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Christian Student Development in a Postmodern World

A Qualitative Study on the Impact a Postmodern Worldview (Social Imaginary) Has on the Engagement of Christian College Student Affairs Personnel with the Hearts, Minds, and Practices of Their Gen Z Students

By
Kathleen G. Haase

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry.

Saint Louis, Missouri

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Dr. Tasha Chapman
Faculty Advisor

_____

Dr. Joel Hathaway
Second Reader

_____

Dr. Joel Hathaway
Director of DMin Program

_____

Mr. Steve Jamieson
Library Director

_____

Abstract

Christian Student Affairs personnel seek to live out their vocational calling in alignment with biblical wisdom by nature of their commitment to Christ and his word. They assent to the authority of scripture, but they have also been impacted by the undercurrents of the postmodern culture. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact a postmodern worldview (social imaginary) has on the engagement of Christian college Student Affairs/Student Development personnel with their Gen Z students, and in particular, their engagement with their students' hearts, minds, and practices. Utilizing the book of Proverbs (representing biblical wisdom concerning young people's hearts, minds, and practices) and the "three great untruths" of Lukianoff and Haidt found in *The Coddling of the American Mind* (representing postmodern "wisdom"), this study sought to gain insight into which type of wisdom was being described when Christian college Student Development personnel talked about developing the hearts, minds, and practices of their students.

This study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with eight Christian College Student Development personnel from a singular CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) institution in the Midwest. Interviews were conducted with Student Development professionals from a variety of offices within the Student Development division of that institution. The interviews were analyzed and compared in order to identify worldview categories and themes.

The introduction and literature review focused on four key areas regarding the impact of postmodernism on the engagement of Christian College Student Development personnel with the hearts, minds, and practices of their Gen Z students: the roots and impact of

modernism and postmodernism on contemporary American higher education (in the introduction); the good, true, and beautiful life according to the proverbs of Solomon; the good, true, and beautiful life according to the modern social imaginary; and the good, true, and beautiful life according to the postmodern social imaginary.

The resulting analysis revealed these primary findings. First, CCSDP answered questions about living truthfully, flourishing, and doing good in the world in ways most aligned with the wisdom of Proverbs. Second, there was also significant alignment in their answers with modern and postmodern social imaginaries. This study identified which concepts in Proverbs and which concepts in the modern and postmodern social imaginaries the CCSDP were describing in their answers, as well as potential cultural reasons for those descriptions.

To my dad who taught me what is *true* through his life and learning, to my mom who showed me what is *beautiful* through her love and joy, and to my husband who lives out the *good* in his service and generosity, I dedicate this work to you, without whom it would never have begun or been completed.

There is a givenness to things that is built into the fabric of creation. It is the essence of wisdom to perceive this divine order in life and to align one's life with it.

— Tim Keller
God's Wisdom for Navigating Life
February 25

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

— Proverbs 14:12, ESV.

There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks to Him and bad when it runs from Him.

— C.S. Lewis,
The Great Divorce

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Abbreviations

CCSDP	Christian College Student Development Personnel
Gen Z	Generation Z
MSI	Modern Social Imaginary
PSI	Postmodern Social Imaginary
SAP	Student Affairs Personnel

Chapter 1

Introduction

The field of Christian college Student Development has a significant challenge. Students are arriving at college impacted by a worldview contrary to a Christian one. In particular, many entering students bring with them a belief in "the three great untruths" described by journalist and author, Greg Lukianoff, and social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt, in their book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*: 1. Humans are fragile and anything difficult is harmful to them, 2. Feelings should always be trusted, 3. People can be divided into the good people and the evil people.[1] These students arrive on the campuses of Christian colleges and universities not so much expecting to be challenged by the leadership within their school's Student Development or Student Affairs offices but are instead expecting the Student Development personnel to alleviate their discomfort, affirm their feelings, and advocate for them against the "harmful" others.[2]

Not only students are impacted by this worldview. Christian college Student Development personnel (CCSDP) are impacted as well. These "three great untruths" are an outworking of a shared postmodern conception that has saturated Western culture. Renowned Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, documents in his seminal work, *A Secular Age*, how the cultural understanding of "the sacred" and "the secular" evolved in the Western world from the Middle Ages to the modern and postmodern ages. He argues that the Middle Ages was a time in which the social narrative of the world presupposed a

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[1] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 7.

[2] Lukianoff and Haidt, 9,10, 13, 14.

sacred dimension. But eventually, through historical changes and competing ideologies, belief in the sacred became simply one choice among many. Taylor refers to this culturally shared view of the world as a "social imaginary."[3] He uses the term, "social imaginary," instead of "worldview," because he believes that it is greater than simply an intellectual construct concerning one's view of the world. He sees it as "the ways in which (ordinary people) 'imagine' their social existence," not necessarily in a theoretical way, but "carried in images, stories and legends" that hold a shared sense of legitimacy and create common understanding and practices between people.[4]

To live in a culture, therefore, is to be impacted by that culture and the shared social imaginary that underpins it. Taylor speaks of the social imaginary as presented "in our mother's milk, so to speak, to the extent that it's very difficult for us to imagine the world otherwise."[5] A person or group of people may hold significantly different beliefs from the majority of people in that same culture yet still find themselves impacted by the social imaginary woven into that culture, forming the lens out of which that culture conceives reality. Prominent author, James K. A. Smith, a professor of philosophy at Calvin University, extrapolates on the work of Taylor regarding the impact of the social imaginary. He adds that it is not a question of if people are or are not impacted by the social imaginary, but how they are impacted.[6]

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[3] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 171.

[4] Taylor, 172.

[5] Taylor, 45–46.

[6] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 93.

Description of the Problem

It is therefore unsurprising that Student Development personnel at Christian colleges have also been impacted by this postmodern social imaginary. As Christians in their field, they would differ from their secular contemporaries in many of their beliefs. However, they still hold assumptions about the nature of reality and persons and engage in practices in their field in ways that reveal the impact of a postmodern social imaginary. Perry Glanzer, a Christian scholar, ethicist, and professor of Educational Foundations at Baylor University, along with associates, Theodore F. Cockle, Britney Graber, and Elijah Jeong, ask whether God makes a difference for Student Affairs. They note that young CCSDP are coming into Christian institutions impacted by Student Affairs "theories, frameworks and categories" founded on secular and postmodern presuppositions, and many do not seem to be aware of how those presuppositions might contrast with a Biblical metaphysic.[7]

George Barna, the Director of Research for the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, notes from his 2021 national study of American worldviews that "most Americans do not know what worldviews they possess or draw from in their daily choices."[8] The data shows that the most common worldview is not a true worldview but simply a "collection of disparate worldview elements blended into a customized philosophy of life."[9] Americans are picking and choosing from a variety of

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[7] Glanzer et al., "Does God Make a Difference for Student Affairs?"

[8] tracymunsil, "CRC Report Finds Increasing Influence of Postmodernism, Secular Humanism in US Culture - Arizona Christian University."

[9] tracymunsil.

worldviews in a syncretistic way. In his research, Barna found that Americans were cobbling together four main worldviews: postmodernism, secular humanism, Christianity, and moralistic therapeutic deism. He explains that, out of these, they are "creating a hodge-podge of beliefs that often conflict and contradict one another."[10]

Background of the Problem

The history of higher education in America sheds light on the current ideological confusion exhibited by CCSDP in their engagement with college students. Early on, American universities unmoored themselves from Christian doctrine and eventually became untethered from the sacred altogether.[11] This separation, secular from sacred and creation from creator, was a rift from which a cohesive worldview could no longer be put back together. Without a transcendent authority, human identity and purpose became unmoored.[12] Educational institutions found themselves adrift in developing students without a Christian doctrine to define who they were shaping and to what ends they were shaping them.[13]

In his popular book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, theologian and ecclesiastical historian, Carl Trueman explains how this transcendent/imminent division leads to two fundamentally different ways of thinking about the world. One way is the mimetic view which regards the world as "having a given order and a given meaning,"

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[10] tracymunsil.

[11] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 242, 314–15.

[12] Glanzer, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, 152, 153.

[13] Glanzer, 147, 148.

which humanity must discover and conform to. The other is the poietic view which "sees the world as so much raw material out of which meaning and purpose can be created by the individual."[14] Trueman references Taylor and agrees with his claim that Western culture moved from "a predominantly mimetic view of the world to one that is primarily poietic."[15] Secular, public universities as well as religiously founded colleges were impacted by the culture's move from a mimetic view to a poietic one. George Marsden, an American historian who has written extensively on Christianity and American higher education, documents this move. He chronicles how American colleges and universities eventually moved away from Christian doctrine as the authority for human identity and purpose and, in its place, lifted the individual as the ultimate authority for naming themselves and creating their own meaning.[16]

Modernity's Impact on Colleges and Universities

Marsden and contemporary Christian university academics such as Glanzer, Cary Balzer, and Rod Reed document the movement of cultural ideas through the history of American higher education. The first American colleges were Protestant and denominational, founded to raise up the next generation of clergy. However, in this Age of Enlightenment, a shift in focus from God to his creation, humanity and the world, occurred. Along with this shift, the telos of these first colleges shifted as well.[17] The

[14] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 39.

[15] Trueman, 39–40.

[16] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*.

[17] Glanzer, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, 78, 92.

focus moved away from the transcendent, with its contentious religious doctrine, and

toward humanity, with the hope that through reason and science, America's public

educational institutions could create a moral and democratic citizenry.[18] Instead of having

to rely on the authority of religious doctrine, which could potentially break the young

country apart into factions, the hope was that through human reasoning and the scientific

process, the human conscience could be unlocked. The anticipated result was an

authoritative, scientific answer to the question of what was good for society. The belief

was that this process was neutral and democratic since everyone has been created with a

"common sense," the human conscience.[19] This modern hypothesis proposed that

scientific inquiry into the human conscience would result in an authoritative truth upon

which everyone, independent of creed or culture, could agree and upon which a country

could coalesce. These original colleges and universities were founded on the belief that

God created the natural world, and with it, human rationality and common sense.

Eventually, reason and conscience detached from transcendent authority and instead

became an authority unto themselves.[20] This led to ideological clashes as the conscience

and reasoning of individuals differed. Colleges and universities lost their ability to

develop students to an agreed-upon ideal.[21]

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[18] Glanzer, 93.

[19] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 82–83.

[20] Glanzer, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, 94.

[21] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 152–54.

American colleges began as small affairs. Each consisted of a handful of professors and a college president acting as the sole administrator.[22] The college president and the professors were tasked with not only the intellectual formation of their students but also their moral formation. Balzer and Reed, Professors of Biblical Studies at John Brown University, note that early American college educators believed their role to be the formation of the whole person and the creators of an "institutionalized ethos of piety."[23] As colleges and universities lost their doctrinal core, academic disciplines formed their own professional societies with their own standards of ethics and excellence. The resulting focus outside the university, toward professional societies, diminished the professors' sense of responsibility to whole-person student development within the university.[24]

Educational professors, Glanzer and Alleman (Baylor University), and Ream (Taylor University), document the beginnings of the "Student Development" or "Student Affairs" profession. Between the early and mid-1900s, social changes, such as the trauma of two world wars, the women's suffrage movement, and academic professionalization, created new pressures on colleges and universities to hire deans and student development personnel to tend to the increase in disciplinary and administrative issues. These issues were brought on by cultural realities such as expanding fraternity and sorority systems, changing social mores, increased campus housing demands for a growing female student body, and new orientation and career service expansions. With professors no longer

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[22] Glanzer, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, 161.

[23] Balzer and Reed, *Building a Culture of Faith*, 46.

[24] Glanzer, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, 117–20.

willing to oversee these growing student needs, new administrators were hired.[25] This was the beginning of the field of Student Development. It began in an era of great confusion regarding the role of the university in developing students and the end to which they were developing them.

Postmodernity's Impact on Colleges and Universities

As American higher education entered the mid-to-late 1900s, the modern idea of the inevitability of progress through science became less believable. Two world wars and political and ideological clashes abroad and at home led to significant cultural unrest.[26] The ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, gained social acceptance. Marx and Nietzsche questioned commonly held Western assumptions about social structures and grand narratives.[27] They recognized that these assumptions, undergirding the modern era, rested on a belief in a transcendent authority. When that belief was removed, it left society without an arbiter for competing truth claims.[28] Both Marx and Nietzsche named these competing truth claims as "nothing more than attempts to exert power."[29] If there was no ultimate authority, then truth could be defined by anyone. Those with the most power could leverage it to name truth in ways

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[25] Glanzer, chaps. 8–9.

[26] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, p.291.

[27] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 173, 191.

[28] Porteous, "A Christian View of Postmodernism and Its Roots," 7–8.

[29] Honeysett, "Christians in a Postmodern World."

that privileged themselves and served to keep them in positions of power.[30] This concept

of truth-claim-as-power-play was part of the philosophical force behind the legal removal

of In Loco Parentis in 1961 as the guiding principle behind the relationship of university

and student. With this change, students became responsible for their own moral and

character development.[31] This shift of responsibility lent itself to further confusion for

Student Affairs personnel (SAP) regarding their role with students.

After the demise of In Loco Parentis and the rise of postmodern ideologies within

American higher education in the mid-to-late 1900s, the concept of developing students

toward a common ideal began to fall out of favor.[32] In the postmodern social imaginary,

there was no shared metanarrative that explained reality.[33] Objective truth claims were

seen simply as constructions of language used by groups of people to obtain power and

justify oppression. With objective reality viewed subjectively, individuals were left to

create reality for themselves.[34] For the SAP, this meant that defining the ideals to which

students should aim was a misuse of power and ultimately oppressive. SAP were left with

the task of reimagining their role when 'development' no longer had an agreed-upon

ideal. They needed a new foundation on which to ground moral and character formation.

Taylor detailed how secularization and a materialistic view of the universe robbed

humanity of a transcendent world that gave meaning to the here-and-now as well as

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[30] Taylor, "A Crash Course on Influencers of Unbelief."

[31] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 116.

[32] Lee, "The Curious Life of In Loco Parentis at American Universities."

[33] Honeysett, "Christians in a Postmodern World."

[34] Porteous, "A Christian View of Postmodernism and Its Roots," 12.

direction for humanity's desire for wholeness and perfection.[35] Although there were still vestiges of the American ideals of Christian sanctification and humanistic progressivism, external authority lost its position of influence, and internal authority replaced it.[36]

Without a transcendent authority to determine what was moral and to define human identity and purpose, people needed an alternative imminent authority. The choice was between an external authority within society or an internal authority within the self. With the rise of the postmodern notion that there was no grand narrative and the subsequent skepticism of external claims of truth, the individual became the locus of authority. Feelings and experience were soon elevated above seemingly cold and calculating rationality under the influence of Romantic philosophers, like Rousseau.[37] At the same time, there was a growing societal distrust in the neutrality of reason.[38] Contemporary culture author Jake Meador summarized Rousseau's critique of external authority as follows: Society was "alienating and repressive" because it forced persons to take on roles that they would not have chosen for themselves. It created "a division between our external self and our internal self. For Rousseau, finding one's authentic self is a challenge, and society is the chief obstacle to overcoming the challenge."[39] Along with Meador, Taylor referenced the impact of the Romantic movement on the postmodern social imaginary with its 'you-be you' mentality. He wrote, "The

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[35] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, chap. 4.

[36] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 47–49.

[37] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 122.

[38] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 295.

[39] Meador, *In Search of the Common Good*, 49.

understanding of life which emerged with the Romantic expressivism of the late eighteenth century was that each of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity and that it is important to find and live out one's own, against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us by society."[40]

It is within this current milieu that SAP live and engage their students. Many now see themselves as living within a limited, material world devoid of transcendence where individuals do not share a common reality.[41] In this social imaginary, humans create their own meaning, name their own truth, and define their own morality by directing their attention within to the feelings and desires that govern their decision-making.[42] Tolerance is seen as a paramount social virtue and freedom to live out one's authenticity a natural right. Trueman writes that this new "psychological man" is committed "first and foremost to the self and is inwardly directed" and expects institutions to be "the servants of the individual and their sense of well-being."[43] Trueman presses further to say that educational institutions "cease to be places for the formation of individuals." Instead, colleges and universities "become platforms for performance, where individuals are allowed to be their authentic selves precisely because they are able to give expression to who they are inside."[44]

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[40] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 475.

[41] Glanzer, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, 158.

[42] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 49, 50.

[43] Trueman, 49.

[44] Trueman, 49.

New Roles for a New Social Imaginary

With external authority suspect, SAP need a new role to justify their continued existence within the university and their value to students. Glanzer argues that within this new culture, where external moral formation is eschewed, SAP guide students to their own inward authority. They now believe their role to be the expansion of the horizon of their student's moral options through education and the creation of opportunities for student experiences.[45] Glanzer notes that as the profession of Student Affairs began to codify their professional standards in the early twenty-first century, "Student Affairs personnel were being taught theories that would only reinforce students' moral individualism."[46] An example of this appeal to internal authority is evident in the following section of an article on character education from The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Alabama: "The role of the educator is as guide to help students to reflect for themselves on questions of who they are and want to become. It is this personal reflection on character and its autonomous development and integration in an overall mindset or identity that is conducive to flourishing as an adult."[47] In this definition, the role of the Student Affairs educator is not to help students to develop character by aligning their life to a transcendent truth or societal norm. It is to guide students back to themselves so that they can know, through a personal reflection on character, who it is they are and who they want to become. The authors propose that this

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[45] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 149.

[46] Glanzer, 126, 127.

[47] "The Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools - 2022," 8.

inward reflection is the means to answer those questions and to facilitate student flourishing.

With the removal of transcendent authority, and ultimately transcendence itself, and with a new cynical view of power structures, and with an emphasis on self and the institution as servant of self, the profession of Student Affairs needs to redefine and justify their role within the university.[48] SAP are now to 'listen and learn' from their students who become, within this new postmodern worldview, the ultimate authority of their own meaning and significance. They are to guide students back to themselves and play the role of encourager and cheerleader for the choices of their students. And they are to affirm the narrative that each student can make these choices, placing their stamp of approval on the chosen reality within which the student attempts to live and flourish.[49] An example of this new Student Affairs staff role appears in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) 38-page document entitled, "Approaches to Affirming Student Identities." In this document, SAP are presented with a professional standard for how to support and affirm students in their chosen identities. Some questions for SAP to ask themselves are, "How is your institution adapting language so that it is affirmative and inclusive of all students?" and "How are you and your institution continuously updating knowledge about who your students are and adapting/amending systems accordingly?[50] Throughout the document, the referenced identities are those that the students choose for themselves. These identities are dependent on what the students

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[48] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 363.

[49] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, chap. 8.

[50] Foley, "(Mis)Understanding Students," 9.

feel is most true of themselves at the time. The role of the SAP is to listen and learn, and then affirm their student's chosen identities and amplify their voices.[51] This role corresponds directly to one of the "three great untruths" that Lukianoff and Haidt have observed being promoted in the universities: "Always trust your feelings."[52]

A second role to which SAP are now professionally directed is to help students to flourish within the closed system of an imminent world.[53] In this new role, SAP need to describe flourishing without reference to the biblical hope of redemption and restoration, and suffering loses its meaning and significance without the reality of a Christian sanctification process.[54] The relief of suffering therefore becomes a necessity for flourishing, and the definition of both suffering and flourishing need to be arrived at subjectively within the authority of the individual's feelings.[55] If a student feels unsafe, unwelcomed, harmed, or offended, the SAP can help alleviate those negative feelings. They can also present the student with an alternative perspective on the situation, but this approach risks increasing the student's sense of being harmed and at the same time the SAP's job.[56] They can also seek to ameliorate the situation by removing the offense-causing agent. Either way, in a postmodern social imaginary, a second role of the SAP is

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[51] Foley, 10,12.

[52] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 4.

[53] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 325.

[54] 2 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 10:14; Rev. 21:1-4

[55] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 24.

[56] Lukianoff and Haidt, 120, 121.

to keep their students safe from anything that might hinder their sense of flourishing.[57]

Haidt and Lukianoff name this as another of the three great untruths: Humans are fragile, or "What doesn't kill you makes you weaker."[58]

A third role of the SAP is that of advocate for vulnerable and emotionally injured students. In this new emotionally unsafe world of clashing, individually created realities and personal identity-crafting, perceived injury becomes normative.[59] Who or what is to blame when students create their own narratives and trust their own feelings regarding perceived injury? Haidt and Lukianoff write, "In today's culture of safetyism, intent no longer matters; only perceived impact does…and just about anything can be perceived as having a harmful – even violent – impact on vulnerable groups."[60] Without the world of the transcendent, there is no blaming of God nor appealing to him for justice with the affront of pain and suffering. When the pointed fingers of blame come out, how does society decide who is the guilty party, and for whom do SAP advocate when students have competing claims of being the victim of the other?

The postmodern answers to these questions arise at the end of the nineteenth century with theorists such as Marx and Nietzsche, with their immanent power theories, and Derrida, Horkheimer, and Heidegger with deconstructionism, critical theory and existentialism respectively. These all pave the way for the postmodern university's answer to the question of who are the "good people" and who are the "evil people." If

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[57] Lukianoff and Haidt, 24–30.

[58] Lukianoff and Haidt, 4, 22.

[59] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 362.

[60] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 104, 105.

there is no ultimate truth, and truth is simply constructed (deconstructionism) by individuals or temporarily aligned groups of people looking to benefit themselves (critical theory) through their free and responsible acts of the will (existentialism),[61] then those in power are simply those who construct truth to benefit themselves at the expense of the weak. Being in a powerful, advantaged majority indicates that one is part of the dominating, willful coalition overrunning and oppressing a weaker coalition. Being in a weaker, disadvantaged minority indicates that one is part of the oppressed and innocent coalition of victims.[62] Along with these theories, new ideas about justice work their way into colleges and universities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Glanzer credits thinkers such as John Dewey and James Tuffs as well as Lawrence Kohlberg and Herbert Marcuse for bringing to the postmodern social imaginary a new secular conception of justice, renamed "social justice."[63] Although justice has always been conceived as a social enterprise, this new "social justice" is defined outside of a transcendent authority and therefore creates a conundrum. How does a society of free individuals, who create their own realities, live together without a higher ethic to cohere them or to act as judge?

Kohlberg, a psychologist known for his theories of moral development, promotes the idea that within liberal democratic societies, one legitimate moral value can and should be transmitted from educator to student, since it is a "universal moral principle"

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[61] Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, 7, 29, 36, 37, 113, 212.

[62] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 150.

[63] Glanzer, 145.

that society "want[s] all people to adopt always in all situations."[64] That value is social

justice, or equality.[65] Glanzer notes that around this same time, the concept of social

justice begins to be informed by critical theory.[66] Marcuse, a Marxist sociologist and

philosopher, believes that in a society where an imbalance of power exists, equality (or

tolerance for everyone) only advantages those in power. He argues that what is needed is

an intolerance of the "repressive tolerance" of those in power.[67] Haidt and Lukianoff, in a

summary of his premise, writes, "If indiscriminate tolerance is unfair, then what is

needed is a form of tolerance that discriminates. A truly liberating tolerance…is one that

favors the weak and restrains the strong."[68] The answer to the question materializes: For

whom do SAP advocate? They advocate for the oppressed and disadvantaged minority

who are the innocent victims of the powerful and advantaged majority.[69] Haidt and

Lukianoff name this as the third great untruth of the postmodern university: "Life is a

battle between good people and evil people."[70]

Christian colleges can retain, to some extent, the developmental nature of their

Student Development offices during these same time periods. Although they share a

common ideal toward which to aim their students, they too swim in the waters of a

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[64] Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, 39.

[65] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 149.

[66] Glanzer, 150.

[67] Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," 117–20.

[68] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 65.

[69] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 330, 331.

[70] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 4.

postmodern culture. Christopher Watkin, culture writer and senior lecturer at Monash University, writes that, to some extent, it is impossible to fully resist the impact of these cultural waters since, "they are always already part of us" and, "they are us."[71]

As postmodernity etches itself more deeply into the hearts, minds, and practices of a new generation of students, Gen Z adolescents arrive at Christian college campuses with a Christian shell but postmodern instincts. A recent Barna study finds that practicing Christians in America are significantly influenced by competing worldviews. It states that 54 percent resonate with postmodernist views, 36 percent accept ideas associated with Marxism, and 29 percent believe ideas based on secularism. The data also show that Gen Z and Millennials, who "came of age in a less Christianized context are…up to eight times more likely to accept these views" than older generations.[72] Christian college Student Development professionals (CCSDP) are not only faced with a new generation of students weaned on postmodernity, but as Glanzer notes, they too are impacted by "this new form of religion" that demands allegiance, comes with its own morality, and names truth in opposing ways to the wisdom of scripture.[73]

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[71] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 9.

