critique

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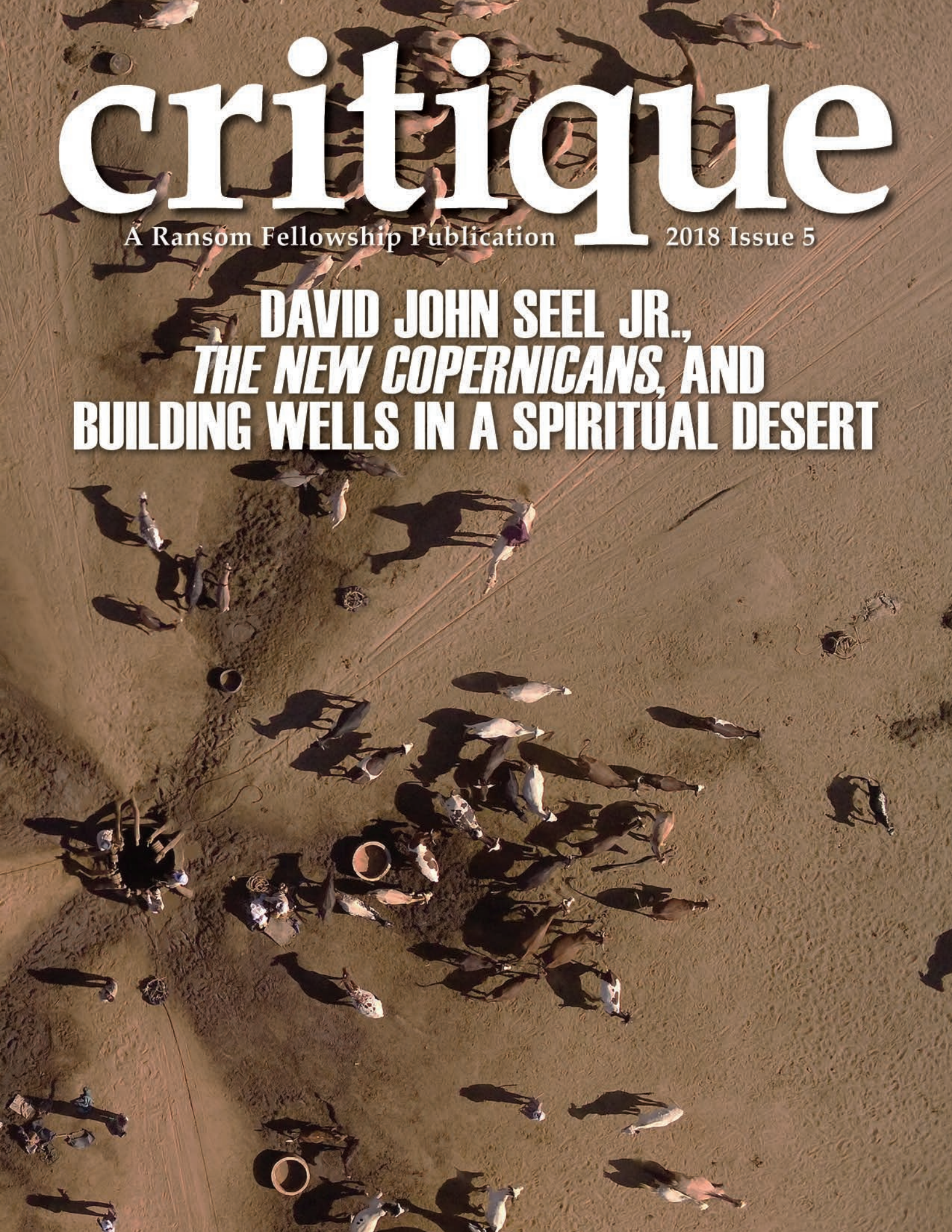

DAVID JOHN SEEL JR., *THE NEW COPERNICANS*, AND BUILDING WELLS IN A SPIRITUAL DESERT

CRITIQUE

CONTACT *CRITIQUE:*
www.RansomFellowship.org
5245 132nd Court, Savage, MN 55378
ransomfellowship@gmail.com

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Except where noted, all articles are by Denis Haack.

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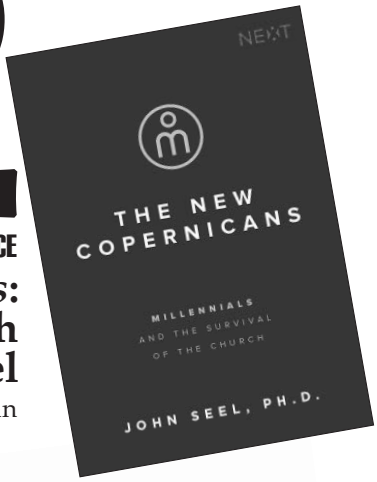
2018:5 CONTENTS



EDITOR'S NOTE

Faithfulness, Not Results

"We are called to a selfless stewardship of all callings, cultures, and creation in a manner that is creative, life affirming, and God honoring," David John Seel writes in "Building Wells in a Spiritual Desert." "God's real presence in our lives is to be translated into faithful presence within our given sphere of influence. The proof of doing it correctly is that nonbelievers see our public actions as an indispensable benefit to human and social flourishing."

Our faithfulness as Christians as we live out our lives in some corner of reality becomes kingdom work that demonstrates the reality of grace and a reason for hope. No corner is too small, because God's grace is meant to penetrate and transform all of life as the Christmas carol puts it, "far as the curse is found." When Jesus used a boy's small meal to feed a multitude, he was living out a parable we must carry in our heart. Jesus was demonstrating that a small life, given freely, was not merely acceptable to God but, in his hands, could do more than we could possibly imagine.

Christian faithfulness does not consist of elaborate programs but in ordinary lives. It does not require esoteric skills but a willingness to love in word and deed. Listening and asking honest questions, providing warm, simple hospitality, being willing to say, "I don't know," seeking justice even at cost, and treating every person with the dignity, care, and respect they deserve as created in God's likeness regardless of their lifestyle, values, and ideas—such things speak love even to cynics.

As we pursue our calling in the work of our vocation, Christians do have an added task that is not shared by our secular neighbors. They can, if they want, merely accept the standards of the world to measure how they pursue their work. We, however, believe that Christianity speaks intelligently and creatively into every aspect and sphere of life and reality, so we will want to nurture a distinctly biblical perspective on both our work and our rest. And though the process can involve some hard thinking and careful study, it is life giving because work in a broken world tends to slide into toil when not permeated with grace.

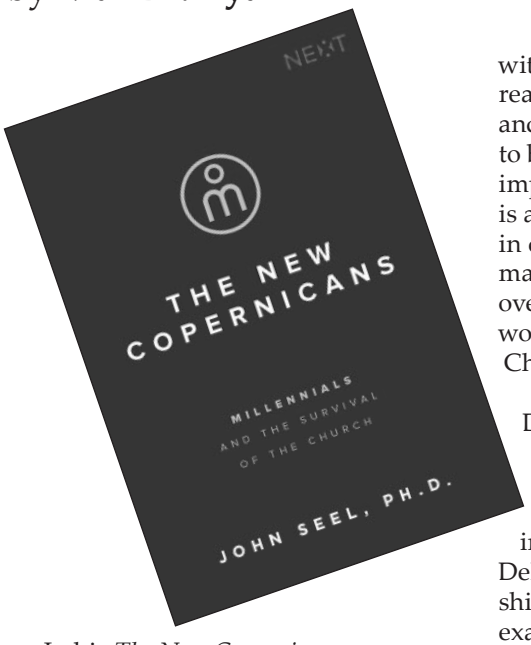
And here is what might be the best news of all: we don't have to worry about results, just being faithful.

In our world there is tremendous pressure to accomplish something, to change the world, to make a difference. And I do believe that the gospel works to change lives and cultures, that grace in a broken world is redemptive and transformative. But the transformation is God's work and responsibility, while his call to me is to be faithful in the ordinary of my life and calling. He may allow me to catch a glimpse of the transformation he is working, but then again he may not. He certainly is not obligated to do so, and it could feed my hubris that really should not be fed, ever, and it is not humility that causes me to say that. So, I may not see evidence of change, but that is what is referred to as the walk of faith—living not because we can see the result but because we believe the promises of God in Christ.

