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New hope for Christian perspectives on campus with civil exchange of ideas. **§1**

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World-class scholar visits Oklahoma State and contends for the existence of God. **§2**

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New book invites Christian faculty to be the salt and light that Jesus envisioned. **§4**

## Hope Emerging from Middlebury

Rick Hove, *Faculty Commons Executive Director*



**A bit of March Madness occurred at Middlebury College in Vermont that had nothing to do with basketball.**

On March 2 about 100 Middlebury students rallied together to prevent the speaker, Dr. Charles Murray, from giving a lecture on campus. The crowd became unruly, rushed the speakers, and a faculty member was seriously injured.

Five days later, on March 7, over 100 Middlebury professors ran this ad in the Wall Street Journal, which I quote in part:

"In view of these unacceptable acts, we [Middlebury professors] have produced and affixed our signatures to this document stating core principles that seem to us unassailable in the context of higher education within a free society. The principles are as follows:

- Genuine higher learning is possible only where free, reasoned, and civil speech and discussion are respected.
- Only through the contest of clashing viewpoints do we have any hope of replacing mere opinion with knowledge.
- The incivility and coarseness that characterize so much of American politics and culture

cannot justify a response of incivility and coarseness on the college campus.

- Exposure to controversial points of view does not constitute violence.
- Students have the right to challenge and to protest non-disruptively the views of their professors and guest speakers."

Middlebury is notable for its scuffle, but other esteemed educational institutions have now made similar statements.

For example, in light of canceled speeches and "censorship," the student government of Northwestern University drafted a "Resolution Concerning Academic Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity" that called on the university to welcome diverse speech.

And on March 14 Princeton University professors Robert George and Cornel West called on others to sign the following statement (it has already garnered hundreds of professor signatories, including the ethicist Peter Singer.) We quote in part:

"None of us is infallible. Whether you are a person of the left, the right, or the center, there are reasonable people of goodwill who do not share your fundamental convictions. This does not mean that all opinions are equally valid or that all speakers are equally worth listening to. It certainly does not mean that there is no truth to be discovered. Nor does it mean that you are necessarily wrong. But they are not



### Cru Students, Staff, and Professors Take Nicaragua by Storm

Four Christian professors and Faculty Commons staff members, Ralph (center right) and Connie Cooley, joined a team of 19 Cru students and staff during spring break to launch a spiritual movement among college students in León, Nicaragua. The doors of two universities opened wide because the professors were part of the team. They spoke in classrooms to 340 Nicaraguan students and faculty, talking about their disciplines and research, and sharing their journeys to faith in Jesus. Sixteen students trusted Christ, and a new ministry and partnerships have been launched! †

necessarily wrong either ..."

Among the signatories is University of North Texas Professor of Sociology, George Yancey, who has empirically demonstrated that the Christian worldview is among those that is frequently excluded in academia.

Could the hope of presenting Christian perspectives on campus be emerging from Middlebury, Northwestern, and Princeton? Possibly.

Maybe our academic culture has deteriorated on our great universities to the point where even those with no personal predisposition to things Christian will argue that our academies

and country are better with the free exchange of ideas, even "crazy ones" like someone rising from the dead.

Time will tell, of course, but join with us in fervent prayer that this is the case. So much is at stake!

We never saw this version of March Madness coming, but we welcome it. †

*Rick Hove is the Executive Director of Faculty Commons, Cru's faculty and graduate student ministry. For nearly forty years, he has served professors and students on campuses throughout the country. He and his wife, Sonya, live near Duke University.*

## §2 Intelligent People Believe in God?

Ministry Profile: Gary and Gena Hellman, *Oklahoma State University*



"If you're ever in the area, please come speak to us!"

What are the chances that a retired, world-renowned philosophy professor from England would be in the neighborhood of Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma? Yet God works in sovereign ways.

Dr. Tom Lynch, professor of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at OSU and a leader in the Christian faculty and staff group, contacted Dr. Richard Swinburne from Oxford University after reading several of his books. Dr. Swinburne ranks as one of the world's leading experts on arguments for the existence of God. Dr. Lynch emailed him about his teachings and concluded the correspondence asking him to come to OSU if he was ever in the area ....

To Dr. Lynch's surprise, Dr. Swinburne responded positively! Nine months later in September 2016, he arrived at OSU to speak to an overflow crowd of more than 600 on "Arguments for the Existence of God." The following day in the building that houses the Philosophy Department, about 85 people attended a luncheon to consider his ideas on the immaterial soul of man.

Dr. Swinburne's reputation as a distinguished, international scholar in philosophy drew many who would not normally attend a "Christian" event. At the luncheon graduate students came in large numbers, sat on the front row, and peppered Dr. Swinburne with questions.

One Christian graduate student revealed that Dr. Swinburne's teachings had "saved my faith." Because a respected world-class scholar would believe in Christ and clearly contend for the existence of God, this student was able to grapple with and affirm his own faith.

