Carter asked how many tenure-track professors had been led to Christ, and whether or not it was a result of a person's own ministry. Professors confirmed the conversion of another professor on an average of one every 8.84 years. A few very active professors saw many more conversions, while most professors saw none. This is sobering if CLM staffers believe that professors are the best avenues for introducing other professors to Christ. This result could mean several things. Perhaps professors do not initiate very well with nonbelieving colleagues with the intent of sharing their faith. Possibly they do initiate well, but the nonbelievers do not respond well to the initiative. It is also possible that professors really are not the best avenues to reach other professors. I tend to doubt this last conclusion, but it is possible.

A second finding in Carter's survey is that a CLM staffer will see a professor become a Christian once every 2.24 years, whether that is a result of their direct ministry or some one else's on campus. Again, some CLM staffers are more active, and some have more established ministries than CLM staff on other campuses. Some staff respondents have seen no conversions at all.

The fact that a CLM staffer sees four times the average number of conversions does not mean that they are more effective than a professor is at reaching apostate professors. First, CLM staffers see many more people on campus than a typical faculty member, who spends the bulk of her time in her department. CLM staffers are also more highly trained in evangelism and apologetics than are most faculty members. With equivalent training, professors may be more effective than CLM staff. In addition, CLM staffers work with multiple professors who may have also responded to the survey.

The data may indicate that Christian faculty are actually as effective as the CLM staff because the sample frames and response rates are different. It is probable that the response rate among CLM staff is lower, because the non-respondents may not have seen any conversions either, so they may deem their responses irrelevant to the survey. If they had responded, the number of conversions per staff would likely look more like those of the national faculty leaders. Ultimately, the measure of effectiveness is not in raw numbers of conversions. It is in professors and/or CLM staffers taking the initiative to tell apostate professors about the Good News. The results are up to God, for only the Holy Spirit can change a person's heart.

Regardless, CLM's current corporate experience with such a large network of staff and Christian faculty members nationally is not encouraging. CLM should expect many more tenure-track conversions than one every 9 years. They will not see a marked change in the university unless this trend changes. That is why this study is important to CLM. Perhaps I might learn something in my research that will increase their effectiveness.

### **Summary**

Evangelicalism in America is changing in recent years. At one time evangelicals were only interested in the salvation of individuals. Now, their scope is expanding to include ministering to the whole person and the institutions they occupy. These Christians have rediscovered a vigorous intellectual life that rejects the anti-intellectualism of their fundamentalist roots.

Christian Leadership Ministries was born out of the need to reach intellectuals and their academic institutions with the gospel.

Since there are so few currently doing this kind of ministry, CLM is pioneering and learning as they go along. Academia is unfamiliar territory for most evangelicals, so CLM has little experience to draw on. In 20 years, they have had successes and failures. They have created new ministry models and strategies, and they have learned much. CLM does a good job at identifying and networking Christian faculty locally and nationally. Many of these have become effective witnesses for Christ with their students, but have not been effective witnesses with their colleagues. This is largely because neither these professors nor the CLM staffers have taken time to learn about their apostate audience. CLM is just shooting the proverbial shotgun hoping they will hit something.

CLM staff members have some good ideas about how to reach apostate faculty. They agree that the approach should be relational, and that cognitive outreach alone is insufficient to reaching apostates with the gospel. There is an attitude of the will involved. These may all be true, however, they have not been tested. Without first-hand information from those whom they are trying to reach, CLM's effectiveness in evangelism may remain very low. Christian Leadership Ministries has come a long way in developing methods and models for faculty ministry, perhaps farther than anyone else has. However, they still have much to learn, and this study should make a substantial contribution to their knowledge deficit.

## THE CHRISTIAN MISSION TO ACADEMIA

### The Nature of the Mission

The context of this research is the theology and practice of Christian Leadership Ministries, and their work among the faculty of the colleges and universities of America. In order to study their mission to academia it is important to determine what mission is and how it relates to ministry to the campus.

The Christian mission is not always what we think it is. Often we lose our focus through our many ministry activities, such as serving the poor, preparing a worship service, or sharing the gospel. We think these activities are our mission. Newbigin (1994) makes a helpful distinction between “mission” and “missions.” What we do for God – our plans, strategies, and methods – is what he would call missions. Our mission is what God sends us into the world to do. Our mission is not our activity, but what Bosch (1991) calls *missio Dei* – God’s activity. Yet, God generally chooses partnership with mankind, rather than unilateral action. He asks us to be involved in building his Kingdom rather than being mere spectators while he does all the work. Christians are to love and serve others in Jesus’ name, and invite others to enter his Kingdom. The church, therefore, is the center for witness, not its source. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God accomplishes His mission through us. This makes the mission for Christians an adventure, joyfully embraced, rather than just an obedient obligation.

*“It has been customary to speak of ‘the missionary mandate.’ This way of putting the matter...misses the point. It tends to make mission a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of the law rather than part of the gospel. If one looks at the New Testament evidence one gets another impression. Mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy. The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive is something that cannot possibly be suppressed. It must be told...One searches in vain through the letters of St. Paul to find any suggestion that he anywhere lays it on the conscience of his readers that they ought to be active in mission. For himself it is inconceivable that he should keep silent. ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the*

*gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). But nowhere do we find him telling his readers that they have a duty to do so" (Newbiggin, 1994:16-17).*

What missions we use in accomplishing our mission is a reflection of our view Christians' role in culture. Niebuhr (1951) details the classic conceptions of this dichotomy that are relevant to how Christians have approached the university. A few of these positions are presented here. One view is to avoid participation in the general culture. Most fundamentalists and some evangelicals embraced this separatist mood, and as a result they have not been involved in the university, much less culture in general. Many ecumenical Christians have a different perspective from separatists, and are involved in academia because they see Christ saving everyone, not a select group. This stance makes social change difficult, as Christ is seen as synonymous with culture. Yet, social structures need redeeming along with those who occupy them. Christians who hold this third view instead see the university as a fertile opportunity for the establishment of God's Kingdom in the hearts of cultural gatekeepers, and through them the culture at large.

Understanding what mission is, there are several views of mission that could support a ministry to university faculty. These include evangelical, ecumenical, and Catholic perspectives on mission. While each view is valid, they have different emphases; some lend themselves more to redeeming social structures than do others. The first view considered, evangelicalism, is strong on personal evangelism.

*Evangelicals' focus historically has been mostly on the spiritual life and on saving individuals. In the last couple of centuries they have helped revitalize the church. "It has been the great campaigns of revival, awakening and evangelism during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that have made Christianity once again a matter of choice and conviction, rather than a matter of birth, ancestry and culture. In a world of nominal Christians with nominal beliefs, with faith that was a mere formality, it was above all Evangelicals who challenged people to make a choice, to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour, and to change their lives accordingly – to become 'born again' Christians" (Nolan, 1991:AB2).*

Evangelism is not unique to the Christian faith, but it is a distinctive of Christianity. Other faiths, particularly Judaism, have sects that seek new converts via evangelism. Those faiths do not require evangelism as a matter of theology and conviction. The heart of the Christian faith is Jesus' Great Commission to go to the entire world and make disciples of all nations. God has

no grandchildren, only children, and all of them are adopted. People must be born-again by accepting Christ's substitutionary atonement for their sins. This for evangelicals is the gospel. Most Christians would affirm that sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ is an essential part of the Christian life. CLM was born out of this traditional evangelicalism.

Christians from the ecumenical tradition are one of evangelicals' critics. Evangelicalism has been rightly faulted for its emphasis on the spiritual life while having little real concern for the whole person. People wait for heaven in a physical existence that faces the challenges of injustice, poverty, war, and the environment. Ecumenicals assert that "the church does not exist solely for the spiritual comfort of individuals, nor solely to get individuals into heaven. [Christians] are also responsible for the earth, the world, for the course that history will take" (Nolan, 1991:AB3). The World Council of Churches has outlined ten affirmations on justice, peace, and the integrity of creation (WCC, 1990) as a basis of their theology. Evangelicals on the other hand argue that God's Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. In practice, while ecumenicals pursue an agenda of social concern, they often do not include how one enters the Heavenly Kingdom. Salvation is not in being born-again, but in social justice and doing good deeds. Their gospel is the social gospel.

Since Vatican II, Catholics have developed a theological formulation that avoids the dichotomy between the gospel and the social gospel. "The Church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving, but she is conscious that the best structures and the most idealized systems soon become inhuman if the inhuman inclinations of the human heart are not made wholesome, if those who live in these structures or who rule them do not undergo a conversion of heart and of outlook" (CTS, 1976b:18). The encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* emphasizes the term "evangelization" rather than "evangelism" to describe Catholics'

holistic view of ministry. Evangelization combines evangelism and social concern as equally important and complementary functions of the Christian mission.

Perhaps in the end, the Catholic view may prove to be the most effective in reaching academics and academic culture with the gospel. It is important that Christians share the gospel in the university so that others may become Christians. Also, Christians should be active in social concerns, something to which most professors are sensitive. Ministry to academic professionals is still a relatively new field in missions, so CLM can learn from these other traditions. CLM has yet to resolve the question of how best to infuse the gospel into academia.

Two developments in theology of mission regard the introduction of Christianity into new cultures, and are useful in modern missions. These trends are contextualization and inculturation. Both are relevant to this discussion of reinserting the gospel into American universities. Contextualization concerns itself with how to “adapt the message, encoding it in such a way that it will become meaningful to the respondents” (Hesselgrave, 1981c:402). In past centuries, Christian missionaries preached the gospel from a Western cultural context. Consequently, these missionaries were not just evangelizing a new culture, but in fact Westernizing that culture. New converts had little effect on their native culture, because the converts were isolated from it in a Western microcosm. Consequently, these cultural mutants were rejected by their native culture. This is primarily why today missionaries are viewed poorly, and many cultures are hardened to the gospel.

Contextualization of the gospel is an attempt to rectify this. “We must distinguish between the gospel and culture. If we do not, we will be in danger of making our culture the message” (Hiebert, 1981:377). Contextualization looks for culturally relevant language, indigenous redemption metaphors (Richardson, 1974), and other communication techniques to give the

gospel meaning to the local culture. How does one explain to an Eskimo that “all of us like sheep have gone astray” when he or she has never seen a sheep?

Contextualization is a step in the right direction. It is a way to make the gospel relevant to culture, but is somewhat external to culture. It concerns itself with making the gospel understandable to a local culture – the local context. However, once the local context understands the gospel, this is where contextualization stops. It is not aware of the gospel’s role in examining the context. Bosch (1991) affirms that while the gospel must be inserted into a context, the gospel also critiques the context, for instance when it encounters cultural evil. When the gospel encounters cultural evil it can either assimilate or transform. It is more than a message to be understood. It has the power to transform lives (Hebrews 4:12) and whole cultures. The gospel is not passive knowledge, but it actively changes lives.

Infusing the gospel into a new culture is more than making the gospel understandable to a local culture. Inculturation goes further by allowing native converts to reinterpret the universal gospel and give it expression in the style, language, and practice of the local culture. “The church must be allowed to indigenize itself, and to ‘celebrate, sing and dance’ the gospel in its own cultural medium” (The Lausanne Committee, 1981:531). The evangelist should recognize some responsibility in communicating the gospel without the evangelist’s cultural entanglements. Also, the evangelized are free to interpret and integrate the gospel into their culture as they see fit. The missionary should distinguish between the “Bible culture” (the culture in biblical times which first received the transcultural message of Christ), the missionary’s culture and the respondent culture (Hesselgrave, 1981b:393). The missionary’s aim should ultimately be to allow indigenous people to live out the gospel in their own way. Indigenous converts give the gospel native cultural expression, and can let the gospel change their culture as needed.

The rise of indigenous missionaries (Yohannan, 1995) is an outworking of the inculturation model. In many Third World countries the plea to the West is “stay home.” Pray, send money and resources so indigenous missionaries can do the work. These missionaries know the language and the culture, and are more effective. The gospel is received coming from a native, rather than a foreigner. Furthermore, these missionaries cost less to support because they do not require the creature comforts of Western missionaries. A dozen local missionaries can go into the field for the cost of one Westerner. These local evangelists are more effective in reaching their culture than are foreigners. “Even though the idea may have been sparked by contact with another culture, it still must be introduced from within to be accepted” (Kietzman and Smalley, 1981:505). CLM’s ministry model also emphasizes indigenous missionaries. Professors are better suited for reaching academia than outsiders.

There are two criticisms of inculturation. It is impossible to achieve in practice because there is no pure gospel, or it is undesirable as an act of cultural imperialism. Both of these critiques stem from incipient cultural relativism. Schleiermacher asserted that theology is influenced, if not determined, by the context in which it evolved. He maintains that there never was a “pure” gospel message that is supracultural and suprahistorical. Every text has its own *sitz im leben* – its own life setting or context. Each context creates its own gospel. Therefore, theology is a dialectical construct between theory and praxis. Most postmodern theologians likewise deny the existence of a transcultural gospel. If Schleiermacher is correct, then we must conclude that there is no core message. Then how can we ever say any local story is truly Christian?

Bosch (1991) asserts that one must avoid this kind of relativism. He points out that there are both contextual and universal dimensions to theology. These combine to form a local theology that preserves the meaning of the gospel while giving that gospel a unique local cultural expression. To do otherwise is to lose the core of the Christian faith. “If we, then, translate it into native forms without thought to preserving the meaning, we will end up with syncretism –

the mixture of old meanings with the new so that the essential nature of each is lost. If we are careful to preserve the meaning of the gospel even as we express it in native forms we have indigenization” (Hiebert, 1981:378). The gospel is likewise transcultural because it is prior to culture. Genesis 1-3 shows us that there was relationship with God before there was culture. Before Adam and Eve ever had children, the core of the gospel was already in place. “Man’s relationship to God precedes and prescribes all other relationships. In this sense true religion is prior to culture, not simply a part of it (Hesselgrave, 1981a:365).

The second critique is that inculturation seems an imposition of one culture upon another. It is judgmental to say something is wrong with another culture and that it should change. Nevertheless, this is not endemic to Christianity. In the past, Christians have committed atrocities in the name of Christ, but this is not a problem with Christianity itself. The gospel by nature is transforming of both individuals and cultures. The mistake some Christians make in evangelism of both persons and cultures is to subsume the role of the Holy Spirit. We try to point out to the person or culture where we think the evil lies. Instead, we should let the gospel make that critique, and let the Holy Spirit convict of sin.

Cultural relativists suggest that cultures should be left to pursue their own course. They contend a primitive culture is better than Western interference. However, in reality this utopian view is not viable.