I sometimes picture in my imagination a host of believers, each living in some small corner of reality. Nothing spectacular happens. There is little noise and no fanfare, fireworks, or headlines. It's believers following Christ into the world, refusing to remain isolated from non-Christians in a gated—virtual or real—Christian ghetto. Believers faithfully following the rhythms of work and rest embedded in creation, each living "a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified" (1 Timothy 2:2). We may feel unnoticed at times, but that is an illusion spawned in hell. As Aretha Franklin sang on *A Woman Falling Out of Love* (2011), "His eye is on the sparrow / And I know He watches me." And unseen by us but as real as the most mundane object in a kitchen drawer, God is at work, extending here, deepening there, weaving together all that is done to his glory into a tapestry of grace that beats back the fall, redeems lives, and allows the light of God's kingdom to shine in the darkness. ■

The New Copernicans: An Interview with John Seel

by **Mark P. Ryan**



In his *The New Copernicans: Millennials and the Survival of the Church*, cultural analyst, social-impact consultant, and author John Seel draws attention to a fundamental shift already under way in American culture. In offering an analysis designed to steer the church toward greater faithfulness touching its younger members (those carrying this shift), Seel balances his very real warning with an ultimate outlook that remains warm and hopeful.

Timely, even prescient, Seel's volume is an important resource that repays careful reading. Destined to provoke questions and already producing some disagreement, *The New Copernicans* is neither a biblical-theological reflection nor a blueprint demanding uniform implementation. It is, however, a sustained plea to take stock of where we are and to reconsider how we misperceive, minister to, and invite into ministry the millennial generation. Serious in tone and sincere in its aims, Christ-professing millennials struggling with feeling understood and older readers desiring to understand present and coming generations both stand to benefit from Seel's research. Most important of all, *The New Copernicans* is a critical read for those presently in church leadership wrestling with marked cultural change and turning over leadership to those who inhabit the world differently and who express their Christianity in ways still taking shape.

Respected sociologist, James Davidson Hunter, refers to Seel's work as the kind of careful listening that has been missing to date and as providing important insights into a massive generational shift. Delineating the contours of the coming shift and current responses to it, closely examining the way millennials see reality and what this means for the church if it is to retain and benefit from the coming generation, *The New Copernicans* lands amid disquieting statistics of Christian decline and significant debate over the transference of leadership to millennials and post-millennials.

Without necessarily agreeing with everything, and with my own shortlist of questions and clarifications to pursue, nonetheless I have already benefited immensely from this volume and am glad to recommend it to others. I am also glad for the recent opportunity I had to actually pose several questions and clarifications to Seel, and I thank him for his generous willingness to allow our back and forth to be shared here with readers of *Critique*.

Mark Ryan: Having read *The New Copernicans* multiple times and having sat with it for some months since its release earlier this year, I have come to characterize this work as both a labor of love and as an ultimately encouraging volume. That said, you do introduce *The New Copernicans* by way of referencing the Titanic and by issuing a pan-pan alert! You also express up front that the church itself is creating the growth of the unchurched, and what we are doing to reach the next generation is not working. Is the situation facing the evangelical church really that concerning? Are we really mishandling our moment in time and the next generation so poorly? And what, at root, are we failing to see?

John Seel: Social scientists need to be careful in predicting the future. Moreover, there is a rhetorical danger in crying "Wolf, wolf." This book was written in October of 2016. Since then the evangelical church has had to deal with the fallout from its alignment with the Trump administration. Historian John Fea's book, *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump*, tells this story. Recently evangelical leaders met at the National Press Club to discuss, "Donald Trump and the Moral Collapse of American Evangelicalism." Dr. Rob Schenck, the president of the Dietrich Bonheoffer Institute, was hosting the event. Perhaps there are parallels between our current cultural accommodation and the Weimar Republic. In addition, the full weight of the #MeToo movement has not fully impacted the wider evangelical church, though the scandals at Willow Creek and Southwestern Seminary are at best cautionary tales. In the public mind, "complementarity" is being equated with misogyny, and often for good reasons. And finally, after the book was published the Pinetop Foundation released its report, "The Great Opportunity: The American Church in

2050." It describes a "pivotal moment in the life of the American church," with the largest and fastest numerical shift in negative religious affiliation in the history of this country. And they say that they are understating the problem. So I actually believe that the problem is far worse than I describe and that the existential crisis will come sooner than I suggest. Christian colleges and seminaries may be first to feel the full impact of these changes because they work so closely with and are dependent upon the coming generation. So to stay within the metaphor used in the book, there are more icebergs looming just ahead and they are closer than anticipated.

As I state in the book, the Titanic was not sunk because of the icebergs, but because of the captain's reaction to them. If the ship had steamed directly into the iceberg it would have caused a huge crash with probable loss of life, but it would not have sunk the ship. By turning sharply, the iceberg ripped through five watertight compartments thereby dooming the ship. I fear the same for the evangelical church. Under pressure they are apt to take draconian steps—in effect, doubling down on the past—that will further alienate the coming generation and make things far worse for the church, all this in spite of good intentions. Steps taken at Inter-Varsity (sexuality statement), American Bible Society (statement of faith), and Cedarville University (Philippians 4:8 policy) are all early examples of such doubling down. We will see more. Blind to our cultural moment, evangelical leaders are reacting in ways that are very likely to doom American institutional evangelicalism. We might even see a revival in mainline churches (ELCA, RCA, PCUSA, etc.), which is something evangelical hubris has not been willing to admit. So I'd say the analysis in my book is highly constrained.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL HUMILITY IS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT I AM NOT GOD AND THAT AN ACCEPTANCE OF CONTINGENCY IS A CORRELATIVE TO MY STATUS AS A CREATURE.

MR: In speaking of this 'frame shift' that evangelical churches are facing, you boldly suggest that the new way of processing reality that today's (and coming) generations are carrying is not only different *but also better*. Indeed you say that it will make the church more like Jesus. What are the broad contours of this 'frame shift' and how might embracing such change serve our millennial church members and strengthen the church as a whole as it pursues Christlikeness?

JS: Spiritually-oriented millennials or "new Copernicans" are the first post-Enlightenment and post-secular generational cohort. In the spirit of Lesslie Newbigin's missiological critique of the Western church, millennials are calling attention to the evangelical churches' 300-year accommodation to the Enlightenment. What is being suggested in my book is not an uncritical accommodation to a millennial

HERE NEW COPERNICANS MORE HONESTLY EMBRACE THAT ALL BELIEF IS A SIMULTANEOUS MIXTURE OF FAITH AND DOUBT.

frame, which is the instinctive pattern of liberalism, but a renewed self-awareness of our current accommodation to the Enlightenment so that we are called back to an ancient faith so as to be better prepared for post-Christian missional opportunity. We need to go back in order to go forward. This is the same argument being made elsewhere by James K.A. Smith.

In terms of the sensibilities of their frame, new Copernicans are more incarnational, Trinitarian, aspirational, communal, relational, mystical, and revolutionary. I ask, "Who does that sound like?" They may not have the right software, but they have an improved operating system.

THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IS UNAWARE OF HOW MUCH OF ITS THEOLOGICAL FRAME HAS BEEN SHAPED BY THE ENLIGHTENMENT—WHERE COGNITIVE ABSTRACTIONS DOMINATE, WHERE EITHER/OR THINKING IS NECESSITATED, WHERE SUPERFICIAL BELIEF IS INEVITABLE, AND PHARISAICAL JUDGMENT THE CONSEQUENCE. MILLENNIALS ARE POINTING TO A BETTER WAY—A WAY THAT IS MORE LIKE JESUS.

MR: One of the ways you describe millennials is as 'seekers' (or 'explorers'), as opposed to 'dwellers,' with the difference being one of open mindedness and of a continued searching for answers versus those who are happy where they have landed and who feel they have reached the truth. Given the typical evangelical quest for certainty and the prizing of conviction, how is this more open mindset beneficial and not unsettling? What prevents openness or the embrace of an epistemological humility from sliding into skepticism or relativism?