[72] "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians."

[73] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 98–99, 108.

Purpose Statement

Many Christian authors write about what a postmodern worldview looks like and how it impacts emerging adults' perception of the world.[74] Lukianoff and Haidt present how this new worldview is manifesting on secular college and university campuses. What has not been addressed in the literature is how CCSDP have been impacted by these "three great untruths" of the postmodern university described in *The Coddling of the American Mind* and how that impacts their engagement with Gen Z students.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how CCSDP describe what it entails for students to flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to flourish?

2. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to live truthfully?

3. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to do good in the world?

Significance of the Study

Everyone to some extent is impacted by the postmodern conceptions of reality within Western, twenty-first century culture, and even more so the Millennials serving as SAP in higher education today. Barna's studies show Millennials to be heavily influenced by postmodern ideology which shapes the story in which they imagine themselves to

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[74] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*; Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*; Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*; White, *Meet Generation Z.*

live.[75] Furthermore, most CCSDP are not receiving robust theological training in their graduate degrees. Instead, they are steeped in secular developmental theory created by academics who do not espouse biblical anthropology or teleology.[76] Since core perceptions have a direct impact on practices, it is inevitable that Christian colleges and universities have Student Development personnel whose practices, to some extent, are shaped by secular ideologies inconsistent with, and sometimes antagonistic toward, the wisdom found in scripture.

This study can be a window into the practices of CCSDP with their students and how these practices compare to the postmodern issues described above. From the findings, CCSDP will be able to see with greater clarity the ideological differences between the wisdom of scripture and the wisdom of a secular world. In turn, this clarity will lend itself to further insight regarding which practices to employ as a CCSDP when engaging students affectively (heart), cognitively (mind), and behaviorally (actions). The findings can help CCSDP to engage students more towards flourishing, walking in truth, and practicing the good.

This study also has significance for any Christian in the field of Student Affairs because it delves into core perceptions SAP have regarding the nature of their job, the goals of their job, and the students they serve. Without understanding core perceptions, mission and team building within Student Affairs offices becomes obfuscated. Different conceptions about how students flourish, live out truth, and do good in the world complicate the ability to arrive at a consensus regarding goals and praxis. This study

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[75] Barna, "George-Barna-Millennial-Report-2021-FINAL-Web.Pdf."

[76] Glanzer et al., "Does God Make a Difference for Student Affairs?"

examines the type of wisdom being described by CCSDP in their engagement with students. By breaking down the differences and similarities between biblical and secular wisdom, SAP will be given greater clarity regarding the nature of their and their colleagues' belief systems.

The findings of this study can also inform any Christian institution looking to disciple or train young adults. Since all Christians, young or old, are impacted by the social imaginary around them, the findings of this study can help shed light on culturally accepted "best practices" that on further, more informed examination, are counter to or a distortion of a biblical narrative.

Definition of Terms

In this study, key terms are defined as follows:

Modernism – A broad philosophical and cultural movement born out of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that emphasizes the possibility of progress through human reason and scientific discovery and deemphasizes the transcendent, and with it, the authority of God and religious institutions.

Student Affairs Personnel/Student Development Personnel – A person or group of people who work in the field of Student Affairs or Student Development at a college or university. These terms are used interchangeably.

Postmodernism – A broad philosophical and cultural movement of Western culture that began in the late nineteenth century, entered mainstream culture mid-twentieth century, and continues to this day. It rejects the modern era's concepts of

metanarratives, unbiased reason, and objectivity in favor of the particulars of context, diversity, fragmentation, and contingency.

Student Affairs/Student Development – The division or department at a college or university typically responsible for the non-academic development and success of its students. Departments within the Student Affairs/Student Development division may include but are not limited to Career Services, Residence Life, Counseling and Student Care, Athletics, Health Services, Academic Support, and Diversity and Equity.

"Good, True, and Beautiful" – For the purpose of this dissertation, the phrase and words are used as shorthand for "doing good in the world, living truthfully, and flourishing." John Frame, in his book, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, leans heavily upon the categorical concepts found in both the classical transcendentals (the good, the true, and the beautiful) and the Christian trinitarian doctrine of God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). He believes that humans can conceive of God and the world through three interdependent categorical perspectives: the normative, the existential, and the situational.[77] The "normative" refers to that which is authoritative and above; the "existential" to that which is internal or existential; and the "situational" to that which is external or the physical situation. Because of the trinitarian nature of God and because humans are created in God's image, these categories appear to be pressed into all creation and into the fabric of reality itself. In the trinitarian perspective, God the Father represents the authoritative or "normative" category; God, the Son, represents the

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[77] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 75.

external or "situational" perspective; and God, the Holy Spirit, represents the internal or

"existential" perspective (see figure 1).[78]
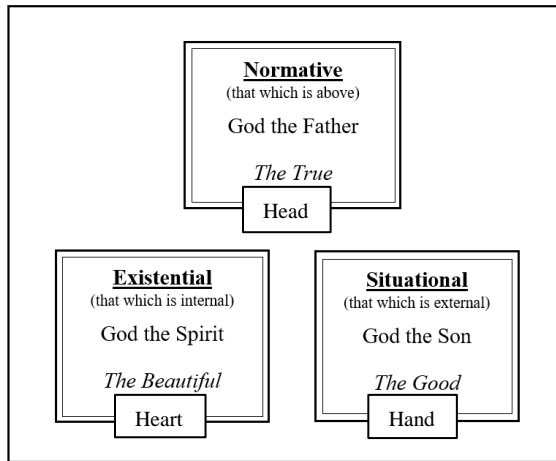
Figure 1. Created from source material
Source: John M. Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 42, 201, 266, 307, 316-323.

In the classical transcendentals, "the good," "the true," and the "beautiful," fit into

the "situational," the "normative," and the "existential" categories respectively. Truth

holds authority over an individual or humanity in general and is often associated with the

head or the mind; beauty is that which is within humanity and the internal longings and

desires often associated with the heart; and goodness is that which is external or

embodied which is often associated with human action or the works of the hand (see

figure 1).[79]

Along those lines, the "three great untruths" of the postmodern university

proposed by Haidt and Lukianoff align with these categories. As humans image their

creator (the *imago dei*), they desire to do good in the world, to live truthfully, and to

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[78] Frame, 42.

[79] Samples, "The 3 Transcendentals."

flourish. The untruth: "Life is a battle between good people and evil people" represents

the human desire to do good in the world reflecting that which is the good/situational.

The untruth: "Trust your feelings" represents the desire to live truthfully reflecting that

which is the true/normative. And the untruth: "Humans are fragile" represents the desire

to flourish reflecting that which is the beautiful/existential.[80]

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│        ┌──────────────────────────┐           │
│        │   Trust your feelings    │           │
│        │       The True           │           │
│        │       Normative          │           │
│        └──────────────────────────┘           │
│  ┌──────────────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐│
│  │  Humans are fragile  │ │ Good vs evil people││
│  │    The Beautiful     │ │     The Good      ││
│  │     Existential      │ │    Situational    ││
│  └──────────────────────┘ └──────────────────┘│
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Figure 2. Created from source material
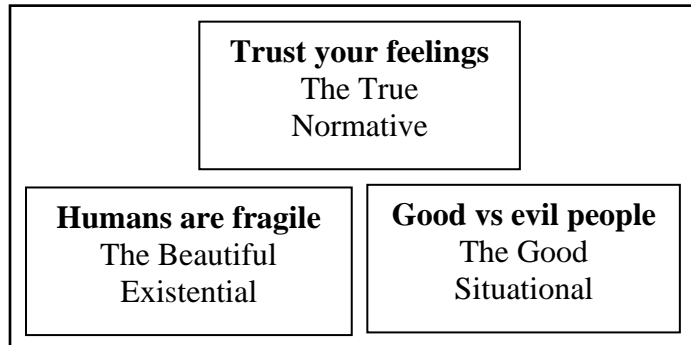*Source*: Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, The Coddling of the American Mind (London, England: Penguin, 2019), 4; John M. Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 42, 201, 266, 307, 316-323.

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[80] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 4.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how Christian college Student Development personnel (CCSDP) describe their role with students and what it entails for students to flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world. Three literature areas are reviewed to gain a broader understanding of some of the relevant issues. A preliminary literature review of the impact of modern and postmodern social imaginaries on American higher education is contained within Chapter 1 and forms the basis of the history of the problem. It is followed here by a literature review of the good, true, and beautiful life in the Proverbs of Solomon to provide a biblical framework through which to view student development work within Christian higher education. Next, two areas of literature are reviewed that have foundational relevance for the qualitative research. These areas focus on the literature concerning the modern social imaginary of the good, true, and beautiful life, and the postmodern social imaginary of the good, true, and beautiful life.

To gain a deeper understanding of what CCSDP are describing when they talk about their engagement with students, it is important to understand the ideas shaping the current social imaginary in contemporary American higher education. The following questions arise: how is the good, true and beautiful life defined; what are the assumptions behind these definitions; and from where do these assumptions come? The literature review engages authors who give answers to these questions from diverse areas of expertise. These research questions require ideas from experts with a broad understanding of the history of ideas and of the resulting impact of those ideas on culture. It also

requires a rigorous understanding of Christian doctrine. Because of this, these literature review areas engage experts in history, cultural analysis, philosophy, and theology. A special emphasis is given to authors who connect their research with the impact of resulting cultural change on American higher education.

The Good, True, and Beautiful Life in the Proverbs of Solomon

The following study of the book of Proverbs explores how the proverbs describe the good, true, and beautiful life and how these descriptions paint a picture of what it looks like for a person to flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world. King Solomon, the third and last king in the United Kingdom of Israel, is the expert author in the study due to the breath of his wisdom concerning the things of God, humanity, and the nature of the world.[81] He is considered to be the accepted author of the majority of Proverbs, according to commentary author, Sid Buzzell, and is renowned for his wisdom and prolific writings.[82] Old Testament scholar and Proverbs commentator, Bruce M. Waltke, similarly argues that, aside from Proverbs 30 and 31, authored by Agur and King Lemuel respectively, the first twenty-nine chapters can be attributed to Solomon.[83] The book of 1 Kings contains the following description of the wisdom of Solomon:

> God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone else…His fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five…From all the

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[81] Knox, "Solomon."

[82] Buzzell, *"Proverbs," The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 901.

[83] Waltke and Silva, *Proverbs*, 24–25.

nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.[84]

In Solomon's collection of proverbs, the primary Hebrew word for wisdom is *hokma,* which refers to the skill of "craftsmen, sailors, singers, administrators, and counselors."[85] Theologian and scholar Ron Rhodes asserts that King Solomon's collection of proverbs offers guidance for "skillful and wise obedience in day-to-day life." He writes, "A person who experiences *hokmah* in [their] spiritual life and relationship to God is one who is both knowledgeable and experienced in following God's way." Biblical wisdom, he states, is essentially "skill in the art of godly living."[86]

Kenneth T. Aitken, lecturer in Hebrew Bible at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, writes that Jewish teachers understood that "wise living requires the ability to reach sound decisions and to make the right choices, and thus the ability to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, wholesome and damaging, important and unimportant, wise and foolish."[87] Pastor and theologian Timothy Keller writes of wisdom, as presented in the book of Proverbs, as including discipline, discernment, discretion, and knowledge.[88] Keller, Aiken, and Rhodes give broad definitions of wisdom that integrate concepts of knowledge, discernment, and action in a divinely created reality. Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, William P.

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[84] 1 Kings 4:29-34

[85] Jr. Unger, *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 47–4753.

[86] Rhodes, *Proverbs*, 12.

[87] Aitken, *Proverbs*, 11.

[88] Keller and Keller, *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life*, 6.

Brown, argues that the definition of wisdom is "a constantly moving target…abounding in paradoxes and tensions." He writes that wisdom is practical yet rigorously intellectual, embraces knowledge yet admits uncertainty, draws from the natural order yet open to divine revelation, a gift from God yet an object of human effort. He says that "fundamentally, wisdom is about making sense of God, the self, and the world, and acting accordingly. It cuts to what is truly important in life. Wisdom is the art of living fully, acting justly, and venturing forth reverently."[89]

Brown corresponds his three arts of wisdom to the concept of the three transcendentals. "Venturing forth reverently" corresponds to the true life. "Living fully," or flourishing, corresponds to the beautiful life. And "acting justly" corresponds to the good life.[90] To make "sense of God, the self, and the world, and acting accordingly," six categories emerge within this study of Proverbs — one internal and one external for each of the three transcendentals. The internal category is concerned with the nature of each transcendental within itself, while the external category is concerned with the expression of each transcendental in the world. The two categories within the true life are the nature of authority and living truthfully. The two categories within the beautiful life are the nature of human identity and flourishing. And the two categories within the good life are the nature of the situation and doing good.

Solomon, in the opening verses of Proverbs, states that the purpose of the proverbs is to "teach people wisdom" so they may align to it, be known by it, and live it

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[89] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 24–26.

[90] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 26.

out.[91] The six categories in this literature review represent the inside nature and outside expression of each of the three transcendentals: the true life, the beautiful life, and the good life. The following is a description of what emerges when the wisdom of Proverbs is analyzed through the following six categories: the true life—the nature and types of authority in Proverbs; the true life—aligning with truth in Proverbs; the beautiful life—the nature and types of personal identity in Proverbs; the beautiful life—personal flourishing in Proverbs; the good life—the nature and types of situations in Proverbs; and the good life—doing good in the physical world in Proverbs. The following chart is to give the reader additional clarity regarding the categories and their relationships:

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[91] Proverbs 1:2,3 [New Living Translation]

The Good, True, and Beautiful Life in the Proverbs of Solomon Chart

This visual summary outline of the Proverbs analysis utilizes John Frame's "multi-perspectivalism" categories (normative, existential, and situational) and the Greek transcendentals (the good, the true, and the beautiful). Each of the three categories is connected to and impacts the others, as designated in the parentheses referring to one of the three categories from Frame.
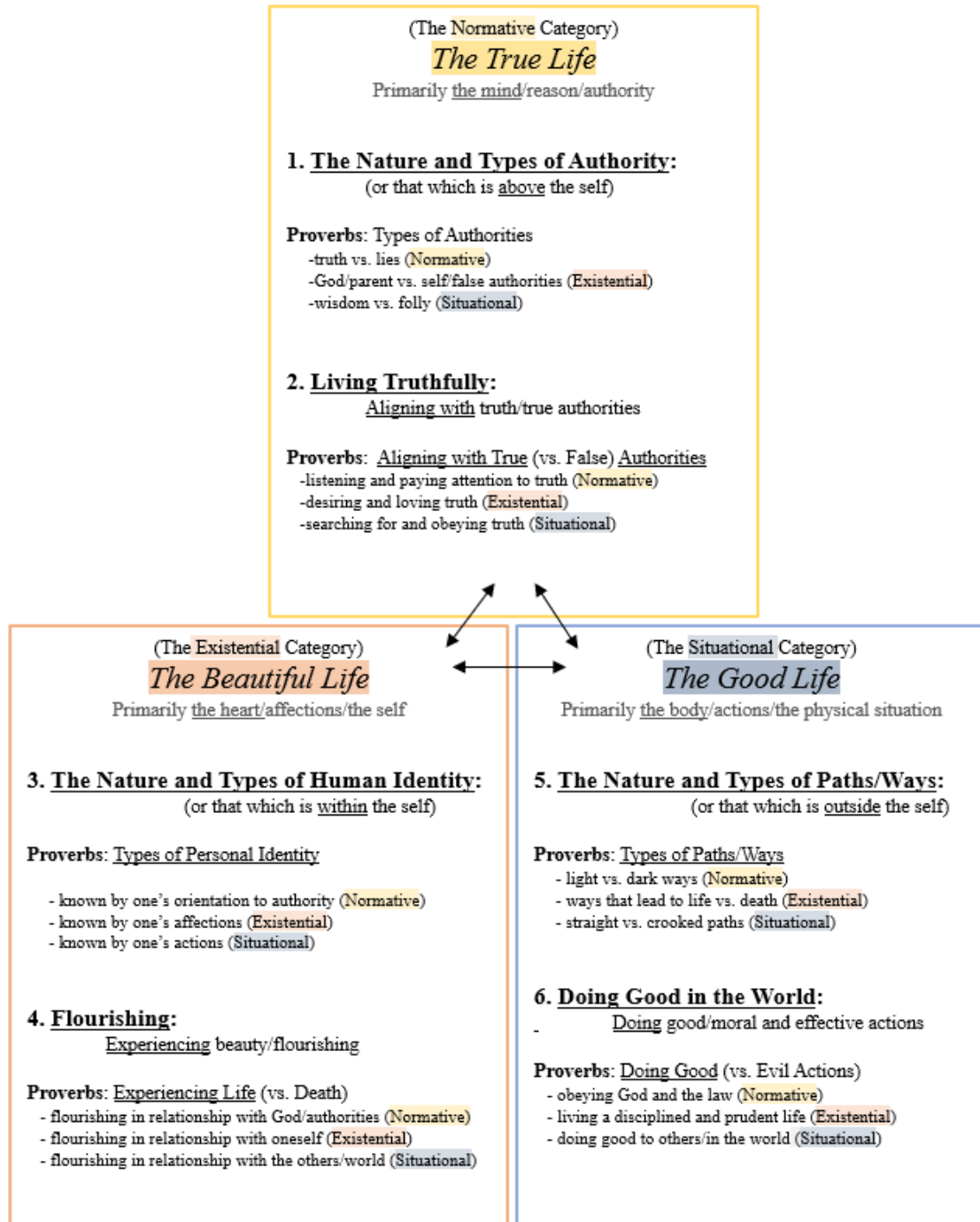
(The Normative Category)
The True Life
Primarily the mind/reason/authority

1. The Nature and Types of Authority:
(or that which is above the self)

Proverbs: Types of Authorities
- truth vs. lies (Normative)
- God/parent vs. self/false authorities (Existential)
- wisdom vs. folly (Situational)

2. Living Truthfully:
Aligning with truth/true authorities

Proverbs: Aligning with True (vs. False) Authorities
- listening and paying attention to truth (Normative)
- desiring and loving truth (Existential)
- searching for and obeying truth (Situational)

(The Existential Category)
The Beautiful Life
Primarily the heart/affections/the self

3. The Nature and Types of Human Identity:
(or that which is within the self)

Proverbs: Types of Personal Identity

- known by one's orientation to authority (Normative)
- known by one's affections (Existential)
- known by one's actions (Situational)

4. Flourishing:
Experiencing beauty/flourishing

Proverbs: Experiencing Life (vs. Death)
- flourishing in relationship with God/authorities (Normative)
- flourishing in relationship with oneself (Existential)
- flourishing in relationship with the others/world (Situational)

(The Situational Category)
The Good Life
Primarily the body/actions/the physical situation

5. The Nature and Types of Paths/Ways:
(or that which is outside the self)

Proverbs: Types of Paths/Ways
- light vs. dark ways (Normative)
- ways that lead to life vs. death (Existential)
- straight vs. crooked paths (Situational)

6. Doing Good in the World:
Doing good/moral and effective actions

Proverbs: Doing Good (vs. Evil Actions)
- obeying God and the law (Normative)
- living a disciplined and prudent life (Existential)
- doing good to others/in the world (Situational)

Figure 3. Created from source material
Source: John M. Frame, "A Primer on Perspectivalism," accessed July 27, 2023, https://frame-poythress.org/a-primer-on-perspectivalism; Proverbs (NLT).

The True Life: The Nature of Types of Authority in Proverbs

From the first chapter of Proverbs, Solomon acknowledges valid authorities from which true things can be known. He claims that the proverbs, which he has written and collected, are authoritative to teach "wisdom and discipline" and to know what is "right, just, and fair" (1:2-3). The wisdom Proverbs teaches is also declared a true authority. Solomon writes that everything wisdom says is right and true (8:6). It is a gift from God and comes from him (2:6). Every word of God, says Proverbs, "proves true" (2:6). The following analysis of the nature and types of authorities in Proverbs explores these seven concepts: truth; wisdom; fear of authorities; trust of authorities; authorities to listen to; and value judgments.

Truth

The Lord is the highest authority for truth. It is not what humans imagine it to be. Solomon says that just because a path seems right, does not mean that it is (16:25). The Lord sees and knows all things, including human thoughts and motivations. Although people often judge that they are pure and right, the Lord examines their hearts and knows that they are not (12:2). It is the Lord who sets the standard for fairness, says Solomon. (16:11). Humans need an authority higher than themselves to know truth and to walk truthfully.

Although God is the highest authority for truth, he has planted his truth within people which can be accessed by those with understanding (20:5). Solomon acknowledges that people can know true things, but that they do not need to know all things, nor can they. He says that no one can comprehend the realities of heaven and earth, and their control is limited as well (25:3). It is the Lord who directs people's steps.

They do not need to understand everything (20:24). They do not even know what tomorrow will bring (27:1).

Throughout Proverbs there is significant evidence that Solomon believes there is a transcendent truth that can be known, understood, and lived out. He acknowledges that there are things that reflect truth and are in alignment with truth. He writes that the heart of a person is an accurate reflection of the real person, and an honest answer is delightful. (24:26, 27:19). Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, he says, come from God (2:6). They point not only to the existence of that which is true, but also to the one who is the sovereign truth-giver. "The fear of the Lord," proclaims Solomon, "is the foundation of wisdom" (9:10). Those who acknowledge and respect this ultimate authority for truth, align themselves with that which is true. He states that the wise people who fear the Lord "are mightier than the strong and those with knowledge grow stronger and stronger" (24:5). Truth does not simply reside in the mind for Solomon, but it also lives in a physical reality where it is effective and powerful.

Wisdom

Wisdom points people to that which is true, including the very author of truth (2:6). Wisdom, declares Solomon, is an authority that can be trusted since everything that wisdom says is "right and true" (8:6). He asserts that wisdom is built solid and secure, and that wisdom's words are plain and clear to those with understanding and knowledge (8:9, 9:3).

Wisdom is not only true; it is aligned with true and good things. Solomon says that wisdom is aligned with righteousness (8:20). It is also connected with insight and

common sense (8:14). It is opposed to everything false, and it hates deception and all things devious and crooked (8:7–8).

Solomon declares, using anthropomorphic language, that not only is wisdom not hard to find, but it is also eager to be found (1:20–21). He says that she (lady wisdom) shouts and cries out with a loud voice to all (8:4). She cries out at every meeting place of the people (8:1–3). She actively invites everyone to join her and to experience the delights that come with her (9:3–5). Wisdom knows that flourishing ensues for those who align with her truth.

Fear of Authorities

Proverbs teaches that the Lord is the appropriate authority to be feared. It declares that the person who fears the Lord is to be greatly praised (31:30). It says that the fear of the Lord is foundational for true knowledge (1:7). Fearing the Lord is necessary for knowing truth, and it is praiseworthy to do it.

Proverbs warns that there are inappropriate authorities to fear. It claims that "fearing people is a dangerous trap" (29:25). The fear of people is not praiseworthy and true because it leads to dangerous entrapment.

Trust of Authorities

Trusting the Lord, writes Solomon, leads to both prosperity and safety (28:25, 29:23). The Lord is a trustworthy authority leading people to good things. He acknowledges that there is still work to do, such as preparing for battle, but ultimately one must, in the end, trust in the Lord (21:23). He also writes that wisdom is trustworthy.

Although many trust in strong fortresses, Solomon says it is wisdom in which one should trust (21:31).

Proverbs speaks of three things that should not be trusted: charm, flattery, and oneself. Solomon writes that "charm is deceptive" (31:30). It is not aligned with truth. He also speaks of flattery as something that is not honest and therefore should not be trusted (12:23). He says the most about the foolishness of trusting oneself. He declares that "those who trust in their own insight are foolish," and that "fools think their own way is right" (12:15, 28:26). He says that the guilty do not see themselves as guilty. They feel justified and declare themselves as innocent (12:15, 30:12).

