

Q1. How did the idea for "Shaping A Christian Worldview" develop? Have other Christian schools published similar books in recent years?

A1. a. The idea for *Shaping A Christian Worldview* was mine. We had published *The Future of Christian Higher Education* made up of essays/lectures given on the Union campus. The *Shaping* book was intended as a follow up to that book to address the significant contributions of Christian Higher Education, which include thinking Christianly across the curriculum, showing the relationship of interdisciplinary work, and pointing to ways that faith and reason can work together. We thought it would be unique if all the contributors were from Union, which would underscore the way we seek to carry out the Union University mission.

1. b. The Calvin College faculty published a related book about a decade ago on the Christian Liberal Arts. There may be others but I'm not aware of them.

Q2. What efforts are you making to distribute the book to leaders at secular universities as well as Christian schools? What has the response been so far?

A2 .a. We are encouraging Broadman & Holman to offer the book widely. The endorsements from respected scholars like Jean Bethke Elshtain mean much for the credibility of the project.

2. b. The initial reviews/feedback have been most positive—similar to the comments from David Jeffrey and Stan Jones on the cover. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities will give a copy to over 1200 people next year (2003) – to everyone who attends one of their conferences.

Q3. Are students at Union required to read the book?

A3. Students as a whole are not required to read the book, though we want to begin to encourage its use in Freshman Classes to help students begin to understand the broad mission of Union University, which goes beyond the delivery of content in all the specific disciplines.

Q4. Why did you dedicate the book to Carl F.H. Henry and Charles Colson? In what way does their thinking reflect what you are trying to promote at Union?

A4. We dedicated the book to Carl Henry and Chuck Colson because of their friendship and because of the way that they have articulated the importance of a Christian worldview in their writings.

Q5. How many new faculty appointments have you made since coming to Union? How many of these new professors did you know before they came to Union?

5. We have appointed about 60 new faculty members since I have been here. I knew six or seven before their appointment. Two of them were my former students.

Q6. What qualifications, generally speaking, are you looking for in faculty members?

6. We are looking for people who believe in Union's twofold emphases: rigorous academics and unapologetic Christian commitment. We want capable scholars who can teach and teach well. Teaching effectively is primary. We want some faculty members who are willing to focus some of their time on research and publications. We want faculty with excellent preparation, who have earned respectable degrees, who are solid church members, who will be involved in some way in the life of the campus or the community outside of the classroom. We want faculty members who believe in the mission and identity of the university.

Q7. Do faculty members have to sign a statement of faith? How, if at all, has this changed in recent years?

7. We ask faculty and staff for a statement of their Christian experience, how they seek to integrate their faith with teaching, learning, and living. We ask them to commit themselves to the Union mission. We do not sign a statement of faith, though we emphasize the primary tenets of the Christian faith as understood throughout the history of the church.

Q8. How is Union remaining true to its Southern Baptist heritage while promoting a broader historical Christian outlook? How has this new vision been reflected in the classroom as well as on the campus culture?

8. I think the key to what we do is a “**both and**” focus in so many areas—Both/and instead either/or.

We focus on the liberal arts, but not to the exclusion of professional programs.

We focus on traditional undergraduate education, but not to the exclusion of graduate programs.

We focus on top flight academics, but not to the exclusion of our Christian commitments.

We focus on West Tennessee and the Mid South, but not to the exclusion of developing an emerging national reputation.

Likewise, we focus on our Baptist identity and heritage, but not to the exclusion of the larger universal church and the strengths of other Christian traditions from which we have much to learn.

I think the both/and emphases in all of these areas provide balance and guidance for us, though it is not without tension at times.

Q9. In promoting a broader outlook, have you met with any resistance among longtime Union supporters? How have you dealt with it?

9. I don't think we have met with any resistance. Some people would like for us to focus our commitments on our West Tennessee and Tennessee Baptist constituencies. We acknowledge these constituencies are primary and very important. We are glad to be located in West Tennessee and want to serve this region. We are thankful for our Baptist heritage and Baptist connections and the support that comes from these churches. We believe we can and do emphasize these local commitments while still recognizing a broader constituency, which projects a broader profile and national identity for the university. We can be faithful to both.

Q10. Have you had any difficulties in recruiting professors affiliated with other denominations who might be hesitant about the school's Baptist ties?