*“Naïve academics...may protest that the world’s remaining primitive cultures should be left undisturbed, but farmers, lumbermen, land speculators, miners, hunters, military leaders, road builders, art collectors, tourists, and drug peddlers aren’t listening. They are going in anyway. Often to destroy. Cheat. Exploit. Victimize. Corrupt. Taking, and giving little other than diseases for which primitives have no immunity or medicine...A new school, now rising in America, has at last recognized the futility of this approach, and advocates instead that primitive tribes be exposed to survival-related ‘directed change,’ in order that they may learn to cope with encroachment, now seen as inevitable” (Richardson, 1981:489, 491).*

In reality, all cultures change. None are truly static or pristine. Is it not better for people who care about the culture to make first contact? Conscientious Christians can do this, and allow the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, evil, and injustice. The same can be done in an academic culture from which God has been banished

### Criticisms of Faculty Ministry

As the nature of ministry to academia is considered, inculturation seems to be the preferable missions model. CLM is heading in this direction. Yet, the idea of faculty ministry is subject to criticism. This kind of ministry is new in missions, with effectively only two national ministries to professors, Christian Leadership Ministries and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship's faculty ministry. The scope and influence of these ministries are not sufficiently large yet to have stimulated institutional criticism in writing. Therefore, based on an understanding of academic culture, I shall anticipate possible criticisms. Three potential objections are surveyed below.

#### *Religious Imperialism*

A criticism of faculty ministry could be the threat of religious imperialism. Universities struggled long to free themselves from the limits placed on them by religion. Gays, lesbians, feminists, Marxists, secularists, many Jewish scholars, and ex-fundamentalists are wary of conservative Christianity. Historically these Christians were the epitome of oppression. Protestant Christian cultural hegemony, though, was broken in the U.S. in the late 1800s (Marsden, 1994). As other worldviews gained ascendance in the university through the twentieth century, Christianity waned. While celebrated by many, Christianity's dethroning has produced an unanticipated result.

The nineteenth century disestablishment of Christianity liberated American culture from the limits and abuses caused by religion, but left our culture without a common value system.

Nationality, ethnicity, race, class, and gender fragment today's society. The scourges of war and slavery focused these issues. The emergent culture sought cohesion through the promotion of difference (it is called diversity today) and equity. "Differences are socially and historically constructed and hierarchically arranged...Differences carry real and differential meanings regarding power and privilege" (Hu-DeHart, 2000:40). Highlighting and celebrating differences was believed to unite culture and ensure equality without any one viewpoint being dominant. This has become the diversity project.

The primary vehicle to advance diversity in our culture is education. We can foster a more civil society through education (Gates, 1992) that helps us understand and appreciate our differences and commonalities. McKinley (2001) advances the idea of the "effective teacher as a culture broker," emphasizing the role education plays in shaping culture. The Association of American Colleges and Universities "has established diversity as an educational and civic priority" (Musil, 2000:8).

Universities are at the forefront of the diversity project. Diversity has positive goals that help make the university and society better.

*"For students, diversity increases retention, job prospects, racial understanding, satisfaction with college, openness to difference, and critical thinking. For faculty, diversity enriches their teaching, service, and research. For institutions, diversity improves the curricula, campus social interactions, and race relations. And even for businesses, the ultimate beneficiary of higher education to many people, diversity promotes creativity and innovation, fosters problem-solving skills, and adds to organizational flexibility" (Baez, 2000:46).*

The intent of diversity is to encourage disadvantaged voices. As the marginalized are heard, these alternative views can be transforming (Taylor, 2000).

While the diversity project has noble goals, there are those who believe that it has gone far enough. Most of the liberation goals have been achieved, and diversity has become an

instrument for the same oppression it should shun. “‘Diversity’ is a euphemism for the appointment [acceptance] of more African-Americans, women, and Hispanic-Americans, for offering more courses in black studies, women’s studies, gay/lesbian studies, and for reducing the preponderance in the syllabuses of the cultural achievements of older, white, male persons of heterosexual orientation” (Shils, 1992: 208). Understanding our differences should unite us in a more civil society, but the opposite has been true. “Increased tolerance for diversity has gone hand in hand with increased social fragmentation” (Fitzgerald, 2000:12). Multiculturalism, especially cultural relativism, rather than unifying, “undermines the unity of man, our common humanity in the intellect, which makes the university possible and permits it to treat man as simply without distinction” (Bloom, 1983:33).

Diversity initiatives were intended to allow other minority voices to be heard. Yet, an emphasis on diversity has caused an overreaction against religious viewpoints in public life. Speech codes have “created a culture of the offended” (Marsden, 1997:35). If someone’s speech offends or could potentially offend, then that speech is squelched. Also, the protests of the 1960s have produced a culture of complaint. Groups who complain the loudest often set policies in institutions like universities. Multiculturalism often silences some of our major sub-cultures. Devotion to ideology has eclipsed religious devotion. Reason has been replaced with intimidation by the politically correct (Sykes, 1990). This leads D’Sousa (1991:21) to ask, “What are the merits of overtly ideological scholarship in Afro-American Studies and Women’s Studies programs?” We wind up with what he calls the “tyranny of the minority.” This is especially true in American universities where the Christian voice is certainly not the majority. Universities today are not interested in a level playing field where all voices can be heard. Hegemony has been replaced with another.

Those currently in power culturally do not want religion to gain ascendancy again. However, should we fear resurgent Christian imperialism? “The fact is that many contenders on the various sides of such debates [as abortion and homosexuality] are imperialistic in the sense of wanting to set the moral standards for all society” (Marsden, 1997:32). When this is the atmosphere of the university, this becomes another kind of classroom indoctrination. Is this not the same thing for which twentieth century progressives criticized Christians?

Bringing Christ back to campus need not be another power struggle. Green suggests that providing a place for religion in the academy is appropriate.

*“True, religion has a great capacity for oppression. But it has an equal ability to liberate and transform...We do our students no educational service by pretending that religion isn’t out there and doesn’t exist. We cannot promote the tolerance of something we trivialize or ignore” (Green, 1996:28).*

If we are to emphasize tolerance and diversity, then should one not approach religion on those grounds? Christians are not seeking the reassertion of power, but a voice at the table. “Religion has not been able to find a way fully to participate in the intellectual conversation of the contemporary American university. For the academy, religion is not a kind of difference that matters” (Green, 1996:26).

### *Neutrality*

Lack of neutrality is another possible fault with evangelizing professors and reintroducing Christian ideas in the university. Neutrality demands that an instructor should not promote matters of personal opinion or belief, but remain neutral so as not to influence the student. A professor promoting a Christian viewpoint would violate this stance of neutrality.

In reality, neutrality is an empty concept. There is no neutral perspective or neutral idea. Neutrality, once treasured in education circles, is becoming a relic. In one recent study of

educators, 100% of teachers surveyed agreed that “education is value-laden” (Chambers, 1995:201), not value-neutral.

One can argue that professors who abandon neutrality are intolerant. George Marsden disagrees. “No longer is it easy to assume [in a post-enlightenment world] that if we just become more open and tolerant we will all get along better. Openness and diversity, we have discovered, have their own orthodoxies and their own intolerance” (Marsden, 1997:110). McDowell and Hostetler (1998) chronicle the effects of the resulting intolerant practices engendered by the modern definition of tolerance. Tolerance is not what it once was. Tolerance no longer is just putting up with another person’s differences or vices. “Tolerance is the posture and cordial effort to understand another’s beliefs, practices, and habits, *and to accept them as equally valid approaches to life* (emphasis in original)” (Downs, 1999:28).

The net result of such tolerance has not helped scholarly pursuits any more than it has helped people get along. One secular professor laments,

*“The students whom I teach are so tolerant of so many things that I wonder just how deep that tolerance runs. I would like to find an occasional student who, despite my contrary views, would articulate the position that homosexuality is sinful, or that abortion constitutes infanticide, if for no other reason than to make the point that ideas about right and wrong ought to generate disagreement rather than encourage easy conformity. If renegotiating the truce between faith and knowledge were to produce more of a spark in a typical classroom discussion, I would be in favor of it” (Wolfe, 1997).*

The response of those who wish to uphold neutrality is to take an agnostic approach to values, morals, beliefs, and religion. It cannot be known if any of these things are true. Today’s pluralist espousing neutrality argues from ignorance not knowledge. A pluralist may say, “since we do not know whether a fetus is a human being, we should let each woman decide for herself...” (Budziszewski, 1999:9). Yet, the pluralist knows that certain things are true or not (he knows pluralism is true). He also knows that certain things are right or not (he knows

inherently that murder, rape, stealing, etc. is wrong). Moral good and evil is something a person cannot not know (Budziszewski, 1996). They are written on the heart.

### *Teaching Religion*

Lastly, some might argue that to teach religion in the classroom is to advocate its adoption. This should not be done with impressionable students. However, advocacy is implicit in all scholarship. All views are ultimately grounded in some faith or other (Marsden, 1997). If we can make our point on grounds other than just special revelation, why should a Christian voice not be heard?

Many nonbelievers are suspicious of evangelical Christian motives. Christians are only interested in proselytizing when they engage in public activity or ministry, even when they are trying to serve the community. “As Christians we reject this accusation immediately; our desire to share the gospel with people in need is not an attempt to abuse them, but to share with them our profound convictions. We must be aware, however, that, seen from the perspective of secular people or of other religions, this is proselytism and creates new stumbling blocks to people coming to real living faith in Jesus Christ” (Castro, 1983:307).

Introducing a Christian perspective in the classroom is not the same as proselytizing in class.

That is rarely in line with instructional goals, and can be an abuse of power by the professor.

*“Perhaps the most important issue is our obligation as educators not to exploit the students’ situation – especially that of frequently vulnerable and inexperienced undergraduates – by coercing or indoctrinating them into accepting beliefs, worldviews, or values through the power relations that exist any time one party assesses and rewards the performance of another...But religion is not the only potential offender here. The duty not to subvert learning and rational discourse in the university must also protect students against being recruited in the classroom into Marxism, free-market capitalism, or feminism” (Comenisch, 1994).*

If a student privately wants to discuss spiritual matters with a professor, that is a different matter. The classroom should not be a bully pulpit for a professor’s ideology or

beliefs, but an academic ought to be forthright with his or her own biases and worldview. “On the one hand, teaching in which there is no teacher involvement was perceived as lacking credibility. On the other hand, teaching that includes too much intervention of the teacher’s ideology seemed to many to be indoctrination” (Shkedi and Horenczyk 1995:116). An intelligently argued viewpoint that is distinctly Christian can have a place in the classroom alongside other views if the grounds for the view are not strictly built on special revelation. Christians have simply lost the art of integrating faith and discipline. In fact, most Christian faculty in universities today would likewise balk at deliberate proselytization in the classroom. “All the religious professors interviewed for this article said they believed it would be wrong to proselytize in a secular classroom or to deny others the right to hold different views” (Mooney, 1994).

#### **Conversion and Belief**

Since part of Christian Leadership Ministries’ practice is evangelism, it is important to look at the nature of conversion and belief. If CLM’s goal is to see professors converted to Christ, then one should examine the dynamics surrounding that change of belief.

One can understand conversion in several ways. In evangelical Christian circles it is usually understood theologically. A person turns to God from self, repents of their sin, and accepts Christ as their Savior from that sin (Conn, 1986). While this is Christian conversion in summary, there are more nuances to conversion. Conversion does not have just a theological dimension. Psychology studies conversion, particularly as it relates to the psychology of self. There is also a sociological view of conversion, which deals with the community aspect of conversion. Sociology looks at the conversion of societal structures as well. Part of CLM’s aim is to effect some sort of conversion of academia. For the purposes of this study we will focus

on the theological and psychological understandings of conversion, while acknowledging that a decent study of conversion sociologically is beyond our scope.

Since “every ministry performed in the name of Christ is a call to conversion” (Potter, 1983:315), the essence of conversion should be examined. “Despite differences in conversion experiences across people, cultures, and groups, there is an underlying, universal process of conversion to be discovered” (Pitt, 1991:172).

Conversions occur both suddenly as well as gradually. It may be possible for a person to have more than one conversion experience in a lifetime (Conn, 1986; Rambo, 1992; Gillespie, 1991). Most evangelicals would qualify this as evidence of spiritual searching, and that once a person is converted to Christ, he or she cannot be converted to some other belief. Though conversions can occur rapidly, most occur over time. Lofland and Stark (1965) were early pioneers in describing conversions as a process. Their seven conditions, while not without criticism (Seggar and Kunz, 1972; Austin, 1977; Snow and Phillips, 1980; Greil and Rudy, 1984;), have affected the direction of present conversion research. Lofland and Stark showed that the context for conversion is the converts’ identification with common social ties and common values of the new faith community. As the prospective convert is befriended and endorses the beliefs of his or her new friends, conversion may occur.

Frequently, conversion is motivated by a crisis experience in the life of the convert. A crisis can be a stressful life circumstance such as death in the family, divorce, change of occupation, birth of a child, or other personal episode. It can also be because of cognitive dissonance. Encountering new beliefs, values, or ways of thinking or living can cause a spiritual crisis. This crisis can prompt a quest for renewed meaning and purpose through the crisis. Reich (1997:20) questions if conversion necessarily follows from crisis. “It does not seem clear though to what

extent people search actively for health, development, meaning and so on, or whether changes just occur spontaneously.” If the crisis is resolved before a new religion (secular or otherwise) is encountered, conversion does not occur (Pitt, 1991). As Johnson (1959), in a neo-Freudian sense, attests crisis often is the trigger toward a conversion experience. Newer non-Freudian theories (Loder, 1981; Pitt, 1991; Kirkpatrick, 1997) bear out the importance of crisis in conversion.

Many ascribe to James Fowler’s (1981) explanation that conversion occurs through a developmental process of stages each culminated by a crisis. Conversion is part of the transition from one stage of development to another. Fowler proposes six stages in the development of the self as it relates to faith. These stages, based on the child development theories of Piaget and Erikson, detail the maturation of the faith of the normal human. They range from the intuitive-projective faith of a child to the universalizing faith of the spiritual elite (Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Bonhoeffer, Billy Graham). As the person moves through the process from one stage to the next, crises will facilitate the person’s emergence from their spiritual chrysalis. Conversion occurs through the resolution of the crisis. Fowler’s faith development model is a powerful analytical construct for understanding spirituality.

Fowler has many supporters, but also many critics. Ford-Grabowsky (1987) and Heywood (1986) doubt that these stages, if they exist, are sequential, progressive, and universal. Fowler’s stages of faith may not be applicable to all people in all cultures. Loder (1981) finds that most personal growth comes *between* stages rather than within them. This allows for the possibility of nonsequential development. Also, personal development may not always be in a positive direction. Heywood also challenges Fowler’s extrapolation of faith development from cognitive theory. It is focused on objective fact while faith is the realm of subjective meaning and value.