JS: An open perspective and attitude toward truth and conviction, is not quite the same thing as "open mindedness" as in I'm open to believe everything. It means that there is an honest self-reflectiveness about my beliefs and convictions:
1) Reality is more complex than I can understand,
2) I could be wrong, and
3) There is much that I could learn from you.

The typical evangelical "quest for certainty and the prizing of conviction" is symptomatic of an Enlightenment framing of faith as a cognitive exercise of belief. If faith is understood in contrast in relational categories, then other words dominate such as trust, reliance, and faithfulness. Philosophically, giving up of foundationalism does not automatically lead to skepticism or relativism, but can lead also to critical realism. Epistemological humility is an acknowledgement that I am not God and that an acceptance of contingency is a correlative to my status as a creature. An open attitude toward truth does not mean that I don't have convictions that I hold, even strongly, but that my attitude toward my beliefs is more aware of the human complexities in all belief—partial, mixed motives, socially conditioned, and the like. Here new Copernicans more honestly embrace that all belief is a simultaneous mixture of faith and doubt. Here the postmodern critique of modernist objectivism is worth following. I'm aware that this shift feels threatening to older evangelicals, but it is also more human and honest in the end.

Let's put the point bluntly, "How do we hold to the faith once received without the Enlightenment?" The answer is going to be found in the practice of the ancient church and its priority for engaging the imagination through liturgy, worship, community, art, music, and experience. This is what James K.A. Smith has been advocating in his "cultural liturgies" volumes. Frames are secured through the imagination. The imagination or intuition is not subjectivism, but an alternate way of knowing as in Pascal's "the heart has its reasons of which reason itself does not know." Lewis adds, "All truth is first won through metaphor," and later, "the imagination is the organ of meaning and reason the organ of truth." We clearly need both, but when we start with reason it becomes hegemonic; the imagination is negated in a manner that is intellectually crippling. This is the thesis of neuroscientist Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and his Emissary*. Sadly, just at the time when the church is most in need of imaginative apologetics, its weakness in this aspect of its faith and practice is being exposed. Where are the new Tolkiens and Dysons who can lead contemporary modern followers of Norse myths, Lewis'

favorites (as in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*), from myths to myths that actually happened? Evangelical pastors are ill equipped to move people from Joseph Campbell to Jesus Christ. Handing out updated versions of Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* is not going to do the trick. The task is first one of imagination not reason, of myth not fact, of addition not subtraction. In most seminaries, just the talk of myth or Jungian collective unconscious is enough to freak them out. C.S. Lewis has a great deal to say to us today. If he were still here, he would be right in the midst of these discussions.

MR: You rightly note that those of us who believe in absolute truth, or what the late Francis Schaeffer termed "True Truth," struggle with the millennial penchant for greater openness and tend to hear relativism rather than humility. As a non-millennial, how might you help others of us resist this tendency and to better value millennial openness and their more provisional orientation toward what we deem true?

JS: Millennials are not opposed to truth as much as how truth is framed. They remain interested in securing an accurate assessment of reality and human nature. While they may not assume confidence in past sources of authority and may approach them with learned skepticism, they are not opposed to truth, particularly if it is framed in a humble manner and able to be appropriated phenomenologically and existentially. This is more in keeping with "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

It is the insecure bully who on the playground insists loudly that it is their way or the highway. In contrast, Francis Schaeffer's approach was to encourage others to go and live like hell and come back and tell me how *that* worked. Or as Dallas Willard states, "Anyone who can find a better way than Jesus, he would be the first to tell you to take it." We have not heard that stated from a church pulpit in some time!

We need to learn again that reality is Trinitarian, by which we mean fundamentally relational. We need to return to such an understanding of faith. Jesus did not say, here is a short list of things that must be believed in order to qualify for heaven and not hell. No, he said, "Follow me," which is an open-ended invitation to pilgrimage. We need to abandon Gnostic Scantron-thinking, which becomes a self-serving "hall of mirrors." The evangelical church is unaware of how much of its theological frame has been shaped by the Enlightenment—where cognitive abstractions dominate, where either/or thinking is necessitated, where superficial belief is inevitable, and Pharisaical judgment the consequence. Millennials are pointing to a better way—a way that is more like Jesus.

WE TEACH THE BIBLE THROUGH AN ENLIGHTENMENT LENS: OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, AND APPLICATION OR HEAD, HEART, AND HAND. IN FACT, WE LEARN BEST IN JUST THE REVERSE ORDER: HAND, HEART, AND HEAD. CONTEMPORARY NEUROSCIENCE HAS CRITIQUED THIS ENLIGHTENMENT FALLACY.

MR: Elsewhere, and as a further aspect of your describing millennials, you highlight this generation's prioritizing of human connection and new experience over theoretical engagement (e.g. book learning and abstractions). You speak of this sensibility as highly incarnational and of much of modern day evangelicalism as having lost this embodied incarnational feel—which in turn is to lose the reality and scope of Christ's work. While you clearly describe the former (the experiential turn among millennials), might you further flesh out the latter (what you mean by evangelicalism's loss of reality and the scope of Christ's work)?

JS: It is well known that being a seminarian is usually bad for one's spiritual walk with Christ. Some seminaries have identified this as a problem and have taken steps to address it. When we treat a subject abstractly, we hold it at arms length, with the assumption that some how we can control the subject. Moreover, when we use left-brain thinking on the subject, we break it down into its smaller parts, dissecting the truth in a way that makes it much harder to see it as a whole, much less experience it as a lived reality. If we were to apply this way of processing reality to our marriages, it would not make us better husbands or wives. We might

even be able to talk a good game, but we'd continue to be weak on authentic connection. When Jesus presented the gospel or good news, it was about the immediate availability of the kingdom of God: the telos of indwelling unity in Christ through his Holy Spirit, "living water" to the Samaritan woman, "eternal life" to Nicodemus both of which are available now to everyone who believes. The Gnostic strain in evangelicalism, particularly Reformed evangelicalism, is well documented and must be resisted. Jamie Smith's emphasis that we are lovers before we are thinkers gets at this problem. We teach the Bible through an Enlightenment lens: observation, interpretation, and application or head, heart, and hand. In fact, we learn best in just the reverse order: hand, heart, and head. Contemporary neuroscience has critiqued this Enlightenment fallacy.

MR: Shifting toward engaging millennials within the church and effectively reaching millennials without, you advocate no specific recipe or particular program but call us toward becoming 'a certain kind of person.' Whereas you list a few examples—some of whom are likely to reassure fellow evangelicals, others of whom are likely to startle them—whom else might you point to as an exemplar? And what other qualities do you include as essential to your list of gentleness, flexibility, patience, winsomeness, and openness?

JS: The audience of this book is both older evangelical church leaders and spiritually disenchanted millennials. Each will react differently to the people I quote. I am trying to hold ground between Tim Keller and Rob Bell. There are many within the "evolving faith" movement that readily identify with the questions Rob Bell is asking but may not want to leave the church or abandon their love of Jesus. To these wanders one might need to mention Templeton, Rohr, and the Dalai Lama, just as Francis Schaeffer in his day mentioned Sartre, Camus, Antonioni, and Bergman. To these folks *The Tao of Pooh*, *Beyond Religion*, and *Velvet Elvis* may be useful starting points in their spiritual journeys. In an evangelical politically correct world, one can't quote a theologically accurate statement by Rob Bell without being assumed a heretic. For this association one reviewer calls my book "insidiously dangerous." This evangelical political correctness is not particularly a game I'm willing to play, and therefore I will take the potential misunderstanding as a badge of honor.