Authorities to Listen To

It is the Lord, declares Solomon, who "gives the right answers" (16:1). He is the one who speaks the truth and should be listened to. Solomon also repeats, in varies ways, that one's mother and father are authorities to which one should listen. He writes, "listen" to one's father and "be wise" for the father teaches "wisdom's ways" and leads his child on "straight paths" (4:11, 23:19). He states that the correction of one's father and mother is to be listened to and their commands and discipline is the way to life (1:8, 6:23, 7:1–2).

The godly are also considered to be a true authority in Proverbs. They are known for their honesty (11:3). Solomon says, godly people give "wise advice" and speak "helpful words" that save lives (4:6, 10:31–32). He writes that if one listens to the godly, it leads to success (20:18).

The wise are also to be listened to. Solomon says that from a wise person flows wisdom (18:4). He states that they "give good advice," and their instruction leads to life

(13:14, 15:7). He says that they are known by the wise words that they speak and by their understanding (10:13, 16:21).

Solomon not only commends listening to these specific types of people but also to listening to others in general. He states that "the wise listen to others," and that "many advisors bring success" (12:15, 15:22). He affirms listening to those who are giving instruction and advice and to those who offer correction, adding that correction is necessary for learning (12:1,13:10, 23:12). The one thing that he does commend paying attention to, which is inside of the person, is the person's own guilty conscience (14:9). All other authorities for truth in Solomon's proverbs reside outside of the person.

Proverbs encourages people not to listen to their own declarations of innocence. It argues that people cannot cleanse their own hearts, nor be pure and free from sin by declaring it (20:9). Proverbs also warns that there are people to which one should not listen. It declares that the wicked and their advice are not to be attended to. Their words, he says, are "perverse," and their advice is "wicked" (10:32, 12:5–6).

Folly, as well, is not an authority for truth. Solomon writes that folly calls out for people to listen to her, but her ways lead to death and the grave (9:13-18). Solomon acknowledges that because there are bad actors in the world, not all criticism is valid (25:12) Wise people, however, should not ignore it. Instead, they are to be careful and thoughtful about it (13:16–18). They should never stop listening to instruction, or, declares Solomon, they will "turn [their] back on knowledge" (19:27).

Value Judgements

Solomon declares certain things to be inherently better than others; some he declares as the best. He names "getting wisdom" as "the wisest thing [one] can do!" And,

he says, "whatever else" people do, they should "develop good judgment" (4:7). Truth, Solomon believes, is the best thing to have, and one should never sell it for anything else (23:23). The heart, he declares, is to be protected above all things since "it determines the course of (one's) life" (4:23). Acquiring wisdom, never exchanging the truth for a lie, and protecting the desires of the heart are, according to Solomon, of the highest value.

Solomon also records many things to be better than others. Regarding the Lord, Solomon declares that he is more pleased when people do what is right than when they offer sacrifices to him (21:3). Regarding the self, Solomon writes that it is better to listen to a father's wisdom and to be satisfied by the spouse of one's youth than to listen to or be satisfied by immoral and promiscuous people (5:1–5, 5:18–20). Regarding the world and effectiveness in it, Solomon declares that the wise are mightier than the strong, and soft speech is more powerful than force (24:5, 25:15).

Wisdom and wise words are held up in superlative contrast to financial gain and power throughout many of Solomon's proverbs. He asserts that wisdom is "far more valuable" than riches or anything else one may desire (8:10–11). It is more precious and profitable than financial gain (3:14–15). Wisdom is also said to be better than strength. Solomon declares that it "conquer(s) the city of the strong and level(s) the fortresses in which they trust" (20:15, 21:22).

Internal Versus External

Solomon contrasts internal qualities or character with external qualities or actions. He states that beauty on the inside is better than beauty on the outside (11:22). He writes, "Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city" (16:32). Regarding riches, he declares that honesty and righteousness are better. He says

that being poor and honest is better than being dishonest and rich, and ill-gotten gain does not last (10:2, 19:1, 19:22, 28:6).

Solomon places a high value on internal peace and contrasts it with luxurious living, particularly the eating of good food and the beauty of lovely environs. In each case, internal peace wins out. He says that it is better to live alone in a bad place than to live with a quarrelsome person in a lovely place (21:9, 21:19, 25:4). And little food eaten in peace, he says, is better than "feasting—and conflict" (15:17, 17:1).

Quality Versus Quantity

Solomon also emphasizes that more is not always better. He writes, "Better to have little, with fear for the Lord than to have great treasure and inner turmoil (15:16). He continues in this theme when he writes that to "live humbly with the poor" is better than to "share plunder with the proud" (16:19). Both godliness and a good reputation, Solomon declares, are better than wealth (16:8, 22:1). Another concept, within this same theme, is that no matter what the godly give, it is better than more from the wicked. "Better the "words of the godly" than the worthless "heart of a fool," and "wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy" (10:20, 27:6).

The most scathing contrast that Solomon makes in Proverbs is saved for those he compares negatively to a fool. There are two verses that compare a fool with another type of person where the fool is considered the better option. He writes that "there is more hope for fools than someone who thinks they are wise," and "there is more hope for fools than someone who speaks without thinking" (26:12, 29:20). Since the fool is often negatively contrasted with the wise, Solomon is making a bold claim about the negative value of prideful thinking and thoughtless speech (1:5–7, 9:1–18, 13:20).

The True Life: Aligning with Truth in Proverbs

In the beginning of the second chapter of Proverbs, Solomon concisely and powerfully lays out a plan for gaining wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. He claims that truths can be found by right choices, right affections, and through effort.

He urges young people to "listen" to what he says and to "treasure" his commands (2:1). He tells them to do the internal work of tuning their "ears to wisdom" and "concentrating on understanding" (2:2). They are challenged by Solomon to use their voice to "cry out for insight" and to "ask for understanding." They are also exhorted to use their bodies to search and seek for truth as if they were looking for hidden treasure (2:4). Solomon claims that if truth is sought in this way, then understanding will follow, and knowledge will be gained (2:5–6). He promises that by actively pursuing truth, they will come to understand what is "right, just, and fair" (2:7-9). Solomon believes that living in alignment with truth is possible, and he lays out the ways young people can accomplish this throughout his proverbs. The following analysis of aligning with truth in Proverbs falls into five categories of action: listen and pay attention to true things; get wisdom and understanding through effort; trust, follow, and obey true things; what not to do with false things; and what not to do with true things.

Listen and Pay Attention to True Things

To walk in the truth of wisdom, Solomon urges the young to pay careful attention to their father's instruction, corrections, and commands. He tells them if they wish to be wise, they will listen to their father and pay careful attention to his words (4:20, 23:19). They are to listen to what wisdom says (2:1). Those who take to heart their father's

instructions and corrections, listening carefully to his counsel will gain good judgment and be wise (4:1–4, 4:20, 5:1–2, 6:20).

Solomon also urges them to listen to constructive criticism and corrections not only from their parents but also from others (1:8–9). He writes that if people listen to the constructive criticism and corrections of others, they will grow in understanding and become wise (15:31–32). And to the one who listens, Solomon says, correction can be a beautiful thing that crowns the person with grace and honor (1:8–9, 25:12).

Other things to listen to are advice and instruction, as well as common sense and discernment. Solomon says that listening to advice, instruction, and wise counsel makes one wise and successful (8:33, 20:18). And the young are to listen carefully and commit themselves to instruction and knowledge. To do so will make them wise for the rest of their lives (19:20, 23:12). Solomon highlights the truth of these things by enumerating the benefits people will receive when they align their lives to them. He writes that doing so will "refresh [ones] soul," "keep [one] safe on [their] way," keep them from stumbling, and enable them to sleep soundly and "without fear" (3:21–25).

Not only are the young to listen to wisdom and their parent's advice and commands, but they are also to understand, remember, and value them. Solomon commends using physical reminders (6:21–22, 7:3). He also tells them to write them deep in their heart (4:21, 7:1, 7:3). They are to treasure the commands of wisdom and love them like beloved family members (7:4). Wise people, writes Solomon, "treasure knowledge" (10:14).

Get Wisdom and Understanding Through Effort

Gaining wisdom and understanding takes effort. Solomon says that people should tune their ears to wisdom (2:2). They should cry out for insight and ask for understanding (2:3). Repeatedly the Proverbs tell its readers to look and to search (1:5, 2:4, 8:34). They are to look for wisdom and understanding like a hidden treasure (2:4). Following truth takes exploration. One must concentrate on understanding and explore the meaning of the riddles (1:4, 2:2). The people are told that if they look for wisdom, it will surely be found (8:17). And once found, they are to keep their eyes glued to it (17:24). They are instructed to guard their father's instructions like their own eyes (7:2).

Trust, Follow, and Obey True Things

There are several things that Solomon commends as true. These things are to be trusted and obeyed. One of them is the Lord. Solomon says to put one's trust in the Lord, and in so doing, joy and safety follow (16:20, 29:25). Wisdom, he says, should also be trusted (21:22). Solomon writes that a parent's wisdom and discipline are to be trusted and obeyed, for it protects the child (7:5, 7:22–27, 12:1).

Solomon also commends things to follow. He writes that his proverbs are true and, if followed, will bring insight, knowledge, and discernment (1:4–5). He states that commands are to be followed as well. He writes, "Those who respect a command will succeed" (13:13). He speaks often of following the "right path" (12:2). Those who fear the Lord, walk in wisdom, accept discipline, and are innocent and sensible. They follow the right and straight path that leads to life (8:5, 10:17, 15:21, 16:17, 21:8, 28:16).

What Not to Do with False Things

Solomon speaks not only of how to engage true things, but also how not to engage false things. He tells his listeners not to pay attention to false things or go looking for them. They are not to listen to sinners or their promises of enticement or even to follow their path (1:10-15). They are not to listen to folly or the false promises associated with folly that lead to death (9:18). Kings, declares Solomon, should not pay attention to liars or else "all [their] advisors will be wicked" (29:12). And no one should pay close attention to slander like liars do (17:4). He warns against paying attention to distractions and things not in one's control because they weigh people down and do not lead to wisdom (12:24, 17:24). He gives a particularly strong warning about going out and looking for evil. He assures those that do that they will surely find it (11:27).

Solomon also warns not to trust false things nor to be misled by them. One should not trust how something appears on the outside, such as smooth words, because they might be hiding a wicked and deceitful heart (26:23–26). Wealth is also not to be trusted or relied upon above God (11:4, 30:8–9). Solomon points out that wealth is not necessarily an indicator of wisdom, and it can disappear quickly (12:4–5, 28:11). People are not to be relied upon whose actions have not proved worthy of trust, nor are people to trust their own strength (11:7, 26:7).

Solomon warns that false things can mislead. He tells people not to be sidetracked by following evil since it does not lead to life. He declares that those who do evil are misled by sin and mislead others. The immoral person is one Solomon names as misleading others. He says that their words are sweet, but they are eventually poisonous and destructive (5:3–9). He tells people not let their heart be deceived by sinful seduction and to not let it be trapped by treacherous ambition (7:25, 11:6).

Solomon warns people not to do false things like lying, not keeping promises, or flattery, since these things are deceptive and cause harm to one's neighbor (25:11, 25:28, 29:5). Concealing wrong things like sin or adding to good and complete things like God's word, are both condemned as not walking truthfully (28:16, 30:5).

The Proverbs also warn not to follow false or crooked paths that lead to harm or death. It is the wicked and guilty that walk a crooked path enticing sinners to join them (1:10–15, 4:13, 21:8). Solomon tells the people not to follow them, since violent and corrupt people mislead their companions down a harmful path (4:13, 16:25, 16:29, 22:5). Following this path might seem right to a person, but if it is not aligned with what God says is true, it is the path leading to death (14:12).

What Not to Do with True Things

Solomon reveals several things that are unwise and dangerous to do with true things. Turning away or neglecting true things like good instruction will lead people off course and cause harm (1:5, 4:2, 8:33, 8:36, 10:17, 19:27). He tells people not to reject "the Lord's discipline" or his "divine guidance" (3:11–12, 29:18). Those "who stubbornly refuse to accept criticism will suddenly be destroyed," says Solomon (29:1). And those who "abandon the right path will be severely disciplined" (15:10).

But despising true things, like wisdom, correction, or even the Lord, he says, will lead to suffering and death. Those who hate wisdom, says Solomon, "injure themselves" and "love death" (8:36).

Summary of the True Life

According to Solomon, the Lord is the highest authority for truth, and wisdom is a gift from God, who is the author of all truth. For people to be wise, they must be in alignment with wisdom, which means that they are in a right relationship with the highest authority for truth. Solomon explains to his people that a right relationship with truth entails knowing truth, loving truth, and living according to it.

Solomon explains how living truthfully requires an engagement of the mind, the affections, and physical action. He tells people to pay attention to and concentrate on true things with their minds. They are to love wisdom and treasure knowledge with their affections. And they are to cry out for wisdom, look for it, and walk in wisdom's ways with their actions.

When people place themselves underneath the authority of true things, such as the Lord, wisdom, or a wise parent's instruction and correction, Solomon says they are promised protection and success. When people do not place themselves underneath the authority of true things but instead follow and obey false things, he says that they are misled, fall into harm, and fail in the world. The existential domain and the situational domain are tied to the normative (or authoritative) domain. When people are under a false authority, it impacts their identity and flourishing in the existential domain, and it impacts their physical experience within the situational domain.

The Beautiful Life: The Nature of Personal Identity in Proverbs

Solomon reveals the nature of people throughout his proverbs. He explains what is most real about a person, what can be known about them by God and others (their identity), and what impacts the internal essence of their slowly forming beliefs, desires,

and will (character). He declares that the internal is what is most real, but that the external reveals and impacts the internal. The heart, he says, accurately "reflects the real person" (27:19). Their internal feelings are not fully known by others, but they are known by God (14:10, 12:2, 21:2). What can be known by others, says Solomon, is the way that one acts. His proverbs declare that the way one acts is the way one will be known (10:11). People know the character of a person by their behavior (20:11). He says that people's bad choices show up not only in their behavior but also on their body (23:29–36). He declares that a person's face often reveals intent (16:30).

The book of Proverbs also teaches that things outside a person can have impact on their character and their identity. Solomon states that people become like those with whom they associate (13:20). If they engage with the foolish and the wicked, they can become like them (26:4). In a more positive direction, he says, "wisdom" from outside oneself "can enter [one's] heart" and make one wise (2:10). And the movement of time in a person's life can also impact how they are known. "The glory of the young," declares Solomon, "is their strength; the grey hair of experience is the splendor of the old" (20:29).

Solomon shows that people are identified by God and others by what is revealed internally in their hearts and externally in the physical world. They are identified negatively or positively by what is observed as their orienting authorities, the objects of their desires and affection, and their actions in the world. The personal identity categories found within Solomon's proverbs can be divided into six sections: those who are oriented to true things; those who love good things and despise bad things; those who do good

things; those who are oriented to false things; those who love bad things and despise good things; and those who do bad things.

Those Who are Oriented to True Things

Solomon instructs the young to accept and align with true authorities. If they do, he says, their identities will be good. The wise, Solomon says are those who accept a parent's discipline (12:1). They accept correction and learn from it, and in so doing become wiser still (15:5, 19:24). The godly, says Solomon, are those "directed by honesty" (11:5). The upright follow the path of light and accept instruction from their teachers (4:18. 9:9). The just, says Solomon, are those who understand justice completely because they follow the Lord (28:5).

The honest, the trustworthy, and the sensible are named by the truth by which they align their lives. The honest speak only the truth, Proverbs declares (14:5). The trustworthy are true to their word, and the sensible keep their eyes on the truth of wisdom (11:13, 17:24).

Those Who Love Good Things and Despise Bad Things

Solomon instructs the young to set their affections on good things. If they do, he says, their identities will be good. He says "the godly" are those who care about the poor, love to give, and appreciate wisdom, instruction, correction, and knowledge (9:8–9, 10:8, 15:14, 21:26, 29:7). Solomon names those who take pleasure in living wisely, the sensible (10:23).

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He also gives good identities to those who despise bad things. The godly, he says,
"hates lies," and the righteous "despise the unjust," (13:5, 29:27). God-fearers, Solomon
says, "hate evil" (8:13).

Those Who Do Good Things

Solomon instructs the young to do good things. If they do, he says their identities
will be good. To those who do good things that reflect God, he refers to them as the
godly. The godly, he says, walk with integrity (20:7). They are thoughtful before
speaking, and their words are a life-giving fountain (10:11, 15:28). They encourage
many, declares Solomon (10:21). And one can know the godly by what they do when
they are feeling unsafe. The godly, declares Solomon, "run to the Lord" (18:10).

Those who do certain good things are known as the wise, says Solomon. He
teaches that the wise are known by carefulness in their words and actions as well as the
self-control they show when they, or others around them, are angry (12:16, 13:16, 14:16,
16:14, 29:8–11). From the wise flow "wisdom," "wise speech," and "good advice," says
Solomon (15:7, 16:23, 18:4). They tell the truth, use few words, and do not make a show
of their knowledge. And, he says, the tongue of the wise "makes knowledge appealing"
(15:2).

In Proverbs, those known for being thoughtful in looking ahead are called the
prudent, and those who are thoughtful in their actions are called the sensible. Solomon
says that the prudent understand where they are going. They carefully consider their steps
and think before they act (14:8, 14:15, 21:29). They foresee dangers and take needed
precautions (22:3, 27:12). He says that the sensible person "stays on the right path,"
"controls their temper," "keeps quiet," and "overlook[s] wrongs" (11:12, 15:21, 19:11).

They are a person of understanding, according to Solomon, if they are "even-tempered" and "control their anger" (14:29, 17:27).

Solomon names others by the good that they do. He says that the patient person "calms a quarrel" (15:18). The obedient live wisely (18:7). He names those as upright who help blameless people, and those who travel a straight road, help the innocent (20:10, 21:8).

Solomon declares that those who are oriented to true things reap positive consequences. He says that those who align with wisdom are joyful, as well as those who trust in the Lord (16:20, 8:32). The wise, he says, bring joy to their fathers and inherit honor (3:35, 10:1). And the humble receive God's favor and are granted wisdom (3:34, 11:2).

Those who love good things and do good things reap positive consequences as well. Solomon says that for the happy-hearted person, life is a continual feast (15:15). The godly, he proclaims, are those who receive God's friendship, outlive the wicked, and have a refuge when they die (3:32, 14:32, 29:16). According to him, God also blesses the home of the upright (3:33). He states that the trustworthy and diligent workers prosper, while the prudent are crowned with knowledge (13:4, 14:18, 28:20).

Those Who Are Oriented to False Things

Solomon warns people against wrong postures of the mind, heart, and body that lead to being negatively identified. He instructs the young not to look at, trust, or align with false things. If they do, he says, their identities will be negative. Those who believe and trust wrong things are named as fools in Proverbs. Fools deceive themselves and think their own way is right, declares Solomon (12:15, 14:8). They trust their own insight

and have no interest in understanding; they want only to air their own opinions. (18:2, 28:26).

Those who do not see things rightly or look at the right things are identified negatively. Solomon says the fool does not see things with the eyes of wisdom (17:24). And concerning the immoral woman, he says that she staggers and does not understand; she ignores her covenant before God (2:17, 5:5–6).

Those Who Love Bad Things and Despise Good Things

Solomon instructs the young not to set their affections on bad things. If they do, he says, their identities will be bad. Fools, declares Solomon, love "doing wrong;" it is "fun" for them (10:23). They are so enamored with it that they "broadcast" their foolishness and "brag" about it (12:23, 13:16).

He names those who "take pleasure in [doing wrong]" as evil people. They "desire evil," he says, and enjoy the twistedness of it. (2:14, 21:10) Violent and evil people can not rest until they have done harm to others. It sustains and delights them (4:16–17). They are "eager for rebellion" (17:11).

The proud love themselves in ways that God condemns and punishes, says Solomon (12:5). They love excessive wealth, and Solomon names them as the greedy. They always want more, and they want it quickly, he says (21:26, 28:22). He declares the gossip as one who is eager to tell secrets and to listen to them (11:13, 17:4). And he names the quarrelers as those who love to quarrel and love sin (17:19).

He also gives bad identities to those who despise good things. Fools, he says, hate wisdom and despise their parent's discipline (1:7, 15:5, 15:20). They hate knowledge and the wisest of advice (1:22, 12:23). Fools laugh and take delight in the wrong things,

declares Proverbs. They "make fun of guilt" and have nothing to do with honor (14:9, 26:1).

Mockers (those humorously derisive of people and things), declares Solomon, relish their mocking (1:22). They are proud and haughty and despise the wise (12:24, 15:12). They refuse to listen to correction or rebuke; they hate it, and they hate those who do it (9: 7–8, 12:1, 13:1). They are known by the outcome of their mocking—they are mocked by God and never find wisdom (3:34, 14:6).

The wicked, declares Solomon, despise the godly (29:27). They "do not care at all" about "the rights of the poor" (29:7). "The blood-thirsty hate blameless people" (29:10). And those who are immoral, says Solomon, do not care for "the path to life" (5:6).

Those Who Do Bad Things

Solomon instructs the young not to do bad things or walk bad paths. If they do, they will be known and identified by those things. To those who do bad things, he refers to them as the wicked or evil people. He names those who rely on their feeble strength, the wicked, and those who squander their money on sin, the evil ones (10:14, 11:7). The wicked are known by the evil words and lies that flow out of them (15:28, 21:29). They plan trouble and hurt others. They stir up trouble and conceal violent intentions. (6:6–14, 16:27, 24:1–2). Solomon declares that they are cruel and hurt those who correct them. The wicked cause shame and disgrace (9:7, 12:10, 13:5).

The angry, declares Solomon are hot-tempered and start fights. They commit all kinds of sin and do foolish things (14:7, 29:22). The violent, he says, mislead their companions down a harmful path (16:29).

Solomon identifies the fool by all manner of bad actions. They are "quick-tempered" and "vent their anger;" they "insist on quarreling" (12:16, 20:3, 29:11). They rush ahead with reckless confidence and make foolish choices (14:16, 26:11). A fool speaks proverbs but does not live them out (26:7). And even their foolish speech is said in unappealing ways (15:2, 26:7). They "feed on trash," spend everything they get, and tear down their own houses (14:1, 14:4, 21:20). He calls those who plan trouble and hurt others, fools. He says they cause "resentment" and "bring grief" to their parents. They attack when confronted with their foolishness. And their "schemes," he says, "are sinful" (24:9).

Solomon calls those whose hands refuse to work the lazy people (21:25). He says they are as bad as those who destroy things (18:9). They make small choices of sleeping and resting too much, ending in poverty (1:6–11). They make deceptive excuses for their laziness, even though they have many opportunities to do the right thing (16:14, 22:13, 26:13). He says they choose temporary pleasure over future gain and start projects without finishing them (12:27, 19:15, 19:24, 26:15). And under all these indictments, Solomon declares, they still consider themselves exceptionally wise (26:16).

Those who go around telling everybody's secrets, he calls a gossip (11:13). And those who believe everything they are told he calls simpletons (14:15). He says they are not only clothed in foolishness, but they insist on being simpletons (1:22, 14:18). The immoral woman, he says is "brash," "rebellious," and conniving. She knows what she is doing and is deceitful, and treacherous. She uses seductive words and "abandons her husband" (2:17, 7:11–21). Solomon says that she seduces people toward their destruction (5:1–6).

Solomon instructs the young not to walk bad paths. If they do, he says, they will be known and identified by those things. He names those who breathe lies and are traitors as false witnesses (14:5, 14:25). They align their words to untrue things.

He names those who walk a crooked path, the guilty (21:8). He says they choose dark paths instead of the right way and their words are twisted (2:12–15). And to the one whose crooked path leads to death and destruction, Solomon names the immoral (5:5–6).

Solomon attaches names to those who reap negative consequences from false orientations, disordered affections, and bad actions. Those who align with untrue things, he names the deceivers, and states that they will eventually be exposed in public (26:26). Those who are misled or mislead others and become trapped by sin, he calls the evil and the wicked people (13:6, 21:27, 29:6).

Those who love bad things like sleeping and resting too much are called the lazy ones. (6:6–11). He says they choose temporary pleasure and end up hungry and in pain (19:15). "Despite their desires," he declares, their way is hindered, and they come to ruin because they refuse to work (15:19, 21:25).