Fowler fails to take into consideration the fallenness of human nature by idealizing human achievement.

Ford-Grabowsky (1987) believes that Fowler's system does not cohere. Fowler describes not one, but two developmental tracks (Jung's ego development and Erikson's human development theories). Fowler blends these in an attempt to create a faith development theory. Both models reflect different phenomenon, thus the incoherence. Jung and Erikson's models are not congenial to Christianity, so Ford-Grabowsky questions the veracity of their use by Fowler. She also shows that Fowler, while describing faith development up to monotheistic religion, completely neglects Trinitarian faith. Additionally, Fowler lacks the confessional aspect of faith, an essential ingredient in genuine faith. His focus is on the temporal and changing rather than the unchanging and transtemporal.

Regardless of the conversion model one prefers, none seem to have unearthed the sufficient cause of conversion. Necessary conditions include some kind of personal imbalance or crisis, and recruitment into a new religious community. Many people, including professors, are converted, but what they are converted to may not be religious at all. "As societies become more secularized, non-religious networks (what Durkheim called the "profane") also compete for seekers" (Pitt, 1991:178).

An unusual application of conversion theory by Reich (1997) leads to a salient point in this discussion. If one can be converted, can one be unconverted? Reich proposes that the conversion dynamic of Rambo (1993) can model deconversion. If this is so, this could provide an explanation for how those who grew up in a Christian environment lost their faith. A segment of apostate professors could fit this category.

A part of the conversion process is the change or reordering of one's beliefs. As CLM seeks the change of professor's beliefs, it is helpful to understand how beliefs are formed or rejected. Unlike knowledge, beliefs do not adhere to a logical framework for formation and storage. "Someone may believe something whether it is true or false and it may be that someone does not believe something no matter how obviously true it is or how much evidence he has for its truth" (Ackerman, 1972:14). One would think that if presented with enough evidence, a person would believe. However, many people believe things for other than rational reasons, leading Ackerman to declare beliefs to be "crazy as hell."

Beliefs are formed and stored differently than knowledge. Nespors explains that knowledge is stored logically in semantic networks. Ackerman (1972) also shows that one acquires and catalogues knowledge differently from beliefs. Nespors depicts belief accumulation as *episodic storage*. "Belief systems are composed mainly of 'episodically-stored' material derived from personal experience or from cultural or institutional sources of knowledge transmission (e.g. folklore)...Beliefs often derive their subjective power, authority, and legitimacy from particular episodes or events. These critical episodes then continue to colour or frame the comprehension of events later in time" (Nespors, 1987:320).

Evangelicals when sharing their faith could mistakenly treat beliefs like knowledge. They will likely be ineffective in persuasion, as beliefs are not always logical (Vitz, 1985:29). "Beliefs are not so much propositions or statements as they are conceptual systems which are functional or useful for explaining some domain of activity. Because beliefs play a major role in defining tasks, a sort of autodeterminism occurs in which phenomena inconsistent with the beliefs are defined as belonging to unrelated domains of activity. Thus to show that beliefs cannot adequately account for aspects of reality other than those they are explicitly attached to (and do 'explain') is no falsification of those beliefs" (Nespors, 1987:326).

A common oversight that evangelicals make with unbelieving intellectuals is assuming that their unbelief is couched in intellectual argument, and that a carefully crafted apologetic, skillfully delivered will result in a converted intellectual. This approach fails to consider the core anthropology of evangelicalism, which is humanity's inherently fallen state. Most intellectuals have a problem of the will, not the mind (Vitz, 1985:30).

Ultimately, commitment to Jesus Christ is more a matter of faith and belief than of knowledge, though knowledge is an important basis for that belief. Belief systems are less malleable or dynamic than knowledge systems (knowledge accumulates and changes). Beliefs are relatively static, so “when beliefs change, it is more likely to be a matter of conversion or gestalt shift than the result of argumentation or a marshalling of evidence” (Nespor, 1987:321).

Emotion and will are involved with the intellect in forming beliefs. Using only rational argument will not lead a non-believer to faith. Yet, it is also hard to believe what the mind rejects. Evangelicals should sensitively search out the foundation of those beliefs. If we understand these dynamics in the life of the unbeliever, progress can be made. We should not just examine what they believe, but what episodes and events helped form those beliefs.

Many apostates' unbelief is sustained by Enlightenment atheism. “The great Victorian drama of unbelief [is] not just the rejection of a creed but the expression of a new militant moral outlook – an ideal of self-responsible rational freedom that obliges us to judge for ourselves rather than bow down to authority. With this went a heroism of unbelief that finds spiritual satisfaction in confronting the truth, however bleak and unconsoling” (Degenhardt, 1998:334-335). Perhaps the wise evangelical can use the “universal duty to question all that we believe” (Degenhardt, 1998:337), by helping the apostate to question the duty of questioning everything.

## Summary

This chapter reviewed the nature of Christian mission in academia. Several perspectives are prevalent regarding the mission of the church, including those of ecumenicals, Catholics, and evangelicals. These views wrestle with the Christian's responsibility to proclaim the gospel and work for social justice. These are not mutually exclusive options, but one can address both responsibly. The ministry under scrutiny stems from an evangelical tradition that gives stronger weight to evangelism.

When preached, the gospel should be understandable apart from the culture of the evangelist. Contextualization looks for appropriate language and metaphors to make the gospel comprehensible to the evangelized. However, contextualization addresses concerns external to the recipient culture, overlooking the culturally transforming quality of the gospel. While the gospel is to be inserted into a new context, it also critiques the context. The inculturation model of mission acknowledges the transformation of the evangelized culture as the recipients internalize the gospel, and give it expression in their cultural context. Some are concerned with the possibility of cultural imperialism that has occurred in the past when missionaries have brought colonialism with their gospel. Yet, evangelicals can responsibly preach the gospel without abusing the culture.

One can criticize evangelistic ministry in academia for abuses committed in the name of Christ when Christians were culturally dominant. Christians damaged the academic enterprise when they were more committed to religious imperialism and intolerance than truth and justice. Yet, with the cultural disestablishment of religion those who are heir to cultural control are equally as intolerant and imperialistic in their secularism. Christians, having learned from their own mistakes and those being repeated by the modern cultural elite, can positively influence our education system and society without succumbing to these abuses of power.

When the gospel is heard some may be converted, though the dynamics of conversion are still somewhat a mystery. Many scholars have identified necessary factors for conversion, including crisis and a positive recruitment to a faith community. There are several models of conversion, but a sufficient cause of conversion is yet to be unearthed.

People form new beliefs as they are converted. Beliefs are not like knowledge, and are not always rationally based. They are codified via events of a person's life. This is why the will and emotions of a person, not just the intellect, must be considered in effecting change in belief. With careful study of the person, much prayer, and the Holy Spirit's enabling, perhaps CLM may progress in their mission to introduce professors to a vibrant, dynamic faith in Jesus Christ.

## **NON-CHRISTIAN FACULTY**

### **Phenomenon of Faculty Unbelief**

Now that mission has been discussed, the recipients of the mission should be examined. In the university, the primary recipients are non-Christian professors. We will examine what these nonbelievers and their culture are like. Such understanding provides the background for the research in this paper.

The phenomenon of faculty unbelief is well established, though it is not clear what factors drive the phenomenon. These factors are considered later in the chapter. Regarding religious belief, the Gallup Organization shows that 86% of Americans believe in God (Newport, 1999). An additional 8% believe in some universal spirit or higher power. George Barna's data is similar. He found that 95% of Americans believe in God, and 68% believe in God when described as the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect Creator of the universe who rules the world today (Barna, 1997). Additionally, 85% of Americans identify themselves as Christians (Barna, 1999b), while 40% are born-again Christians (Barna, 2000a). These born-again Christians are the bulk of practicing Christians, rather than the remainder who are culturally Christian. In contrast to Christians, 5-7% of Americans identify themselves as atheists or agnostics (Barna, 1999a; Gallup, 1999). "Especially self-identified academic intellectuals are less religious in belief and practice than the general public" (Anderson, 1968:88). There has been little change in America's religiosity through the twentieth century. "It is now clear that a society growing more modern does not necessarily become less religious" (Coughlin, 1992). Some assert that religiosity is actually increasing, at least on campus, though that religion is not necessarily Christianity (Winston, 1998).

With an understanding of general American religious belief, we turn next to demographics of atheist or agnostic professors in American universities. Surprisingly, while professors spend volumes documenting practically every segment of society, there is much less recorded about faculty, and very little on their religious beliefs. Constructing a reliable picture of nonbelieving professors has been a challenge.

Reliable data on faculty religious beliefs is not easy to find. Most agencies do not collect such information. The National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty conducted by the U.S. Department of Education used to report faculty religious backgrounds and preferences, but has ceased to do so (Finkelstein, et. al., 1998:38). Government policy now prevents government agencies from collecting such data. The National Education Association, a private organization, did not collect religious data in its survey (1979).

The 1969 National Faculty Survey conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for the Advancement of Teaching is the best of the few sources available on the religious beliefs or lack of beliefs of professors in America. The survey discovered that 66% of professors were from a Protestant background, 18% grew up Catholic, 9% were Jewish, 4% came from other religious backgrounds, and 3% had no religious history (Steinberg, 1974:101; Ladd and Lipset, 1975:170; Finkelstein, 1984). Protestant professors roughly represent the general population (Finkelstein, 1984; Steinberg, 1974). These Protestants, however, are disproportionately from theologically liberal denominations. Liberal Christians tend not to be biblical inerrantists, and question many orthodox doctrines including miracles, the Trinity, and the deity of Christ. Catholics are somewhat underrepresented (27% in the general population). Jews, while 3% of the general population, represent 9% of faculty (Steinberg, 1974:101; Ladd and Lipset, 1975:170). In the top universities (see Table 1 for list), these trends are more prevalent (Protestant 59%, Catholic 13%, Jewish 17%, Other 4%, and None 6%).

The above documents the religious diversity of faculty in American higher education. Once American academics became professors, though, many lost interest in or left behind their spiritual heritage. Apostate professors, those who have no faith whether or not they grew up with one, are a significant portion of the university. DeJong and Faulkner (1972) reported 21% of all professors were atheists and agnostics. One-third of professors in the Carnegie study reportedly were indifferent or opposed to religion (Steinberg, 1974:138). Nearly 30% of professors from a Protestant background were considered apostate. Likewise, 18% of Catholic and 67% of Jewish heritage had no faith in God. There are even more nonbelievers in the top universities. Nearly 50% of Protestant, 39% of Catholic, and 72% of Jewish background were indifferent or opposed to religion (Steinberg, 1974:138).

Apostate professors are more common in the humanities and social sciences than in the natural sciences. “Those majoring in the social sciences were most likely to have been raised in nonreligious families, humanities students were most likely to have defected from the religion in which they were brought up, and natural science students were more likely to have retained their religious faith” (Wuthnow, 1989:147).

Several scholars reported that the apostasy rate varies across disciplines. Steinberg (1974) using the 1969 Carnegie data found only 18% of education professors were apostate, while nearly 50% of professors in law and the social sciences were without belief. Bender (1994) documented a study done in the early 1980s showing a similar number of apostates. Thalheimer (1973) found similar results: 20% in the natural sciences did not believe in God, and likewise 36% of those in the humanities and 41% in the social sciences were not theists.

Lehman (1974) surmised that scholarly distance from religion is a good predictor of faculty religiosity. Scholars who view religion as something to be studied create scholarly distance for

objectivity, so tend to hold religious commitment at arm's length. This could explain why there are more believers in the hard sciences and engineering than in the social sciences and humanities. Conversely, scientists also tend to be less knowledgeable about religion. They may be more religious than are nonscientists, but because they do not study religion professionally they may have a smaller knowledge base. This is not the only religious factor, though. "At root the ideal of radical doubt institutionalized at most colleges and universities appears to be incompatible with the value of radical commitment generic to Judaeo-Christian religion" (Lehman, 1974:205).

A surprising finding is the religious makeup of American philosophical circles. Most philosophy of religion professors who are members of the American Academy of Religion are "not theists and regard theistic religions as no more significant than a variety of other religious stances" (Hasker, 1998:186). These professors occupy religious studies departments and liberal theological faculties. Yet, those philosophers of religion who are members of the American Philosophical Association are "theists and take theism seriously as the most significant religious option" (Hasker, 1998:186).

Another unexpected discovery is that most professors, even apostate professors, belong to a church or synagogue (DeJong and Faulkner, 1971; Steinberg, 1974). However, their involvement was for reasons other than personal faith, such as moral and character training for their children, social contacts, or social expectations. "A person may be irreligious and yet remain within the borders of some religious group" (Anderson, 1968:88).

Bowen and Schuster (1986) erroneously speculate that with the rise in religious interest in recent years, the data documenting apostate faculty may be understated. Yet, in the last two centuries, religious revivals have seldom significantly touched the intellectual class. In the nineteenth

century, most professors were believers. Now that it is not true. DeJong and Faulkner (1972) found that 64% of today's intellectuals had no religious experience of the presence of God. If longitudinal data reveals changes in religious belief, this would be significant to those who look to influence positive change in the religious beliefs of professors. With little change in faculty religious belief over time, CLM faces a significant challenge.

Two studies show how faculty religious belief has not changed significantly in the twentieth century. James Leuba conducted a study of elite scientists listed in the 1913-1914 edition of *American Men of Science* (Leuba, 1916). When he asked these scientists if they believed in a personal God "to whom one may pray in expectation of receiving an answer," he found that 41.8% did. Over 80 years later, Larson and Witham repeated Leuba's work, and learned that still 40% believed in God (Larson and Witham, 1999). This is somewhat an American phenomenon. For instance, only 14.1% of French scientists are believers (Bourdieu, 1988:44). Interestingly, though, when Larson and Witham surveyed members of the National Academy of Science (NAS), they found that 93% were atheists or agnostics (Larson and Witham, 1998), tremendously higher than the pre-NAS "great men of science" of Leuba's study. This increase in apostasy, however, is likely more due to the NAS selecting nonbelievers to membership than great scientific achievement producing apostasy. Larson and Witham show that the religious beliefs of scientists have changed little over the past 80 years.

Data from the Carnegie Endowment national faculty studies confirms religious beliefs have not changed. They conducted additional national surveys of higher education faculty in 1975, 1984, and 1991 after their 1969 study. The 1991 survey did not ask about faculty religious beliefs, and the 1975 and 1984 surveys did not ask about religious conservatism like the 1969 survey. While the Carnegie Endowment had collected religious data in their 1975 and 1984 surveys, it has never been published before this dissertation. All of the sociologists involved in the 1969 survey

left UC Berkeley, the driving force behind Carnegie's survey, before the 1975 survey. Apparently, no one had an interest in the religious data of the later studies. I managed to find the 1984 data set with the help of Dr. Rodney Stark and the American Religious Data Archive at Purdue University.