There are common characteristics of those who I believe are most effective in reaching the next generation—characteristics to which I aspire but have in no sense reached. As Brené Brown writes, the doorway is vulnerability. This is the opposite of those who would make the "uncertain, certain and the imperfect, perfect." These are folks who are gentle, inclusive, loving, mystical, spiritual, and self-aware. Pope Francis is this way, as was, I imagine, C.S. Lewis. NPR's Krista Tippett and novelist Anne Lamont are this kind of person. Francis Schaeffer is more of a mixed bag, as early Schaeffer—pre-film—was more this way, but late Schaeffer became more binary and rigid. Early Schaeffer was cultural and European, whereas late Schaeffer was political and American. I was Francis Schaeffer's driver in Switzerland prior to the film and this was the kind of empathetic person I knew. But I also take Frank Schaeffer's critique of his father more seriously now, as I see Frank as an exemplar of the new Copernican ethos:

MY DESIRE IS THAT CHURCH LEADERS MY AGE BEGIN RECOGNIZING THAT WHAT THEY ARE DOING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IS NOT WORKING AND THAT THEY NEED TO BEGIN TO LISTEN CLOSELY AND WITH A GROWING APPRECIATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, MILLENNIALS NEED TO EMBRACE A SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE AND GAIN CONFIDENCE IN THE WISDOM OF THEIR OWN VOICE AND PERSPECTIVE. THEY HAVE BEEN BEAT UP AND PUT DOWN FOR TOO LONG. THEIR TIME IS NOW AND IS LONG OVERDUE. NEW COPERNICANS ARE NOT ONLY THE MISSIONAL FRONT LINES OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH, BUT THEY ARE ALSO THE SOLUTION TO ITS GROWING CULTURAL IRRELEVANCE.

Why I Am an Atheist Who Believes in God.

Elder Porphyrios, a Greek Orthodox monk, observed that one needs to be a poet before one can become a Christian: "Whoever wants to become a Christian must first become a poet." One needs to be able to connect with the right-brain moral imagination. Porphyrios goes on to say in the next sentence that one becomes a poet through suffering. Many of these new Copernican spiritual exemplars are men and women who have had broken-world-experiences. They walk now with a limp. They live in the midst of vulnerability. This I take is a mark of their greatness.

MR: Further on in your outlining of responses the church needs to take up, you speak of providing safe places for honest conversation, of building relationships before demanding creedal affirmation, of agenda-free loving and listening. An impediment to achieving this, however, is what you describe as the church's specializing in instrumental relationships and not knowing how to be in relationship without an agenda. From your study and relating with millennials, how do we learn to be in relationship without agenda? And how do we do this with integrity when part of our interest and desire might be evangelistic?

JS: We think first in pictures. If we think of conversion as a long slow pilgrimage rather than an immediate light switch ("on/off"), we'll be in a position to handle people much more effectively. Lewis' own spiritual journey from secular atheism to pantheistic mysticism to Christian theism took over fifteen years. Life is a movie, not a snapshot.

Millennials are very sensitive to being used or hustled. Some of our evangelistic training serves to encourage us to become emotionally unhealthy people. In the first twelve verses of Matthew 7, Jesus deals with the deadly way we try to "manage or control those closest to us by blaming and condemning them and by forcing upon them our 'wonderful solutions' for their problems." Jesus warning applies to evangelism, "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs." The antidote is "gentle as doves and wise as serpents." In general, if people get defensive in your presence or because of something you say, you're doing something wrong. See my longer article on this point in *Critique* 2016:3: "Pilgrim's Stories: Evangelism is a Dirty Word."

MR: For you, and now that *The New Copernicans* has been out for some months and is starting to be read and reflected upon, what is that you most wish for current evangelical leaders to take away from your book? And what is it that you most wish millennials to hear and know as they contemplate their future in relation to the church?

JS: My desire is that church leaders my age begin recognizing that what they are doing with young people is not working and that they need to begin to listen closely and with a growing appreciation. On the other hand, millennials need to embrace a spiritual pilgrimage and gain confidence in the wisdom of their own voice and perspective. They have been beat up and put down for too long. Their time is now and is long overdue. New Copernicans are not only the missional front lines of the American church, but they are also the solution to its growing cultural irrelevance.

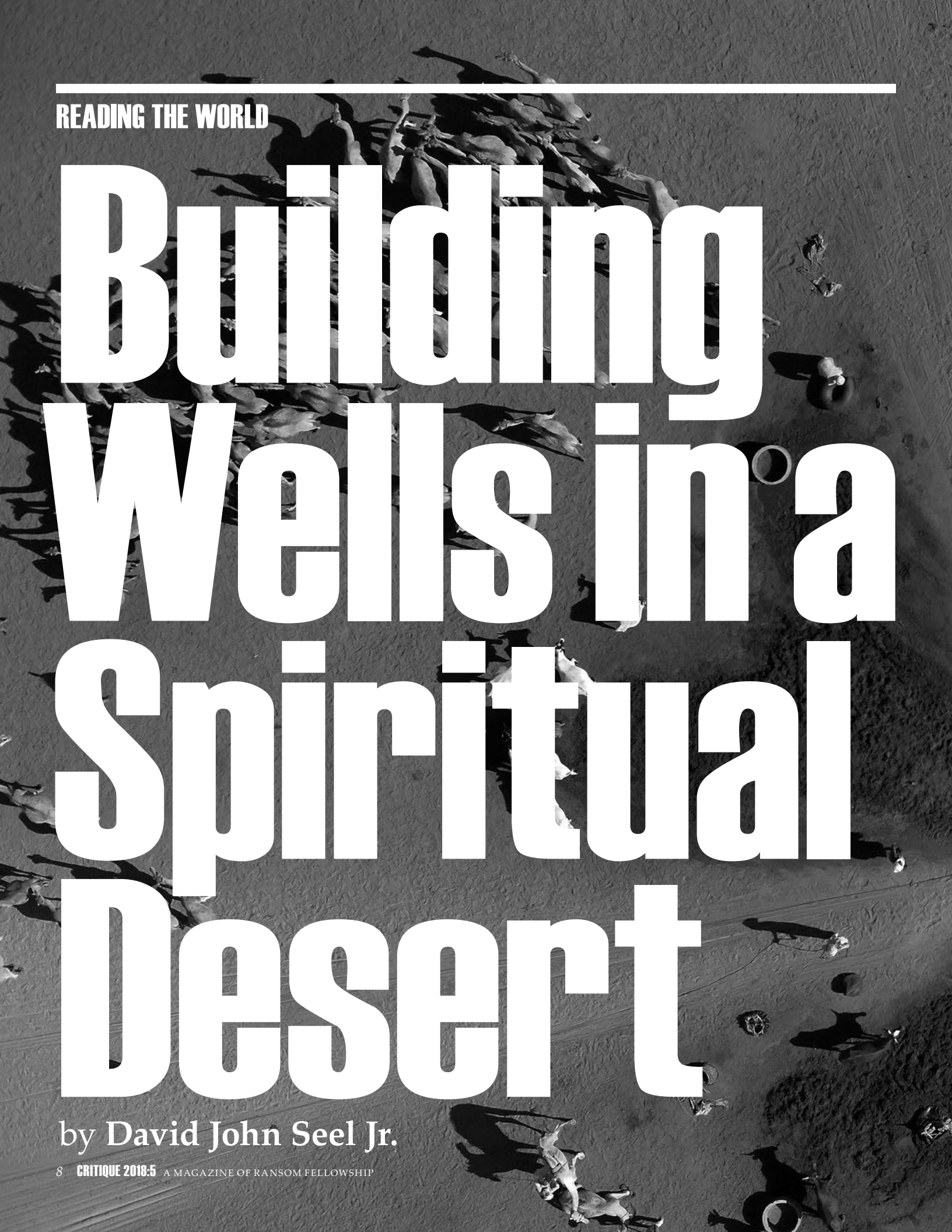
MR: I am thankful to Dr. John Seel for his willingness to allow our back and forth to be shared here, and I trust many of you will take time to read and grapple with *The New Copernicans: Millennials and the Survival of the Church.* ■

***Mark P. Ryan** is director of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute and adjunct professor of religion and culture, Covenant Theological Seminary.*

Book recommended: The New Copernicans: Millennials and the Survival of the Church *by David John Seel Jr. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 205 pages + notes.*

Building Wells in a Spiritual Desert

by **David John Seel Jr.**



RANCHERS HAVE A CHOICE: BUILD FENCES OR DIG WELLS. WELLS ARE THE BETTER CHOICE.