Those who do bad things like speaking without thinking or constantly quarrelling, he names the fool or the simpleton. He says that they will suffer because they do not look ahead or take precautions (10:8, 10:13, 18:6–7). Those who do detestable things in the Lord's eyes he calls the violent and the corrupt (3:31–32, 22:5). He says their homes are cursed by the Lord, and "they have no future" (3:33, 24:20). They are "crushed by disaster," and their light is eventually "snuffed out" (14:32, 24:20).

Identity is directly connected with several factors in Proverbs. It arises from what is inside, which the Lord sees, such as attitudes and desires. It is also connected with

things on the outside, like physical actions and the consequences of those actions. For those Solomon identifies positively, he names the many ways they flourish. For those identified negatively, he warns of pending consequences. He describes how to experience flourishing in all areas of life and what causes them to not experience flourishing.

The Beautiful Life: Personal Flourishing in Proverbs

Solomon lays out for the young what a flourishing life entails. He uses emotive words that appeal to human desires, such as "satisfying" and "life-giving," "safety" and "prosperity" (3:17, 13:14, 21:15, 29:23). The use of "heart," (or *lev*, in Hebrew) is used metaphorically in Proverbs for the inner man, or "the command center of the soul—the mind, the will, and the affections."[92] As such, it is central to human flourishing. Solomon writes that the heart is the "wellspring of life" and determines its course (4:23).

Solomon's proverbs urge the young to choose right authorities, attitudes, and actions that lead to flourishing in all domains of life, such as one's relationships and experiences with God, oneself, and the world—Frame's normative, existential, and situational domains respectively. His proverbs dissuade the young from choices that lead to spiritual dissatisfaction and harm, physical decay and death, and social shame and disgrace. (6:32, 12:24, 11:2, 15:1–2, 19:3, 25:6–7). Solomon persuades his listeners to choose the beautiful life; one filled with flourishing and fulfillment in every domain.

Solomon names several ways that people flourish in their relationship with right authorities and actions. He reveals that the soul is edified by wisdom and encourages people to enjoy wisdom because it is tasty and good, like food for the body (24:13–14).

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[92] "Strong's Hebrew: 3820. לֵב (Leb) -- Inner Man, Mind, Will, Heart."

The soul, he says, is refreshed by common sense and discernment. (3:23–24, 25:25).

Discipline, says Solomon, cleanses away evil and purifies that heart (20:30, 21:21). The

following analysis of personal flourishing in Proverbs falls into three flourishing

categories: flourishing internally; flourishing externally; and flourishing relationally; and

three non-flourishing categories: not flourishing internally; not flourishing externally; and

not flourishing relationally.

Flourishing Internally

Living according to the wisdom of Proverbs leads to the internal flourishing of the

self (existential). Joy, fullness of life, satisfaction, confidence, and peace are some of the

benefits that Solomon connects with doing good things and aligning to true things.

Solomon reveals that to experience joy, one should find, listen to, align with, and acquire

wisdom (2:10, 3:13, 8:34–35). He says that whoever finds "wisdom" finds life and joy.

(8:32). He encourages the young to gain "knowledge" and "understanding" because it

fills their hearts with "joy" (2:10, 3:13). Those who "trust the Lord" and "obey the law"

are joyful, declares Solomon, as well as those who "plan peace" (16:20, 29:18). Their

hearts and life are full of joy, he says (12:20, 13:9).

To experience fullness of life, Solomon maintains that one must "fear the Lord."

He says that fearing the Lord leads to life and is a "life-giving fountain" (10:23, 14:27).

He also declares that listening to and obeying a father's "instructions" is the "key to life"

and flourishing (4:10, 4:13). Accepting the commands and instructions of God, parents,

and the wise, he says, leads to fullness of life (6:23–26, 13:9, 13:14). Pursuing

righteousness and love leads people to "find life" (21:21). Solomon explains that living a

life of discretion and good deeds will be like "a life-giving fountain" and "a tree of life"

(11:30, 12:4, 16:22). And "for the happy heart," he declares, "life is a continual feast" (15:15).

Solomon names other aspects of human flourishing and how to experience them, such as satisfaction, confidence, and peace. He says that satisfaction is found in wisdom's ways (3:16–18). It is also achieved through one's interaction with true words. Storing the "commands" of the Lord in one's heart and using "right" and "wise words" are "satisfying" and lead to a satisfying life (3:1–2, 18:20). Having one's hope fulfilled comes through godly living and fear of the Lord. That which the godly "hope" for "will be granted," says Solomon, and those who "fear the Lord" will "not be disappointed" (10:24, 23:17).

Another benefit of godliness is the boldness and confidence that comes with it (28:1). He says much about how to experience peace. Listening to wisdom and paying attention to common sense and discernment keeps one "untroubled by fear of harm" and allows one not to be afraid of the "disaster" and "destruction" that "come [to] the wicked" (1:33, 3:21–26). Living a life that "please[s] the Lord," Solomon says, makes even one's "enemies at peace with them" (16:7). And for a future peace of mind, Solomon urges parents to discipline their children (29:15–17).

Flourishing Externally

Solomon addresses people's desire to flourish in the external world (situational). Many of the proverbs allude to more than the temporal, physical world, but they also include them and are addressed in this section. He gives many promises that address concerns such as safety and protection, long life, healing and refreshment, and material blessings.

Solomon makes numerous appeals in his proverbs to people's desire for safety and security. He lays out ways they can be safe, secure, and protected. "The Lord is [a person's] security," he says in unequivocal terms (3:26). He declares that those who "trust in the Lord" walk in wisdom and integrity, and follow the path of the virtuous and godly, are safe (10:9, 14:3, 14:16, 16:17, 29:25). He urges the people to be "cautious and avoid danger" like the wise people do, and to have "many advisors" for the safety of their nation (11:14, 14:16). He says that common sense and discernment keep people safe (3:23).

Solomon shows his people how to be protected. He exhorts them to follow, pay attention to, and fear the right authority. He urges them to love and accept the right things and walk in the right paths. Proverbs says that God is a "shield to all who come to him for protection" (30:5). He is the people's security (3:26). He protects their property, and his name is their strong fortress 15:23, 18:10). Solomon tells them to run to God for protection (18:10). He also says that wisdom protects from evil, and wise instruction from the snares of death (2:12, 13:4). Love wisdom, he says, and pay attention to her, and she will be a guardian and protector (4:6, 7:3–4). To be protected from disaster and destruction, Solomon tells the young to follow their father's wisdom and to listen to and pay attention to "common sense and discernment" (3:21–23). Godliness, he says, guards the path of the blameless, and just living brings God's protection (13:6, 4:22–26, 31:27). The godly and those who walk with integrity are protected by God and have a secure foundation during the storms of life. Solomon promises that they will have a refuge when they die (2:7, 10:25, 13:6, 14:32). He declares that those who will be rescued are the ones

who fear the Lord, walk in wisdom, and are godly and blameless. (2:12, 11:6, 14:27, 28:18).

If people wish to live, Solomon says, they should fear the Lord and obey their parents. They should live wise and godly lives that exhibit self-control and discretion. "Fear of the Lord lengthens one's life," says Solomon, and wisdom "adds years to one's life" (9:11, 10:27). The "way to life" is to obey God and your parents and to accept their discipline with self-control (3:1–2, 4:4, 4:10, 6:2, 6:23, 7:1–2, 13:3, 15:27, 19:16, 28:16). Godly living, declares Solomon, is the path to life, and the godly will outlive the wicked (12:28, 16:31, 29:16). Right living, he says, "save[s] one from death" (10:2, 11:4). Those who hate corruption "will live" and those who are disciplined and use self-control will "have a long life."

Proverbs promises rewards and blessings to those whose actions and attitudes are godly, and to those who align to wisdom's words. Regarding godly actions, it says, "The godly are showered with blessings," and their reward "will last" (10:6, 11:18). It promises that God "blesses the home of the upright," and that the honest "inherit good things." It proclaims sexual fidelity leads to a "fountain of blessing" (3:33, 11:31, 14:11, 28:1028:20, 5:15-18). And to those who are generous and give to the poor, it says, they "will lack nothing," and "will prosper" (11:25, 28:27). Both the godly and hard worker are said to be blessed by God with "plenty to eat" (10:3, 20:13, 28:17, 13:2). And those who steward their money wisely are said to be blessed with "wealth and luxury" (21:20).

Regarding those who align to wisdom's words, Proverbs says that they will be blessed with things like wealth and freedom from hunger. It states that "humility and fear of the Lord leads to riches" (22:4). And it says that "healing of the body and strength for

the bones," come from trusting God and turning from evil (3:5–8). Those with knowledge, it promises, grow stronger and stronger, and those who hang on to common sense and discernment sleep soundly (3:21, 3:24, 24:5). Regarding those with godly attitudes, Proverbs declares that they will receive a physical reward. It says that a "peaceful" and "cheerful heart" is good for the body (14:30, 17:22).

Flourish Relationally

Solomon tells his people how they can flourish relationally. He teaches about three relational categories of flourishing: flourishing with God/authority, flourishing with oneself, and flourishing with others/world. Those with a right posture toward God, who obey him, and walk in his ways, "receive favor from the Lord," says Solomon. (3:34, 8:35). He will hear the "prayers of the righteous" and will offer his "friendship to the godly (3:32, 15:29).

Wisdom, and the wisdom of others, declares Proverbs, leads to the flourishing of oneself. "To acquire wisdom is to love [oneself]," it says (19:8). And if one "embraces" and "prizes" wisdom, Proverbs promises that the person will be honored by her. (4:8–9). Being sharpened by the wisdom of another, declares Proverbs, adds to one's own flourishing (9:12, 27:17).

To flourish with others, says Proverbs, one is encouraged to fear the Lord and lead a godly life. The godly life of which Proverbs describes is one marked by working hard, being sensible, and doing good to others. (3:3–4, 12:24, 13:5, 19:6). Those who do these things "will be greatly praised," and their success will be celebrated by the whole community (11:10, 31:30). Searching for good and planning to do good leads to "favor" and receiving "unfailing love and faithfulness," it declares (11:27, 14:22).

Respect and honor from others come to those who are wise and humble and live a righteous, sensible life. Proverbs declares that a person with good sense is respected, and a sensible person wins admiration. It says that humility proceeds honor while wisdom brings honor, and those who overlook a wrong earn respect. (3:35, 8:10, 14:33, 18:12, 19:11, 22:4, 29:23). It also states that the virtuous and capable are praised and honored by the people (31:28–29).

He argues that vocational success (relationship with others and the physical world) results from listening to, valuing, and doing the right things (4:8, 12:3, 12:7, 12:12, 14:4, 24:25). Solomon says that listening to and acting according to wisdom brings success and makes people "great" (4:8, 8:14). He declares that those who listen to "wise council" from many advisors will have success, as well as those who "respect a command" and "commit [their] actions to the Lord" (13:13,15:22, 16:3, 20:18).

Not Flourishing Internally

Solomon not only teaches the people how to flourish in his proverbs, but he also reveals what causes them not to flourish. He describes the losses that certain attitudes and actions bring to a person. He shows that bad choices bring relational and physical consequences (23:29-36).

Regarding internal flourishing, Solomon says that people's minds will be impacted, and they will be deceived. He states that those who plan and plot evil "will be lost" and their hearts will be filled with deceit (12:20, 14:22). They will learn nothing and have no common sense (7:7, 17:10). Solomon shows that their emotions will also be impacted negatively. He says that wrong desires and actions ruin joy, peace, and satisfaction. He says that lying "crushes the spirit" and cheating on one's spouse leads to

emptiness and dissatisfaction (5:10–14, 15:4). The cravings of those who do wicked things, he says, will not be satisfied (10:3,13:2).

Not Flourishing Externally

Wrong desires and actions also lead to physical consequences (23:29–36). Those who are wicked feel unsafe and flee from nothing, says Solomon (28:1). Their actions make them and those around them unsafe. The poor are in severe danger under a wicked ruler, he warns (28:15). "A fool's proud talk" ends up in a beating, but "confronting a fool" is dangerous for others (14:3, 17:12). Violence, harm, and a lack of safety, claim the proverbs, are the result for the naïve, the fool, the imprudent, and the wicked (7:8–9, 11:15, 17:12–13,18:10, 20:17, 26:17).

Protection and rescue will not be granted to the wicked, the thoughtless, and the lazy, declares Proverbs. That which the wicked fear will come to pass, and evil people are "trapped by sin" and "held captive" (5:22, 10:22, 29:6). Those who make rash and thoughtless promises get trapped, says Solomon, as well as those who listen to liars (20:25, 21:6, 23:27–28). The lazy, he says, become enslaved (12:24).

Both the wicked and the foolish are heading for destruction and death (12:7). Sickness and suffering are the consequences of their choices, he explains. They will be "suddenly destroyed," and their pride and haughtiness lead them to it (6:12–15, 16:18, 28:18, 12:18). Fools, he says, are "destroyed by their own complacency" (1:32, 10:21). And those who hate commands and corrections or insult their parents are heading to their death (15:10, 19:16, 20:20). They follow a path that "seems right" to them, but it is not God's way. It is the way to the grave (2:18–19, 5:5, 14:12).

Health, as well, is impacted by the choices people make. Jealousy, says Solomon, is like "cancer to the bones" (14:30). Laziness brings about suffering (31:27). Those who choose temporary pleasure, end up hungry and in pain (19:15). And a broken spirit, he says, "saps a person's strength" (17:22). Trusting the immoral woman or an unreliable person is poisonous and destructive and will cause pain (5:3–4, 25:19). The body, Solomon shows, does not flourish with ungodly behavior.

Proverbs describes how money and wealth disappear and how people end up in poverty. It says that although evil people may have money momentarily, they will soon lose it (11:19, 28:8). Those who use others end up in poverty as well as people who "carouse with drunkards and gluttons" or "prostitutes" (6:26, 22:16, 23:20, 29:3). And being foolish will produce poverty and hunger. Proverbs says that fools "spend whatever they get," and those who "love pleasure" become poor (21:17, 21:20). "Hasty shortcuts" and "chas[ing] fantasy" ends in poverty, it says (21:5, 28:19–20). And for those who do have wealth, Proverbs says that it is not always a blessing if they rely upon it above God (30:8–9).

Those who are foolish and ungodly will also not receive rewards or blessings. The crooked heart and those who conceal their sins "will not prosper," declares Proverbs (17:20, 28:13). They will also receive negative consequences for their actions. Concerning the simpleton, it says, they do not look ahead, and they "suffer the consequences" (27:12). And the bad things they do to others will come back on them, says Proverbs (26:27). The "false witness will not go unpunished, nor will a liar escape (19:5, 19:9).

Disaster and trouble mark the lives of the godless. The wicked and unjust, as described by Proverbs, "fall beneath the load of their sin," are "crushed by disaster," and "have their fill of trouble" (11:5, 12:21, 14:32). Ignoring wisdom's advice and rejecting correction leads to trouble, disaster, and calamity (1:25-27). Foolish babble "invites disaster," and "associat[ing] with fools" leads people into trouble (10:14, 13:20). For the lazy and despondent, says Solomon, "every day brings trouble" (15:15, 24:30–34).

The wicked and foolish are also marked by failure and ruin, and they have no success or stability. "[Do not] envy the wicked," warns Solomon, because they "have no future" (24:19–20). And those who go against the godly, he says, will eventually fail (24:14–16). The wicked, says Solomon, are without a foundation, and they will never have stability. They will be "removed from the land," he says (10:25, 10:30, 12:3). "The mouths of fools are their ruin," and because the lazy refuse to work, they "come to ruin" (18:7, 21:25).

Not Flourishing Relationally

Those who are not rightly aligned with God or his ways are warned in Proverbs of the negative impact it will have on their relationships. Proverbs declares that these people will not flourish with God, themselves, or others. "The Lord is far from the wicked," says Solomon, and they "are detestable to [him]" (3:32, 15:29). He "mocks the mockers" (3:34). They will be judged by him, and their houses cursed (3:33, 11:23, 14:11). He will "severely discipline" those who "abandon the right path," warns Solomon, and to those who close their eyes to the misfortune of others, they "will be punished" (15:10, 17:5, 28:27).

There is no flourishing in one's relationship with others, says Solomon, when evil and foolish choices are made. Schemers are hated; fools cause resentment; and "everyone detests a mocker" (14:7, 24:9, 27:3). Dwelling on a fault ruins friendship (18:19, 17:9). But sleeping with someone else's spouse, warns Solomon, "will cost [people] their life (6:26).

Respect and honor are lost through prideful, selfish, and immoral living. Pride, says Solomon, "ends in humiliation" and also disgrace (11:2, 29:23). Slandering others makes one a fool" (10:18). And fools," he continues, "are put to shame." They have nothing to do with honor (3:35, 26:1). "Doing wrong," he says, "leads to disgrace" (18:3). And listening to immoral people over wise people leads to "public disgrace" (5:10–14).

It is not only community relationships that are harmed by godless living, but also one's relationship to oneself. Solomon says that the man who commits adultery "destroys himself" (6:32). And those who reject discipline "harm [themselves] (15:32). Too much of a good thing, he declares, is bad for the self, and so is seeking one's own honor (25:16, 25:27).

Summary of the Beautiful Life

Relational, physical, and emotional flourishing is described in detail throughout the proverbs of Solomon. People are promised that if they listen to wisdom and accept its authority, and if they love it, and walk in its ways, they will receive the many benefits described. They are also warned that if they listen to, set their hearts on, and follow a false authority, they will experience disaster, destruction, and ultimately death.

The heart of a person, Solomon says, determines the course of their life. It is the heart that determines what is authoritative, what is ultimately desirable, and what actions to take. Through his proverbs, Solomon reveals that these decisions become how a person is known or identified by God and others. Identity is always relational in Proverbs. It is not presented as something a person names for themself. God is said to know the heart of a person. Eventually, the internal heart of a person makes its way into the external world where others can observe its physical manifestations. They see the paths that a person takes and what they do and do not do, and they are known accordingly. They are known as the righteous and the wicked, the wise and the foolish, and variations on those themes, such as the simple, the prudent, the mockers, and the peacemakers. The character of a person is slowly formed and shaped by the small choices of the heart (what they believe, desire, and do). Their evolving character informs their subsequent actions, which in turn impacts their heart. And the heart, according to Solomon, is the source of life and flourishing (4:23). But what actions constitute good actions and shape the heart in ways that lead to flourishing, and what actions are bad and lead to the loss of flourishing? And what is the nature of the situation in which humans make these choices?

The Good Life: The Nature and Types of the Situations in Proverbs

The proverbs of Solomon describe the nature of the situation in which people live. They demarcate the types of people in the world that one will encounter, the types of paths that they take, and the nature of those ways. Solomon categorizes the people that one may encounter "along the way" by internal and external measures. He identifies them by the manifestations of their heart and by what they possess. He says they will either align with truth or falsehood (the integrous and treacherous people), or they will do good

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or bad things (the godly and wicked people). Regarding their physical belongings, he says that some will possess much and some little (the rich and poor people) (2:12, 2:21–22, 22:2).

Regarding the types of "paths" or "ways" people take, Solomon says there are light and dark ways (truth), ways that lead to life and death (beauty), and straight and crooked paths (goodness) (2:13, 2:15, 2:18–19, 4:11–15, 4:26, 10:17, 12:28, 14:12). It also names these paths by their nature and the types of people who take them. The proverbs say that there are paths taken by "virtuous" and "upright" people that "lead away from evil" and towards life, and paths taken by the virtue-less and unrighteous people that lead towards evil and away from life (15:19, 16:17). Proverbs explains that one will know if a path leads to life (flourishing) by the types (or identity) of people on the path. The following analysis of the nature and situations in Proverbs falls into four categories: the nature of the world and God's interaction with it; the nature of people and their interaction with the world; the nature of the world in which people work and live; and the nature of justice.

The Nature of the World and God's Interaction with It

Proverbs describes the nature of the world and God's interaction with it. The physical world is described as created from the Lord's "wisdom," "understanding," and "knowledge" (3:19–20). Wisdom is described as formed by the Lord before creation and present with him in the act of creation (8:22–31). The nature of God's interactions with the world are described intellectually, affectively, and practically.

Solomon declares that the Lord knows and discerns. He says, "The Lord is watching everywhere," and his eye sees both "the evil and the good" (15:3). He "sees

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clearly" everything people do and the path they take (5:21). He knows deeply the human heart and sees and "expos[es] every hidden motive" (15:11, 20:27) He "tests the heart" and brings consequences aligned with the results of the testing (17:3, 21:12).

There are behaviors that God approves and delights in, declares Solomon, and those which God condemns and detests. The Lord is pleased by godliness and "integrity" (15:9, 11:20). He "approves those who are good" and "delights in [their] prayers" (12:2, 15:8). He "delights in" those whose words are pure and true and whose actions are fair and just (11:1, 12:22, 15:23). Solomon declares these things not only about God but also a good father and a good king (15:19, 16:13, 23:15).

Solomon declares that the Lord condemns and detests wicked and evil ways and plans (12:2, 15:9, 15:26). He hates those who do not live with integrity and detests their prayers and sacrifices (15:8, 6:16–19, 28:9). The Lord detests the misuse of power, says Solomon. He declares that "acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent" are both detestable to him. And "those who oppress the poor," he says, "insult their Maker" (14:31, 17:15). To those who "sow discord" or rejoice when their enemy stumbles, Solomon assures them that the Lord is displeased (6:19, 24:17–18).

It is clear throughout Proverbs that God is in control of the practical and physical aspects of life. Solomon says that "the Lord has made everything for his own purposes" and "no plan can stand against [him]" (19:21, 16:4, 21:30). The Lord, Solomon claims, directs, and determines people's steps, both the good people and the bad (16:9, 16:33, 20:24, 21:1, 22:12). He also is the one who gives good things to people, like common grace and the ability to see and hear. He gives these things to "the oppressor and the poor alike" (19:14, 20:12, 29:13).

The nature of the physical body and its parts, according to Proverbs, is that they have the capacity for misuse when animated by bad motives and attitudes. The proverbs cite this truth in the following figurative phrases: a tongue that lies, eyes full of pride, a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, and hands that kill the innocent. (6:16–19, 11:20, 12:22).

The Nature of People and Their Interaction with the World

Solomon acknowledges that it is human nature to believe, to feel, and to do certain things. People's appetites and perceptions are impacted by their present circumstances, he explains (27:7). And "human desire is never satisfied," he declares (27:20). Physical needs, he claims, motivate people toward action (16:26).

Proverbs describes the nature of different types of people as well as what is common to most. Many, it says, will lie to get what they want or claim to be one thing, but their actions prove otherwise (13:7, 20:6, 20:14). People, in general, are drawn to money, abundance, and those who give gifts (14:20, 19:4–6). The wealthy, says Solomon, rule those who are poor, but everyone, even the poor, have the capacity to oppress others (27:7, 28:3).

Proverbs teaches that people will be known by the way that they act (10:11). Their character is reflected internally and externally (31:10). Those who follow the Lord "understand justice," but those who do evil do not (28:5). The nature of the wicked, Proverbs explains, is marked by their poor relationship with justice. They do not understand it, nor do they care about it. They pervert it and make a mockery of it. And they are enactors of all kinds of injustice (17:23, 19:28, 28:5, 29:7).

The Nature of the World in Which People Work and Live

Proverbs describes the nature of the world in which people work and live. Regarding the nature of work, Solomon teaches that the manner in which one works determines one's financial outcome (10:4–5). Success he says, takes work, but he assures people that with work, comes profit (10:4, 14:23).

Regarding the nature of the world in which people live, Proverbs says certain situations with certain people are inevitable. There will be dangerous places, times, and situations, and there will be evil people, in hidden places without accountability, who speak false words (7:8–22). "Storms in life," Solomon promises, will come (10:25). But for the godly, that which they hope for "will be granted." And conversely, what the wicked fear will come to pass, he declares (10:24).

The Nature of Justice

Solomon describes the nature of justice through many of his proverbs. He makes clear that justice "comes from the Lord" and is ultimately enacted by the Lord (24:12, 29:26). Wisdom is aligned with justice, he says, and justice is brought about through wisdom (8:18–20). Solomon teaches that the Lord demands people reflect justice in their actions. They are to use accurate scales and balances (16:11). He says that injustice particularly harms the poor (13:23).