The data from the 1984 Carnegie survey required that I control for sex, because colleges and universities experienced a significant influx of female faculty since 1969. Women tend to identify themselves as religious more often than do men. Table 1 shows this trend. Controlling for sex gives a more accurate comparison with the 1969 data. Women inflated the 1969 data, too, but that effect is far smaller, because there were substantially fewer women in academia at that time.

Another consideration in comparing the two Carnegie surveys is the sample sizes. The 1969 survey is a more accurate picture of academia, because of the number of respondents. Over 60,000 faculty responded; however in 1984 only 5,057 returned the survey. While the 1984 sample was national, it was comparatively small, though they were asked roughly the same questions as in 1969.

The disciplinary samples are on the order of hundreds rather than thousands, so drawing national conclusions based on these low numbers is tentative. Secondly, the small sample would suggest that it is biased toward major universities, leading one to question broad national conclusions. The fact that the 1984 numbers are between the 1969 statistics for ranking universities and those for all colleges and universities suggests that the 1984 data is probably biased toward the major schools. Only the Carnegie institution classification is given in the 1984 data, which shows that 40% of the respondents were from Research I & II and Doctoral Granting I & II schools. These are the larger universities in America.

**Table 1 USA National Sample of College and University Faculty, Carnegie Endowment for the Advancement of Teaching, 1969 and 1984 – Apostasy by Academic Discipline.**

	1969		1984 (Men Only)		1984 (All)	
	Ranking Universities *	All	Apostate	Sample	Apostate	Sample
Education	38	18	29	240	27	370
Business	47	21	30	196	30	246
Engineering	45	29	30	228	30	236
Fine Arts	48	33	36	296	35	419
Physical Sciences	65	37	48	327	48	349
Biological Sciences	62	41	49	327	47	385
Medicine	42	43	49	146	29	403
Humanities	58	46	38	510	36	746
Law	68	48	50	50	50	56
Social Sciences	72	49	46	635	48	837

\* Top 17 universities – Brandeis, Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, Princeton, Stanford, UC Berkeley, UC Los Angeles, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rochester, Tulane, Washington, Vanderbilt. This distinction is not made in the 1984 data.

I use Steinberg's (1974) classifications for religiousness or apostasy. A faculty member is deemed religious if they self-identified as either deeply or moderately religious on the survey. They are considered apostate if they answered indifferent or hostile to religion. The 1969 data is as reported by Steinberg.

There is little evidence to show any change in faculty apostasy from 1969 to 1984. The data from Law is completely inconclusive due to the small sample size. Medicine is significantly skewed due to the large number of females in nursing. Taken together, there is probably no change in apostasy/belief there. The other disciplines are approximately in line with the stronger 1969 survey. If there were a trend away from apostasy, it would be modest. Since the 1984 demographics are not as detailed as the 1969 survey, and the faculty sample is substantially smaller, these also support little or no change in faculty apostasy between these two surveys.

While the data shows a disproportionate number of apostates in higher education, there is some evidence to account for how they got there. A study of graduate students (Zelan, 1968)

associated religious apostasy with a preference for vocations in academia. Another national study (Stark, 1963) found that graduate students are far less religious than the general public.

Wuthnow (1989, 1978), Anderson (1968), and Finkelstein (1984) seem to show that professors carry their unbelief into their academic careers, rather than being socialized to unbelief through their scholarly training. Most professors enter academic careers with an intact belief structure that seldom fluctuates even with the secularizing influence of most universities. When asked if their academic training, research, and teaching duties had changed their religious beliefs, around 70% of professors surveyed said “no” (Thalheimer, 1965). Of those who said “yes,” change was as likely toward more religiosity as it was to less. Thalheimer’s study is very important, as few researchers have studied this phenomenon among professors, though the small sample may not allow one to generalize well to all American faculty.

Few studies have been done since Thalheimer, and those that have (Lehman and Shriver, 1968; Parsons and Platt, 1968; Hoge and Keeter, 1976) corroborated Thalheimer’s work. One can suggest that based on the available data, most secularized professors were already nonbelievers before entering academia. While secular professors are apt to propagate their views in their teaching and research, they seem to have minimal effect on students who go on to become professors. Instead, the presence of a disproportionate number of apostates in the professoriat is due more to self-selection and selective recruitment than academic socialization (Finkelstein, 1984).

Maloney (1997:46) summarizes that “as a group, professors in institutions of higher learning continue to be significantly less traditionally religious than the general public, and they tend to espouse agnostic or anti-religious convictions in their teaching and in their personal lives.”

DeJong and Faulkner (1972) concur that most faculties are not orthodox, and that there are many more nonbelievers than the general American population.

### **Factors Relevant to Faculty Religious Belief**

With a grasp of apostate faculty, an understanding of the relevant cultural factors that influence faculty religious belief is important. Many conditions have promoted the rise of atheistic and agnostic professors in America. Clark (1985) points out that generalizing to apostate professors nationally is difficult, as finding common links across the disciplines in the professoriat is tricky.

#### *History of university faculty*

History shows that Christians founded the first universities. While other cultures today have universities, they were spawned in a Christian milieu. Some scholars (Stark, 2001) question if any other culture could have originated them. Modern scholars, whether believer or secularist, employ at least some of the tenets of a Christian worldview. “Higher learning, even today, entails the exercise, by students and teachers alike, of certain spiritual virtues” (Schwen, 1993:47). Some of these virtues include humility (we presume an author is a wise authority), self-denial (we should replace our sacred cows if truth demands), faith (we trust other scholars’ work and they trust ours), and love (treating colleagues, students, and research with love and respect). These virtues and others have undergirded the work of the university through the ages.

We also know that the vast majority of early professors were clergy (Phipps, 1995:21). Protestantism was the principal ideology that shaped American higher education (Marsden, 1994). However, the twentieth century saw the disestablishment of Protestantism in American society and academia. The university changed rapidly after World War II, with many new professors who were non-Christians and nonbelievers.

Access to the professoriat was less constrained by religion (Finkelstein, 1998; Steinberg, 1974). At one time religion limited academic inquiry. Restrictions on what constituted legitimate scholarship motivated the disestablishment of Protestantism (Marsden, 1994). What has been left in the place of a Protestant establishment in academia is established nonbelief. “Many persons in academic life do not seem to realize that this cultural shift (from Protestant establishment to established unbelief) has occurred, and still seem to imagine that a major threat to academic freedom is coming from a religious establishment that no longer exists. In fact, the principal threat to academic freedom these days comes...from the dominant ideologies among students and faculty” (Johnson, 1995a:19). The repression of transcendence in modern consciousness has become socially and culturally institutionalized (Berger, 1970).

### *Class*

Early professors socially belonged to the upper class. The social composition of academia began changing around 1900, and accelerated after World War II. “Despite the steady flow of lower socioeconomic groups into the professoriat, the upper social strata continue to be heavily represented. Yet, it would be a mistake to conclude that the professoriat is an aristocratic body. The majority of the faculty derives from middle-class antecedents. Historically at least most have been upwardly mobile” (Bowen and Schuster, 1986:31; Finkelstein, 1984). This is not unique to America, as British professors, for instance, are likewise upwardly mobile (Fieldhouse, 1993).

### *Professionalism*

The rise of professionalism and a professional attitude is also a significant influence in academia. In 1890, there were fewer than 1 million professionals in the United States (Derber, et. al, 1990:6). These were largely doctors and lawyers. Faculty became recognized as professionals in the 1930s, and the current role that professors have assumed was well defined by the end of

World War II (Finkelstein, 1984). By 1986, 13% of the work force were professionals. Today, there are 932,000 American college and university professors (CHE Almanac Issue, 1999:38); of these 59% are full-time. In 1975, 70% (628,000) were full-time, showing a declining trend. In the metro Atlanta area, the scope of my ministry, there are nearly 39,000 professors and staff employed in higher education (ARCHE, 1999:29). The Georgia Institute of Technology, the focus of this study, has a total of 4182 employees; 681 of which are professors (IRP, 2000:85).

Georgia Tech, like other major universities, has become primarily a research institute to the detriment of student instruction. This is largely because of the adoption of a professional attitude in academia. After WWII it was considered more “professional” to be a “scholar” than a “teacher” (Sykes, 1990). Consequently, because “professionals are the most highly educated of all strata” (Brint, 1994:3), professors became the ultimate professionals. Oddly, professional faculty is rather ironic considering the prevalence of such values as equity, freedom, and individual rights in the academy. Professionalism “erodes the rights of those not certified as experts, bringing threats to democracy and equality” (Derber, et. al., 1990:4). It produces a new dispossessed majority: the uncredentialed.

Professors, interestingly, provide the credentials for professionals. They are the gatekeepers for training other professionals, and certifying that someone is a professional with all the accompanying privileges, status, and responsibilities. This accords the professor an almost godlike power over most professions.

*“As an ideology, professionalism ha(s) both a technical and a moral aspect. Technically, it promise(s) competent performance of skilled work, and involve(s) the application of broad and complex knowledge, the acquisition of which require(s) formal academic study. Morally, it promise(s) to be guided by an appreciation of the important social ends it serve(s)” (Brint, 1994:7).*

While these are important standards, Anderson (1996) believes professionals have eroded these aims to serve mainly the selfish ends of the professional. Since university professors are the

ultimate professionals, they are susceptible to the same temptations that could cause some to resist becoming Christians.

### *Ethnic minority*

Academic culture is as a minority subculture “different from, and somewhat at odds with, the dominant society” (Lipset, 1982:165). Essentially, the professoriat *is* like an ethnic minority. Much of the distinctiveness of an ethnic minority applies to the faculty.

Lipset likens university campuses to East European *shtetls*. “One could travel over a thousand miles from a *shtetl* in Galicia to one in Ukraine and still be in the same place” (1982:165). There is a remarkable cultural homogeneity across academia. One can go from campus to campus and find a similar culture. This university culture helps reinforce certain ideas, beliefs, and behaviors, and resists others, as do other minority subcultures.

### *Political Ideology*

A dominant belief system in the university is political ideology. With the arrival of Protestant disestablishment, ideology has become “the secular successor to religion” (Crick, 1975a:4).

The prevalent political ideology of academia is liberalism, meaning “the contemporary variety of government-driven social reformism” (Budziszewski, 1999:89). This fact, however, is anomalous, as higher socioeconomic status generally correlates with conservative political views. Professors stem from the middle and upper classes, yet tend to be liberal. Most academics are leftists, but not radical (Brint, 1994; Ladd and Lipset, 1978; Lazarfeld and Thielens, 1958). In the United Kingdom, professors are similarly liberal (Fieldhouse, 1993; Davies, 1992), while many French academics are Marxists (Bourdieu, 1988).

Radicalism is often associated with leftists, many academics being among them. Gouldner believes that the revolt of the '60s and '70s occurred to bring the university infrastructure in line with prevalent ideology.

*“This rebellion, however, had another concrete objective that was economic and was as important as the political goal. This economic objective was to capture livings for those ideologically friendly to the rebels. Specifically, it aimed to win tenured posts for them” (Gouldner 1976:15).*

This helped protect the radicals from backlash by those who held the high ground (the administration), and consolidated the liberal/Left presence in the university. It also secured economic independence for those “leading the Left’s political effort to transform the larger society, not simply the university, and who wanted to secure the university as a fulcrum with which to lever the larger society leftward. Ultimately and clearly, the university revolt was a means to a larger societal reconstruction” (Gouldner 1976:15). Those on the Left in the 1960s understood that the university could be a powerful tool for social transformation. Many evangelical Christians today also recognize this possibility.

Ideology is not homogenous across all levels of the university. “At the lower social levels of the university a liberal-to-Left ideology was generally far more prevalent than at the higher administrative levels” (Gouldner 1976:15). Elite intellectuals are less likely to engage in radical forms of protest, demonstration, or civil disobedience (Kudushin, 1974). In fact, the great majority was “passionately hostile” to the New Left and the counterculture of the 1960s. Yet, high academic achievers still tend to be more politically liberal than their less productive colleagues (Finkelstein, 1984). Professors in most cases are more politically active than the general public.

There are many leftist groups in America, but their power is small compared to that of the university. “The modern university is the largest single site for the production and storage of

antiestablishment ideologies” (Gouldner 1976:15). These ideologies are both antibourgeois in the West and anticommunist in the East. This is very ironic, as the university is a keystone of the establishment, yet it houses strong antiestablishment sentiment.

The late '60s seem to be the high water mark for political liberalism in academia. By 1984, 7% fewer professors identified themselves as liberal while 8% more said they were conservative (Hamilton and Hargens, 1993). Still since World War II, professors have been more consistently liberal than any other occupational group (Ladd and Lipset, 1978).

Ideology is not homogenous across disciplines. The academic left tends to populate the social sciences and humanities rather than the sciences (Gross and Levitt, 1994; Finkelstein, 1984). Brint (1994) says this is because the more productive and prestigious faculties are in other colleges and disciplines from the faculty in liberal arts colleges. The left has “a deep concern with cultural issues, and, in particular, a commitment to the idea that fundamental political change is urgently needed and can be achieved only through revolutionary processes rooted in a wholesale revision of cultural categories” (Gross and Levitt, 1994:3).

In summary, university faculties tend to be more aware and active politically. Their general political bent tends to be left of center, though generally not radical. Humanists and social scientists tend further to the left, while scientists and engineers are more conservative.

### **Obstacles to Christian Faith**

Now that there is some understanding of academics and academic culture, reasons for why they might reject Christian faith are presented. Many impediments factor in the nonbelief of some professors, and make belief in a personal, knowable God more difficult. The following are some of those obstacles.

## *Truth*

The lack of absolute truth in the university may have become a significant factor in faculty nonbelief. The Enlightenment embraced the existence of real, objective truth; it just disagreed as to what was that truth. Relativists today deny that this kind of truth exists. There is no “Truth,” but there are numerous local or personal “truths.” Subjective experience is the arbiter of these “truths.”

Christianity is shunned by relativists, because Christians, ultimately, think they are right. Many relativists suspect that those who think they are right will then try to impose their “truth” on others. “The study of history and of culture teaches that all the world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all” (Bloom, 1987:26). Yet, the defenders of “no one can be right” think that they are right, and should impose their view on everyone else. This internal incoherence is the Achilles heel of relativism.

Relativists stringently affirm that there are no absolutes. “In order to get anywhere at all, the philosophies of denial must always at some point assume the first principles they deny” (Budziszewski, 1999:xiv). Budziszewski (1999:12) also rightly asserts that this is the inherent incoherence of postmodernism. Postmodernism denies metanarratives. Truth is determined contextually and locally. There is no overarching human story; no universal morality that applies to everyone – except the overarching story of postmodernism that is transcultural and global. Postmodernism as a philosophical system seems doomed due to its internal incoherence. Yet, as a mood, it is more difficult to subdue.