In the Australian outback there are two main methods of keeping cattle on a ranch. One is to build a fence around the perimeter of the ranch. The other is to dig a well in the center of the ranch. The first approach operates on the basis of forced exclusion. The second works on the basis of magnetic attraction, or compelling inclusion. If we establish organizations that are centered on a life-giving well, that touches a universal longing, that is based on an accurate understanding of the gospel, then it will be compelling to the emerging generation that is too often done with church. We need to build organizations around the dynamics of a life-giving well. Drawing others toward life is far better than establishing barriers of arbitrary exclusion. The first is an expression of embodied love and makes relationships central. Church leaders face the same choice.

If the nature of reality is essentially spiritual and relational (read Trinitarian) then these dynamics of love are central.[1] Hindu physician Deepak Chopra asks, "Are our genes verbs or nouns?" He continues, "There are no nouns in the universe. Everything is a relationship. Nouns are conventions of language. The universe is more music than words. The universe is a verb, a process of ceaseless activity."[2]

The wisdom here misses an essential point. The godhead as Trinity is uniquely both noun and verb. There is ceaseless relational activity of love within the godhead, but it stands over against creation as a noun, or better The Noun. All else is a verb to God's nounness. Paul states in Athens, "For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). He adds in Colossians: "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (1:17). When we lose sight of the relational aspect of reality and noun other aspects of reality, we are inclined to both reductionism and idolatry. The tendency of the Enlightenment has been to make everything a noun and lose the relational dynamic of reality and faith. In particular, it has tended to make the autonomous individual the main noun of reality. This gets reality backwards. Jesus' prayer that "they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11) is to "baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19) or in the words of Dallas Willard, "immerse them together in the presence of the Trinity." We are to enter into the verbness of reality, by correctly relating to our Direct Object, God the Trinity. This is where we find exclusive human flourishing. Jesus' promise is this, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remains in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

GOSPEL AS WELL

The gospel is to be put at the center of our institutions. This gospel of the "immediate availability of the kingdom of heaven," calls one to enter into an ongoing dynamic relationship with the Trinity. It is an invitation to enter into love at the center of reality.

Jesus did not say, here is a short list of the things that must be believed in order to qualify for heaven and not hell. No, he said, "Follow me," which is an open-ended invitation to pilgrimage. Reggie McNeal writes, "When we reflect on Jesus' call to discipleship, we remember that it was an invitation to choose a direction—'follow me'—and not a command to adopt a doctrinal manifesto or align with a set of religious rites."[3]

For some time now the American church has had a confused understanding of the gospel. Dallas Willard writes, "We have been through a period when the dominant theology had nothing to do with discipleship [read ongoing apprenticeship to Jesus]. It had to do with proper belief, with God seeing to it that individuals didn't go to the bad place, but the good place."[4] He expands: "John 17:3 is one of the most important verses to understand: 'And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' Now, this knowing is not doctrinal knowledge; it's a living interaction with God, with his Son, and with his Spirit."[5] What was Jesus' gospel? "His gospel was the availability of life in the kingdom of the heavens, or the kingdom of God, now.... Jesus is about bringing the life of the kingdom of God into my life now and making me a citizen of that kingdom."[6]

The evangelical church has been unaware of how much of its theological frame has been shaped by the Enlightenment—where cognitive abstractions dominate, where either/or thinking is necessitated, where superficial belief is inevitable, and Pharisaical judgment the consequence. We have unexpectedly fallen into the theological framework of Scantron multiple-choice thinking not loving worship.[7] To the Pharisees Jesus warned, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). "Discipleship" is simply the gospel understood relationally as an ongoing posture of trust and reliance in an ongoing spiritual journey.

Such a relationally framed and mystically empowered gospel is much more attractive to young people today.

Faith is a relationship: discipleship a journey and love its overt dynamic. Rob Bell writes, "I don't follow Jesus because I think Christianity is the best religion. I follow Jesus because he leads me into ultimate reality. He teaches me to live in tune with how reality is."[8]

FUZZY SET LOGIC

Such an understanding of reality is captured beautifully in "fuzzy set theory." In 1965 Lotfi Zadeh, a mathematician and artificial intelligence researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, published a paper on "fuzzy set theory." Fuzzy logic is not logic that is fuzzy, but logic that is used to describe all things that admit to degrees—like love and relationships. Fuzzy logic reflects how people think. It attempts to model human decision-making and common sense. As a result, it points to a more human, intelligent system. Fuzzy logic is multi-valued. It deals with degrees of membership and degrees of truth and degrees of belief and degrees of love. It bypasses the crisp black and white membership of the classical binary logic.[9]

If one understands coming to faith as a dynamic process, a journey of becoming, and a growing relationship, then fuzzy logic fits far better than Boolean logic. Boolean logic is a form of algebra in which all values are reduced to either TRUE or FALSE. Boolean logic is especially important for computer science because it fits nicely with the binary numbering system, in which each bit has a value of either 1 or 0. However, if one understands that my commitment to truth is always partial and open to correction such that doubt and belief are implicit dual aspects of faith, then fuzzy logic fits far better than notions that suggest a fixed absolute certainty. In short, fuzzy logic is new Copernican thinking.

Fuzzy logic is a better description of reality and is reflective of the framing of a growing number of young people. Consequently, the institutional challenge is how does one institutionalize an acceptance of fuzzy logic in an organization? This is perhaps best done through centered-set thinking.

The center of the gospel is *the availability of the resources of heaven for all*. The cross is the means to this why, but is not the specific why: the availability of an ongoing empowering relationship with the resurrected Christ. Jesus' main message was "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mark 1:15), by which he meant there is another reality that you can mystically appropriate that will both make sense of your life and empower you in keeping with how it was originally designed. This is the "good life" to which we are called. This is the way reality is supposed to work. Moreover, it's the only way for humans to thrive. Here is the promise: you can be personally aligned with an empowering spiritual reality that will make you fully human. Salvation is not designed to make you an angel, only human—but fully so.

This dynamic of our dependence on another world can be seen all around us. It is not uniquely spiritual. It is a fact of reality that everything living derives its life from an environment that is *other than* and *larger than* its own. When the right environment is chosen and consistently depended upon, an organism thrives. A hosta plant, for example, derives its life from the sun and soil, something other than the hosta plant itself. But a hosta plant cannot take direct sun and thrive. It must be placed in a shaded environment for which it is best suited. People are no different. French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin observed the same when he remarked, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings having a human experience." By this he meant that our true home and source of our life is a larger spiritual reality—this available *kingdom of heaven*. We can step into the reality of heaven now. This gospel reminds us that reality is a thin place, as the Celtic Christians celebrated. Another world gives this world meaning, flavor, color, and potential. We are dependent on another world, and from it we derive our meaning and life.

Dallas Willard clarifies this difference. "What is my gospel? What's my central message? Is my message one that pulls people into discipleship? Now again, I don't want to be critical, but frankly, most people don't ask this question of themselves. Instead they talk about an arrangement made by God through Christ that involved his death on the cross. That is very important to understand, but ask yourself, 'Is that the gospel?' When we present the gospel through our life and our teaching of what Jesus preached, as life now available in the kingdom of God, we see people respond."[10] By making the gospel a noun rather than a verb, we lose sight of its relational character and its power to transform. This is the compelling center of the gospel and should be the center of all Christian organizations.

CENTER SET LOGIC

A center set approach does not place attention on the fence, but on the well. It highlights the availability of the well for all. The only difference between people is their closeness to the center and their

directionality toward the center. Some are closer to the center; some are further away. Some are moving toward it by their life choices; some are moving away. Those moving toward the center define the set of those who are beginning to follow Jesus.

Directionality and *relational dynamic* become the important metrics for inclusion. The set focuses upon the center, and membership emerges when the center and the movement of the objects toward it are clarified. Centered-set organizations accept and acknowledge a variation within the category. There is no uniformity within the category as these are by definition dynamic sets. One way to visualize a centered set is as a magnetic field, in which particles are in motion. Electrons are drawn toward the magnetic poles. The question then becomes whether our center has an adequate magnetic force. Is our center compelling?

