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## Reflections on Gould's Model of Faith and Scholarship: Consistent, Holistic, Realistic?

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**Abstract:** In this response to Paul Gould's paper, I will first mention seven positive things I see in his essay. The positives I see, in summary, are that Professor Gould emphasizes God's mission and our scholarly faithfulness to it, his helpful definitions of academic disciplines, his examples of missional professors, the good Christian resources Gould uses, his boldness, and many other solid points too many to discuss. Negatively, I mention, in summary fashion, the following points: a possible contradiction, a failure to be truly holistic in the faith-learning nexus, and finally, whether his model will lead to the transformation he seeks. Each major section is followed by summaries of various kinds.

In this response, I am going to first mention what I saw as positives and then offer some critiques. For now, the positives. First, Professor Gould's emphasis on God's mission and our scholarly faithfulness to it is excellent, especially in quoting Christopher Wright's volume on this topic.<sup>1</sup> One day, there will be a judgment in which our fidelity or infidelity to our calling as Christian scholars will be evaluated. Thus, Gould asks: "How do we faithfully live for Christ within our academic discipline?"<sup>2</sup> And I'll add to Gould's discussion from 2 Corinthians and Hebrews. As 2 Corinthians 5: 9–10 states (NASB, 1995):

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent [from the Lord], to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

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<sup>1</sup> Gould, "An Essay on Academic Disciplines, Faithfulness, and the Christian Scholar," p. 2. Available here: [http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould\\_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf](http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Or, perhaps, quoting Deuteronomy 17 and 32, the stern warning about judgment offered in Hebrews 10:27, 30–31 reads as follows (NASB, 1995):

<sup>27</sup> but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. ... <sup>30</sup> For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.” And again, “THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.” <sup>31</sup> It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Second, Professor Gould’s unpacking of the definition of an academic discipline in terms of the modern (“naïve factualism” – Gould’s description reminds me of Max Weber’s rather cold description of the modern scholars’ academic task<sup>3</sup>) and postmodern (“social constructivism”) models of scholarship and his offering of a third, essentially, Christian way (“perspectival factualism”) is very good. Either a “pure neutrality” or a “blind bias” is impossible, for the various reasons Gould specifies, yet each model has its strengths, as Gould says.<sup>4</sup> We want to draw on the strengths of each to come up with an “interested objectivity.”<sup>5</sup> This last model is Gould’s preferred model.

Third, Gould uses excellent examples of being missional professors. A first one is about Walter Bradley’s discussion of designing and building bridges in remote parts of Africa and his study of the use of coconuts to generate electricity in Papua New Guinea.<sup>6</sup> A second concerns Ken Elzinga’s example of servanthood as an economics professor at the University of Virginia. In Elzinga’s case, regularly set aside class preparation time, and his prayer with and for students are the examples.<sup>7</sup> Finally, there is Marc Compere, who is professor of mechanical engineering at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He serves as an excellent illustration of a missional professor in his solar powered water purification system (designed by himself and several students) installed in Haiti after the devastating 2010 earthquake.<sup>8</sup> Gould’s conclusion

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<sup>3</sup> Max Weber, “Science as Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. ed. and intro. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 129-56.

<sup>4</sup> Gould, “An Essay on Academic Disciplines, Faithfulness, and the Christian Scholar,” pp 3–7. Available here: [http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould\\_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf](http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach and David Basinger, *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Gould, “An Essay on Academic Disciplines, Faithfulness, and the Christian Scholar,” p. 14. Available here: [http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould\\_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf](http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

about Compere is this: “What a powerful picture of both professors and students, both Christian and non-Christian, working together to make a difference.”<sup>9</sup>

Fourth, Gould uses very good Christian resources including Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Mark Noll, Harry Poe, George Marsden, and many others, in spelling out his well-articulated academic vision.

Fifth, a positive for Gould is that his academic lens is essentially the Kuyperian or neo-Kuyperian, and Dooyeweerdian or neo-Dooyeweerdian, the latter seen especially in the Al Wolters’ quote.<sup>10</sup> According to historian George Marsden, the Kuyperian tradition for the most part has triumphed. Marsden speaks cautiously of “The triumph — or nearly so — of what may be loosely called Kuyperian presuppositionalism in the evangelical [academic] community.”<sup>11</sup>

Sixth, Gould is to be commended in asking for a response from several professors. He is not bashful or fearful of critique. Gould is bold.

Seventh, there are too many good points to comment on them all, and they all quicken ... at least they quicken me.