Relativists cry “foul” at this criticism. They say they are misunderstood.

*“Enemies of relativism claim it means that everything is equal – that no moral judgements are possible, that Americans must accept whatever other people do. But this is not what relativism means. It means we must look carefully at what other people are doing and try to understand their behavior in context before we judge it. It means other people may not share our desires or perceptions. It also means we have to recognize the arbitrary nature of our own choices and be willing to reexamine them by learning about choices other people have made” (Cohen, 1998:32).*

Still, in order for Cohen to demand that we “recognize the arbitrary nature of our own choices” he must have a concept of the non-arbitrary. He must first affirm an absolute before he can deny the absolute. This makes it difficult for relativists to make moral judgements, and leaves them in a state of cognitive dissonance. One professor wrestling with this issue states:

*“It is possible to reach relativist students, I believe, precisely because, deep down, they are not true moral relativists or skeptics. Rather, they actually hold to a disguised morality that emphasizes tolerance and respect for diversity. However, by denying themselves the moral authority to condemn such great evils of human history as the Holocaust, slavery, and racial oppression, these students lose the basis for morally condemning wrongdoing anywhere, and so must ultimately abandon the very values that led them to advocate tolerance and respect for diversity in the first place” (Simon, 1997:51).*

Relativism turns out not to be relativism at all. It is a veil for a new set of absolutes (Watkins, 1996) that are opposed to a Judeo-Christian worldview.

When evangelicals approach the university with the true gospel, which is for all people, there is substantial resistance. Kliever reaffirms the old Kantian dogma that “religious beliefs and practices have been relocated in the realm of subjective opinion” (1988:8). Coupled with today’s postmodern denial of the objective, an evangelist’s job is difficult. Postmodernism’s critique of modernism can be acknowledged without succumbing to its epistemological quagmire. “The encounter with diversity of beliefs is a starting point in the quest for truth, not a reason to abandon ever it” (Degenhardt 1998:342). Various beliefs and nonbeliefs may point to our ultimate need for God. All one needs to do is look to the common cry by the human spirit, and see how Jesus Christ is the God who can answer that cry.

## *Naturalism*

Epistemological and methodological naturalism dominates the university. Products of the Enlightenment, they de facto preclude belief in God; reality is the material, natural world.

*“Although most Americans are at least nominally theists and a substantial proportion build their lives on theistic principles, naturalistic philosophy rules the academic roost absolutely. Scientific naturalism is taken for granted in the natural science departments, and its only rival in the humanities is a relativistic naturalism that goes by names like postmodernism and multiculturalism. The idea that God might really exist is rarely seriously considered. In the minds of some academic authorities and judges, as we have seen, to suggest this possibility in a classroom is academic misconduct or even a violation of the Constitution” (Johnson, 1995:18).*

Whether the objective naturalism of modernity or postmodern anti-realism, Christians need to point out that these both proceed from naturalistic assumptions. Naturalism is the belief that all that exists is the physical world. There is no supernatural, no God – only natural processes. The university operates on the assumption “if we assume there is no creator god, what sense can we make out of reality?” (Marsden, 1997:53). Yet, naturalism, tightly wed to empiricism, cannot be established empirically; it is not an adequate worldview.

Christian academics often contend for God’s existence, yet still mistakenly utilize methodological naturalism in their research. Essentially, they are privately theists, but publicly atheists. If evangelicals are to truly bring Christ back to the university, they must resist the naturalism of the university. Marsden advocates adopting “methodological secularism” rather than Berger’s “methodological atheism,” (Berger, 1967) as a viable methodology, especially in technical areas. “Methodological secularism means only for limited ad hoc purposes we will focus on natural phenomena accessible to all, while not denying their spiritual dimensions as created and ordered by God or forgetting that there is more to the picture” (Marsden, 1997:91).

## *Institutional Predisposition to Atheism*

Another impediment to belief pertinent to faculty is an institutional predisposition to atheism that is dominant in the university. This dynamism can influence people to atheism, and attracts

nonbelievers to the university as a comfortable haven. With the popularity of atheism and secularism in academia, there is significant pressure to assimilate. Vitz (1985) believes that atheism is a product of a defective father, rather than a neo-Freudian Oedipal wish fulfillment to dispose of one's own father. He reveals that an absent father, or a present, but weak or abusive father, can spell disaster for a child's ability to connect with God. With the growing number of broken homes in the United States, Vitz's theory is chilling.

Reich (1997) believes there are several types of atheism. His "atheism due to religious indifference" has some parallels to Vitz. This indifference for some is socialized and cultural; for others the indifference is acquired, a conversion to atheism. Reich also distinguishes an unchurched atheism, which may not be atheism in the strict sense, but rather religious ignorance. He also differentiates "philosophical atheism" as a conscious questioning study of God. Vitz and Budziszewski (1999) would say that this atheism is really justification of a pre-existing atheism, and not a true road to unbelief. Once a person existentially arrives at atheism, sophisticated argumentation can help cover repressed belief.

### *Scholarly Distance*

As mentioned earlier, scholarly distance from religion inhibits religious commitment. This is particularly evident in the social sciences and humanities; hence there are more believers in the hard and applied sciences than in other disciplines. Scholars attempt to avoid the charge of bias by maintaining a stance of objectivity when conducting research. Social science and humanities researchers, who study religion or subjects that may be influenced by religion, tend not to be religiously involved themselves so they can keep effective scholarly distance. "People in the social sciences and humanities reject religion not so much because of what they dislike about religion specifically...but because of the ill-codified reality which they need to protect within their own discipline" (Wuthnow, 1989:155). This "ill-codified reality" stems from the current

scholarly milieu that views reality as socially constructed. If reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Berger, 1970), then religion should be optional to a given social community. The theologian's world is just "one among many." However, Christianity, particularly the conservative and evangelical varieties, makes universal claims that are not compatible with current academic orthodoxy. In the social sciences and humanities, professional methodology can make it harder for professors in these fields to embrace Jesus Christ.

### **Summary**

This chapter explored the nature of academicians and academia. Faculty demographics were presented, and relevant factors that define academic culture were detailed. Lastly, possible obstacles to Christian faith based on these demographics and cultural factors were explained.

It has been demonstrated that there are a disproportionate number of atheists and agnostics in the university versus the general population. This phenomenon has remained largely unchanged through the twentieth century. However, the distribution of apostates is not even, but varies across disciplines. Education, the semi-professions, and the natural sciences have fewer apostates, while the humanities and social sciences house many more. These nonbelievers tend not to be former believers who lost faith through their education experience. Rather they generally had no faith or lost their faith before entering college. True, many atheistic faculty have shipwrecked the faith of their students, but those apostates who became professors disposed of their faith before embarking on their training. Higher education rather than making apostates for its faculty, self-selects preexistent secularists.

Many cultural factors make academia more attractive to recruiting and maintaining apostate faculty. Foremost is the disestablishment of Christianity. American universities are comfortable

havens for apostates where religion is not welcome. Professors are upwardly mobile socially and financially. Professorship is the ultimate profession, where one is certified smart, and is the gatekeeper of all the other professions. Academia is a defined subculture that has a common language, culture, and ideology regardless of what campus one enters. Universities are a platform for promoting secularism.

Several obstacles contribute to resistance of Christian faith among apostate professors. Truth is little discussed and little valued in academia today. Postmodern relativism makes evangelism a challenge. Why would anyone give his or her life to One who is the Truth, if no one has the truth? Naturalism is the dominant worldview of the university. If all that is real is the material world, why seek the spiritual? Many professors are already predisposed to apostasy, and the university fosters atheistic secularism. If atheism is true, why look for an illusory God? Also, as any decent researcher must maintain some scholarly distance from the subject studied, a social science or humanities faculty has additional challenges. The closer one's research comes to religion, the more danger the data will be prejudiced by personal involvement. With a better understanding of these issues perhaps a means of reaching them for Christ may be found.

## DISCOVERING FACULTY UNBELIEF

### Methodology

My study is about the attitudes and beliefs of atheistic and agnostic professors with an aim toward successful Christian conversion. As far as I can determine, this type of study has never been conducted at any university anywhere. “If the issue is new or researchers have written little on it, you begin at the beginning. This is called *exploratory research*” (Neuman, 1994:18). Consequently, I have used qualitative methodology, as I believe the use of a predominantly quantitative approach would be misguided and premature. Even with a carefully crafted quantitative questionnaire, the validity of the data would be questionable. This is because accurate interpretation of quantitative data requires an established underlying interpretative theory. Otherwise, one could not say with any certainty what a particular response means. The researcher must have a good idea what a respondent is meaning when selecting one of several preassigned responses contained in a questionnaire. The researcher knows what the response means to her, but cannot assign any correspondence without a theory of why a respondent selects a given response. In the absence of an interpretive theory, qualitative interviews are a more appropriate choice. Perhaps through these interviews an interpretive scheme will emerge which could form the basis of a subsequent quantitative research project. Additionally, interviews allow for theological reflection, which is a major component of this course.

I conducted a series of interviews in May and June of 2001 with faculty from the Georgia Institute of Technology, a Research I university in Atlanta, Georgia. The interviews were conducted with teaching faculty at Georgia Tech. Some of the faculty is devoted solely to research, but these were not included in the sample. For the purposes of this study, I was

interested in professors in a traditional role in the university. This includes teaching, research, student advising, and other duties of the typical professor. Research faculties do not interact with students much, particularly undergraduates. The broad-based transmission of Christian ideas in the university is more likely to occur through teaching faculty. Likewise, teaching professors can spread unbelief and skepticism. The power for influence makes teaching faculty more important to this study.

I did not use a random process to pick the professors selected for this exploratory study. Rather, I asked Christian professors I know in departments across the campus to give me the names of known atheist and agnostic professors in their or other academic departments. I did this with the assurance of anonymity. In colleges where I received no referrals, or where I knew no Christian professors, I made telephone calls and sent e-mails to faculty out of the campus directory. Also, some potential interviewees who were screened out of the study recommended other professors who might fit my study requirements. My goal was collecting a pool of potential interviewees from each of the colleges of the university. Because Georgia Tech is predominantly an engineering institution, care had to be taken to ensure that the smaller colleges were represented. Additionally, where possible, gender and ethnicity were considered for representativeness. Engineering disciplines do not have a large minority population, so I looked for these voices to be heard. I also included professors in various stages of the tenure and promotion process.

Since this is an exploratory study, a large, randomly selected sample is not desirable. I used purposive sampling, which allowed me to focus strictly on agnostics and atheists; something probabilistic methods would make difficult. Purposive sampling has an advantage in that “instead of going for the typical instances, a cross-section or a balanced choice, the researcher can concentrate on instances which will display a wide variety – possibly even focus on extreme

cases – to illuminate the research question at hand. In this sense it might not only be economical but might also be informative in a way that conventional probability sampling cannot be” (Denscombe, 1998:15-16). The limitation though is that “with purposive sampling, the researcher never knows whether the cases selected represent the population. It is used in exploratory research” (Neuman, 1994:198). It is acknowledged that I cannot reliably generalize with this study beyond Georgia Tech. However, with a decent interpretative theory established, I may seek to generalize the findings of this study with a national quantitative survey at a later time. My findings may actually be representative of apostate professors nationally, but the design of this study does not allow me to appropriately draw this conclusion.

While I used purposive sampling, I also used a form of quota sampling to enable more representativeness in my sample. Quota sampling “establishes certain categories (or strata) which are considered to be vital for inclusion in the sample, and also seeks to fill these categories in proportion to their existence in the population” (Denscombe, 1998:13). The Georgia Tech faculty is comprised of 695 full-time professors (IRP, 2000) in six colleges. To be roughly representative of all disciplines, I selected four interviewees from the College of Engineering (322 professors), two from Ivan Allen (105), two from Sciences (144), and one each from Management (38), Architecture (42), and Computing (44). I telephoned or e-mailed the subjects to screen them and ask for an interview appointment. The third screening question is from the Carnegie Endowment national faculty surveys, and used to determine faith or apostasy. I asked the following screening questions:

- 1. Are you teaching faculty at Georgia Tech?**
- 2. What is your current rank in the department?**
- 3. Do you consider yourself a) deeply religious, b) moderately religious, c) indifferent to religion, or d) hostile to religion?**
- 4. Do you consider yourself a) agnostic b) atheist**

I accepted respondents who answered c) or d) to question 3, and confirmed that they were atheist or agnostic with an a) or b) answer in my last question. Some persons were screened out of the study by this method to ensure the interviewees were definitely agnostics or atheists.

The interviews were semi-structured, including demographic and background questions that had definite answers. The remainder of the interview consisted of 9 open-ended questions. This method of inquiry is appropriate for this type of study. "Open-ended questions are especially valuable in early or exploratory stages of research" (Neuman, 1994:234). The interviews were generally conducted in the offices of the selected faculty, though one was conducted in a laboratory and two were at restaurants. I gave appropriate informed consent statements to each interviewee so they were aware that participation is voluntary, anonymous, and that they may refuse to answer or discontinue the interview at their discretion. Also, each interview was recorded with consent, and later transcribed for study. The actual interview questions are included as Appendix A.

The first three subjects served as a pilot for the interview. I added two questions to the interview after the pilot. Two subjects raised issues of the afterlife and a materialist worldview. I added a question to further document this. One subject volunteered information about his parents' divorce and differences on religious training. The others did not volunteer such information. I thought this might be valuable information. Without a lengthy line of questioning, I added the question, "Were your parents in agreement religiously?" Asking about "agreement" not only addressed the parents' religious tradition(s) in a subject's background, but also opened an opportunity for the subject to talk about family relationships. In this way I might uncover, particularly, the father dynamic in the subject's upbringing.

There are some suppositions in the literature review that I am trying to confirm as I work toward an interpretative theory for future study. It seems that professors generally do not become apostates through their academic training. That issue seems to be largely settled before entering academia. I hoped to confirm this. Another assertion I wished to explore is a causal factor for apostasy. An absent, passive, or abusive father seems to be a factor in apostasy (Vitz, 1985), but as Reich asks, “Are poor relationships with parents the cause or a consequence of apostasy?” (Reich, 1997:15). Some of the interview questions are attempts to verify these ideas.