In a centered set a "Christian" would be defined as one who is in a relationship with Jesus. The questions are dynamic and relational: to what extent are there personal or institutional reliance, trust, and dependence on God? How is God becoming more and more a priority in one's life or in the institution's culture? We have less need to focus on doctrinal boundaries and a greater need to point people to the center and to highlight the life-giving attractiveness of the center. We recognize and expect that there will be variation among Christians in terms of their relationship to the center. A center set expects conversion, namely a turning toward Christ and growth in the dynamics of one's ongoing relationship with Him. There is a leaving of one's nets to follow Jesus—but this necessitates more than the belief in a list of doctrinal propositions or saying the words of a given prayer.

The obvious benefit of centered-set organizations is that they disavow cheap grace. It positions faith as a relational journey, not an intellectual light switch—"on/off." Paul Hiebert, the missiologist who has done the most work on centered-set thinking writes, "A centered-set approach to defining 'Christian' corresponds more closely to what we see happening in missions and church growth. It also seems to correspond more closely with the Hebraic view of reality."[11] This Hebraic view of reality is decidedly pre-Enlightenment. Faith is here understood as an ongoing and growing relationship where God becomes more and more central to all of one's life.

BOUNDED SET LOGIC

This is not how the Enlightenment handles belief and conversion, for it does not admit to degrees or a continuum. This is typical of bounded set organizations and the fences they build. Here are the four characteristics of a bounded set organization.

1. Listing the essential characteristics that an object must have to be within the set creates the category. So, when listening to a person's testimony, we approach it with a theological and experiential check list: conversion experience, recognition of sin, recognition of Christ's work on the cross, sinner's prayer, heart "strangely warmed," etc.
2. The category is defined by a clear boundary. Most of the effort in defining the category is spent on defining and maintaining the boundary—and this is mostly done through clarifying theological propositions or cognitive knowledge.
3. The objects within a bounded set are uniform in their essential characteristics. There is no room for variation within the structuring category, when positions are characterized in an either/or frame. One is never a

little bit pregnant. Shades of grey are not accepted.

4. Bounded sets are static sets. Once an object has been defined as within the set, there is no categorical change in its status. This is not a category that anticipates growth or change.

What does it mean to be a Christian within a bounded set? A clear distinction between "Christian" and "non-Christian" is essential. There is no place in between; no room for a relational continuum. Moreover, we view all "Christians" as essentially the same, and conversion as a light switch in typical Boolean logic. Evangelism is about getting people into the right category, by throwing the switch to the "on" position usually through a simple cognitive affirmation of belief, as in "the sinner's prayer." While this tends to be the norm within American evangelical thinking, it is an inadequate description of the gospel and a faulty assessment of human nature and experience. What we have here is Enlightenment overlay on the gospel that makes it in practice a bounded set. This way of thinking is largely rejected by contemporary young people. This creates an opportunity for those who want to reconnect with the ancient gospel—pre-Enlightenment—in order to position themselves for effective future spiritual influence—post-Enlightenment.[12]

A belief-oriented, behaviorally focused bounded set approach leads to legalism. In contrast, we need today a gospel-focused approach that pulls people toward God because they are so ravished by Christ that they want life within his kingdom. This was the approach the early Celtic Christians took among the Druid pagans, when they adopted an approach of treating the unconverted as "belonging before believing."[13] Their focus was on strengthening the reality of God's real presence in the midst of the Druids that was spiritually compelling.

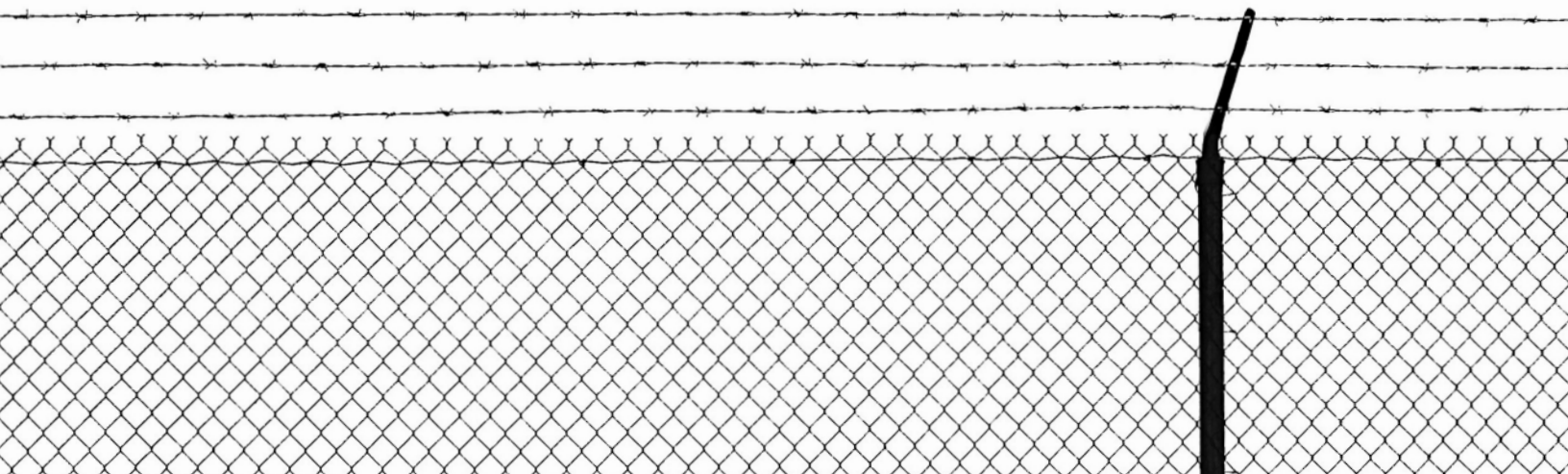
The new Copernican ethos rejects bounded-set thinking.[14] Reality and relationships are too complex and overlapping to work effectively within neatly defined boxes. As the first post-Enlightenment and post-secular generational cohort, new Copernicans reject the premise of Boolean logic as an adequate description of the complex nature of reality and the messiness of relationships. However, they are attracted to authentic spirituality when it is offered with a strong sense of meaning. This generation demands that organizations "start with why."[15] They need a clearly marked spiritual well.

We need organizations that are animated by longing, not fear, by a spirit of inclusion, not exclusion. It is notable that The Colossian Forum's annual conference this year is themed "Moving from Fear to Hope." This is exactly the right spirit. Young people want to give themselves to something larger than themselves that makes the world a better place, empowers them with the resources for all of life, and helps them make sense of life's complexities. They don't want simple reductionism or shaming rejection. However, they long for genuine spiritual connection that makes sense of their cross-pressured lives.

We affirm then that fuzzy logic is more accurate, human, and spiritually honest. The shift from bounded set to fuzzy set is the shift from a closed to an open perspective on reality, from dweller to explorer, from static to dynamic, from Enlightenment to post-Enlightenment thinking.

THE CHARACTER OF THE WELL: GOSPEL + VOCATION + SHALOM

What is the content of a center-set organization? If an organization is Christian in character and mission then five characteristics need to be uniformly



present in its metaphorical well. It must be gospel-centered, transcendent, relational, dynamic, and compelling.

If an organization is seeking in some sense to be Christian in its mission, then it is essential that at its core the main thing must remain the main thing, namely the gospel must be central. The gospel understood as the immediate availability to everyone, of the resources of the kingdom of heaven, provides a dynamic center to individual and institutional life. It makes the gospel a verb as in "follow me."

The second thing that this understanding of the gospel provides is an immediate focus on transcendence. The resources of the kingdom are an incarnational reality: God comes to earth. God is everywhere, but God is not intrinsic to reality, which is the error of pantheism. Consequently, the movement of faith is "up and out" not "down and in."[16] This is worship not navel gazing. Ironically, many who move to a more open theological stance typically lose any sense of transcendence as talk of the "kingdom of God" becomes associated with political progressivism. This has been the consistent error of mainline Protestant churches.

Third, this gospel is a call to relationship and the patterns of love. The church as the bride of Christ is a cosmic picture of God's desire to marry us. In this sense, sexuality is a pre-evangelistic picture of God's desire for all mankind.[17] The relational character of reality goes all the way up and all the way down.

Fourth, this gospel is a dynamic process, an invitation to an ongoing spiritual pilgrimage. We assume continual dependence and growth. In this sense, we never actually "arrive" even when we enter into heaven. Love is generative and is never fully consummated. As such the center must be defined as a verb.