10. I am not aware of any difficulties. Most people are aware of the controversies in Baptist life over the past 25 years, but the controversy is rarely if ever discussed on the Union campus. We think we can focus on our mission and be faithful to our Baptist heritage without getting caught up in the Baptist controversies. We claim that we are evangelical by conviction and Baptist by tradition.

Q11. How is Union trying to recruit a broader base of students? What are parents saying about the nature of the school's Christian commitment and academic programs?

11. a. Overall parents are generally quite pleased with our efforts—at least that's the feedback we receive. We are not a perfect institution. We acknowledge that we miss the mark in some areas at times. We are committed to continuous quality improvement in all areas so we are always working to improve. I think people appreciate our purpose-driven, mission-driven emphases.

11. b. We have seen the representation of our student body expand in recent years from about 30 states to 43 and from about 15 countries to almost 30. This geographical diversity has been healthy for our campus in many ways.

Q12. In your essay in the new book, you say that there is "no room for anti-intellectualism in Christian higher education." Why do you think this has been a problem in the past among evangelicals? Specifically, how has it been a problem for Union in the past?

12. a. There has been a tendency among some to suggest that you can't be academically rigorous if you have a serious Christian commitment. Thus many Christian schools have opted for a genuine piety and third-rate academics. "Holy mediocrity" in academics is still mediocrity and we don't think that is acceptable.

12. b. Others have tried to have first-rate academics and have done so by downplaying or disregarding their Christian commitments. We don't want to go in that direction either. We do believe that we need to emphasize quality academics in order for our faith commitments to be taken seriously in the academic world. Thus there is no room for "anti-intellectualism" on this campus.

12. c. Union has had a commitment to solid academics and a genuine Christian heritage for many years, but I believe that both are now more clearly articulated and carried out with a greater emphasis than at any time in the past.

Q13. What are your thoughts on Mark Noll's book "The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind?"

13. Mark Noll is a brilliant historian. He represents in so many ways the best of Christian scholarship. I'm not as pessimistic as he is about the absence of the evangelical mind, though he is right that at the popular level there is a seemingly inherent anti-intellectual streak in the church. I do not believe that represents the best of the Christian

tradition from Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, Lewis, Eliot, and on the list could go.

Q14. How are students at Union being challenged to face conflicting worldviews? How are they being taught to think for themselves so that they do not simply parrot their professors and speak in platitudes and jargon?

14. In our identity statement it says that Union will seek to engage the culture. That means that we will encourage our students to understand the history of ideas as well as the great issues of our time. We want them to learn to wrestle with these issues and think for themselves. We certainly want faculty to be guides in this process. We want students to develop intellectual curiosity, a hunger to explore issues, to engage the culture, to think critically and imaginatively, while learning to think Christianly.

Q15. Are students getting involved in the community in a significant way to see life beyond the "Union bubble"? Are there plans for study abroad programs?

15. I think more than ever the students of Union University are involved in the life of the Jackson community (I think that goes for Union staff, faculty, and administrators as well). We want to encourage volunteerism. We want to encourage service-learning opportunities. We want students to have genuine moral and ethical commitments that encourage their involvement. We want to try to avoid a self-righteous isolationism.

Our Global opportunities both in study abroad programs and mission projects take many of our students into cross cultural situations each year. These opportunities are expanding for them personally, relationally, and intellectually. The Institute for International and Intercultural studies as well as the outreach efforts of our Campus Ministries Office work hand and hand in these important matters.

Q16. In an essay in the Unionite in 1998, you said that "Union is a Christian liberal arts-based institution preparing students to be leaders and to live out the 'salt and light' implications of Christian truth. Union has not yet arrived in this regard." What do you think needs to be done to move closer to that end?

16. I made that statement in 1998. We have made significant strides in the past 4 years. We will never arrive at the ideal, but we are moving forward both intellectually and in hands-on life experiences in our understanding of what it means to be salt and light in the world. Again, I think the growth in the understanding of our overall mission and identity by trustees, faculty, staff, and students has helped us greatly in this area.

Q17. In your essay in the new book, you said, "We now find ourselves in a cosmic struggle between Christian truth and a morally indifferent culture." In what way does the current age pose more challenges than past eras? Os Guinness has noted that, "Every age senses itself falling in morals." Why do you believe that today's culture is different?