As I conducted the interviews, I wrestled with one of the methodological and ethical liabilities of qualitative research: researcher bias. I did all I could to minimize this effect. I was careful to ask questions substantially as they were written, and relied on carefully proofed, written transcripts of the audio-recorded interviews as my primary source of data. In this way I tried to minimize errors, and let the subjects speak for themselves rather than interpret what they said. I asked appropriate follow-up questions to probe for meaning and additional detail, and I restated responses in summary to clarify that I understood their response correctly. I represented myself as a post-graduate researcher from Oxford University. This legitimized the study in my subject’s eyes, and made them more willing to participate. I dressed in campus casual clothing, conducted myself professionally, and maintained a neutral to friendly demeanor. This was particularly challenging when respondents mentioned persons and events on campus of which I am personally acquainted. It could affect their responses if they knew I was friends with these persons or was a principle organizer of the events mentioned. This treads the fine line of deception, but for the sake of objectivity and obtaining honest responses, I believe I did the right thing.

## **Findings**

The respondents consisted of 9 males and 2 females distributed from the colleges described above. Of the total 695 full-time Georgia Tech (GT) faculty, 100 are female (IRP, 2000:84), so my gender sample is generally representative, though it may be slightly over representative, as women tend to be more religious than men are. While the GT faculty is 19% ethnic minorities, I had only one minority interviewee. This may be under representative in raw numbers, but it may be representative or even over representative with my focus group, as atheism and agnosticism is likely less common among ethnic minorities than among their white colleagues. In acquiring these 11 respondents, I encountered many rejections. First, I had to reject some potential interviewees because they did not meet my screening criteria. Second, many of those that did pass my screening criteria declined to be interviewed. They generally did not want to talk about these issues with anyone.

The sample's ages range from 31 to 73 with a mean age of 54.2 years. One was an untenured assistant professor. The rest were tenured, two being professors, seven were associate professors, and one assistant professor. The total GT faculty is actually 40% professors, 32% associate professors, and 26% assistant professors. While my sample is not proportionately representative of GT's faculty rankings, this probably does not affect the data's validity. Nine of the respondents held Ph.D. degrees and two held M.A.'s, which is roughly consistent with the 95% of GT faculty who hold Ph.D.'s.

Geographic region of origin did not seem to be a factor in their apostasy. None of the respondents were native Georgians, and four were from the South. Four were born outside the United States, three were from the Northeast, and none were from the West. Religiously, six were raised in nominally Protestant homes, one was Catholic, two have Jewish backgrounds, one grew up Hindu, and one had no religious background. This roughly parallels the distribution of

religious backgrounds in elite universities (Steinberg, 1974), which Georgia Tech could be classed. Most of the parents of my subjects agreed on how the subjects were to be raised religiously. Two sets of parents were not in agreement, and two pilot subjects were not asked this question. Though raised in these backgrounds, five of the respondents consider themselves agnostic and six are atheists.

I surveyed several themes related to professors' beliefs, including significance, factors for nonbelief, influence of academia on beliefs, and the afterlife. Seventy-two percent of the respondents found significance to their life in academia rather than off campus. "Academia can be so consuming...it siphons off a lot of activity that I might otherwise direct toward civic minded causes...This life is demanding enough of a community base feeling itself." One professor's meaning was derived from research. "Academia can be sometimes a little exhausting, but it's always nice to come back to the fact that I've done something to make the lives of some children better, and I think that sustains me through a lot." Three professors found meaning in their teaching, dismissing research as of marginal impact. However, four faculty members believed teaching and research both provide a sense their life matters. An engineer summarized this by stating that academia "gives me an opportunity to influence things the way that we can build (research). Another reason I'm in academe is that I can, to whatever extent possible, influence people, young people (teaching)." Of the eight professors who found meaning in academia, seven said that included teaching. The three remaining professors agreed, "It's just a job," but one they enjoy. Their significance is found in family life or other community involvement.

I found similar results to Wuthnow (1989, 1978), Anderson (1967), and Finkelstein (1984). Most apostate professors tend to already be unbelievers before starting their academic training, rather than being socialized by the university into agnosticism or atheism. All of my subjects

had arrived at agnosticism or atheism before becoming an academic professional. Three were apostate by the end of high school, four in the first year or two of college, and two were lifelong apostates. They had never known anything else. Two decided this issue in the latter years of college, though there is indication they seriously doubted before this time. Nevertheless, all were apostate upon entering graduate school.

The faculty gave many factors for their choice of leaving or never acquiring faith. Reich (1997) classifies these factors as cognitive, emotional or pragmatic, existential, and societal. Cognitively, God is not the best explanation for the world and how it works. Every professor in my study stated this as an influence in his or her agnosticism or atheism. They all specifically mentioned that they approached the world from a scientific perspective.

*“I think a certain scientific perspective on the world contributed a great deal. A belief in evolution, a belief in things being supported by evidence, a lack of evidence for the existence of God.”*

It seems even the non-scientists in my study had scientific training in their undergraduate days. Perhaps this is one of the reasons they were hired at Georgia Tech, or perhaps this is a common factor with apostates. Further study would be needed to verify this. Eight subjects specifically mentioned a belief in evolution as a part of that scientific outlook. Additionally, most professors cited a lack of evidence for God and the irrationality of faith as cognitive support for their unbelief. I asked some of these professors if they had ever sought to resolve some of their intellectual problems with Christianity. Once they had settled on their apostasy, they had not sought these answers.

*“There wasn’t anybody to ask really. I mean, priests in churches, who are pretty ignorant of damn near everything, except “The Book” which they read through and through.”*

To be honest, I don't know that I have seriously questioned my beliefs since my college days. However, I have many good reasons for my faith, including answers to the questions that all my subjects raised.

The second most frequent class of factors for unbelief is societal. Here Christians or the Church have not been trustworthy witnesses of God, and that dissuaded many of the faculty from faith in Christ. Most cringed at Christian hypocrisy.

*“I think part of it was growing up in a preacher’s home in the South during the Civil Rights Movement, and seeing the hypocrisy of the southern Christian church, that the white Christian church was going to be the last institution that would accept blacks as brothers, and it ought to have been the first. And I think that was part of the frustration of seeing in society, especially in the South in North Carolina, that the church ought to be welcoming Martin Luther King, Jr. and his peaceful resistance. And the white Christian church in the South was not very welcoming. And so that’s, looking back on it, when I sort of date my disenchantment.”*

Many respondents also cited hypocritical encounters with family members and associates that turned them off to faith. Numerous anecdotes were related of disingenuous acts committed by Christian colleagues, including pushy evangelistic attempts. Half of the subjects mentioned a strained, broken, or abusive relationship with a father, including parental divorce. My question on parental agreement was not as successful as I would have liked. It did not surface relational issues each time I asked it. I did not probe further, because I would use too much time pursuing a line of questioning on an ancillary topic. For those who understood the question to include a relational component, they volunteered their rough paternal relationships. This seems to confirm Vitz’s (1985) thesis that atheism develops out of a dysfunctional paternal relationship. One atheistic engineer typified this.

*“My parents were not married to start with, my father was married to somebody else, which means that half the names I get called turn out to be true of course. And they fought like cats and dogs, I mean physically. I’d be separating them at the age of five. I’d be woken up, totter downstairs, and there they were bashing hell out of each other. My father left when I was six I think. Oh, he kept us alive with money. And my mother was, I think, irked that here she was unmarried with this kid around her neck and it was miserable, a miserable upbringing. And I think she turned to religion to sort of get some solace.”*

Most subjects mentioned wars, oppression, and inquisitions committed in the name of religion as societal concerns. No respondent had been subjected to any of these horrors. These issues are probably not personal reasons for apostasy, but rather support for other preexisting beliefs about the Church and Christians. Another societal issue raised was the perception that religion (Christianity) was a crutch or coping mechanism for those who are weak or have problems. Since those respondents did not view themselves as weak or having problems, they saw no need for religion. Two professors explicitly stated that political involvement on the part of Christians bothered them. The Christians they envisioned tended to be conservative, evangelical rather than liberal Christians although liberal Christians are often just as politically active in this country. These professors were strong believers in a radical definition of the separation of church and state. They contend the state should sponsor secularism, although the nonsponsorship of a national church was the original intent of our Founding Fathers.

Two other societal issues raised are more problematic. Over a third specifically mentioned the exclusive claims of Christianity as an obstacle, and several others hinted at this without being explicit. Since most Christians, and particularly evangelicals, believe Jesus is the only way to God, this does not sit well with relativists and postmoderns who reject that anybody has the truth. The other issue is more intriguing. Three professors said that Christians are very selfish. "I do feel that saving themselves at the moment of death is their principle motivation." Christians are interested in themselves rather than others, thus committing the ultimate hypocrisy since Christ taught exactly the opposite. Likewise, Christians' motivation for morality seems (according to these apostates) to be extrinsic rather than from the heart.

*"There's not a cosmic Santa Claus who's going to give you a treat if you've been good or punish you if you've been bad. All we have in this world is each other, and traditions that emphasize some kind of cosmic policeman watching over your shoulder...I mean it's almost a Kantian argument that you should be good for the sake of being good, not because there's someone watching over your shoulder who will give you punishment or reward."*

Fewer subjects raised emotional and pragmatic issues than originally expected. Apostates in this category of Reich's find that God is not a reliable partner in personal life and does not guarantee the goodness of the world. I expected most subjects would cite evil and suffering or that God does not reliably answer prayers. Only three mentioned these issues, and for only one were they serious concerns. Additionally, one professor mentioned a lifestyle incompatible with Christian commitment as a factor in apostasy. I suspect there would be more allusions to lifestyle issues if I had probed deeper. Personal conduct is different than beliefs. People are more likely to tell you what they think, but not so likely to talk about how they live. I did not include questioning about conduct in this study because of time and scope, and it is not central to my study.

When asked if their academic training, research, and teaching duties had changed their religious beliefs, 91% said no. This is higher than the 70% found by Thalheimer (1965). This could be because my sample was smaller than Thalheimer's. However, Thalheimer's sample included deeply and moderately religious faculty as well as apostates. Perhaps apostate's beliefs are more resistant to change. The university fosters secularism, so there could be less cause for apostate faculty to acquire religiosity. These factors can account for the variation.

A significant finding is that no subject believed in an afterlife. Their worldview is very materialist. They believe we will "return to the earth, [and] become minerals for plant growth." "I believe we are matter," affirmed another professor. One professor wanted to affirm a belief in heaven from upbringing. However, when probed further the professor admitted, "these are the kinds of questions that are making me go back and think, you know, I'm just going to be worm food...I would have to take a more materialist stand on that."

The remainder of the interviews dealt with issues regarding Christianity. I first asked about general perceptions of Christians. This is a broad question, which many subjects pointed out,

but I wanted to get their definitions of what a Christian is and how one behaves. One professor was ambivalent about Christians, “No animosity, no hostility.” Only one professor stated his perception of Christians was positive overall. However, he was really ambivalent, though sympathetic to persecution Christians have experienced. “I was moved by the plight of the Christians back in the Roman Empire.”

Five professors had negative perceptions. Typically, the Christians mentioned were conservative evangelicals. These Christians most frequently were perceived as interested only in evangelism, and showed little concern for serving and helping people. This was viewed as hypocritical and uncompassionate. “I’ve seen or heard about too many people who call themselves Christians who are trying to further a particular agenda, or to proselytize people into their particular form of religion.” The subjects felt the Christians were disrespectful of them and their beliefs. They felt like they were non-persons if they did not believe as the Christians did, especially if the Christian thought they were going to hell. “It’s damaging for people to go around proselytizing their particular views.” These Christians were often described as pushy and trying to impose their beliefs. One professor stated that “people should be attracted to a religion,” and these Christians are not attractive.

Four professors had split perceptions of Christians. Typically, liberal Christians were viewed much more positively than were conservative Christians. This is probably because more professors are politically and theologically liberal. Also, Northern Christians were seen more positively than were Southern Christians. Northern Christians tend to be liberals and Southern Christians are conservative. “The people I’ve met up North who claim to be Christian tend to hold political beliefs...that I in some cases share.”

<b>Table 1 Faculty Subject's Perceptions of Christians</b>		
<b>Liberal</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	
<i>Northern</i> <i>Tolerance</i> <i>Forgiveness</i> <i>Egalitarian</i> <i>Respects diversity</i> <i>Open-minded</i> <i>Non-offensive</i> <i>Fair</i> <i>Intelligent</i> <i>Concerned for world/environment</i> <i>Lives out faith</i> <i>Don't stand up and say "I'm a Christian"</i>	<i>Southern</i> <i>Inconsiderate</i> <i>Presumptuous</i> <i>Intolerant</i> <i>Narrow-minded</i> <i>Proselytize</i> <i>Disrespectful, esp. of diversity</i> <i>Offensive</i> <i>Impolite</i> <i>Disgust</i> <i>Bigoted</i> <i>Hypocrisy</i> <i>Dominating</i>	<i>Unfair</i> <i>Imposes beliefs</i> <i>Unforgiving</i> <i>Judgmental</i> <i>Attack</i> <i>Not concerned for environment</i> <i>Selfish</i> <i>Uncompassionate</i> <i>Prejudice</i> <i>Stupid</i> <i>Unintelligent</i> <i>Naïve</i>

Additionally, if the professor personally knew the Christian, the professor tended to have positive views of the Christian, even if they were conservative. The personal acquaintance was seen as the exception to the rule about conservative Christians. This came out in my question about respect for colleagues of faith.

When asked if they knew any persons of faith at Georgia Tech that they respected, eight professors said they knew someone they respected, and three did not. Of those three, two did not know any persons of faith, and one knew of none he respected. The persons respected by the eight professors were all Christians; five were faculty and three were students. Three subjects described students because the subject was unaware of Christian colleagues, or respected the students, but not the colleagues. Essentially, about half of the subjects knew of a Christian colleague that they respected.

The reasons for their respect were for personal and professional qualities in the Christian. Sometimes the respect was for professional reasons only, and frequently for both professional and personal characteristics. Never was respect extended for just personal qualities. Regarding personal character, one professor said, "If you have these qualities, you also have the academic qualities." It seems that professional competence is an important factor for respect in the eyes of unbelievers, but that is usually predicated on excellent personal character, too. The most

frequently specified quality of the Christian was respect for others and their views. Their nonbelieving colleagues esteem Christians who can disagree agreeably, but scorn those who do not. “I am certainly wary of people who have intolerant beliefs about people whose own views differ from theirs.” Another attribute frequently mentioned was professional competency, which included excellent, quality work and high intelligence. One atheist commented on the intellectual prowess of one Christian, saying, “He’s hot!” Other qualities of Christians that nonbelievers respect include high morals, kindness, critical thinking, public service, good attitude, clean, a sense of order to life and the world, thoughtful, steady, confident, sincere, conscientious, steadfast, doesn’t drink, and disciplined. One unbeliever even respected a Christian colleague because the Christian trusted God for things in his research. Seeing that God related in the real world caught this apostate’s attention.