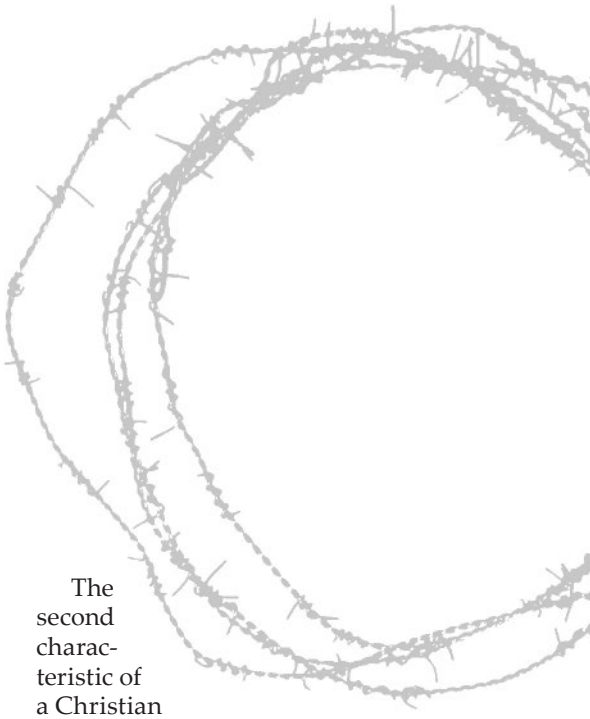
Fifth, this gospel is compelling as it touches our deepest longings for connection. Babies will die without touch. We are hardwired for connection, love, and relationship. It is only in such an environment that human beings thrive. The center must be framed to connect with our deepest desires, which means that it must appeal primarily to the heart and imagination. It must be infused with beauty and the artists' touch.[18]

GOSPEL-CENTERED WELL

So, the institutional center needs to be a verb, centered on the gospel, consciously dependent on the transcendent, relational, and dynamic in character, and broadly compelling to others, particularly those outside of faith. It must be articulated in such a manner that it attracts others with magnetic force. These five characteristics explain the compelling force of Bishop Michael Curry's sermon at the Royal Wedding, "The Power of Love."

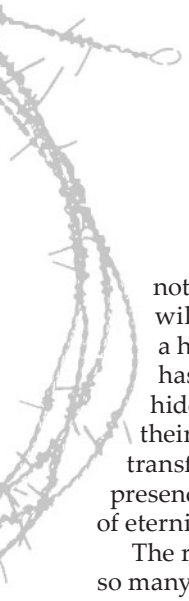
For an institution to have authenticity, it must spiritually "be" such a place. "Being such" an organization enables us to be branded as such. It is less a marketing posture as a spiritual reality. A gospel-centered organization is less about its beliefs about soteriology ("theology dealing with salvation especially as effected by Jesus Christ") and more about the living presence of Christ present in and through the organization. A kingdom organization is not measured by its theology as much as by its spiritual reality: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Spiritual presence must be tangible.

VOCATIONALLY ANIMATED WELL



The second characteristic of a Christian institutional center is an emphasis on vocation or calling.[19] A theology of vocation is the clutch for effective discipleship. The clutch in a car translates the power of the engine to the tires. Likewise, vocation translates the power of the gospel into the real world, converting real presence into shalom. If a kingdom gospel focuses on the availability of resurrection power, calling directs this power toward particular arenas of responsibility and brokenness. We have often distorted the entire purpose of discipleship. Discipleship has more to do with repairing the world through our vocations (the Jewish *tikkun olam*) than doing evangelism to get people to heaven; perhaps its focus is essentially a this-worldly orientation as in "on earth as it is in heaven."

We can approach this problem another way by asking, "What will we be doing in heaven?" Andy Crouch suggests that there is a continuity between *what we will be doing there* and *what we should have been doing here* before heaven: "The most plausible answer, it seems to me, is that our eternal life in God's recreated world will be the fulfillment of what God originally asked us to do: cultivating and creating in full and lasting relationship with our Creator. This time, of course, we will



> not just be tending a garden; we will be sustaining the life of a city, a harmonious human society that has developed all the potentialities hidden in the original creation to their fullest. Culture—redeemed, transformed, and permeated by the presence of God—will be the activity of eternity."[20]

The reason this sounds strange to so many evangelicals is that they have been taught since the Second Great Awakening a truncated "two-chapter gospel," one that focuses on the fall and redemption.[21] This view is not false as much as woefully incomplete... to border on heresy. A full understanding of the gospel is "four-chapters": (1) creation, (2) fall, (3) redemption, and (4) restoration.[22] Al Wolters' summarizes:

> *Redemption is re-creation. If we look at this more closely, we can see that this basic affirmation really involves three fundamental dimensions: the original good creation, the perversion of that creation through sin, and the restoration of that creation in Christ. It is plain how central the doctrine of creation becomes in such a view, since the whole point of salvation is then to salvage a sin-disrupted creation.*[23]

He adds, "The restoration in Christ of creation and the coming of the kingdom of God are one and the same."[24]

Such a two-chapter gospel makes the purpose of discipleship narrowly individualistic and mostly reduced to a personal relationship marked by a conversion experience. It is certainly this, but it is also to be much more. The gospel involves much more than getting into heaven; it's about getting heaven into us. It's about appropriating the resources of heaven in order to work toward the restoration of all things to God's original intent at creation. N.T. Wright adds, "The whole point of Jesus' work was to bring heaven to earth and join them together forever, to bring God's future into the present and make it stick there."[25]

To adopt a truncated gospel, what Dallas Willard calls the "gospel of sin management," is to narrow the mission of the church and to invariably distort cultural formation away from the restoration of human flourishing or *shalom* to a pretext for individual proclamation.[26] Art and music no longer have meaning as intrinsic forms of beauty, but only as vehicles for proclamation. In such a manner, the entire cultural task is distorted. To get this wrong is to change the mission of the church. Here is a summary of the four-chapter mission of the church and how we need to reconceptualize our vocation within God's kingdom purposes:

> *We work within our particular callings in order to understand God's good creation and the ways that sin has distorted it so that, in Christ's power, we may bring healing to persons and the created order and as God's image-bearer, exercise responsible authority in our task of cultivating the sphere of our particular calling to the end that all people and all things may joyfully acknowledge and serve their Creator and King.*[27]

We must learn to view the cross through the lens of creation, our re-commissioning in the light of our original mandate, salvation as resurrection power realized to the end that creation is healed. Calling is the particular clutch that puts all in motion for an individual or institution. In a college curriculum such a kingdom calling perspective should be infused in every academic discipline. Willard warns Christian academics, "Until institutions of Christian higher education and their faculties break out of the posture that holds genuine knowledge to be secular, and until they carry out their task of developing and conveying distinctively Christian knowledge—in the free, open, and rational manner that characterizes the life of the mind and of scholarship at its ideal best—those institutions will, despite all appearances, be a primary *hindrance* to the 'Jesus project' on earth."[28] The study of creation must be placed in a kingdom perspective.

Reality is not designed to flourish without human input. Nor can companies achieve a vibrant functioning community without constructive management. Without human input the forces of social entropy create fragmentation and decay.

Scientists have conjectured, in a TV series "Life After People," what would happen to civilization if nature were left on its own?[29] Serious urban blight begins to occur within two days. Our task is not to preserve "sustainability," a hands-off policy with the goal of maintaining an unkempt wilderness, but rather to foster "vitality," through a thoughtful active investment of ourselves in nature's rich inherent potential—a weeded garden in full bloom, a landscaped city filled with music and art. That water is "untouched by human hands," as the Fuji brand exclaims, does not necessarily make it better. The flourishing of nature to achieve its full potential necessarily requires human input. This is how reality is designed to function.