There are differences in how people respond to justice, but the Lord always responds consistently. "Justice," says Proverbs, "is a joy to the godly, but it terrifies evildoers" (21:15). And those who are guilty can feel innocent and justify themselves. Often, they do not see themselves as guilty (30:12, 30:20). But nothing is hidden from God. And Proverbs says he hates "acquitting the guilty" or "condemning the innocent."

He "detests double standards of every kind" (20:10, 20:23, 21:12). The Lord will enact justice on the wicked and will defend the innocent (21:12, 23:10–11). Proverbs declares "God will repay all people as their actions deserve" because he knows and sees people's hearts (24:12). Proverbs highlights that the Lord defends the poor, needy, and defenseless, and he ruins those who exploit them (22:23, 23:10–11).

Rewards and punishments arise from what people do. "Good people," says Solomon, "receive their reward," and "evil people will surely be punished." Solomon names these evil people as the proud, the rebellious, the liars, and those who rejoice at the misfortune of others. He says they will surely be punished (12:5, 17:5, 17:11, 19:5). Those who reject God's wisdom will "get what they deserve" (11:21–31, 14:14). Sometimes, he says, the same consequences for different types of people yield different results (17:10).

All who do just things, Solomon promises, will reap positive results, while those who do unjust things will harvest destruction and "disaster" (22:8). "It will go well," Solomon says, for those who judge fairly and "convict the guilty" (24:24–25, 29:14). The "credible witness," he says, "will be allowed to speak." But the "false witness will be cut off" (21:28). Solomon points out that although evil people might gain wealth and position, it eventually ends up with the godly (13:22, 14:19). Sin, declares Solomon, becomes its own punishment (27:1). When people ignore the poor, Solomon tells them, "[they] will be ignored in their time of need" (21:13).

The choices and character of a leader impact their people (28:12). A just king "detests wrongdoing," says Proverbs, and gives stability to the nation (29:4, 16:12). When the wicked are in authority, sin flourishes (29:16). They demand bribes and destroy

a nation (29:4). Proverbs says that being given over to one's appetites, such as craving and guzzling alcohol, is not consistent with justice (31:4–5). Those who enact justice bring flourishing to those around them and their nation. Proverbs not only explains the nature of justice and what is good but also how to live it out in the world.

The Good Life: Doing Good in the Physical World in Proverbs

Solomon begins his proverbial teachings by laying out their overarching purpose. He explains that it is twofold. Firstly, "their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise" (1:2). He continues, saying, "Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, and to do what is right, just, and fair" (1:3). The telos of the proverbs, as presented by Solomon, is an embodiment of Wisdom and understanding in the world.

Throughout Proverbs, Solomon teaches the people what is good and how to do good things. He uses action verbs such as "search," "prepare," "help," and "rescue," to emphasize that the undertaking is physical and requires effort (11:27, 14:21, 21:26, 24:27). Trusting God and seeking his will is said to show people what is good and the right path to take (3:5–6). But, declares Solomon, doing good also brings about an understanding of the good. He says that being honest, just, and faithful will enable a person to understand what is "right, just and fair" (2:7–9). Solomon lays out for his people a blueprint for doing good things and eschewing bad things so that they may be good, wise, and successful. The following analysis of doing good in Proverbs falls into three "good" categories: leading justly; living virtuously; and doing good to others, and three "evil" categories: leading unjustly; living unvirtuously; and harming others.

Leading Justly

Wisdom, declare the proverbs, is needed by leaders to "make just decrees" and "righteous judgments" (8:15). The affections of godly leaders are to align with the good. They should care about the rights of the poor and hate corruption. (28:16, 29:7). They should not show partiality or overlook crime, even when committed by those in need (6:30–31, 28:21). And their judgments should fit the offense and the nature of the offender. They are commended by the proverbs to never judge unfairly or show favoritism. They must listen to both sides of the story to be a just leader (16:10, 18:17).

Discipline and correction should be meted out differently for different types of people, declare the proverbs. A wise king separates out the wicked and punishes them (20:26). Mockers should be punished, and fools disciplined; by doing so, the simpleminded become wiser (19:25, 19:29, 21:11). "Hot-tempered people must pay the penalty," or, say the proverbs, they will keep doing it (19:19). And the murderer must not be pitied or helped. Death, they proclaim, is their just due (28:17). Physical punishment is important for fools. It "cleanses away evil" and "purifies the heart" (20:30). Solomon declares that words plus physical consequences ensure commands are heeded (29:19).

Just leaders are encouraged to help blameless victims (29:10). They should "speak up" for those who do not have a voice and "ensure justice for those being crushed" (18:5, 29:7, 31:8). Those doing wrong, declares Solomon, should not be protected or acquitted (13:10, 18:5, 20:24).

Living Virtuously

Proverbs teaches people about virtue and how to live virtuously. It culminates with a description of a wife of noble character at the end of the collection. Before this

descriptive culmination, several virtues are highlighted as good to acquire to live a good and just life (4:23). Godliness and truthfulness mark the good person, it explains (11:23, 14:5, 14:25, 24:26). A good person tells the truth, providing credible witness (12:17, 21:28). They are trustworthy, dependable, and integrous with their words and actions (13:17, 25:13). It says that they are prudent in all they do. They use discretion with their words and behaviors, and they are discerning (15:23, 15:28, 16:21, 21:23, 21:29, 23:4, 25:11, 25:15, 27:12). They are a good steward of themselves, and they enhance their world through continued learning and a thoughtful interaction with others and the world (10:14, 25:7, 27:17, 30:26).

In the description of the wife of noble character at the end of Proverbs, the author paints a picture of an internally virtuous and externally capable woman. She lives in wisdom and truth, her affections are set on good and beautiful things, and she is faithful and fruitful in her relationship with people and the world. (31:10–27). Her actions engender trust (30:11). They highlight her "strength" and "dignity" (31:225). She has compassion on the poor and needy and helps them (31:20). Her words are both wise and kind, and she is careful in all her ways (30:16, 30:26–27). She takes initiative and works hard for the good of the family and community (30:13–20). She is known for being virtuous by everyone, and her virtuous living is an outworking of her fear of the Lord (30:28–31).

Doing Good to Others

Solomon commends doing good to others and incentivizes the endeavor with a panoply of benefits. He adds specificity to whom the benefits are to be given. He says, "Blessed are those who help the poor" (14:21). He tells them that if they help the poor,

God "will repay" them, and they will lack nothing (19:17, 28:27). They are called to "rescue those" being unjustly punished or "being crushed" by others (24:11, 31:8–9). They are to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and they are to use godly speech. All their words should be life-giving and kind (4:5, 10:11, 10:21, 12:25, 16:24). Solomon encourages his people to give gifts to others because, he says, they "open doors" and "give access to important people" (18:16, 21:26, 28:27).

Doing good, according to Proverbs, includes promoting peace. Those who plan peace, it says, get hearts filled with joy (12:20). Promoting peace is brought about by defusing anger, avoiding fights, and overlooking offenses (15:18, 17:14, 20:3, 29:8–11). It includes forgiveness and reconciliation, gentle words, and love. (10:12, 14:9, 15:1, 16:6). It can also include bold reproof and throwing out the mocker, says Solomon (10:10, 22:10).

Solomon describes what good leaders do throughout his proverbs and how their behavior impacts the nation and the people around them. Doing good as a leader is imperative for the stability of a nation as well as the leader's own thriving (28:2, 29:4). Wisdom is more important than strength for a leader, says Solomon, and unfailing love and faithfulness protect a ruler (20:28, 21:22). A leader ought to hate corruption and judge both fairly and cautiously (25:8, 28:16, 29:4, 29:12). They are commended to use discipline for training the young to be wise, helping them to make good decisions and live orderly lives (29:15–19). Physical discipline is necessary for the young, Solomon says, because it drives foolishness from them (20:30, 22:15). The good leader, declares Proverbs, punishes the wicked and publicly rewards and praises those who do virtuous things (20:26, 21:11, 31:31).

There are several things that Proverbs names as important actions by the people for a thriving nation. Godliness is said to make a nation great as well as having godly and wise leaders (14:3, 28:2, 29:2). Obeying the law fights the wicked in the nation, and it brings joy to those who do it (28:4, 28:7, 29:18). An upright citizenry with many advisors helps a nation to prosper and be victorious in war, declares Solomon (11:11, 24:6). And a growing population is a good thing for a nation's leaders (14:28).

To do good in the world, one must be a good family member. Proverbs declares repeatedly that obeying one's parents is good. They are told to listen to them because their life came from them (6:20, 23:22). Marriage is also declared as a good thing. Solomon names it as a treasure and a blessing from the Lord (18:22). He says that godly parenting and parental discipline is a blessing to children (13:14, 20:7, 22:6. 29:15–17). Good parents direct their children on the right path (22:6). And a good grandparent, says Solomon, is wise and generous with their money and able to "leave an inheritance to their grandchildren" (13:22).

The marks of being a good friend are also described in the proverbs. A good friend is loyal and builds up (18:24). "The godly," declares Solomon, give good advice to their friends," and their wisdom helps their companions become wiser (12:26, 13:20). Not only do they care for their friends, add Solomon, "the godly care for their animals" as well (12:10). Their virtuous living extends to the mighty and the small alike.

Leading Unjustly

Virtuous living is contrasted with corruption and vice in Proverbs. Regarding corruption, Solomon says that those who help the wicked are guilty themselves and should be removed from leadership (13:10. 20:24–25). He says that denying justice to the

innocent or acquitting the guilty is wrong (17:26–28, 18:5). He writes that "it is wrong to punish the godly" and the honest (17:26). Corruption, he declares is evil (8:13).

The proverbs show that those who do selfish and unjust things bring grief to everyone. He names greed and hoarding as bad for the community (11:26, 15:27). People should not "withhold good from those who deserve it," if it is in their power "to help them" (3:27–28). He says that rejecting the law affirms the wicked and offends God (28:4, 28:9).

Living Unvirtuously

Regarding vice, Solomon makes the case that wickedness is manifested through the mind, heart, and body into the world. "A proud heart, haughty eyes, and evil actions are all sin," he says (21:4). He makes the case that when people choose to look at, love, and walk in the ways of evil, they reap a myriad of negative consequences. People are known by the way they act (10:11). Those who plot evil are told their hearts will be filled with deceit, and the rewards from deception disappear and ensnare (12:20, 26:7). He says that pride and arrogance lead to bad actions that result in punishment (13:10, 21:18).

Solomon presents a contrast between those who do good and those who do evil. The peacemaker he counters with those who are angry and violent. He says that "anger is cruel;" wrath is destructive; but "jealousy is even more dangerous" (27:4). And the "violence of the wicked" destroys them (21:7). He counters the honest with the dishonest, the dis-integrous, and the unreliable. He claims they say one thing and do another. Because of that, he says, they will be punished and not be rewarded. (21:6, 21:18, 25:11, 26:7). The wise are countered with those who are undiscerning, unteachable, and reckless. Solomon says that they do not accept divine guidance or guidance from anyone

(29:18). They simply air their opinions and have no interest in understanding (18:2, 18:17). They do not learn from discipline, he says (17:10). They are not careful in their speech but vent their anger, talk too much, and do not use discretion (10:19, 12:13, 18:21, 19:2, 25:17, 25:20, 29:11, 29:20).

Solomon also names the poor stewardship of oneself as destructive. He says that drinking too much wine and alcohol leads people to bad behavior (20:1). He speaks of fretting over evildoers or wasting one's energy on them as bad for a person (24:19–20, 31:3). He says it is bad to fail to protect oneself by angering the powerful, going against the godly, or participating in rumors because each of them risks the person's life. (10:2, 24:14–16, 26:22). Being lazy and taking hasty shortcuts lead to poverty (14:23, 21:5). And lazy people want much but do little (13:4). He says they sleep when they should be working, and they make deceptive excuses regarding it (10:5, 20:13). People choose bad things, declares Solomon, and end up ruining their life. They do not take responsibility but instead blame God (19:3, 31:27).

Harming Others

Solomon warns the people against participating in actions that harm others. They are told not to start a fight or plot harm against an innocent neighbor nor to "repay good with evil" (17:13, 3:29–20). The poor and the defenseless receive particular attention. He strongly condemns harming them and calls it an offense against God (17:5, 30:9). Those who close their eyes to poverty or injustice will be cursed, he says, and ignoring those in need results in one's own needs being ignored (21:13, 24:12, 28:27).

The proverbs name internal and external factors that cause discord as well as the types of people who initiate it. They reveal that promoting discord instead of peace is

harmful for self and neighbor. People ought not start a quarrel, Solomon tells the people, or it will "open a floodgate" (17:14). Those who "love to quarrel," he says, "love sin" (17:19). Regarding internal factors, the proverbs declare that pride leads to conflict; greed causes fighting; and hatred stirs up quarrels (10:12, 13:10, 28:25). Regarding external factors, gossip is said to keep quarrels alive, while "harsh words make tempers flare" (15:1, 26:20). Hot-tempered and angry people start fights, and quarrelsome people can never be stopped (15:18, 19:13, 24:1–2, 27:15, 29:22). Evil people, claim the proverbs, plot violence and their words stir up trouble (24:1–2). Words, according to Solomon, can promote great discord. "With their words, the godless destroy their friends," and "the mouth of the wicked overflows with perverse speech" (8:13, 11:9,15:28).

What is Bad to Do with Particular People

Proverbs describes things that are bad to do with particular people. It warns that doing so will result in negative consequences. Rebuking a mocker or correcting the wicked will get one insulted or hurt (9:7). Rescuing a "hot-tempered" person will end in continued bad behavior (19:19). It explains that trusting those who are unreliable or offering false promises ends in pain (12:23, 21:10, 25:19, 26:6). Discipline is wasted on fools, declares Proverbs repeatedly, because they have no interest in understanding (12:23, 17:16, 18:2, 26:3). It warns that engagement with fools does not end in satisfaction and can lead to becoming like them (26:4, 29:9).

Proverbs denounces several attitudes and actions within family relationships. It warns that insulting or mocking one's parents or despising their instruction results in severe consequences (19:26, 20:20, 23:22, 30:17). Stealing from them, without any sense of wrongdoing, is associated with the severity of murder (28:24). It tells parents that

failing to discipline their children will ruin their children's lives (23:13, 19:18). And it says that sparing them from the pain of discipline will ultimately harm them (13:24).

Regarding relationships with friends and neighbors, the proverbs have much to say about what is bad to do. Arguments, gossip, and offense destroy friendship, they say. Abandoning one's friends or family's friends will result in reciprocal action (27:10). And it is the wicked, they declare, who lead their friends astray (12:26).

Regarding bad transactions with neighbors, Solomon highlights lying and cheating as primary culprits. Telling lies about others, he says, is as harmful as physical violence against them (24:8–9, 25:18). Flattery and belittlement are both decried, as well as gossip and falsely testifying against them (14:21, 17:4, 26:18–19, 26:28). Cheating one's neighbor with underhanded dealings or leading them along an evil path is also denounced (22:28, 23:10, 28:10). Solomon warns to protect oneself from bad neighbors. He says to not associate with rebels, angry people, gossipers, or prostitutes because they bring ruin and disaster and their habits can be learned (20:19, 22:24–25, 24:21, 29:3). And he warns repeatedly against agreeing to guarantee a neighbor's debt, because it can lead to entrapment and losing everything (6:1–5, 17:18, 20:16, 20:25, 22:26–27, 27:13).

Types of People Who Are Bad for a Nation or Community

Solomon names the types of people and actions that are bad for a nation or community. Mockers, the wicked, and immoral people are named as bad for society. Mockers can agitate an entire town, and the talk of the wicked tears a city apart (11:11, 29:8). "Moral rot," he says, causes a government to "topple easily" (28:2). Sin, he says, is a disgrace to all people (14:34).

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The proverbs are manifold concerning the impact of bad leadership on a nation. "Without wise leadership, a nation falls," they proclaim (11:14). They say that when the wicked are in power, sin flourishes, people groan; they feel unsafe, and are unsafe (25:26, 28:15, 28:28, 29:2, 29:16). Rulers who oppress their people have no understanding and those who plant injustice harvest disaster (22:8, 24:24, 28:16). They warn that injustice destroys a nation (29:4). And they declare that it is not fitting for a ruler to tell lies or listen to liars (17:7, 29:12). Instead, wise and truthful advisors are needed, especially before significant undertakings (24:6, 29:12). But the bad action that unsettles the whole natural world, proclaims Proverbs, is when bad behavior gets a reward (30:21–23).

Summary of the Good Life

Proverbs reveals the immanent and transcendent context in which people live. It explains God's interaction with the world, one's internal motivations for physical actions, and the types of paths and people that one will encounter in the world. Regarding God's interaction with the world, Proverbs declares that God sees and understands all that happens in the world and is in control of it. He tests people's hearts and judges their actions. The proverbs declare that God is emotionally moved by people's actions and rewards good actions and punishes bad action.

Proverbs explains how internal and external factors impact peoples' actions in the world. It shows that people are motivated by their physical needs, and that their physical needs, or appetites, are impacted by their circumstances. It declares that circumstances impact people's perception of the world. It reveals that appetites are never satisfied, and that people are drawn to abundance. Proverbs shows that there will be those with plenty and those with little because of both circumstances and choices. It says that everyone,

regardless of wealth, has the capacity to use or abuse their power and possessions. It declares that those who follow the Lord in their actions are the just, and those who do not are the wicked who enact all kinds of injustice.

Proverbs describes what it looks like for different types of people to do good in the world, from kings and leaders to family members and friends. It commends leaders to lead with justice and wisdom. A leader is to show no partiality, to consider the types of people being led, and to use both words and physical consequences to reward the godly and punish the wicked. Proverbs encourages people to act in ways that are godly, truthful, and prudent, and to be good stewards of themselves and the world. They are to do good to others in speech and action, and to promote peace. They are especially encouraged to care for those in need.

Proverbs declares that obeying the law is good, and that good leadership is imperative for a flourishing nation. It names getting married and having children as good, and it encourages children to respect and obey their parents. It discourages vice, corruption, mockery, immorality, and harming others, and declares them bad for a nation. It states that without wise leadership, a nation falls. Proverbs shows that when people's actions align with truth and wisdom, they are good actions and lead to individual and corporate flourishing.

Summary of the Good, True, and Beautiful Life in the Proverbs of Solomon

Wisdom is presented in the proverbs of Solomon as possessing an inherent integrity. What is true is also beautiful and good, and those who abide in wisdom, walk

truthfully, do good, and flourish. Brown writes that "wisdom lives with prudence, discovers knowledge, and walks in the paths of righteousness."[93]

Solomon presents his students with a triad of interconnected postures, desires, and behaviors that cannot be divorced from one another without negative consequences. He issues warnings to all who will listen, to not choose the road that leads to death, to not love evil, and to not reject wisdom. "Wisdom," according to seventeenth-century theologian Thomas Traherne, "invites appropriation via imitation so that the human self can be recast in the *imago sapentiae*." Lady wisdom, he explains, calls people to imitate her and be formed into wisdom's image. He further describes that "in the kingdom of glory, the effects of activity will be joy and praises."[94] The rightful embodiment (doing good) of fully formed wisdom in a person (living truthfully) results in joy and a posture of praise to the one true God (flourishing). This is the message of Solomon in his Proverbs. Living truthfully, flourishing, and doing good is the result of accepting, loving, and embodying wisdom.

The Modern Social Imaginary of the Good, True, and Beautiful Life

In the previous section, three foundational concepts in Proverbs were reviewed to frame the work of CCSDP with their students. The study reveals how Proverbs describes the good life, the true life, and the beautiful life and how these descriptions paint a picture of what it looks like for a student to flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world. With these descriptions from the authors of Proverbs in mind, the review turns to what

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[93] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 49.

[94] Traherne, *The Works of Thomas Traherne*, 2:203.

the experts say about the social imaginary of the Modern Age and how that imaginary conceives of the good, true, and beautiful life.

Foundations of The Modern Social Imaginary

To understand the modern social imaginary and its conceptions of the good, true, and beautiful life, it is important to understand how they have been perceived in the ages preceding. Theologian and social theorist Steve Turley describes the Classical Age view, as imagined by Plato and Aristotle, as a world that has genuine meaning and purpose. The cosmic values of truth, goodness, and beauty can "communicate divine meaning to the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic capacities of the human soul." This meaning in turn "brings balance in the soul," which "harmonizes the human person with divine meaning and purpose of the cosmos." This balance was considered by classical philosophers as essential to human flourishing.[95] Kenneth Samples, senior research scholar at Reasons to Believe, writes that in the Classical Era, "truth (that which defines reality), goodness (that which fulfills its purpose) and beauty (that which is lovely) were objective cosmic values considered by Plato and Aristotle to be knowable to the "noble seeker." The noble seeker "had the internal capacities of logos (reason), ethos (morality), and pathos (emotions)" which "corresponded to the cosmic values and brought forth human fulfillment."[96]

After the fifth century AD in the Middle Ages, when pagan cultures had largely converted to Christianity, Christian philosophers and theologians "appropriated the truth of these [Classical Era] cosmic values as truths of general revelation but grounded them

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[95] Turley, *Awakening Wonder*.

[96] Samples, "The 3 Transcendentals."

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in the nature of the triune God." Turley states that the difference was that "God doesn't *have* truth, goodness, and beauty; rather, God *is* truth, goodness, and beauty."[97] Peter Kreeft, a professor of philosophy at Boston College and The King's College, explains this Christian concept of the classical transcendentals in this way: "Everything that exists is in some way true, good, and beautiful." Humans, because they have been made in the image of God, are able to "know the truth, desire the good, and love the beautiful." He states further that, "our present longing for truth, goodness, and beauty exists because these values reflect the ultimate source, which is the maximally perfect God. When we pursue truth, goodness, and beauty in this life and in this world, we are tracking the majesty of the Lord."[98] From these foundational concepts of the good, true, and beautiful modern ideas about God, self, and the world emerge.

Modern Ideas About God, Self, and the World

Charles Taylor chronicles the move from the religious social imaginary of the Middle Ages to the fully secularized imaginary of the postmodern West. He names three stages of secularization that occur and credits modernity for "[bringing] about secularity, in all its three forms." The first is "secularized public spaces"; the second is "the decline of belief and practices"; and the third is "an end to…the transcendent, or of goals or claims which go beyond human flourishing."[99] Smith emphasizes Taylor's secularity hypothesis, stating that "the secular touches everything. It not only makes unbelief

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[97] Samples.

[98] Baggett, Habermas, and Walls, *C.S. Lewis as Philosopher*.

[99] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20, 21.

possible; it also changes belief – it impinges upon Christianity [and all religious communities]."[100] Historian Julie Ruben, Harvard Graduate School of Education, names the stages within modernity differently. Her focus is on the changes to the social imaginary of early American higher education.[101] George Marsden summarizes the first stage (1880-1920) as the "religious stage," where university leaders are not hostile to religion but are wary of theology and church authority. They redefine religion by moral qualities. The second stage (1900-1920) is where science becomes the source of values and the chief bearers of moral teaching (social science becomes the successor to moral philosophy). The third phase (after 1920) is where "science is required to be value-free." This is the "humanistic phase" where the humanities take the place of religion and become "the bearers of the ideals of beauty and truth."[102] This move toward secularity impacts each of the three domains (God/ultimate authority, self/identity, the world/society) in unique ways.

Modern Ideas About God/Ultimate Authority

Marsden documents that until late modernity, there was still an acknowledgement of transcendence and moral values, but these were rooted in science and reason. Marsden writes, "Faith in God, humanity, and moral progress were all rooted in confidence in the scientific method as the great revealing."[103] No longer did confidence lie in the authority

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[100] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, xi.

[101] Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*.

[102] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 189, 190.

[103] Marsden, 275, 276.

of God and his revelation but in mankind's understanding through reason and science. Taylor explains, "The great invention of the West was an imminent order in Nature, whose working could be systematically understood and explained on its own terms." He shows the progression from a belief in transcendence to a questioning of it. This imminent order in nature leaves "open the question whether this whole order had a deeper significance, and whether if it did, we should infer a transcendent Creator beyond it."[104]

Decentering God

The process of secularization begins with a de-centering of God and a re-centering around his creation. Smith phrases it as "God is now present in his design, in order."[105] Taylor shows that because the focus turns away from God to the result of God's work, a confusion grows as to what Christian faith is actually about. Taylor writes, "The divine…can be present to the extent that we build a society which plainly follows God's design. This can be filled in with an idea of moral order which is seen established by God" (Taylor calls this the "Modern Moral Order"). He proposes that there is confusion as to whether it is salvation or "the progress wrought by capitalism, technology, democracy" that defines the Christian faith. He writes that it was even more difficult "to distinguish between salvation and the establishment of good moral order."[106]

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[104] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 17.