I next asked unbelieving professors if they were to seriously consider faith in Jesus Christ, what concerns or obstacles would they have. Three subjects specifically said they could never do that. “It’s an absurd suggestion.” “It’s an impossibility. It’s a hoax.” “It’s intellectually offensive.” These subjects perceived Christianity as an irrational, Kierkegaardian leap of faith. Several of the other eight subjects who could consider faith in Christ mentioned irrationality, “lazy thinking” as one put it, as a concern in potentially becoming a Christian.

Five professors cited belief in miracles such as the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and the Immaculate Conception as a major concern. This issue plays back to themes of irrationality and a scientific outlook on the world. One professor admitted that there are some good arguments for miracles. He referred to C.S. Lewis’ *Miracles* as “very good. It’s the best stuff on this that I have seen...very fine.” The divinity of Christ was an issue for three professors. “If Jesus Christ is presented as a symbol of the religion, that’s one thing, but if he were presented as literally the Son of God, then I’d have to reconcile that.”

Another major issue for four subjects was the exclusive claim of Christianity. They believe there are many roads to God. It is considered intolerant, disrespectful, and offensive to say Jesus is the only way. “They’ve got the correct answer and any other is incorrect...I don’t know many religions that teach tolerance of other religions.” Relativists are particularly touchy about this.

Many subjects raised issues about the Bible. Some distrust the Bible as authoritative or as the word of God. They believe it to be a human compilation with great truths, but many factual and historical errors. “If you compare the stories [in the gospels], they’re different, because they were edited by different people...They rewrote history in my opinion, in much the same manner that Chinese communists rewrote history.” When Christians quote the Bible, to the subjects it has no weight because they don’t accept its authority. These same subjects reject a literal interpretation of the Bible, citing the need for contemporary reinterpretation. “It seems to me religion needs to be incredibly flexible...it needs to change, and I don’t think it does...when you hook into this divine moment (view the Bible as historical) 2000 years ago there’s not a lot of room for modification or reinterpretation.” These attitudes are all consistent with a relativist or postmodern outlook.

There were other concerns and obstacles to faith in Christ raised by my respondents. These include lack of scientific evidence, no afterlife, or selfish motives for being good or attaining the afterlife. Others were concerned they would have to be like Christians, and had difficulty making commitments generally. One professor made an excellent point about the lack of humor particularly among evangelical Christians.

Lastly, my subjects were asked if the concerns and obstacles they mentioned were satisfactorily resolved, would they actually become a Christian. This gets at volition. Are these issues real concerns or just smokescreens for something deeper? I did not ask this question of two

subjects who considered faith in Jesus Christ to be patently absurd. The question was inappropriate given their response to the previous question. Of the nine who did respond, only three said they would not become a Christian. One of these three was the other professor who considered faith in Christ absurd. He said, “I don’t see what good it would do me; what it would add to me.” Another professor joined him in this attitude. The third professor believed he lacked the cultural context and training to become a Christian. “I can no more become a Christian than I can become a Southerner, or become a...I don’t know...some other group that requires...a cultural background and training.”

Six professors indicated that if they had satisfactorily resolved their concerns they would become Christians. This is 55% of my sample – an interesting and significant discovery. Granted, three said that if they could become a Christian, they might also become a Buddhist or member of some other religion. This is because of underlying relativism in their thought. However, for the other three it was very straightforward. “If you demonstrate to me that God exists within the terms of some Christian teaching, if you show me it’s true, of course. I couldn’t deny the truth.” “The older I get, I think probably the more likely I might do something like that. Yeah, exactly.” One professor affirmed that he could be a Christian, but “certainly not instantly.” This realistically shows that conversion involves a process in a person’s life. These apostate professors were more open to faith in Christ than I anticipated. I did not expect to hear a confirmed atheist tell me “I say wishful thinking [because] I wish I could believe it. Honesty prevents me from doing so... I don’t see it as truth. I’d like to; I’d love to.” Another professor confided,

*“I am, I have to admit, very scared of dying. The notion that you die and that’s it, is a very uncomfortable feeling. I think it’s very comforting to think that you die and, depending on which religion you are in, either you’ve led a life of good works, or you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior, or whatever...you know, if you do that thing, you’ll have eternal life, is an appealing notion. And there are times when I desperately want to believe it, but there’s that darn word ‘believe’ again, as opposed to ‘knowing’ or ‘proving,’ and it’s a continual struggle for me every day.”*

## Summary

This study explores the attitudes and beliefs of atheist and agnostic professors. The study consisted of a series of 11 semi-structured interviews with teaching faculty at the Georgia Institute of Technology. The sample was selected purposively with a specific quota that would proportionately represent the six colleges of the Institute. The subjects were selected with screening questions by telephone and e-mail. Proper informed consent research procedures were followed, including guarantee of anonymity, voluntary participation, promise of civility, and right to refuse to answer. The interviews were conducted in comfortable surroundings, tape recorded, transcribed, and the transcriptions proofed for accuracy.

The 11 subjects included 9 males and 2 females aged 31 to 73. All but one were tenured, and 9 had Ph.D.'s. They were evenly distributed geographically, and were proportionately similar to Steinberg's findings on faculty religious background. Five subjects were agnostic, and six were atheists.

Most of the professors surveyed found a sense of meaning in life through academic life. They all were apostate before becoming academic professionals, confirming Wuthnow's findings. Their academic training did not change their religious beliefs, but rather supported and reinforced their apostasy. All professors were thoroughgoing materialists, a worldview that undergirds their unbelief. All subjects, regardless of discipline, held a scientific outlook on the world. This was a substantial support for their unbelief. Consequently, they held a strong belief in evolution, and cited the irrationality of faith and the lack of scientific evidence for belief in God to cognitively sustain apostasy.

While all professors had cognitive factors to their unbelief, many also had societal reasons for skepticism. The Church or Christians were poor witnesses for God. Historically, Christians

have waged war, oppressed others, held inquisitions in the name of Christ, and appeared hypocritical, both personally and institutionally. Racism, lack of compassion, selfishness, and the imposition of moral and political beliefs were frequently mentioned, largely in relation to conservative, evangelical Christians. The question of evil and suffering in the world was not a major factor for most professors' apostasy, and lifestyle issues were not apparently important.

Generally, the perception of Christians by apostate faculty is negative. Conservative Christians were viewed substantially more negatively than liberal Christians. However, a positive personal acquaintance tended to carry a favorable perception. Most professors knew of a Christian at Georgia Tech whom they respected. The respect was extended for the Christian's personal and professional characteristics, but never for the personal qualities alone. Professional excellence and competency were viewed from the wellspring of personal Christian character; but without professional competence, respect was apparently withheld.

A large majority of subjects would seriously consider faith in Christ if their concerns were sufficiently addressed. Belief in miracles and the irrationality of faith were top problems, stemming from a scientific outlook. Exclusivism and problems with the trustworthiness and interpretation of the Bible were significant issues. Six professors, 55% of the sample, admitted they could accept Christian faith if these concerns were resolved to their satisfaction. The conversion would not likely occur immediately, but would involve a process of dialogue with a Christian colleague. In fact, several were eager for discussions and resolution of these issues. This is not the view most evangelical Christians have of agnostic and atheist professors.

## **TOWARD FACULTY BELIEF**

### **Conclusions**

The findings of my study lead me to one theological conclusion. Christian Leadership Ministries' standard evangelicalism, while the heart of its mission, is a hindrance to its effectiveness. Its emphasis on evangelism should not be abandoned, however, evangelism alone will not help CLM accomplish its mission to inculturate the gospel into American academia. University intellectuals need to see that God makes sense in the real world, and that an authentic Christian life is livable.

Inculturation requires sensitivity to the recipient's cultural context. The evangelist must use caution to discern his or her own culture to avoid cultural imperialism. The wise Christian will assist the natives of the recipient culture to fuse the transcultural gospel with recipient culture. The gospel will critique in turn the individual and the culture, transforming both toward the image of Christ. However, it is ultimately the evangelized not the evangelist who are to give expression to the gospel in the new cultural context. The evangelist must allow the recipient culture to interpret the gospel in its new context. At that point the gospel is no longer his, but it is theirs.

Three priorities comprise a university's mission and define its cultural context. These priorities are teaching, research, and service. Academics are to educate, advance knowledge, and serve the community and world. It makes sense that people in this culture will need to see that the gospel relates to these areas before it would be adopted.

Teaching and research are areas of academic culture that CLM has addressed somewhat. Over the last decade, CLM has fostered an emphasis on what they call academic integration. This resurgent scholarship encourages Christian professors to allow a Christian worldview to inform their academics. They ask, “How does God relate to my discipline?” This is much more than being a good and ethical professor because one is a Christian. Rather academic integration acknowledges that if naturalism, feminism, Marxism, and other “isms” may inform academics, then so may theism. Professors such as George Marsden (1997) and Phillip Johnson (1995b, 2000), who are involved with CLM, have begun laying the foundation for contemporary integrative Christian scholarship. However, this field is still in its childhood, and extensive work must be done in every discipline.

As more professors expand integrative scholarship, Christian faith will be more attractive to non-Christian academics. This does not mean that integration is merely a tool for evangelism. Integrative scholarship is a legitimate intellectual activity in its own right. Its practice does not have to result in evangelism. However, with professors certain intellectual issues must be addressed for Christian faith to be personally plausible. Every professor in this study indicated that one of their roadblocks to faith in Christ is that God did not seem to be the best explanation for the world and how it works. Reich (1997) categorized this as a cognitive concern. One professor summarized, “It doesn’t fit the facts and it seems to me to be almost an irrelevancy.”

If evangelicals cannot demonstrate how God relates to the real world, then for intellectuals in the university, God will remain on the fringes in the world of personal devotion. He may be helpful for those who feel they need Him, but He will continue to be a myth in the phenomenal world. However, a compelling case for a theistic view in an academic discipline might attract some practitioners to faith in Christ. “Showing that one’s religion addresses real life well leads

seekers to critically examine what they believe” (Pitt, 1991:181). If a theistic view seems to make sense in a discipline, perhaps non-Christians will ask about the worldview and faith that undergirds the view. Intellectuals seem to shy away from emotional and irrational faith commitments; therefore, satisfactory rational explanations are critical for effective evangelism in the university. Also, a well formulated theistic view in a discipline can allow a Christian scholar to make a unique contribution to their academic field, because they see the world as it actually is – a world created by God. Integrative scholarship can aid the university to accomplish its mission in teaching and research.

Academic integration is a significant step toward inculturating the gospel into academia. Christian Leadership Ministries recently made a deliberate commitment to this aspect of inculturation by creating a subdivision called Academic Initiative designed to foster integrative scholarship. This emphasis must be enhanced to ensure the long-term success of CLM.

While CLM is making inculturation strides in teaching and research, they have done little to address the service dimension of the university’s mission. This is perhaps the weakest spot in CLM’s strategy in the university. The professors in this study almost unanimously stated that the poor witness of the Church and Christians, particularly evangelicals, have dissuaded them from following Christ. The various forms of disingenuous faith is what Reich calls societal concerns. This hypocrisy ranges from the wars, crusades, and inquisitions in some of Christian history to racism, intolerance, selfishness, and unforgiveness contemporarily. Genuine Christians may point out that those who committed some of these acts were Christian in name only. However, nonbelievers are usually incapable of making this distinction, so the perception remains that it is Christians who live inconsistently. Apostate professors want to know if Christians can live out their faith. “If someone has to tell me they are a Christian it promotes disgust...[A Christian that I respect] lives it everyday, and he doesn’t tell you he’s religious.”

Service plays a significant part in living out the Christian faith before watching academics. Concern for the struggles and issues of academic life speak volumes about genuine Christian faith in the university; faith nonbelievers might consider adopting. Seeing Christians involved in social concerns in the community outside the university is consistent with the university's mission and the perception of what Christians should be doing. An excellently lived life can make Christianity attractive, and cause nonbelievers to ask why one would give such loving, concerned, and selfless service. This could lead to opportunities to talk about how one becomes a Christian. This does not mean we should view service as an instrument to evangelism. We should serve because that is the nature of Christian faith. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). However, even Jesus' perfect service opened numerous opportunities to tell others how they could be saved.

Christian Leadership Ministries needs to adopt a serious commitment to social concern. CLM, while including a service dimension to their ministry, is not deliberately committed to it. There are occasional seminars conducted on individual campuses that provide a service. These include faculty seminars on life management and how to get tenure, and a seminar for students on how to get better grades. These activities are a step in the right direction, but they are a small part of CLM's programs. If CLM is to be successful in reaching the university for Christ, they should incorporate service to the campus. Professors involved with CLM who adopt intentional service will not only be helping advance the mission of the university, but also the mission of the church. One atheistic professor understood the power of service to the advancement of the Kingdom. He said, "Not only [can] you help them in this world, but you can help them to the next world, because their gratitude might reflect itself through some sense of understanding what you are saying." Evangelism combined with social concern is the best means by which the gospel may be inculturated into academia.

Fundamental evangelicals may balk at this, thinking that I am suggesting the adoption of liberalism. However, I do think it is possible to embrace the service ethos of liberalism without adopting its theology. It is clear that the subjects in this study are more liberal than conservative ideologically, and they identify with others of like mind. The trick is adopt what is good in liberalism without compromising truth. Conservative evangelicals have already compromised the truth by neglecting Christ-like service to focus only on saving souls. Christian aid to the world in which God has placed us is part of the gospel. Evangelicals should embrace both evangelism and service for effective ministry.

This is a step away from twentieth century dichotomized evangelicalism to a model like the modern Catholic formulation of mission or the Wesleyan movement in eighteenth century Britain. Uniting service and the gospel is imperative for twenty-first century mission. Christian Leadership Ministries has begun moving in this direction, but still has much to incorporate into its ministry to reach its goals. As a result, the transforming power of the gospel will have a positive, redeeming effect on a very important social structure – the university.

### **Recommendations**

Inculturation happens through individuals in a new culture who accept and embrace the gospel. If this is to occur in academia, it is important to know how to position the gospel so that it is appealing to significant groups of professors. The apostate professors in this study had two major barriers to faith in Jesus Christ: cognitive and societal concerns to use Reich's categories. These matters essentially overlap the elements of the university's mission. The cognitive concerns relate to teaching and research, and the societal concerns deal with service. Over half of the faculty said that they could see themselves seriously considering faith in Jesus Christ if these concerns were satisfactorily addressed. This significant finding warrants adjustments to CLM's methods and strategies to appeal to these concerns.