In brief, Gould desires transformation (in/of culture) via faithfulness to God’s overall mission “to redeem humanity and restore shalom to all of creation”<sup>12</sup> (Gould also believes in the intrinsic value of the scholarly enterprise), and not just through the “add Jesus and stir” method.<sup>13</sup> “Rather,” he says, “faithfulness to Christ [a strength if there ever was one] requires the Christian scholar to live a missional life in the academy by seeking a missionary encounter within each level of his or her academic discipline.”<sup>14</sup>

Speaking of Gould’s fearlessness and boldness when it comes to critique in the sixth point mentioned above, here are three assessments.

First, I find a possible contradiction when Gould writes, “The goal is not a conversion of academic disciplines to correspond to a distinctly Christian perspective.”<sup>15</sup> Instead, Gould says, Christian scholars ought to be “principled pluralists,” and I agree here. Non-Christians do have the political power now in the academy, and they have not been bashful about promoting their agenda. Scholars ought to be “principled pluralist.” Yet Gould also says that scholars are after “the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> George Marsden, “The State of Evangelical Christian Scholarship,” *The Reformed Journal* 37 (1987): 14.

<sup>12</sup> Gould, “An Essay on Academic Disciplines, Faithfulness, and the Christian Scholar,” p. 2. Available here: [http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould\\_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf](http://www.epsociety.org/userfiles/file/Gould_Essay-on-academic-disciplines-faithfulness.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

mantle of truth” which is found within a Christian view of reality.<sup>16</sup> So Christian scholars do want a correspondence with “a distinctly Christian perspective.” A conversion, in other words. So while there may be agreement between Christianity and other points of view based on common grace, etc., “confrontation”<sup>17</sup> is sometimes needed. Is not the goal ultimately “truth” which is to be found within a Christian perspective? Thus, conversion is the ultimate desideratum. Perhaps Gould does not go far enough in his Christian vision of scholarship by prescribing a mere “intellectual humility” as a result of our finitude and fallenness.

Second, Gould claims to offer a “truly holistic account of faith and scholarship integration.”<sup>18</sup> But does he? He highlights the missional aspect of faith-learning integration, but Gould doesn’t tell his readers exactly HOW to integrate faith and learning *per se*.<sup>19</sup> At least, he does not in this paper. In my view and in summary of a more holistic model, at *creation* in Genesis 1–2, faith and learning were seamlessly *integrated*. At the *fall* in Genesis 3, faith and learning were *dis-integrated*. However, in the fallen situation, nothing took biblical faith’s place; rather, idolatrous faith did. In other words, people (scholars included) are people of some kind of faith (Gould does emphasize this). In *redemption* (the rest of the Bible: Gen. 3:15 – Rev. 22: 21), faith and learning are *re-integrated*. Christ reconciles all things (Gk: *ta panta*) to God by the blood of His cross (Col. 1: 20), including Christian faith and learning. This governing story of creation, fall, and redemption (CFR) tells Christian scholars how to do the work of re-integration (but Gould does not tell us how exactly). Good questions could be asked of each plot in this larger, overarching narrative. Nonetheless, Gould’s point of view, then, helps by adding the often-missed missional component, but his model is not holistic. There is more to faith-learning integration than the missional dimension, though this aspect has been neglected (and, in Gould’s model, the charge of pietism may lie closely at the door).

We could also add the huge implications of the biblical gospel in the *incarnation* of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and in His *service, suffering and sacrifice*, in his *resurrection, intercession, and lordship*, in his gift of *Pentecostal power* in the Holy Spirit, and in our (Christian) coming judgment at the *bema* seat of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, I wonder if the transformation Gould seeks will really come about through his missional vision, or by any means, for that matter except by the grace of God. The cross, humanly speaking, is always offensive (1 Cor.1: 18-22). To Greeks or

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> For resources of various kinds on integrative aspect of the faith and learning connection, see: <http://www.virtualsalt.com/int/> (accessed, June 12, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> David K. Naugle, *Philosophy: A Student’s Guide in Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition*, ed., David S. Dockery (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 110-14.

Gentiles, the gospel, even in sophisticated, scholarly terms is “foolishness”; to the Jews, Jesus in His death and resurrection, is a “stumbling-block” (see 1 Cor. 1: 23). However, to those who are saved and thus can understand, the cross and resurrection, that is, the gospel, are the power and wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24). We need, however, God’s grace to understand and believe. We love our autonomy, especially in the West. Along these lines, C. S. Lewis said in his spiritual autobiography *Surprised by Joy* that, as a non-Christian, God was the “transcendental interferer”<sup>21</sup> and, among other things, he hated God’s authority.

In brief, then, Gould may want to rethink in his mind and heart these negatives about a possible contradiction, whether his model is, indeed, holistic, and whether the transformation he seeks is even possible. There are other shortcomings, but these mentioned are crucial.

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<sup>21</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*, A Harcourt Brace Modern Classic (New York: Harcourt, Inc.,1955), 166.