[105] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 85.

[106] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 736.

De-personalizing and Denying God

Taylor proposes an intermediary between the decentering of God and the denying of God. This intermediary is deism.[107] It keeps the concept of God yet removes almost all attributes except for what is necessary for the world to exist. It especially removes the impingements of higher authority and moral burden. Smith agrees with Taylor about the removal of specifics concerning God's attributes. He writes, "unhooked from the specifics of Christian doctrines and tethered to a more generic deistic god, the modern moral order (MMO) is independent of any specifics—and hence contestable—claims about this God."[108] German anthropologist and philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach provides the route from deism to secular humanism in the mid-nineteenth century. Feuerbach proposes that religion is simply a projection of human perfection on to an imaginary God.[109] Trueman writes, "For Feuerbach, talk about God is really talk about human beings," and "if human beings are ever to reach their full potential, they must therefore realize that they should ascribe the glory they give to God to themselves."[110] This philosophy completed the ideological move from a depersonalized god to persons as their own gods.

Taylor believes that ultimately the modern aim is "to reject the Christian aspiration to transcend flourishing."[111] An atheistic humanism arises in culture that sees

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[107] Taylor, 19.

[108] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 54.

[109] Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*.

[110] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 181.

[111] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 247.

human greatness as achievable only in the rejection of an authoritative transcendence. Henri de Lubac, a Jesuit priest and influential twentieth century theologian, writes of atheist humanism. He says that it "sought to protect and extend human greatness by emancipating it from the bondage of God." He believes the Nazis were the culmination of the attempt to construct humanism without God.[112] Trueman writes of this same rejection of Christian transcendence in the early twentieth century and believes that with it, "the world loses its teleology."[113] Lewis names this loss as "stepping into the void." He says that "however far they go back, or down, they can find no ground to stand on."[114]

With the loss of a transcendence, Taylor speaks of the "flattening of the world." This is a world where higher notions are constrained within "the bound of measure, instrumental reason, and perhaps also good taste."[115] Smith agrees and adds that "this flattening of the world meant the loss of references." Without the transcendent world, there is a search for significance and for things to mean something. The Romantic Age saw beauty take on the weight of meaning. Taylor sees a "shift from an understanding of art as mimesis to one that stresses creation." Art no longer points to anything outside of itself, the meaning is in the deep personal experience of beauty. In a similar way, Reuben documents that in the early twentieth century, humanists "argued for deriving goodness from beauty and not truth." They see the humanities as able to offer a secular equivalent

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[112] Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 24.

[113] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 27.

[114] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 64.

[115] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 247.

of religion."[116] Humanity reaches for something beyond itself and, without transcendence, creates gods of themselves and their own experiences.

Modern Ideas About Self/Identity

Taylor conceives of the modern development of what it means to be a self as consisting of three main ideas: in the existential domain, he sees a "focus on inwardness, or inner psychological life" regarding who people think they are; in the situational domain, an "affirmation of ordinary life"; and in the normative domain, a belief that nature gives us an "inner moral source."[117] Trueman also identifies this inward turn in culture. He says that "with the era of Rousseau and Romanticism, a new understanding of human selfhood emerged, one focused on the inner life of the individual."[118] Trueman believes this turn is connected to a social imaginary that no longer sees the world as "possessing intrinsic meaning" or humanity having "a specific given end."[119] Since purpose is no longer a transcendent given, it "collapses into any purpose I choose to create or decide for myself."[120] Rieff places this turn inward as the mark between the Modern Age and the Postmodern Age. He names it as a turn from "economic man" to "psychological man."[121] Lewis notes the impact of this inward turn detached from the

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[116] Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*, 214.

[117] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.

[118] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 27.

[119] Trueman, 40.

[120] Trueman, 42.

[121] Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, 58.

transcendent. Individuals become simply unattached parts disconnected from everything else. In earlier ages, Lewis writes, "when it spoke in parts, it would remember the whole. While studying the *It*, it would not lose…the *Thou*-situation." Modernity brings with it not only an inward turn but an eventual splintering of the self from everything else, having no metaphysical reality holding together all the parts as a whole.

Sin and Self

The concept of sin as willful departure from God and his transcendent law falls out of favor in modernity. Taylor writes that there is "less and less concern with sin as a condition we need to be rescued from through some transformation of our being, and more and more with sin as wrong behaviour which we can be persuaded, trained or disciplined to turn our backs on." "Religion," he writes, "is narrowed to moralism."[122] Marsden makes this same observation. He documents that morality becomes synonymous with virtue, and that when the term virtue is used during nineteenth century academia, it "is always used as shorthand for the moral life." He gives an example of President Francis Wayland of Brown College in 1835 and writes that "for Wayland virtue also becomes not what one acquires to fulfill one's telos but a set of habits one imitates to achieve moral perfection."[123] "Modern humans," writes theologian and commentator Reinhold Niebuhr, "saw history as a realm of infinite possibilities but forgot that it is a realm of evil as well." Sin, for the modern person, is no longer something that is internal or part of the identity of fallen man. It is now a behavior that can be observed and

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[122] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 225.

[123] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 44, 45.

measured, or a set of virtues deemed effective for a flourishing society. Jacobs agrees with this loss of transcendence within the world of morals. He writes that "the world of morals was becoming pinched between positivism on one side and pragmatism for everything beyond the laboratory."[124]

Identity and Human Progress

With the diminishment of the reality of sin, Taylor believes that what emerges is "a stance of reconstruction towards ourselves." The power of the Holy Spirit is no longer needed for sanctification. All that is needed is simply internal grit and will, aimed at the end goal of civility. Taylor calls this "self-fashioning," and writes, "We treat our own baser nature as raw matter to be controlled, reshaped, and reformed."[125] "Civility," says Smith, "becomes a sort of naturalized secular sanctification."[126] Sinful human nature in the Modern Age is not the object of the taming. The object of the taming is humanity's "wild, raw nature." Taylor asserts that civility requires one to "work on yourself." It "involves a struggle to reshape ourselves."[127] Taylor believes that, in this new social imaginary, grace is no longer needed. Reason and discipline become sufficient for the perfection of humanity.[128]

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[124] Jacobs, *The Year of Our Lord 1943*, 16.

[125] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 112.

[126] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 43.

[127] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 101.

[128] Taylor, 222.

In modernity, Christianity is reduced to a kind of moralism. Glanzer presents the social understanding of moral virtue as one that transitions from being seen as a response to the image of God in humanity, to one that is seen as a duty to God, and finally to one seen as a duty to country. He believes that American ethics did not "abandon all focus on developing particular virtues."[129] Instead, leading thinkers became more pragmatic. They "instrumentalized particular virtues for broader and vaguer ends."[130]

In late modernity, being virtuous is adhering to certain social ideals. Marsden names them as "individualism, pluralism, emancipation, tolerance, anti-dogmatism, free critical inquiry, and the authority of human experience."[131] At first, moralism is identified with the "progress of civilization." "Progress," Taylor asserts, is defined and overseen by the elites of the day who identify and transmit the "higher standards" for society. However, there is an ideological move away from society incorporated in something larger (what Taylor refers to as "The Great Disembedding") and becomes simply a "collection of individuals."[132] Glanzer follows this shift, adding to it the impact it has on Christians in the nineteenth century. He points out that those who consider themselves to be "fundamental" or "evangelical" Christians focus more on their identity as an individual and their relationship with God; whereas those who consider themselves to be "liberal" understand their "primary personal identity in terms of [their] human

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[129] Glanzer, *Restoring the Soul of the University*, 44, 45.

[130] Glanzer, 48.

[131] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 347.

[132] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 146, 152, 242.

community."[133] With the loss of transcendence in the social imaginary, an identity confusion and a role confusion beset both the individual and society.

Modern Ideas About World/Society

During the Modern Age, the view of the world moves from a transcendence-infused cosmos to a natural universe. Smith states it as a move "from creation to nature."[134] Taylor states it as "an imminent order of natural laws, rather than any sort of hierarchy of being."[135] What is lost is a relationship to a transcendent God at the center of society.[136] After Darwin, there is a growing sense that things simply evolve within a natural universe instead of a being shepherded by a creator in an ordered, hierarchical cosmos.[137] Social and political structures are no longer enchanted givens, which makes it necessary for humanity to create their own social order.[138] Lewis argues that there is a new sense of control and power as society is emancipated from tradition and transcendence. Humans are persuaded of their power over nature with the increase of scientific knowledge and technological advances.[139] Trueman also cites the impact of

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[133] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 63.

[134] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 34, 35.

[135] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 60.

[136] Taylor, 20.

[137] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 71, 326.

[138] Smith, 39.

[139] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 57.

technological advances. He writes that they "weaken the authority of the natural world and persuade human beings of their power."

There is another impact to society with the removal of transcendence. The empirical world is unable to prove its own value or that which is qualitative. Lewis asserts that "[nature] seems to be the world of quantity, as against the world of quality...that which knows no values as against that which both has and perceives value."[140] Lewis believes that "the great minds" are aware that something significant is lost when "objects are stripped of its qualitative properties and reduced to mere quantity."[141] Taylor believes that truth becomes limited to that which is effective in the natural world.[142] No longer does understanding include a knowledge of something's essence and therefore its telos. But instead, writes Smith, "we get the 'mechanistic' universe that we still inhabit today, in which efficient causality (a cause that 'pushes') is the only causality and can only be discerned by empirical observation."[143] This mechanistically conceived universe divorced from transcendence has an enormous impact on the modern social imaginary of the good, true, and beautiful life.

The Modern Social Imaginary of a Beautiful Life

For Taylor, every person and society "lives with or by some conception(s) of what human flourishing is: what constitutes a fulfilled life" and "what makes life really worth

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[140] Lewis, 69.

[141] Lewis, 70, 71.

[142] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 98.

[143] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 42.

living." He chronicles the ideological shift from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age concerning flourishing. The Christian tradition of the Middle Ages sees loving and worshipping God as humankind's ultimate end within which human flourishing is fulfilled. Taylor asserts that during the eighteenth century, there is a shift of focus from God the creator, to his creation and its design. "What is added…is an appreciation of the way in which human life is designed so as to produce mutual benefit." The focus becomes the "good engineering design in which efficient causation plays the crucial role."[144] Marsden as well notes this shift of attention from creator to creation within eighteenth and nineteenth century academia. He sees this shift as the beginning of "flourishing" being disconnected from the transcendent. He notes that in this period public universities begin a "broad identification of Christianity with humanism in the sense of whatever promotes human welfare."[145] The focus of human flourishing moves along a trajectory away from God to God's design within humanity, and eventually to the notion of a humanity without God.

The Loss of Fuller Flourishing

      Taylor also sees a shift during the Modern Age regarding the idea of renunciation being a necessary part of flourishing. At the end of the Middle Ages, individual flourishing is a lesser form of flourishing to be renounced for the sake of God. He points out that, within a Christian worldview, for fuller flourishing to occur, there is a renouncement, to some extent, of immediate individual flourishing for something higher.

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[144] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 17.

[145] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 106.

Taylor states that "the call to renounce doesn't negate the value of flourishing; it is rather a call to center everything on God.. This initial "forgoing" goes on to be the source of flourishing for others on one level, and on another level, "a collaboration with the restoration of a fuller flourishing by God." As the focus moves away from God, and away from the transcendent, toward humanity, renunciation of individual flourishing is seen as essential for the sake of society. Eventually though, the focus moves away from society and toward the individual, wherein the renunciation of self for the sake of others is problematic for personal flourishing.[146]

The famous Christian scholar and apologist C.S. Lewis writes about this modern notion of flourishing in its middle stage, when it has become unattached to the transcendent but not yet fully individualized. Without a transcendent authority defining what is ultimately good or bad for society, an elite class of scientific social planners are needed who "know how to produce conscience and decide what kind of conscience they will produce." They become the authority for what the individual is to renounce for society to flourish. Lewis writes, these "elite social planners" see themselves as "outside" and "above."[147] As these elites eventually conflict ideologically and methodologically, it is not long before authority itself becomes suspect.

Truman catalogues the same movements that Taylor names regarding the cultural ideas about human flourishing in modernity. He states that by the nineteenth century, certain key thoughts including this new concept of flourishing are already in place. The self is defined outside of its relationship with God or society. What begins with a higher

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[146] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 17.

[147] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 61.

flourishing located in the authority of God, ends with a rejection of both God and society's authority. Flourishing becomes located solely within the individual, and renunciation for anything outside of self is seen as a hinderance to individual flourishing and progress.[148]

Truman references Feuerbach as a proponent of this late modern idea of flourishing. Feuerbach, a mid-nineteenth century German anthropologist and philosopher (who strongly influences later thinkers such as Darwin, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche with his work critical work, *The Essence of Christianity*[149]) states that, "If human beings are ever to reach their full potential, they must therefore realize that they should really ascribe the glory they give to God to themselves. Religion hinders human beings from being fully human."[150] The self, according to Feuerbach, is the final authority regarding human progress and flourishing, whereas any demands outside the self are to be considered a hinderance to its fruition.

The Modern Social Imaginary of a True Life

During the Modern Age, the concept of truth slowly became detached from God. Human reasoning was considered adequate for knowledge of the transcendent without the need for special revelation. Truth was located within the human mind and reasoning was considered the new authority for society. Marsden documents this change in his study of college and university presidents during this era. He shows that truth as a special

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[148] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 201.

[149] Gooch, "Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach."

[150] Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 181.

revelation from God is seen as simply a product of human reasoning. He writes of Cornell President Andrew Dickson White: "White did not object to Christianity being represented in the university, only to traditional Christian dogmatism."[151] The dogmatic and authoritative doctrine of scripture was problematic to White. For him, a "capable and honest" person could bring more truth to the university than one who stood dogmatically on religious doctrine.[152] Truth for White could be accessed through reason and confirmed in a person's sincerity and capability.

C. S. Lewis also writes about this move in the modern imagination of truth as a transcendent authority above oneself to a truth that is created by oneself and free from external constraints. He not only documents this move but names the motive for the redefinition. Lewis believes that during the modern era, humankind does not actually want truth, they want to have God's creation without being under God's authority, and they believe that applied science will get it for them. He writes, "For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. The problem facing applied science," writes Lewis, "is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men" because "it is not truth he wants…but gold and guns and girls."[153]

Taylor names this detachment from God and the transcendent as "disenchantment." He believes that truth in a disenchanted age becomes bounded within the individual since the belief is that "the only minds in the cosmos are those of humans."

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[151] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 107.

[152] Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 372, 373.

[153] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 77.

The thoughts, feelings, etc. of humans occur in minds, and minds "are bounded; they are inward spaces."[154] Trueman, like Marsden, documents the progress of this disenchantment in culture. He writes about intellectuals in the Modern Age, like Darwin, who furthers the notion that truth is disconnected from a higher authority. Truman states that, "having no God-given destiny, [people] have no transcendent ethical standards, either laws or virtues, to which they need to conform themselves."

Locating Truth in Feelings and Desires

Lewis and Haidt acknowledge that the cultural location of truth within the domain of feelings is a recent phenomenon in history that begins in modernity. Lewis states that, "Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it – believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could merit, our approval or disapproval, our reverence or our contempt."[155] Haidt references common wisdom throughout history that "feelings are always compelling, but not always reliable." He references the changing dynamics within universities impacted by this modern notion that feelings are not to be questioned but received as authoritative truth. On university campuses, this notion "distort(s) reality, deprive(s) us of insight, and needlessly damage(s) our relationships." Lewis agrees that this modern idea of equating feelings

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[154] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 31.

[155] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 14, 15.

with truth is leading to a distortion of reality which is negatively impacting the new generation being taught it.[156]

Trueman references a new emphasis on the emotions for moral education by Rousseau and the Romantics. He states that "their assumption was that there was a common human nature that could lead to agreement on what things should arouse appropriate empathy and sympathy or anger and outrage."[157] There is no need for God's law to reveal what is good and true. Human nature has an accurate barometer located within it. Lewis adds that not only goodness and truth but also beauty is detached from the transcendent and located within human feeling. Lewis references educators who teach that a beautiful waterfall is not actually sublime but simply evokes sublime feelings in the observer. He writes that what is being taught is that "I have feelings in my mind associated with the word 'sublime,' or shortly, I have sublime feelings."[158] His critique of this type of modern education is, "their words are that we 'appear to be saying something very important' when in reality we are 'only saying something about our own feelings.'"[159]

As truth is further detached from transcendence in late modernity, even the realms of fact and morality fall under skepticism. Alan Jacobs, a distinguished professor of humanities at Baylor University, writes about the ideas of prominent thinkers at the close of World War II. He references Robert Maynard Hutchins, then president of the

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[156] Lewis, 19.

[157] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 195.

[158] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 2.

[159] Lewis, 5.

University of Chicago, who speaks against the prevailing ideas of pragmatism and positivism as insufficient to answer totalitarianism. Hutchins recognizes that without a governing authority, morality simply becomes a matter of opinion. He states that "if everything is a matter of opinion, and if everybody is entitled to his own opinion, force becomes the only way of settling differences of opinion. And of course, if success is the test of rightness, right is on the side of the heavier battalions."[160] Jacobs highlights that there is a confusion of means and ends during this period. Power and wealth, instead of being the means to something higher, become the ends "because the realm of value is the realm of opinion, in which I seek nothing more than easy justification for my desires."[161] Values start to be seen simply as opinions, and opinions as justification for desires, with the most powerful getting what they want.

The Modern Social Imaginary of a Good Life

In modernity, there is a reimagination of the individual's relationship with society and the world. Taylor believes that these relationships are reimagined because modern humans no longer see themselves as living within an enchanted world. He says that "living in the enchanted, porous world of our ancestors was inherently living socially." With the removal of a relational God engaged with his creation, one has the sense of being "buffered" from the transcendent. Taylor says that "the buffered self is essentially the self which is aware of the possibility of disengagement. And disengagement is

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[160] Hutchins, "What Shall We Defend."

[161] Jacobs, *The Year of Our Lord 1943*, 16.

frequently carried out in relation to one's whole surroundings, natural and social."[162] This is why, Smith states, that "exclusive humanism [becomes] a live option for organizing both an individual life and whole societies."[163] The concept of disengagement is posited as a kind of freedom: freedom from God, freedom from nature's constraints, and even freedom of the individual from society. With this newfound "freedom from God," society finds that it needs a new source for meaning and power. It engages the concept of "progress" to find it, and utilizes nature as the means for achieving it.

Freedom and Independence from God

This idea of freedom becomes central in modernity. Biblical scholar and theologian Richard Bauckham sees this individualistic freedom as a rebellion of the created against the creator. He says, "The modern notion of individualistic freedom is a full-scale revolt against the given. It rejects dependence. It is not received from others or enhanced by others. It is an inherent capacity the individual deploys in an exercise of self-creation."[164] Jacobs also documents this conceptual turn away from dependence and constraint. He writes that during the early-to-mid-nineteenth century, Christian intellectuals were aware of a common American misstep toward an "anarchic" model of democracy that is "unable to conceive of freedom as anything other than the absence of constraint."[165]

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[162] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 42, 43.

[163] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 31.

[164] Bauckham, "Freedom and Belonging," 14.

[165] Jacobs, *The Year of Our Lord 1943*, 128.

Meaning Found in Progress

       Once modern society has a sense of being free from transcendent authority, the question of doing good in the world needs to find its answer within the imminent domain. In modernity, morality is perceived as something that reason can unlock from the human conscience. Then, through personal discipline and good behavior, a good and moral society can be created. Taylor writes that "the central moral concern becomes the imposition of a disciplined order on personal and social life, ensuring high standards of self-control and good behavior in the individual, and peace, order and prosperity in society." He further states that this could be achieved "through unaided human powers."[166] Marsden gives examples of this "optimistic view of human nature" in his review of early American college and university presidents. He writes that they "denied the severity of original sin" and "affirmed the free ability of persons to choose the good simply by putting their minds to it."[167]

       In the Modern Era, human reasoning becomes the authority over revelation. Where the Bible provides society with an ultimate purpose for life in the Middle Ages, modernists begin to view progress as their chief end. Lewis writes, "Universal evolutionism, the belief that the very formula of universal process is from imperfect to perfect, from small beginnings to great ends…is perhaps the deepest habit of mind in the [modern] world."[168] In this scientific era, progress is defined by what can be observed and measured, making economic gain and efficiency central to its definition. Nancy

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[166] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 260, 261.

[167] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 55.

[168] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, sec. "Is Theology Poetry?"

Pearcy, professor of apologetics at Houston Baptist University, writes, "the [modern] workplace fostered an economic philosophy of atomistic individualism, as workers were treated as so many individual units to be plugged into the production process."[169] Lewis sees this concept of "machine" as a new archetypal image for Western society. Christian author and editor, Jake Meador, also refers to this atomistic machine-like separation of an organic whole when he references John Locke. He argues that it was Locke's idea of the product of one's work being owned by the individual that separates "the fruit of a person's work from the people the work is done for." He writes that "work's product ceases to be a holistic human good and becomes a purely monetary good."[170]

Nature as a Means to Human Progress and Power

Along with the rise of secular humanism and the advance of technology in modernity, the natural world comes to be seen as an arena for humans to master and conquer. Jacobs claims that prominent early modern thinkers consider nature as something that society subdues and conquers. Nature is to be bent to the will of humanity.[171] Lewis highlights this same concept when he writes, "'Man's conquest of Nature' is an expression often used to describe the progress of applied science." He takes the concept further by naming a deeper truth underneath this conquest. Lewis believes that ultimately what is called "Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power

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[169] Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 329, 330.

[170] Meador, *In Search of the Common Good*, 96, 97.

[171] Jacobs, *The Year of Our Lord 1943*, 133.

exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument."[172] With God

receding from the picture, humans see themselves no longer as stewards of creation, but

masters of creation. Nature becomes a commodity for human progress, and as Lewis

argues, a means of some individuals to control others. The separation of humans from

God eventually separates humans from nature and each other.

Summary of the Modern Social Imaginary of the Good, True, and Beautiful Life

With increasing secularity there is a dramatic change in the social imaginary of

the good, the true, and the beautiful life. As Lewis argues, something significant appears

to be lost. With the rejection of Christian doctrine, and then of the God of the Bible, and

finally of God, himself, culture loses any kind of authority outside of the created world.

Authority is contested and battles ensue. Scientific experts disagree. Reason is heralded

as the new authority and then is contested by the Romantic Movement which promotes

the authority of internal desire and emotive experience over reason. Progress is the end

goal for society and human nature, but conflict arises as to where they are progressing.

The concept of evolution questions whether nature should simply have its way without

imposition from human institutions at all, and ideological disagreements lead people to

wonder if the entire enterprise is simply about achieving power.

Modernity begins with truth as that which can be empirically proven, or that

which scientific experts espouse, but it eventually comes to be seen as that which resides

in the emotive experiences of the individual. What is considered the good in society is

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[172] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 134.

that which is effective or productive, but without a given telos, naming the destination becomes a power battle. What is conceived of as the beautiful is the inward experiences of the self as it interacts with the empirical world. But without a higher objective reality, all becomes subjective and atomized. Modern individuals are disconnected from nature and society as they lose a shared reality. It is at this juncture that Taylor's definition of Secular 3 (an end to the transcendent, or of goals/claims which go beyond human flourishing) comes to fruition.[173]

The Postmodern Social Imaginary of the Good, True, and Beautiful Life

What do the experts write about the postmodern social imaginary and how that imaginary conceives of the good, true, and beautiful life? Christian philosopher, Paul Gould summarizes how many authors describe the current postmodern state. He argues that "what began as a suppression of truth about God" in the West during modernity has ended in a full disenchantment. He writes, "Everything once held dear and valued as sacred is now up for grabs." Gould believes that even the "very concepts of goodness, truth, and beauty" are not exempt from this break from the transcendent. "Moral distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, are erased, and" he continues, "aesthetic evaluations of what is beautiful and what is horrid begin to blur."[174] Renowned theologian Norman Wirzba agrees that in this disenchanted age, "Belief in God is unwelcome, unnecessary, and unimaginable."[175]

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[173] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20, 21.

[174] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 51, 52.