17. We live in a time of secular ascendancy, what some call a post-Christian world. That is certainly true in the West (Europe and North America). If Phillip Jenkins, professor of history at Penn State, is right in his new work *The Next Christendom*, the reverse is true in the South (Latin America and Africa) and in the East (Asia). In those cultures there is a rise of Christian conversion and a commitment to Christian truth that is remarkable.

I don't think we should be pessimistic about the times in which we live. I do think we should be aware of cultural trends locally, nationally and globally to the degree that we can stay in touch. It would be naïve to do otherwise.

Q18. What are some of the biggest challenges students are faced with in today's culture when it comes to preserving their faith?

18. The bombardment of sexuality in music, plays, the media, film is probably the greatest challenge for today's students. The whole issue of truth, the global unrest, issues of prejudice and racism, and many other significant challenges face our students. Learning to think and live Christianly is not easy in today's world.

Q19. What kind of relationship do you want Union to have with the community of Jackson?

19. We want Union to be a major partner in the Union community. I think this is a place we have seen major progress. Union is not an island in this community. Regularly you see students volunteering at Youth Town, at the Perkins Center, the Boys and Girls Club, and various tutorial programs. You see the Union School of Education working with the school system, the Business faculty working with Business leaders and the Chamber, the Nursing and Healthcare faculty with the hospitals, our musicians with the symphony, and our Christian Studies faculty with the churches. We are involved in numerous aspects of this community including a variety of civic clubs, boards, and agencies.

The recent economic impact study indicated that Union is a major source of jobs and that overall the impact from Union on Madison County was \$87 million last year.

We are thankful for the wonderful relationships we enjoy in this community.

Q20. Are there any schools in particular that you admire and are trying to model Union after?

20. There are many schools I admire for a variety of reasons. I think Union is doing some things better than others and then there are areas where we want to learn from sister institutions.

Many of our programs such as Education, Art, Music, the Sciences, Christian Studies, Social Work, and our Faculty Development program, to name a few, are being looked to as models by many other institutions.

I admire the serious academics and sound scholarship at Wheaton College. I appreciate the way Taylor University balances faith commitments with solid academics. I like Samford's beautiful campus and commitment to quality. I think Azusa Pacific, Seattle Pacific, and Palm Beach Atlantic provide outstanding comprehensive programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Baylor's long range vision (Baylor 2012) is impressive. I'm watching what unfolds there very closely. Hopefully, we can learn from each other and grow together for the good of all.

Q21. What has been your biggest challenge at Union?

21. The biggest challenge at an institution like Union is resources. The budget has doubled since I came. More money has been raised in the past six years than in any other ten year period in the life of the university. We have made progress, but still our resources are quite limited and our endowment (which also has doubled in size) is still woefully weak for a school almost 180 years old.

We'll keep working, trusting, hoping. We have great friends who we know we'll be faithful to Union. We do indeed trust a providential God.

Q22. What have you enjoyed most about your job?

22. What I enjoy most about my job is watching the quality of work by quality people day in and day out. I love watching excited freshmen become reflective seniors over a four year period. I love watching the Board of Trustees catch an idea and move to make it happen. I love watching great scholars communicate profound ideas. I love watching staff members give of themselves for the good of Union students.

Most of the time I really don't do very much, but I try to encourage a few people, thank a few people and try not to get in the way. The wonderful strides that Union has made have been because of a visionary Board of Trustees, supportive friends and alumni, a

great faculty and staff committed to Christ-centered excellence, and wonderful students. Union is really a tremendous place to serve.

Q23. Has getting named to the board of directors of Christianity Today International been a longtime goal of yours? How do you plan to balance that role with your role at Union? Do you plan to leave Union at any point in the near future to devote more time to publishing?

23. No. I've never had as a goal to be named to any board. Those things just happen. Just like the jobs I've had. I've never sought a position. I've always been invited to serve or to allow my name to be considered—whether in a job or on a board. I'm grateful for every opportunity that has come my way. I don't understand why they happen sometimes, but I am indeed thankful. Being asked to serve on the *Christianity Today* board is a real privilege and a wonderful opportunity to be involved with the national and global Christian leaders of our day. I count it a real honor.