This is a delegated task, for which we are accountable both to God and creation. A measure of our failure is heard in creation's groaning. "For the

creation was subject to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8:20–21). One day, God's "good creation" will be restored as it was intended. The Edenic Garden will be restored as a bustling city, a New Jerusalem. Shalom—universal flourishing and wholeness—will be realized by and in all things. Our work in our own small spheres of responsibility is to contribute to this larger enterprise of making God's kingdom visible on earth as it is in heaven. Hunter summarizes, "What this means is that where and to the extent we are able, faithful presence commits us to do what we can to create conditions in the structures of social life we inhabit that are conducive to the flourishing of all."[30]

AGENTS OF SHALOM

This leads to the third and final aspect of the proposed center. We are to be agents of shalom. The consequence of our efforts with others, in culture, and in creation should collectively smell like human flourishing. Intuitively, shalom or faithful presence needs no argument. It is humanly self-evident by all.

The measure of this is best seen in an extreme case, when Israel was in exile in Babylon. In this hostile pagan environment, they are called to embed themselves within their surrounding culture and work toward the success of the surrounding pagan institutions. Their metrics of success was the success of their surrounding culture—"for when they flourish, you flourish" (Jeremiah 29:7). There is here no hint of retreat, playing the victim, or self-serving tribalism. As they worked within their individual callings in the power of God to align it with his purposes and design for mankind, the result was peace and human flourishing. The church is to act like assist leaders within an alien culture.[31]

We have the opportunity to participate as ambassadors of reconciliation and agents of shalom until Christ comes again to bring this reconciliation and shalom in its fullness (2 Corinthians 5:20). *We are called to be co-creative creational caretakers in and through our callings.* We are called to a selfless stewardship of all callings, cultures, and creation in a manner that is creative, life affirming, and God honoring. Journalist Ken Myers writes, "Following Christ is a matter first of inner transformation, and then of living faithfully in accord with the order of creation as he made and is redeeming it, in all of our cultural convictions and practices concerning a host of abstractions and concrete realities: food, sex, time, music, film, history, language, technology, family, justice, beauty, agriculture, and community."[32] Collectively, this reliance on the resources of the kingdom of God, expressed through our particular callings, in a manner that fosters shalom, is what is meant by "faithful presence." James Hunter writes, "For the Christian, if there is a possibility for human flourishing in a world such as ours, it begins when God's word of love becomes flesh in us, is embodied in us, is enacted through us and in doing so, a trust is forged between the word spoken and the reality to which it speaks; to the words we speak and the realities to which we, the church, point."[33]

God's real presence in our lives is to be translated into faithful presence within our given sphere of influence. The proof of doing it correctly is that nonbelievers see our public actions as an indispensable benefit to human and social flourishing. Peter writes, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:12). This is not how the contemporary church is typically perceived, because we do not have a compelling center that attracts others.

CONCLUSION

A centered-set Christian institution will focus on the gospel of the availability of the resources of heaven, equip people with a kingdom vocation, and enable faithful presence to be experienced by all inside and outside the church. It will be assumed that the Lord's work in vocation must be done in and through the Lord's power and way. It will be a dynamic center of love and service marked by a humble reliance on the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Membership in the community will be marked by a clear commitment to follow Jesus and an ongoing effort to deepen this relationship. The goal is to create an institution marked by the real presence of Jesus in a genuinely spiritual manner where inclusion, service, humility, sacrifice, and love are the natural unforced fruit. One's response to this when experienced is "This is something I want to be apart of and give my life to."

The challenge of Christian churches, colleges, and parachurch organizations is to realign their center wells in this manner. On the surface, it is a much more difficult task than building fences around doctrinal distinctives. But it is also a task that will make us more like Jesus in the effort. ■

David John Seel Jr. *(University of Maryland) is a cultural-renewal entrepreneur and social-impact consultant with expertise in the dynamics of cultural change. His latest book is* The New Copernicans: Millennials and the Survival of the Church *(2018). He lives with his wife on a historic farm in Pennsylvania and blogs at www.ncconversations.com.*

FOOTNOTES

1 See Rohr, Richard and Mike Morrell. *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (Whitaker, 2016).

2 Chopra, Deepak, "LIVE from The Nantucket Project," AOL Build video, 56:29, September 23, 2016, build.aol.com/video/57e55a845095495a4c595d0.

3 McNeal, Reggie. *Kingdom Come* (Tyndale, 2015), p. 79.

4 Willard, Dallas. *Living in Christ's Presence: Final Words on Heaven and the Kingdom of God* (InterVarsity, 2014), p. 10.

5 Ibid. 20.

6 Ibid. 20, 21.

7 See Enns, Peter. *The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More than Our "Correct" Beliefs* (HarperOne, 2016).

8 Bell, Rob. *Velvet Elvis* (Harper One, 2005), p. 78.

9 Hashim, Siti Zaiton Mohd, "Fuzzy Logic & Fuzzy Sets," https://comp.utm.my/sitizaiton/files/NotaSubjek/Nota%20%20AI%20(1)/Fuzzy1.pdf/.

10 Willard, 20, 21.

11 Hiebert, p. 29. See also Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Context: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Baker, 2009).

12 "A thoughtful engagement with postmodernism will encourage us to look backward. We will see that much that goes under the banner of postmodern philosophy has one eye on ancient and medieval sources and constitutes a significant recovery of pre-modern ways of knowing, being, and doing. Ancient and medieval sources provide a useful counter voice to modernity." Smith, James K.A. Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?, p. 25.

13 Hunter, George G. III. *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West... Again* (Abingdon, 2000), p. 54. "Most people experience faith through relationships, that they encounter the gospel through a community of faith, that becoming a Christian involves a process."

14 See http://www.windriderforum.info/portfolio_page/episode-three-sphere-thinking.

15 Sinek, Simon. *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (Penguin, 2009). "There are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it.... When companies or organizations do not have a clear sense of why their customers are their customers, they tend to rely on a disproportionate number of manipulations to get what they need.... People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

16 Payne, Leanne. *Real Presence: The Christian Worldview of C.S. Lewis as Incarnational Reality* (Baker, 1995).

17 West, Christopher. *Fill These Hearts: God, Sex, and the Universal Longing* (Image, 2012).

18 Smith, James K.A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Baker 2009). On p. 31 he writes, "Many Christian schools, colleges, and universities—particularly in the Protestant tradition—have taken on board a picture of the human person that owes more to modernity and the Enlightenment than it does to the holistic, biblical vision of human persons. In particular, Christian education has absorbed a philosophical anthropology that sees human persons as primarily as thinking things."

19 McNeal, p. 106: "The topic of *vocation* becomes profoundly more important in a Kingdom-centered theology. A church-centered ecclesiology typically focuses on 'the call' as exclusively related to church work, with scant attention paid to the work of God's people in their daily occupations."

20 Crouch, Andy. *Culture-Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (InterVarsity, 2013), p. 173.

21 The rise of revivalism of the 18th century and dispensationalism in the 19th century are largely responsible for this tendency within the evangelical church. See Samuel R. Schutz, "The Truncated Gospel in Modern Evangelicalism: Critique and Beginning Reconstruction," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, October, 2009.

22 One can get to a four-chapter gospel through three differing theological orientations: the Kuyperian Reformed tradition, the charismatic kingdom orientation, or the Roman Catholic sacramentalist tradition. While they differ in theological emphasis, their implications for cultural engagement are largely the same. This is not to say that all Reformed, Charismatics, or Catholics believers grasp the cultural implications of the theologies that they tacitly believe.

23 Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Eerdmans, 2005), p. 12.

24 Ibid. 72.

25 Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (Harper San Francisco, 2006), p. 102. It should also be noted that biblically heaven is not a future destination, but the hidden God dimension of ordinary life right now, or our hidden life in God.

26 Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (Harper San Francisco, 1998), Chapter 2, "The Gospels of Sin Management," p. 35–60.

27 Modified from *The Student Creed* by Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby in Learning for the Love of God: A Student's Guide to Academic Faithfulness (Brazos Press, 2014), p. 112–113.

28 Willard. *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge* (HarperOne, 2009), p. 207.

29 de Vries, David. "Life After People," TV Show, History Channel, January 2008.

30 Hunter, p. 247.

31 In basketball, an assist is attributed to a player who passes the ball to a teammate in a way that leads to a score by field goal, meaning that he or she was "assisting" in the basket. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assist_(basketball).

32 Myers, Ken in Scott Allen, "What's All the Fuss about a Biblical Worldview?" http://darrowmillerandfriends.com/2017/09/21/biblical-worldview-needed, p. 241.