The cognitive issues can be addressed through apologetics. There are two families of apologetics, presuppositional and evidentiary. Practitioners of both schools tend to exclude the other, but both are needed for effectively reaching apostate faculty. Evidentialists demonstrate from various evidences that God is the best explanation for the world and how it works. However, the evidence is interpreted from a Christian worldview which evidentialism does not directly provide, but does come from presuppositionalism. Yet, the logic and philosophical rigor of presuppositionalism can seem cold and without heart, something evidentialism can provide. Repeatedly the professors in this study complained about the perceived irrationality of faith in Jesus Christ. However, they also cited lack of evidence for God and theistic interpretations of the universe. Both apologetic approaches will be needed for successful persuasion. CLM has an evidentialist bent, and can benefit from the inclusion of some presuppositional modes of persuasion.

The use of apologetics in this context is not in the traditional evangelical style. Typically, evangelicals employ apologetics to defend the faith from outside attack. This spirit of apologetics leads to the kind of militarism, pushiness, and exclusivism that nonbelievers perceive to imbue evangelicalism. Warfare language must be struck from evangelicals' vocabulary if they are to connect with those outside the Christian community. No one likes to be treated as the enemy or a target. The apologetics I would propose is in the spirit of dialogue. Gentle and patient persuasion in the context of an ongoing conversation with apostates will be more effective than a defensive posture against a perceived enemy. I Peter 3:15, 16 (GNB) tells us when asked "to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect." Most of the professors in this study chided evangelicals as being disrespectful of them, because evangelicals are so intent on converting the apostate that they seldom try to understand the apostate's perspective. CLM's emphasis on the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit for ministry should help them develop greater proficiency in dialogue rather than defense. The

love, patience, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control needed for effective dialogue are fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23), amply supplied to the Spirit-controlled Christian.

Specifically, showing how Christian faith relates to everyday life will appeal to apostate's cognitive concerns. Apparently, every professor in the study relied on some form of scientific thinking to support his or her nonbelief. Additionally, every professor affirmed materialism and naturalism. These professors frequently mentioned belief in evolution. This would indicate the need for CLM to develop research, ministry strategies, and materials that give a compelling alternative to these views. The emergent intelligent design movement in American academia holds considerable promise to developing such a viable alternative. Intelligent design theorists point to intelligence in the design and function of the universe. However, they leave it to philosophers and theologians to debate the nature of that intelligence. Their research shows evidence for creative intelligence rather than chaotic and random natural forces. Many CLM professors are involved in this movement. CLM should also look for other modes for addressing intrinsic materialist naturalism.

It will be important for CLM to identify capable professors in every academic discipline who have experience integrating a theistic worldview into that discipline. These can serve as leaders to expand integrative scholarship in these fields. Also, specialists in academic integration methodology are critical to developing training materials to teach other professors how to do academic integration. All Christians should engage in integration, because it is important academic work, and part of loving the Lord with the mind. Additionally, those who do evangelism with intellectuals rely on integrationists for a rational basis for faith.

I would also recommend developing materials and training in the use of informal logic and the art of persuasion. Most evangelicals know how to quote the Bible to advance an argument, but when their audience does not accept the Bible's authority, their argument fails. They are relying

solely on arguments based on authority, when there are other ways to reason. This does not discount the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing a person to faith in Jesus Christ. However, evangelicals tend to be less effective by not knowing how to be persuasive in a discussion. Additionally, evangelicals need to be aware of unbelieving professors' suspicion of the exclusive claims of Christianity. This respects the postmodern sensibilities of the university today, and it is a wise tactic for deflating an unnecessary obstacle to further conversation. If evangelicals insist that only they have the truth, then they appear arrogant, elitist, insensitive, and disrespectful; all things apostate academics abhor.

*“When we assert that Christian revelation is true, we aren’t saying that all non-Christian [positions] are wholly false. This is the impression that Christians often give, and pluralist arguments wrongly imply this as well (when, for example, they deny that any religion has “a monopoly on the truth”). The Christian doesn’t claim exclusive possession of truth, because all truth is God’s truth...The Christian is to affirm truth and virtue wherever they are found. But the Christian maintains that God’s revelation in Jesus is true and that other...systems are wrong where they contradict Christian revelation (emphasis in the original)” (Copan, 1998:77).*

Answering the cognitive concerns of nonbelieving professors is not sufficient for them seriously to consider faith in Jesus Christ. They do not perceive most Christians as living the life Jesus lived. The wars, racism, and inquisitions in the name of Christ are polar opposites of what Jesus taught. Likewise, the perceived dogmatism, judgmentalism, selfishness, and disrespect of others by evangelicals make Christian faith unattractive. George Barna (1999c) reported that in 1999, for the first, time more *Christians* than non-Christians divorced. If these hypocrisies were removed so that Christian living was consistent with Christian thinking, many apostate faculty would give Christian faith earnest consideration.

Why do nonbelievers think most Christians are hypocrites? Most Christians know how they should live. They just lack the power to live what they know. The apostle Paul described that tension in Romans 7 and 8. Professors in this study describe evangelical Christians much as Paul described the fleshly Galatian Christians. His solution could be CLM’s. “Let the Spirit

direct your lives, and you will not satisfy the desires of the human nature” (Galatians 5:16, GNB).

When Christians are Spirit-filled (Spirit-directed), they have the power of the resurrected Christ. This is not so they can do anything they want, but rather so they can do the will of God. They can live as Jesus did because Jesus lives in them. This mystery of the Christian faith, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27), is the secret for living as Christ did. Unfortunately, 53% of evangelical Christians do not believe the Holy Spirit actually exists (Barna, 2000b). They do not consider him an actual person, but a symbol of God’s power. By default they do not appropriate his power, and thus live their lives in the flesh. Therefore, they do not look much different from their non-Christian neighbors, and they are rightly viewed as hypocrites. Christians should look like Christ, but they cannot apart from his power.

Campus Crusade for Christ, Christian Leadership Ministries’ parent organization, is among the leaders in the Christian community who emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life (Bright, 2000). Dr. Bill Bright, co-founder and former president of Campus Crusade for Christ, has consistently lived and taught the Spirit-filled life for 50 years. His godly example culminated in receiving the Templeton Prize for the Advancement of Religion in 1996. If CLM will rigorously emphasize this teaching with the Christian faculty with whom they work, significant progress in addressing Christian hypocrisy can be made. CLM cannot change Christian history, or eliminate contemporary troubles in countries like Northern Ireland. However, they can make a difference with their constituency. Perhaps those professors’ godly example might spread through the university to the general culture.

Specifically, if Christian faculty lived consistent Spirit-filled lives they would be motivated to serve. CLM must develop more programmed and non-programmed modes of service to

expand their ministry and that of their constituent faculty. The current seminars that CLM offers are excellent and should continue. More market research is needed to determine other faculty needs. If these needs are met, then perhaps opportunities to talk about spiritual things may surface. Again, this does not mean we should serve people just so evangelism will occur. Christians should serve because Christ served. However, excellent service may raise spiritual issues that Christians should not neglect.

Maybe apostate professors need help with their finances or their marriages. Perhaps there are professional areas where CLM can help. If they developed workshops on proposal writing for research grants perhaps this might meet a need. What if individual Christian professors offered to help other colleagues secure research funding, or even offered to give a colleague some of their own funding if possible? CLM can learn from the social gospel, even to the point of developing a social conscience that translates into social action. CLM professors could help poor and disadvantaged students gain admission to the university. They could help the poor and homeless. Professors could contribute their professional expertise to organizations like Habitat for Humanity, or offer medical help in the community if they are medical professionals.

Christian professors should look diligently for ways to serve the campus community by helping the university succeed in its mission. This demonstration of love and service should also be a powerful apologetic to the apostate faculty in this study, who viewed Christians as selfishly committed to God for their own benefit; and that they do good from extrinsic motivation – do good or God will punish you. However, a Spirit-filled Christian will naturally do good because the Creator God of the universe resides within them, and they rely on Him to do good through them. “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). If believers depend on this God “the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father” (John 14:12). Additionally, by living in vital Christian community together, they

can demonstrate to the larger campus community what true community is like. Community motivated by the love of Christ is the test before a watching world that God is real (John 17:20-22). The network of Christian Faculty Fellowships that CLM has on campuses across the country is vital to this end.

When opportunities to talk about spiritual things arise, there is great potential. Over half of the professors in this study would consider faith in Christ if their cognitive and societal concerns were addressed. However, the approach to these conversations is critically important. If the Christian in conversation with their nonbelieving colleague appears only interested in a conversion, then suspicions arise and defenses go up. However, a wise Christian can make progress spiritually with nonbelievers when the other person's beliefs, opinions, and concerns are heard, understood, and respected. "Patient persuasion can break down the strongest resistance and can even convince rulers" (Proverbs 25:15, GNB).

Christian professors need to be more proactive in initiating discussions with their apostate colleagues. At the end of our interview, one atheist stated, "The discussion of the type that you and I had, even though it is for your thesis, more of this should be happening, actually, because people will see each other better in my opinion." Another atheist candidly admitted, "I never talk of it [with my Christian colleagues, but] I am very interested in the question, naturally interested. I would like to know what is at the bottom of it." Of the 11 subjects in this study, five apostate professors mentioned their desire to discuss issues of God and faith with their colleagues. One specifically said that he was curious. He had little spiritual background growing up, and has wondered at the faith of his Christian colleagues. He would like to know more. His colleagues only need to speak up. If Christians approach their colleagues like I did, as if they were on a fact-finding mission of understanding rather than treating the nonbeliever as a target or project, the nonbeliever will open up and talk about these issues.

Additionally, it is important that these serious discussions be good-natured. One professor specifically pointed out the lack of humor in evangelical Christianity. This by itself was a deterrent to him. It is true that many evangelicals appear to be grim, serious, and cheerless. Most people love to have fun, and people having fun are fun to be around. Interject personality and humor in these dialogues as appropriate with one's individual style. Continued dialogue, service, answering questions, and building relationships with love and concern while laughing and living life together may result in apostate professors committing their lives to Jesus Christ.

For the evangelical Christian this involves some risk. Being proactive about sharing one's faith is seldom a popular thing in the university. However, tempered with loving service, evangelism becomes evangelization as the Catholics call it, and this is more attractive in the university. At a conference I attended, Ron Hutchcraft remarked that, "we have gone as far as we can go...safely." There is danger to being a public Christian. It may be uncomfortable and possibly perilous to popularity, promotion and tenure, or research funding. However, Jesus did not promise believers that the world would like his followers. He actually said, "if they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Not that Christians should provoke persecution, but it is a possibility, especially for Christians committed to serving and sharing their faith. However, conversely one apostate professor confided, "I think that people who go along to get along are not people that really have an effect on life and other people's lives." There may be risks, but the rewards are great.

### **Summary**

Christian Leadership Ministries needs to adopt a mature evangelicalism that incorporates a significant commitment to service and social concern along with its evangelistic efforts. This adjustment in its ministry model should allow the inculturation of the gospel into the universities of America. Precisely how to go about this inculturation is the domain of the university faculty

and not that of CLM staff. Hundreds of professors who are partners with CLM staff could spearhead this mission to academia. Only the faculty, the natives so to speak, can give the gospel proper expression in academic culture.

The inculturation task interfaces with the three primary priorities of the university, which are teaching, research, and service. CLM has made some progress in integrating the gospel with the calling of the university. Particularly, CLM has made a good start in dovetailing the gospel with the areas of teaching and research. The seminal work of some of its professors in academic integration and the formation of CLM's Academic Initiative are important steps in demonstrating how God relates to everyday life in academia. More work needs to be done in this area until there are teams of professors in every discipline leading research that incorporates a theistic perspective in every field. This will require hundreds of professors experienced in academic integration. While CLM has made some inculturation advances via academic integration, they have done little to unite the gospel with the service aspect of the university's mission. They have a few service-oriented seminars that are offered on some campuses, but there is no definite commitment to service that matches their focus on integration. This critical error should be corrected if CLM is to see long-term success in academia.

In order for the gospel to be infused into academic culture, the concerns and obstacles of nonbelievers must be addressed for them to adopt Christian faith. The two main concerns of the faculty in this study are cognitive and societal. The cognitive concerns centered on scientism, materialism, and naturalism can be addressed through integrative scholarship and non-defensive, dialogical apologetics. Christian professors need to demonstrate how God relates to the real world of scholarship, not just personal devotion. They will need specific tools and training to learn academic integration and persuasion in an academic setting.

With the societal concerns, CLM must equip Christian professors to live a consistent Christian life. The injustice and hypocrisy committed by Christians is a great hindrance to faith in Jesus Christ. Particular emphasis is needed on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If Christians rely on themselves to live what they know to be right and good, then they will fail for they are powerless against their own sinful nature. However, when they learn to trust the indwelling Spirit to live his life through them, they will excel in service to their colleagues and community. Additionally, much research is needed to determine the personal and professional needs of professors so that CLM may devise services to meet those needs.

As their needs are met, some non-Christian professors will inquire about the God these Christians excellently serve. When these opportunities arise, the Christians can then give them the gospel of Jesus Christ. He died to set them free from sin, give them a home in heaven when they die, and give them power to live well in this life. This will likely require a patient, ongoing, gentle dialogue with nonbelievers. The good news is that many will likely accept the gospel if their concerns are addressed. As more professors commit their lives to Jesus Christ, Christian Leadership Ministries should see university culture begin accepting Christian faith in the academy. CLM desires this inculturation goal. Careful reflection on this exploratory study and expansion on its results and recommendations should help accelerate the cause of Christ in the universities of America, a contribution to the Kingdom of God I am very glad to make.

# Faculty Interview

## Demographics

**Sex:** Female Male

**Year of your birth** \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital status:** Married Remarried Separated Single Divorced (Single Again) Widowed

**Department** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rank:** Instructor Assistant Professor Associate Professor Professor Regents Professor Other

**Appointment:** Regular w/tenure Regular w/o tenure (tenure track) Non-tenure track  
Acting Visiting

**What is the highest degree that you hold?                      When?                      From where?**

## Background

**Where did you grow up** (what state/region did you call home)?

**In what religion were you raised?** Protestant Catholic Jewish None

Other (please specify)

**Were your parents in agreement religiously?**

**Do you consider yourself?** Agnostic Atheist

## Beliefs

**Does academia give you a sense that your life really matters or makes a difference in the world?**

**When did you decide that you were an agnostic or atheist?**

**What factors brought you to that conclusion?**

**Has your academic training, research, and teaching duties changed your religious beliefs? If so, how?**

**What do you believe is your destination when you die?**

## **Attitudes Regarding Christianity**

**What is your general perception of Christians?**

**Do you personally know any persons of faith at Georgia Tech that you really respect? Is that person a Christian? Why do you respect them?**

**If you were to seriously consider faith in Jesus Christ, what are the concerns or obstacles you would have?**

**If the issues you have described were resolved, would you become a Christian? If not, why not?**

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