Gary and Gena Hellman, Faculty Commons staff members for 30 years, co-sponsored the event with OSU's Departments of Philosophy and Religion. Gary and Gena recognize God's involvement in the ministry at OSU. Arriving in Stillwater, OK in 1986, they wondered where to begin. Through prayer, seeking direction, and meeting one-on-one with people, they



International scholar Dr. Richard Swinburne (center left) eating dinner and sharing ideas with graduate students and faculty before a campus-wide lecture on "Arguments for the Existence of God."

built a nucleus of interested faculty and staff that continues to grow and influence the university for Christ.

That large group of committed faculty and staff now works with the Hellmans and the faculty leadership team to promote and provide a safe environment for students and faculty to explore God on campus. They host regular luncheon meetings that connect believing faculty and staff. They sponsor campus-wide

events, like Dr. Swinburne's visit, that welcome everyone to investigate faith in God.

In Matthew 22:37 Jesus says that the first and greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." By providing opportunities to employ the mind to investigate God, the ministry at OSU has seen many draw closer to Him with their mind, heart, and soul! †

### Oklahoma State University

OSU was founded on Christmas Day in 1890 as Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. It is now the flagship institution of the Oklahoma State University System.

- 21,046 undergraduates | 4,110 graduate students
- Ranked #78 in *U.S. News & World Report's 2017 "Top Public Schools"*
- 200 undergraduate degree majors through six Colleges
- School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration ranks 8th worldwide among top hospitality and tourism programs
- Hosts "America's Greatest Homecoming Celebration" – an award-winning event drawing more than 80,000 alumni back to campus each year
- Cowboys and Cowgirls athletic teams have more than 50 NCAA Championship titles
- Alumni include philanthropist T. Boone Pickens and country singer Garth Brooks



Edmond Low Library, Oklahoma State University | Stillwater, OK

# A Servant to Students

Faculty Profile: Dr. Ken Elzinga, Robert C. Taylor Professor of Economics, *University of Virginia*



If you were one of the 1000+ students who registered for Dr. Kenneth Elzinga's Economics 201 class at the University of Virginia, you would notice something unusual when checking out this

professor's UVA webpage. Alongside photos of his wife, his bulldog, and his antique cars are the words: "My additional interests include following Jesus Christ."

On the first day of class, you hear Dr. Elzinga tell the huge group of students that he is going to teach out of a biblical model of leadership. "That means that I'm to be your servant," he explains, "and you can call me on it if I'm not doing that."

You remember the long list of credentials on Dr. Elzinga's webpage and wonder why such a distinguished professor is teaching an introductory economics class at all, much less considering himself the servant of his students.

As the semester proceeds, Dr. Elzinga is always well-prepared for his lectures. He also

uses examples from the Bible—but not in the sneering way you hear other professors reference the Bible. This professor seems to take the Bible seriously.

He schedules generous office hours, and he stays in the classroom after each lecture to answer questions ... until the last waiting student has gone.

Your friend in class, who has been struggling with some personal issues, went to see Dr. Elzinga after he got a poor grade on a test. He told you that Dr. Elzinga actually offered to pray for him—right there in his office!

The students who took this class last year had reported about Dr. Elzinga's thoughtfulness. The one who got an A+ in the course received a personal letter. But so did the students who failed his course. "Perhaps I failed you as your servant," he is reported to have told them. Imagine that!

Another student who received a caring letter from Dr. Elzinga was the student whose mother died in the middle of the semester. It was the only condolence letter he received from the university.

Over a 40-year career, Dr. Ken Elzinga has taught more than 45,000 students. Over 20,000 of these have heard his brief explanation on the last day of class of why he is a follower of Jesus.



One evening before a big test, you take advantage of Dr. Elzinga's offer to come over to his home for a one-hour "brownies and milk study break" at 9:00 pm. Meeting his wife and spending a relaxing hour with the other students there actually enables you to hit the books again productively.

When Thanksgiving rolls around, Dr. Elzinga invites all his students—all 1000+ of them—to come over for Thanksgiving dinner if they don't have other plans. The Chinese student who sits behind you says there were other international students there, and the Elzings explained why Americans celebrate Thanks-

giving. It has to do with God, he said.

On the very last day of class, Dr. Elzinga tells the group that he is a Christian. By now you are not surprised to hear this. This professor has "walked his talk" all semester long. The girl sitting next to you is so touched that she is brushing away tears.

Maybe there is something to this Jesus business after all. You remember that Dr. Elzinga's webpage includes a link that offers a daily Bible reading. "I'm going to start reading that every morning," you think. Dr. Elzinga has made an impact on your life that you will never forget. †



Each fall semester, Dr. Elzinga teaches more than 1,000 students in UVA's largest class, Economics 201. On the first day of class, he tells them he will follow a biblical model of leadership and that he wants to be their servant.