[175] Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation (The Church and Postmodern Culture)*, 6.

Gould believes that the two modern ideas of nature-as-mechanism instead of organism and of full empiricism instead of a healthy respect for empirical facts continue to have enormous impact on the current postmodern culture. He writes that it "help[s] set the stage for the nineteenth-century ascendency of Marx, Nietzsche, and Darwin" and "the complete severance of the sacred order from the natural (and social) order."[176] He proposes that the new goal of life in the now postmodern contemporary society is entirely subjective. Instead of being virtue-oriented or religion-oriented as were earlier ages, "the defining goal of an individual's life in this disenchanted age is the satisfaction of their personal desires."[177] Taylor agrees with Gould that the present age has strong currents of non-religion. He argues that belief in God is unnecessary to make sense of the world. Taylor also writes about a new current of "anti-humanism," which, he says, "[flies] under various names today, like 'deconstruction' and 'post-structuralism,'" which he believes finds their roots in Nietzsche.[178] Taylor proposes that meaning and purpose in today's culture is found in "expressive individualism." He defines this as the notion that each person has their own way of realizing humanity, and that one is to find and "live out one's own" instead of conforming to a model imposed from the outside.[179] These authors claim that with this loss of transcendence in modernity, the individual becomes the meaning maker, or creator of truth, instead of God. Truth and authority move into the

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[176] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 51.

[177] Gould, 53.

[178] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 19.

[179] Taylor, 486.

existential realm of self, and particularly the realm of the emotive, desiring self. Because of this move, there are great shifts in the social imaginary about God, self, and the world.

Postmodern Ideas About God, Self, and the World

Theologian John Frame, proposes that knowledge is always an interrelation of three perspectives: the normative perspective; the existential perspective; and the situational perspective. He proposes that these perspectives follow a trinitarian design. Ideas about God, self, and the world also follow along this trinitarian structure with God as the normative authority (above); self as the existential individual (within); and the world and society as the external situation (without). Frame believes that ideas about reality [are] distorted when transcendent authority is ignored, devalued, or misplaced.[180] Both Taylor and Watkin refer to this distortion when they reference the "flattening" of the world during late modernity.[181] They see this flattening as a misplacement of ultimate authority. Instead of it being located within the transcendent domain, it is relegated to the imminent domain.[182] Watkins references Yale theologian, Hans Frei, who argues that at the turn of the twentieth century the framework for understanding the human story shifts from a biblical one to a psychological or scientific one.[183] Gould acknowledges this shift as well. He recognizes the shift as a move away from a transcendent normative standard. For him, this impacts all domains of understanding. He writes, "they exaggerate and

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[180] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 10, 62, 63.

[181] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 7.

[182] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 510.

[183] Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 6.

deform some aspects while neglecting others."[184] The loss of transcendence in the

twentieth century impacts all notions of God or ultimate authority, of self or identity, and

of society or the world in the decades to follow.

Postmodern Ideas About God/Ultimate Authority

Rieff names the progression of the cultural ideas around authority as fitting into

one of three world cultures. The postmodern conception of authority he terms, "third

world" culture. He describes the first world as one that sees authority in fate and the

second as one that sees it in human law grounded in the sacred. The third, Rieff argues, is

a world where "society has moved into a completely secular mode," where there is

nothing beyond society to make law codes stable. He believes that the abandonment of

the sacred order "leaves culture without any foundation at all."[185] Trueman agrees that

without a "commonly accepted foundation" regarding authority, "ethical and political

discussions" are "acrimonious and futile."[186] He believes that no compromise can be

reached because there is no assimilating one belief to another when they "rest on

completely different premises and are aimed at antithetical outcomes."[187] Gould phrases

it as a lack in "a normative standard outside society that also acts as a social glue."[188]

Lewis believes an ultimate transcendent authority is imperative for society because "only

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[184] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 247.

[185] Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks*, 4, 49, 90.

[186] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 388.

[187] Trueman, 401, 402.

[188] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 247.

[this] provides a common human law of action which can over-arch rulers and ruled alike." He writes that a transcendent objective truth giver is a necessity for "a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery."[189] These authors agree that the loss of transcendent authority in the postmodern imagination brings with it social unrest and futile ideological battles.

Authority Placed in the Situational Domain

Taylor argues that with the removal of the transcendent domain in the social imaginary, meaning and significance are forced into the imminent domain. There is a battle as to where in that domain ultimate authority lies. Pragmatists like John Dewey, at the end of the modern era, believe that an ideology or proposition is true if it works. Trueman writes that society has a "strong preference for technical, rather than moral approaches to everything." Ultimate authority for the pragmatists is placed in the situational domain where, in an increasingly technical age, what "works" means what is "efficient or effective."[190] This pragmatic approach still acknowledges a form of truth outside of the person to which they are subject. Marsden documents that as Dewey's "traditional theological beliefs [recede]," there is a corresponding "increase in social idealism and activism."[191] Dewey looks for truth in social progress. Pragmatism and the social sciences still retain a level of moral value until the mid-twentieth century. Rueben shows that during this time there is a move from authority being in a value-laden science

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[189] Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 73.

[190] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 208.

[191] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 185.

to it being in a value-free science. It is here, he argues, with the loss of moral imperatives

in science, that authority in the social imaginary moves into the humanities and ultimately

into the existential realm.[192] Truman argues that with Rousseau and Romanticism, "a new

understanding of human selfhood emerge[s], one focused on the inner life of the

individual."[193]

Authority Placed in the Existential Domain

Marsden documents that with Rousseau and Romanticism, although the focus has

moved inward, there is still an acceptance of the concept of human nature; something of

an authority beyond, even if that beyond is in the natural world. He claims that in this

naturalistically conceived universe, "good as a moral term [has] only an emotive use."

Trueman states that when the notion of human nature is taken away, "all that is left is

free-floating, subjective sentiment."[194] Marsden argues that by the early twentieth century

philosophers like Nietzsche and Marx brought into the social imaginary the notion that

"metaphysical as well as ethical statements [are]…meaningless."[195] Trueman agrees and

believes philosophers like Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin overturn metaphysical

categories. Marsden believes that what is ushered into culture is the concept that truth is

socially constructed (constructivism) and determined largely by power.[196] He argues that

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[192] Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*, 190.

[193] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 27.

[194] Trueman, 195.

[195] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 294.

[196] Marsden, 352.

there are no more facts, only interpretations, and that interpretations of history are "controlled by the interests of the interpreters." They are "useful myths."[197] MacIntyre writes that in this new postmodern culture where society is "unmoored from traditional norms of morality, human beings become barbarians, governed by their will to power."[198] Truth is conceived as being constructed by the individual, and the individual (or collective) powerful enough to impress their truth into the social imagination become the authority for what is true.

Moral and political philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre argues that emotivism (the idea that morality is guided by emotion) becomes the dominant ethos in the mid-twentieth century instead of reason, telos, or virtue.[199] Glanzer writes that "throughout the 40s, 50s, and 60s, the idea that ethical judgments are simply expressions of subjective feelings and attitudes, the theory of emotivism, gain(s) the upper hand."[200] Taylor expresses it as a "shift more and more towards the strength and the genuineness of the feelings, rather than the nature of their object."[201] "Ethics," writes Trueman, "becomes a function of feeling."[202] Truth is not only constructed in the postmodern imagination, it resides in the feelings of the individual and gains authority through its authenticity and passion.

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[197] Marsden, 295.

[198] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 253.

[199] MacIntyre, 253.

[200] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 93.

[201] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 488.

[202] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 85.

Postmodern Ideas About Self/Identity

With the loss of external ethical norms, humans lose the notion of having a sinful nature. Trueman writes that under the influence of Rousseau, society comes to understand human nature as good but is negatively impacted by "social institutions that breed corruption and wickedness."[203] Watkin shows that this concept is at the core of the contemporary social imaginary. He writes that "the modern paradigm of heroism is defining your own identity in the teeth of a 'them' who want to stifle you and make you conform."[204]

Freud brings to the social imagination the notion that perhaps humankind is not "fundamentally good, empathetic, and rational" like Rousseau argues, but is instead "dark, violent, [and] irrational."[205] Not only does society lose the concept of a sinful nature when transcendence is removed, but it also loses the imago dei. Trueman argues that in the current culture, dignity is now psychologized and is no longer a universal given for humanity. He writes that "the granting of dignity has come to be equated with the affirmation of those psychologized identities that enjoy special status in our culture." Culture analyst Alan Noble agrees that in the contemporary milieu, where the only truth one can know is one's own existence, identity becomes something that each person must name for themselves. Unfortunately, he states, this "sovereign individualism comes at a great price…The burden is manifested by a desperate need to justify [one's identity] through identity crafting and expression." Without the validation of others, individuals

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[203] Trueman, 113.

[204] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 43.

[205] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 206.

are left feeling insecure and unstable.[206] Watkin agrees and says that with self-definition

comes a mental health burden and "its accompanying need to present the perfect self-

image."[207] He also writes about the impact of this focus on personal self-expression and

self-actualization in culture. He says that in modern Western societies, this individual

focus is coming "at the expense of the welfare of the community."[208]

Postmodern Ideas About Society/World

Marsden documents a transition in society regarding primary identity. He writes

that society no longer sees their primary identity as being rooted in a collective national

identity or "the long heritage of broadly orthodox Christianity" but instead sees it rooted

in the self as an individual. He argues that this individualism "corrodes" the sense of

being part of something larger together.[209] Marsden also documents this turn toward

individualism. He credits a shift in authority as the impetus for this cultural movement. If

authority lies within the individual, any type of orthodoxy is simply an impingement to

"one's own path of spiritual inspiration." Conformity to a social or religious norm leads

one away from "the good."[210] Marsden notes that in the early "American democratic

project" common stories and "fellow feeling among their members" is encouraged and

seen as the social glue holding a people together. He believes that in the current situation,

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[206] Noble, *You Are Not Your Own*, 4,32.

[207] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 94.

[208] Watkin and Keller, 43.

[209] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 379, 386.

[210] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 489.

the individual is raised up to the expense of society. He writes that "sacrifice and transcending differences for the sake of a common goal" is no longer seen as valuable.[211] What is considered valuable is tolerance and justice—tolerance for desiring individuals and an equity between them.

Tolerance and Justice—The Last Remaining Virtues

Without an authority of shared common values, there is little to hold society together. The one social virtue that persists is tolerance. With identity rooted internally by the authority of self-creation, the only option of cohesion left is to simply tolerate the inward authority of each individual. Taylor writes, "Tolerance is the last remaining virtue," and "the sin which is not tolerated is intolerance."[212] Taylor sees the most significant shift in the post-1960s West as the loss of other values that surround tolerance and place limits on an individual's fulfillment.[213] "Choice," he believes, "[becomes] a prime value." He shows that with the acceptance of naturalism and critical theory in the twentieth century, "choice" is perceived as being unfairly biased toward the strong and not even real choice at all.[214] Smith summarizes it this way, "The whole human race [is] subjected to some individual men, and those individuals [are] subjected to that in themselves which is purely 'natural' – their irrational impulses."[215]

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[211] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited*, 352.

[212] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 85, 484.

[213] Taylor, 485.

[214] Taylor, 478.

[215] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 87.

In contrast to Smith and Taylor, Glanzer writes about justice replacing tolerance as the last great virtue. He references educational theorist, Lawrence Kohlberg, who argues, "there are not many moral virtues but one." The argument is that "justice is a universal principle, [whereas] rules have exceptions but not the one principle of justice."[216] Glanzer believes that Kohlberg succeeds in "reducing virtually all of moral education to justice."[217] To tolerate the ideas of those in power is perceived as injustice since truth is simply a construction of ideas used by the strong to oppress the weak.

Deconstruction and the Physical World

Not only is truth subject to the desires of the individual; in a postmodern social imaginary, the physical world is perceived as being subject as well. Trueman holds that critical postmodern philosophies along with the psychologization of modern life grants a priority to "inner conviction over biological reality." "Reality," he writes, "is inward and psychological, not outward and natural."[218] In this perspective, biology comes to be regarded "as a form of tyranny." Truman argues that when ultimate authority is given to the psychological self, the physical body becomes something to overcome. He writes, "Its authority is to be rejected; biology is to be transcended by the use of technology."[219]

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[216] Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, 39, 300.

[217] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 149.

[218] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 340.

[219] Trueman, 259.

However, acknowledges Watkins, there is still a tension in culture between this radical freedom, which determines even nature, and the evolutionary concept of determinism.[220]

Preeminent Christian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd writes that when freedom and nature, or the "personality ideal" and the "science ideal" become enemies, "humanism [has] no choice but to assign religious priority or primacy to one or the other."[221] Watkins acknowledges this same tension. He believes there will always be a prioritization debate between the existential and the situational categories (such as the debate between freedom and nature) when the normative transcendent category is ignored.[222] Social chaos, Trueman argues, is the inevitable outcome of the loss of transcendence.[223]

Reiff also writes about this social chaos within twentieth century culture. He names it "anti-culture," since cultures are defined by what they forbid, and in an age of complete freedom, and particularly sexual freedom, nothing is forbidden. Reiff believes this leads to cultural "deathworks," which he defines as a type of cultural poison.[224] He writes, "Culture and sacred order are inseparable…No culture has ever preserved itself

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[220] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 195.

[221] Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 153.

[222] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*.

[223] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 387.

[224] Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks*, 4.

where there is not a registration of sacred order."[225] He concludes with precision and clarity, and writes, "Where there is nothing sacred, there is nothing."[226]

The Postmodern Social Imaginary of a Good Life

With the sacred and the transcendent removed from the postmodern imaginary, and moral virtues reduced to tolerance and justice, "good" and "evil" take on new meaning. Watkins argues that the concept of sin is now considered intolerant as well as the concept of judgment itself. He writes that "as for judgment, it has become the byword for bigotry." Contemporary culture, he writes, "attacks sin and judgment as hate speech." With authority located psychologically within the individual, appeal to norms outside the individual is now considered oppressive. Smith writes that with the "expansion of expressive individualism…the only sin is intolerance."[227] The prevailing belief becomes "Do your own thing, who am I to judge?"[228] The social "good" is to affirm the inward authority of the individual and the social "evil" is to impose an external norm onto the choices of others.

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[225] Rieff, 13.

[226] Rieff, 12.

[227] Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 87.

[228] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 108, 109.

Redefining Justice in a Land without God

There is one exception to this new definition of good and evil. Kohlberg

introduces this exception in the mid-1960s in his moral development theory.[229] He writes

that "the legitimate moral values that the school may transmit are the values of justice."

He believes that natural laws are grounded on concepts of justice which "functions in

maintaining the rights of the individuals."[230] For Kohlberg, it is not a matter of what is

good, but of what is equal. Glanzer connects Kohlberg's philosophy with the new gender

identity movements. He argues that their focus is on "obtaining power, respect, and

rights, and not achieving a particular moral ideal of identity excellence." Each gender

and sexual identity seek "an equitable distribution of power and privilege." Other virtues

are ignored and only social justice matters.[231]

Trueman documents the philosophical ideas that change cultural notions around

justice. He argues that Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin prove lethal to any type of ethic built

on the intrinsic, sacred order within nature. Without a sacred order, there is no imago dei

to ground the equality and dignity of humankind. Trueman writes that these intellectuals

bring to the social imagination the idea that the "sacred order was a sign of psychological

sickness," and that belief in God is a means to manipulate the poor and suffering.[232]

Within this social imaginary, inequality is simply the product of the strong oppressing the

weak. Sin no longer plays a role in societal ills. Trueman believes that Marcuse's

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[229] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 148.

[230] Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, 300.

[231] Glanzer, *The Dismantling of Moral Education*, 70.

[232] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 194.

ideology turns both tolerance and justice on its head. He writes that in Marcuse's ideology, "tolerance is in the service of hegemony." It is only in restricting the speech of the oppressor that the marginalized will be heard.[233] Not only should justice not be blind, but it should see and preference the marginalized.[234]

Haidt believes that this division of society into the oppressors and oppressed is creating an us vs. them mentality in contemporary culture. He argues that this is too simplistic of a lens to view individuals and society, and that it is missing nuance and generosity. Trueman agrees that nuance and generosity are missing in the current cultural climate. He highlights the popular narrative regarding the motivation and impact of moral judgments around sexual behavior. Using the example of an objection to homosexual behavior, Trueman writes that "any attempt to corral sexual behavior is…rendered an oppressive move designed to make the individual inauthentic."[235] Cultural critic and London college pastor Marcus Honeysett writes that in the "absence of any shared belief in truth, or shared trust in overarching schemes of meaning…like modernism or Christianity…metanarratives are now distrusted simply on the grounds that they claim to be true, and therefore are likely to be a power mechanism." He writes further that "there is no such thing as Good and Evil, only good and bad." For the postmodernists, Honeysett argues, the "ultimate felony" is "to enslave ourselves and deny our human potential."[236]

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[233] Trueman, 330, 331.

[234] Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance."

[235] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 264.

[236] Honeysett, "Christians in a Postmodern World."

With identity grounded internally and psychologically, harm and repression expand in meaning to include psychological categories and to be seen primarily within this category. Trueman writes that in this new reality, "freedom of speech…becomes part of the problem, not the solution, because words become weapons."[237] The psychological well-being of individuals becomes primary, and in a world where truth is created by the individual, perceived emotional harm is harm. Trueman believes that "ethics…becomes a function of feeling."[238] And when a certain type of postmodern social justice is added to the equation, (one that divides humans into oppressor and oppressed), ethics becomes a function of the feelings of the oppressed alone.

Trueman believes Marcuse's ideology has significantly shaped contemporary notions of justice. In a Marcusian world, Trueman argues, "speech needs to be carefully regulated" for the good of society. After all, he writes, "why would bad words and ideas be allowed when their only purpose is to inflict psychological damage on and cause oppression of the marginalized, disposed, and other victims of the ruling class's practices of domination?"[239] Watkins also defines societal good and bad within this type of justice narrative. He agrees with Trueman that, in this view, the world is perceived as being divided into groups of oppressors and oppressed. He also argues that in this narrative, one is guilty of, and responsible for, the historical and contemporary actions of the majority-culture groups to which one belongs. Redemption, he says, is found in a type of social justice where the oppressed overthrow their oppressor and where society is reformed by

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[237] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 55.

[238] Trueman, 85.

[239] Trueman, 252.

first tearing it down."[240] The "good" in this social imaginary is action and speech that affirms "oppressed" groups or tears down "oppressor" groups. The "bad" is considered that which feels psychologically harmful to the "oppressed."

The Postmodern Social Imaginary of a True Life

With the marginalization and denial of transcendence in society, conflict arises around concepts of truth and authority. Without an authority above humanity, it is simply one person's truth against another. Trueman explains that "the reason why ethical and political discussions are so acrimonious and futile today is that there is no commonly accepted foundation on which such discussions might constructively take place."[241] He writes that "moral discourse today is so fruitless because it lacks any commonly accepted basis on which moral differences can be discussed and assessed."[242] Philosopher and literary critic William Egginton references common terms associated with the current direction of mainstream universities, terms such as: "fragmenting," "splintering," "politicization," and "disrupting."[243] He argues that these words denote the confusion and conflict within contemporary culture.

It is not only interpersonal conflict that is created in the absence of transcendent authority; it is intrapersonal conflict as well. There is confusion within the individual as to which faculty or combination of faculties (e.g., reason, feelings, desire, sense

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240 Watkin, "CRT vs. Classical Liberalism vs. Christianity."

241 Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 388.

242 Trueman, 195.

243 Egginton, *The Splintering of the American Mind*.

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experience) one aligns. Some academics like Haidt and Lukianoff encourage students to not trust their initial feelings, but many others are teaching them the exact opposite.[244] Watkins shows that it is animal appetite and desire that many consider authoritative for people's lives, and that rationality and language are simply a means of aligning to them.[245] Trueman believes that all that is left for individuals now is to follow their free-floating subjective sentiment.[246] Taylor believes that the current social imaginary is one that encourages everyone to "follow his/her own path of spiritual inspiration" and, "Don't be led off yours by the allegation that it doesn't fit with some orthodoxy."[247] Although there are disagreements as to exactly what is authoritative within the individual, the authority being sought is not external to the individual.

To act authentically in the postmodern age is to align oneself to oneself. There is no longer the Christian concept of aligning to Christ to become one's true self; the self known by God. There is also no longer the modern concept of aligning to a more virtuous potential self, attained through reason and self-discipline. Watkin argues that the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre helps to bring into the social imaginary a new notion of authenticity. Watkins writes that Sartre seeks to convince his contemporaries that they have a choice to "cower" to other's ideas or "to act authentically, deciding for oneself the meaning and purpose of one's life" and to act according to it.[248] He references the impact

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[244] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 14.

[245] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 93.

[246] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 195.

[247] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 489.

[248] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 196.

of Nietzsche, who Watkin credits with the concept of humans having authority within themselves to define their own existence.[249] Trueman also references Nietzsche and Sartre as helping to create the notion that individuals are self-creators. He writes in explanation of this notion that "[humans] are able to constitute themselves by their self-conscious, intentional actions." He credits existentialist philosopher and social theorist Simone de Beauvoir with taking this idea of self-creation one step further by influencing the culture to turn "away from biological facts to inner psychological life."[250] In 1953, de Beauvoir writes, "The female is a woman, insofar as she feels herself as such…it is she who defines herself by reclaiming nature for herself in her affectivity."[251] Trueman summarizes this idea: "To be a woman is to feel that one is a woman."[252] In the postmodern social imaginary, one must look within to discover the real self which is the truest truth. False authorities outside oneself are not to be heeded. It is the internal feelings, desires, and self-affirming ideas that one must structure one's life around.

The Postmodern Social Imaginary of a Beautiful Life

Watkins summarizes the contemporary notion of living one's best life as a life of being one's own master and blazing one's own trail. He writes that "we have been increasingly told that we live our best life when we go our own way, in the face of what

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[249] Watkin and Keller, 94.

[250] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 255, 256.

[251] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 49.

[252] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 257.

'they' tell us to do."[253] The Modern Age, Taylor argues, is an age where individual

happiness is encouraged, but only when it is set within certain limits or boundaries.

Taylor names some of these boundaries: self-control, hard work, family values, and

productivity. He claims that after the Second World War, "the limits on the pursuit of

individual happiness [are] most clearly set aside, particularly in sexual matters."[254] No

longer does human flourishing demand sacrifice in the social imaginary. Taylor believes

that flourishing is now sought only within the imminent domain. Culture no longer has a

Christian "transformation perspective" that acknowledges the limits of earthly

transformation and the promise of future perfection and higher flourishing in heaven.

Fullness and flourishing now must be experienced within the present and without

limits.[255]

Trueman argues that for Rousseau, Hume, and Freud, "the goal of human

existence [is] to be happy." He believes that Rousseau teaches culture to see happiness as

returning to and aligning with "the impulses of nature" and to one's feelings. Freud, he

believes, gives this idea of happiness "a specifically sexual turn in identifying it with

genital pleasure." Because of Freud's influence, present-day culture sees sexual

satisfaction as "one of the key components to what it means to be living the good life."[256]

Haidt and Lukianoff decry a new culture that sees immediacy of pleasure, feelings of

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[253] Watkin and Keller, *Biblical Critical Theory*, 198.

[254] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 484, 485.

[255] Taylor, 643.

[256] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 148, 203, 204.

safety, and pain-free living as imperative for flourishing.[257] With the individualistic and inward turn in society, flourishing comes to be associated with psychological wellness. This wellness, says Trueman, is not bounded by society's needs, but society is seen to be bounded by the psychological needs of the individual. The individual's wellness, Trueman writes, is perceived to be negatively impacted if their self-created truths are not affirmed. To not affirm their truths "would create anxiety and make one inauthentic" leading to the perception of "psychological harm."[258] "Life is performance," says Trueman, and to flourish one needs to be in an accepting and safe environment where one can express one's truths to the support and approval of others.[259]

Summary of the Postmodern Social Imaginary of the Good, True, and Beautiful Life

In the Modern Age, God was decentered, but in the Postmodern Age, he was dethroned and replaced by the individual. The postmodern social imaginary sees the world as devoid of the sacred. There are no more facts, only interpretations. All is subjective. Truth is seen as socially constructed and determined by power. Individuals create their own reality, which is largely determined by their feelings and desires. One is encouraged to align oneself with those feelings and desires to be authentic. Fullness and flourishing are considered an inward psychological wellness that is experienced when one expresses one's truth to the affirmation of an outside world. Social good is affirming

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[257] Lukianoff and Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 14.