## Join with us in Prayer

Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself." – Matthew 22:37–39

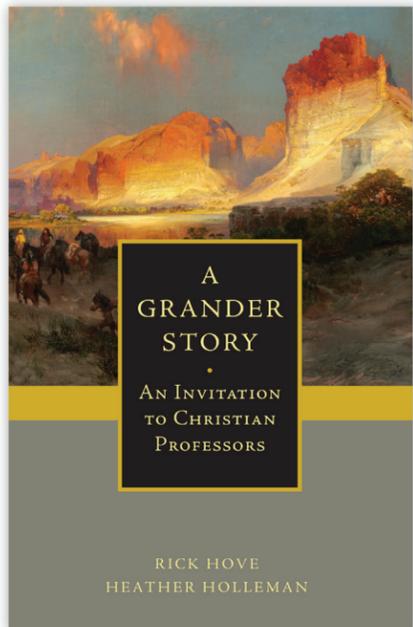
1. Ask God to "open doors" for Christian perspectives in the classrooms of our country (Colossians 4:2).
2. Pray our book, *A Grand Story*, will encourage new professor movements on many campuses.
3. Pray God would strengthen and encourage every Christ-following professor.

# A Grand Story: An Invitation to Christian Professors

Book review by Jeff Hardin, Chair of Zoology, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Most of us love a good story. But I wonder how many of us who are Christian academics have the sense of being integral characters in the greatest story of all: the amazing story of the victory of God's redemptive love expressed supremely in Jesus Christ.

Amid the incessant pressure of grant deadlines, grading, preparing new lectures, or tweaking our CVs, it's easy for us to lose sight of the unique roles we can play as Christian faculty as we are conformed to the image of the Grand One—the One who entered His own literary masterpiece to become its central protagonist.



While still in graduate school, I became convinced that my life should be about more than maximizing my professional competence. I developed a strong desire for a life that reflected Jesus' call to all Christians in the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13–16, NRSV)

Believing in that call is one thing; living it out is another! *A Grand Story* is an invaluable aid to grains of salt like me as we seek to fulfill God's call to be part of His grander story in the world.

At secular universities, there is tremendous pressure to "let the world around [us] squeeze [us] into its own mold," as J. B. Phillips so memorably paraphrased Romans 12:2a, rather than being "transformed by the renewing of our minds" (Romans 12:2b, NRSV). We often fail to realize that we are gradually being leached of our saltiness.

Many of us are unaware of any other Christian faculty member in our department. We lack local, embodied reminders of a different, profoundly Christian way of living as faculty day-to-day. It becomes all too easy for us to "switch off" our Christian faith when we set foot on the campus, so that we are indistinguishable from our colleagues.

*A Grand Story* tackles these issues head on. Written in a unique, engaging back-and-forth style by Rick Hove and Heather Holleman, it is a book I wish I'd had as a fledgling professor. It presents a captivating vision of faculty life that will inspire professors to be the salt and light that Jesus envisioned.

This book reaches not just the head but also the heart by weaving personal stories and biblical foundations together. It offers six stories from actual faculty members of the ways they seek to live out their callings to be flavorful grains of salt where God has placed them.

In these very different stories, we are allowed to peek over the shoulders of men and women who—at different stages in their careers—became convinced that they should orient their lives as Christian faculty around a grander story.

The last section of the book provides suggestions for putting these ideas into practice. It resists being overly prescriptive; these ideas can be "tried on for size" by faculty in different settings.

At the end of *A Grand Story*, I found myself asking a penetrating question: in what ways am I as a Christian faculty member moving the story of Jesus Christ, the Grand Storyteller, forward? I was motivated and challenged. I pray that you are as well. †

## Investing in the Mission

Your financial investment will help us build movements of professors and students to take the hope of Jesus Christ to the world. Will you prayerfully consider partnering with us in this vital endeavor? All contributions to Faculty Commons are income tax deductible.

### Cash donations

Make check payable to Cru and mail to Faculty Commons; 2001 W. Plano Parkway, Suite 2700; Plano, Texas 75075. Or invest online: [give.cru.org/2271527](http://give.cru.org/2271527)

### Maximize your giving to help reach the world for Christ

Stocks, bonds and mutual funds held for at least a year, which have increased in value since the time purchased, will receive extra tax savings when used as a donation.

### Donor Advised Funds

You can make a gift of cash or appreciated assets into a Donor Advised Fund, receive an immediate tax deduction, then plan for future giving. The Cru Foundation can show you the tax and cash flow benefits.

If you need assistance, please contact our Director of Ministry Development, Rich McGee at 214-727-6084 or [rich.mcgee@facultycommons.org](mailto:rich.mcgee@facultycommons.org).



A higher standard. A higher purpose.

### Support Faculty Commons Staff Members

As part of Cru, all of our staff members trust God for their salary and ministry expenses. You can contribute to individuals at [give.cru.org](http://give.cru.org) by typing their names in the search box.

## Fast Facts:

Christian faculty at the *University of Georgia* hosted A Common Call regional conference for vision and training for 28 professors from five nearby universities.

When Cru staff at Ohio's *Miami University* had more students than they could disciple, three professors caught the vision and are now discipling students with them.

*Oregon State University* Christian professors ordered 30 copies of *A Grand Story* to give to faculty and graduate student fellowship groups to read and discuss together.

During spring break, two *Ole Miss* professors traveled with Faculty Commons staff to Italy and England to minister to Cru staff and students on mission there.



FACULTY COMMONS  
A Cru Ministry

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