[258] Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 54.

[259] Trueman, 379, 380, 392.

the inward authority of the individual and seeking an equitable distribution of power and privilege in society.

Summary of Literature Review

In light of the literature examined, American colleges and universities have been shaped by three distinct social imaginaries each with a different ultimate authority: the biblical social imaginary as represented in this literature review by the wisdom of Proverbs, which has the Lord and his law as its ultimate authority; modernism which has rational humanity and science as its ultimate authority; and postmodernism which has the internal psychological self as its ultimate authority. Truth (or that which is authoritative) appears to have ultimate significance for shaping what each social imaginary considers good and beautiful.

Within each transcendental category of truth, beauty, or goodness (or Frame's corresponding categories of normative, existential, and situational) in each of the three social imaginaries (Christian/Proverbs, modern, postmodern), there is a particular understanding of the nature of authority, the nature of the existential self, and the nature of the situation. There is also a particular way in which these social imaginaries encourage people to live out truth, beauty, and goodness, both internally and externally. Although ultimate authority is ultimately significant for how each of the social imaginaries understands and encourages the good, true, and beautiful life, each transcendental category impacts and influences the others. There can be no truly distinct analysis of each of the three transcendentals categories since they always function together, and there can be no exact definition of each of the three social imaginaries since they are fluid, overlapping, and present differently in different contexts. Because of this,

the following is a generalized summary of what the literature says are the beliefs and

corresponding obligations of each social imaginary (or what each believes about the

nature of truth, beauty, and goodness, and how each imagines they should be lived out).

The Three Social Imaginaries and the Normative/Truth Category

Regarding the normative/truth category (or the nature of authority and aligning

with truth), Proverbs declares that not only is the Lord and his law authoritative, but there

are other valid authorities as well, including truth, wisdom, and wise leaders. To align

with truth, according to Proverbs, one must fear, love, and obey God and obtain the

wisdom that comes from him. One does this by paying attention to true things, loving

wisdom, and walking in wisdom's ways. The consequences of living truthfully according

to Proverbs are protection and success given by God in the material and/or spiritual

world. The consequences for not living truthfully are to be misled into immediate and

eternal harm and failure in one's relationships and actions.

The modern social imaginary (MSI) places human reasoning and science as its

highest authority for truth, but it also considers scientific experts and one's common

sense as valid authorities. Truth is obtained through the scientific method and one's

internal and external senses. Living truthfully requires obtaining empirical facts and data

and then aligning one's practices to their revealed truths, which are discovered through

the scientific method and validated by experts. The positive consequences of living

truthfully, according to the MSI, are personal and social progress and greater efficiency

and control over nature, which leads to an abundance of material goods and comforts.

The postmodern social imaginary (PSI) places an individual's internal

psychological self as the highest authority for truth, but it also considers authenticity,

passion, and the self-revealed "lived" experiences of "marginalized and oppressed," non-majority people as valid authorities. Aligning with truth requires knowing one's deepest desires, taking pride in them, expressing them to others, and living them out against the pressure to conform to a dominant and oppressive majority. It requires listening to and learning from "marginalized and oppressed," non-majority others, and adapting one's life to their revealed truths. The positive consequences of living truthfully, according to the PSI, are personal freedom, happiness, and self-actualization (particularly regarding sexuality) and a society where oppressors are held in check and where all people have freedom and equitable privilege.

The Three Social Imaginaries and the Existential/Beauty Category

Regarding the existential/beauty category (or the nature of the self and experiencing flourishing), Proverbs says that what is most real about a person is what is internal (or one's heart), but that the external world and one's own actions can impact and reveal the heart. A person's identity is what can be known about them by God and others. Although people identify others by how they act, God knows people by their actions and heart. A person's character is the product of the daily small choices of the heart (mind, affections, will) which in turn impact and are impacted by the person's actions. A social imaginary founded on Proverbs understands the choices of the heart to be central to human flourishing. It understands that flourishing (spiritually, emotionally, physically, and relationally) results from a person choosing right authorities, attitudes, and actions and conforming their heart and body to spiritual and physical realities.

The MSI understands the rational mind and the physical body to be most real about a person. A person is known by their actions in the world (how they behave and

reason) and whether they conform to cultural virtues or notions of personal and social progress. Training, education, self-determination, and one's environment impact a person's character. One's primary identity is defined by a collective national identity, but individually, it is defined by conformity to what is rational, virtuous, and civil (as defined by the scientific elite). The MSI understands personal and social progress (peace, order, and prosperity in society) as central to human flourishing. Flourishing is believed to result from embodying virtue and civility, self-fashioning through education, personal effort (without aid from God), rationality, and technological and social progress through the physical and social sciences.

The PSI names a person's feelings, desires, and personal interpretation of their "lived" experiences as what is most real about a person. One is known by what they share is true about themselves and by their membership in a chosen or conferred social tribe (a group of people aligned around a commonality that often share similar social standing and/or power dynamics). Virtues, according to the PSI, are simply creations of the powerful to privilege themselves and their tribe. There is no such thing as character, only self-definition. Some believe that human nature is basically good while others believe that deep down humanity is irrational and ruled by desires and appetites (especially sexual). Flourishing means pleasure for the physical body and happiness for the inward self. It is believed to result from being in an accepting and safe environment where one can express one's truths and feel the support and approval of others while experiencing a pain-free life.

The Three Social Imaginaries and the Situation/Goodness Category

Regarding the situational/goodness category (the nature of the situation and doing good in the world), Proverbs names the following ways/paths that are in the world: light and dark ways (ways that do or do not have the light of truth—normative); ways that lead to life and to death (ways that do or do not lead to ultimate flourishing—existential); straight and crooked paths (paths that are or are not aligned to what is good—situational). There are also ways known by the people who take them. The way of the upright is light (they can see reality), and it leads away from evil. The way of the wicked is dark (they cannot see reality), and it leads towards evil. Identity, according to Proverbs can be known by the path one takes, or the path can be known by the identity of the one taking it. Proverbs names the types of people one will encounter in the world: godly people and evil people (the situation from above); integrous people and treacherous people (the internal situation); and rich people and poor people (the external situation). Proverbs explains that to do good things one must be on the good and right path by trusting God and seeking his will. One must also understand wisdom and embody it. The "good" is that which is right, just, and fair, and one comes to understand what is right, just, and fair by being honest, faithful, and just. Proverbs declares that doing good leads to being good, wise, and successful.

The MSI understands humans to be living in a created (or after Darwin, evolving) ordered world that is to be subdued and conquered for material gain. Human nature is seen as basically good, but in its base, raw form needs to be controlled and re-shaped. The types of people in the world are those who are either disciplined and living by virtue or undisciplined and living by vice. They are either civil (controlled, educated, and

following reason) or savages (uncontrolled, uneducated, and following natural impulses). The MSI understands goodness as progressing the self and society through reason, education, and virtuous living, and controlling and utilizing nature through science and technology. To do good, one must become virtuous and adhere to certain social ideals, make sacrifices for the good of society, transcend individual differences for the sake of a common goal, and be effective and productive for the wealth and technical advance of society. Doing good according to the MSI leads to moral perfection, human achievement, and a civil society of peace and prosperity.

The PSI understands humans to be living in an evolving material world devoid of the sacred and without metanarratives. There are not more facts, only subjective interpretation. Truth is conceived as socially constructed and determined by power. Human nature is seen as a product of animal instincts, one's internal environment (e.g., the chemical balance in the brain) and one's external environment. The PSI names the types of people who one will encounter in the world as a panoply of individuals who are whatever they claim to be (each person having their own way to realize their humanity). There are also oppressed people and oppressors (those with power and privilege oppressing those without). In the PSI, one does good things by affirming the inward authority of the individual, including oneself, and equitably distributing power and privilege in society. The following are seen by the PSI as good to do: balancing one's mental health through one's preferred method (e.g., healthy food, exercise, stress reduction, medicine); crafting one's identity and expressing one's individuality (living out one's own against conforming to a model imposed from the outside); affirming the chosen identity and expression of others; action and speech that does not psychologically

harm the oppressed and/or helps to redistribute the power and privilege unjustly gained

by oppressors; and actions and speech that affirms the rights of non-human entities, such

as animals and the earth (humans are simply one part of nature). Doing good according to

the PSI leads to personal happiness and justice in the world.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain a rich description of CCSDP's beliefs concerning how students flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world and how these beliefs impact their engagement with their Gen Z students. The assumption of this study was that CCSDP in the United States are impacted, to some degree, by the social imaginary of the secular and postmodern western society in which they live. Their descriptions will give greater insight into the kind of impact this postmodern social imaginary has on CCSDP's engagement with their students. To address this purpose, the research identified four areas of focus: the beliefs of CCSDP about what it entails for students to flourish, the beliefs of CCSDP about what it entails for students to live truthfully; the beliefs of CCSDP about what it entails for students to do good in the world; and the impact of CCSDP's beliefs on their engagement with students. After having been informed by the literature review, the researcher utilized basic qualitative research. To examine the main areas of focus more closely, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to flourish?
2. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to live truthfully?
3. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to do good in the world?

Design of the Study

The research design of this study followed a basic qualitative approach. Sharan B. Merriam, in her well-known book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and*

Implementation, shows that qualitative research "encompasses a number of philosophical orientations and approaches" but that all of them have "an emphasis on experience, understanding, and meaning-making."[260] Because of the interest of the researcher to understand the nature of the belief system of CCSDP and how they make meaning in their work with students, a qualitative study was chosen, and in particular, a basic qualitative study. Merriam defines a basic qualitative study as a study that seeks to "understanding how people interpret their experiences," "how they construct their worlds," and "what meaning they attribute to their experiences."[261] The study sought and utilized this type of data.

Case Study Setting

As an added dimension to the basic qualitative approach, a case study method was utilized because of the bounded nature of the research. Merriam defines a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system."[262] The case study method was able to minimize the variables for a more in-depth study into a singular institution. Since all participants shared the same culture and institutional structure, the case study eliminated extraneous data, allowing the researcher to expand the scope of the study to a variety of different offices within one department of an institution of higher education. The case study analysis was particularly useful for providing an opportunity for greater

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[260] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 21.

[261] Merriam and Tisdell, 24.

[262] Merriam and Tisdell, 39.

depth of individual exploration and at the same time greater breadth of representation from offices within a singular institutional department.

The researcher utilized interviews to gain an insider's perspective on the subject matter. Merriam refers to this view as the emic view, differing from etic view, or outsider perspective. Merriam states that "the key concern [of the emic view] is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's."[263] Because of the nature of qualitative research, it was important for the researcher to be the primary instrument of data collection and analysis since "the human instrument…is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive."[264] An inductive process was utilized as the researcher built the concepts and theories from the data of the interviews. Larger themes evolved from the words, concepts, and stories of the participants. Merriam names this movement "from the particular to the general" as a mark of the inductive nature of a qualitative study.[265] The product of the inquiry was richly descriptive and included the words, quotes, and concepts of the participants as well as descriptions of the participants and the context.

Participant Sample Selection

The researcher chose nonprobability sampling because of the qualitative nature of the study. Nonprobability sampling is described by cultural anthropologist and field researcher, J. J. Honigmann, as the method of choice "to solve problems, such as

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[263] Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

[264] Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

[265] Merriam and Tisdell, 17.

discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences."[266] The sampling was also purposeful. Participants were chosen because the investigator sought to gain insight from those thought to be able to offer information-rich data. Merriam writes that "information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry."[267]

This research required participants to work within the Student Development/Student Affairs division of a Christian college/university in the United States. These CCSDP could offer insight into the central questions of the inquiry. Since the study was on the beliefs and interactions of CCSDP, the institution needed to be a member of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities to ensure that the institution was Christ-centered and rooted in a historic Christian faith. It was also important for the institution to be sizable so that participants could be selected from a variety of offices within a Student Development division. The researcher sought not only depth of interview data that could be gathered in one-to-one interviews but also breadth of data that could be provided by participants within a variety of offices.

Participants were purposefully chosen from the offices in the Student Development division. It was important for their position to include significant student engagement from which they could offer a depth and breadth of insight. Since the number of offices within a single college or university is already bounded, the researcher chose to interview one person from each office or office area and to have a breadth of several factors represented within the final selection of participants. Those factors for

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[266] Burgess, *Field Research*, chap. Sampling in Ethnographic Fieldwork.

[267] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 96.

intentional variation of participants were gender, race, and generation. Because the study was highly focused on culture, factors that have significant cultural impact on people's beliefs and engagement were selected. Finally, the institution which the researcher acquired participants was a CCCU college/university located in the Midwest of the United States, due to ease of access for the researcher and limited researcher resources for travel. A typical sample as described by Merriam is "one that is selected because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest."[268]

The final study was conducted through personal interviews with eight CCSDP representing each office or office area. They were invited to participate via an introductory letter and soon thereafter received a personal call to confirm their participation. Each gave written informed consent to participate and signed a "Research Participation Consent Form" to protect and respect the human rights of those involved. In preparation for the research, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements for human rights in research were completed, and the Human Rights Risk Level Assessment is "minimal risk" according to the Seminary IRB guidelines (see below).

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[268] Merriam and Tisdell, 97.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I agree to participate in the research being conducted by KATHLEEN HAASE to investigate the beliefs and student engagement of Christian college Student Development personnel for the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Covenant Theological Seminary.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, and/or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The purpose of the research is to gain a rich description of how Christian college Student Development personnel engage Gen Z students according to the CCSDP's own beliefs concerning how students flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world.

2) Potential benefits of the research: it is hoped that the discussions will be of interest and the research will benefit a wider understanding of the social imaginary guiding the engagement of Christian college Student Development personnel with their students.

3) The research process will include interviewing 8-10 individuals on one occasion with the audio recorded. These will be transcribed and then analyzed as part of the research for the final thesis. All participants will remain anonymous.

4) Participants in this research will meet with the researcher (ideally in person) for up to 90 minutes, for a recorded interview (audio only).

5) Potential discomforts or stresses: None

6) Potential risks: Minimal risk (PTO)

7) Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. The data gathered for this research is confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent unless otherwise required by law. Audiotapes or videotapes of interviews will be erased following the completion of the dissertation. By my signature, I am giving informed consent for the use of my responses in this research project.

8) Limits of Privacy: I understand that, by law, the researcher cannot keep information confidential if it involves abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or plans for a person to harm themselves or to hurt someone else.

9) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Researcher Date

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Participant Date
Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one. Return the other to the researcher. Thank you.

> Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary; 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Phone (314) 434-4044.

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. A list of questions was created to elicit the thoughts and feelings of the respondents about the inquiry at hand. The questions were constructed in such a way as to allow for freedom and flexibility to pivot with the responses of the interviewees but also to stay within the bounds of the issues being explored. Merriam defines the semi-structured interview as one where most of the interview is directed by a list of questions or issues to be explored, yet "all of the questions are more flexibly worded."[269] Because the questions were posed in an open-ended manner, the interviewer was able to probe the responses of the participant, allowing for greater depth of inquiry and exploration. Merriam believes open-ended questions are good interview questions because they can yield helpful, detailed, and descriptive data.[270] The use of open-ended questions within the semi-structured method enabled the researcher to discover themes, patterns, and contrasting beliefs across the variation of participants.

The researcher performed a pilot test of the interview protocol, evaluating the questions for their usefulness in obtaining relevant data and for their clarity. The initial questions were extracted from the literature but evolved as the researcher compared the descriptions, phrases, and words of the participants. Coding and categorizing the data throughout the process of gathering interviews allowed for the emergence of new sources

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[269] Merriam and Tisdell, 110.

[270] Merriam and Tisdell, 120, 121.

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of data. Merriam describes the simultaneous analysis of data and data collection as the "preferred way" to do qualitative research.[271]

The researcher interviewed eight CCSDP for between one to one-and-a-half hours. Prior to the interview, the participants were given a brief catalogue of terms and definitions (see Chapter 1), for a shared understanding and exploration. To accommodate the schedule of each participant, the researcher travelled to the location of his/her choosing. The interviews were recorded on both a cellular device and a personal computer recording application. Two interviews per week allowed the researcher to complete the data gathering in a four-week period. The researcher took thorough field notes during and directly after each interview, noting descriptive and reflective observations of the interview time.

The case study protocol contained the following questions.

1. Describe a few recent student engagements that you felt went really well.

   a. How do you hope your work helps students toward flourishing?

   b. How do you hope your work helps students toward living more truthfully?

   c. How do you hope your work helps students to do more good or just things in the world?

2. Describe some upper-class students that you feel are flourishing.

   a. What were some challenges those students had to navigate in order to flourish?

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[271] Merriam and Tisdell, 197.

b. What are some ways your engagement with them helped them toward flourishing?

c. What are some things that keep students from flourishing?

d. What are some challenges you have faced in trying to help students flourish?

e. How did you navigate these challenges?

3. Describe some upper-class students that you feel are living truthfully?

a. What are some challenges those students had to navigate in order to live more truthfully?

b. What are some ways your engagement with them helped them towards flourishing?

c. What are some things that keep students from flourishing?

d. What are some challenges you have faced in trying to help students flourish?

e. How did you navigate these challenges?

4. Describe some upper-class students that you feel are doing good or just things in the world, whether here or elsewhere.

a. What were some challenges those students had to navigate in order to do good or just things in the world?

b. What are some ways your engagement with them helped them to do good or just things in the world?

c. What are some things that keep students from doing good or just things in the world?

d. What are some challenges you have faced in trying to help students to do good or just things in the world?

e. How did you navigate these challenges?

5. If your resources, time, and energy were unlimited for engaging students toward flourishing, living truthfully, and doing good in the world; what would you hope to be doing with students?

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed each interview by uploading the digital recording into MAXQDA transcription software. Alterations to that transcription were made as the researcher listened to the original digital recording to check the MAXQDA transcription for accuracy. Each interview was transcribed within the week of the interview. Once the interviews were fully transcribed, they were coded and analyzed.

This study utilized the constant comparison method which allowed for "emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses to direct the next phase of data collection."[272] The analysis focused on discovering and identifying (1) common themes, categories, and patterns across the variation of participants; and (2) congruence or discrepancy between the different participants. In addition, to compare the data to the themes, categories, and patterns of a postmodern worldview, the analysis utilized the "three great untruths" of Haidt and Lukianoff as a representation of that worldview. Concurrently, to compare the data to the themes, categories, and patterns of a biblical worldview, the analysis utilized the book of Proverbs as a representation of that worldview. Although the research was

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[272] Merriam and Tisdell, 191.

primarily focused on the impact a postmodern social imaginary has on the engagement of CCSDP with their Gen Z students, the data was also compared to the themes, categories, and patterns of a modern worldview. Author and theologian Stanley J. Grenz argues that although higher education has transitioned from a primarily modern worldview to a primarily postmodern worldview, both worldviews still exist within higher education.[273] The analysis, therefore, also compared the data to a modern worldview and utilized a synthesis of descriptions from Lewis, Marsden, Smith, and Taylor from within the modern chapter of the literature review as a representation of that worldview. Coding for analysis included three categories of CCSDP descriptions: how young adults flourish; how young adults live truthfully; and how young adults do good or just things in the world. These descriptions were further coded for their alignment with a biblical social imaginary (as described in Proverbs), a modern social imaginary (as described by Lewis, Marsden, Smith, and Taylor), and a postmodern social imaginary (as described by Haidt and Lukianoff).

To maintain each participant's confidentiality, names were changed as soon as the interviews were transcribed. As a result, the names used in Chapter 4 are pseudonymous. Further, the names of each office in the Student Development/Student Affairs department were changed to a more generic name in the case of a unique or identifying name. The term Student Development and Student Affairs were used interchangeably for the name of the department.

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[273] Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 2.

Researcher Position

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary collector of data. Although there are advantages to this method, it is the nature of human perception to be highly subjective and selective. Merriam notes, "We all attend to certain things, and nobody attends to them all," but one can be trained to be a careful and systematic observer as well as a skilled interviewer.[274] Because of the researcher's training in qualitative research and data collection, particular attention was paid to these potential biases. The researcher began the study with a primary posture of being a recipient of the artifacts of the participants instead of a creative agent. During the interviews, the goal was to investigate the participant's understanding of the world and how they experienced it. Even so, this approach is not without the subjective influence of the investigator.

The investigator has worked in the field of Student Development for several decades, and there are likely convictions and assumptions that have become deeply embedded. One of the assumptions of the researcher is that humans are deeply influenced by the social imaginary within their culture. Another is that that humans do not create their own reality, but it is God who creates reality. The researcher subscribes to a traditional Christian worldview which understands that all of life is to be lived in obedience to God and in alignment with God's revealed truth found in the Bible. This obedience entails following Jesus's call in the book of Matthew to make disciples.[275] These beliefs impacted, to some extent, the direction of the research and the questions in the interviews. To offset potential bias, the researcher made every effort to use neutral

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[274] Merriam and Tisdell, 138.

[275] Matt. 29:19

body language in the interviews. The interviewer also sought to ask and respond to questions in a tone and manner that would not unduly influence the interviewee toward the opinion, prejudice, or value of the researcher. Since the participants were also Christians and worked in an institution that subscribed to a similar belief system, there was a high likelihood that the words and meanings used by the interviewer would correspond to the participant's understanding of those same words and meanings.

To offset the impact of subjectivity and bias in the study, the researcher engaged Merriam's strategies for promoting validity and reliability. The researcher utilized adequate engagement in data collection, an audit trail, use of rich, thick descriptions, and a diversity of sample selection.[276]

Study Limitations

As stated in the previous section, participants interviewed for this study were limited to those serving as Student Development personnel at a singular CCCU-member college/university in the Midwest of the United States. Consequently, the findings of this study will have direct relevance to, and interest for, a smaller number of professionals in the field of Christian college Student Development. However, the intersection of worldviews and higher education in the study could be of general interest to those who minister to young adults within a church or parachurch organization. The findings of this study could be generalized as to be relevant to their work. As with all qualitative studies, it is the responsibility of the practitioner to interpret and apply these findings to the particulars of their context.

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[276] Merriam and Tisdell, 259.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how CCSDP describe what it entails for students to flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world. This chapter provides the findings of the eight CCSDP interviews and reports on common themes and relevant insights about the research questions. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided the qualitative research.

1. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to flourish?

2. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to live truthfully?

3. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to do good in the world?

Introductions to Participants and Context

The researcher selected eight Student Development personnel from a single, interdenominational, Christian liberal arts college in the Midwest. The eight participants were from eight different offices within the Student Development division ranging from Residence Life, Student Engagement, Student Care/Counseling, Diversity/International Students, and Spiritual Engagement. The participants ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-fifties. One-half of the participants were female, and one-half were male. A diversity of cultures was represented in the interview pool, including those who were native and non-native to living in the United States; those raised in cities, suburbs, and rural areas; and those from a variety of ethnic cultures. The participants had obtained either a Master's or Doctoral level degree in their field. All names and identifiable participant information have been changed to protect identity. The pseudonyms of the eight

participants were randomly assigned by the researcher and are as follows: Natalie, Ryan, Matteo, Lily, Kai, Maria, Jessica, and Isaac. All pseudonyms are gender consistent with the participants.

Data Analysis Details

The data was analyzed within an initial trifold framework of the good, true, and beautiful life and how each worldview (Proverbs, modern, and postmodern) imagines them. A chart was created from the findings in the literature review as to how each worldview answers the following questions: what is the nature of authority and how does one align with it? (the true life); what is the nature of the self and how does one flourish? (the beautiful life); and what is the nature of the world and how does one do good in it? (the good life). The distinctions between the three social imaginaries were presented more simplistically and clear-cut than they occured in real life. This was done for the sake of clarity. Often components of one category were also true of another, but they were true in a different way. Typically, the difference was in the weight given to that component or in that component's disconnection from or connection to other categories. These distinctions were spelled out more clearly in Chapter 5.

The first round of analysis entailed a thorough reading of the eight interview transcriptions to gain an overview of the ideas and descriptions presented by each participant in their answers to the researcher's questions. The second round of analysis entailed reading through each of the participant's answers to gain an understanding of which category (the good, the true, or the beautiful life) or intra-categorical interaction the interviewee was describing. This intra-category analysis entailed any answer that described one of the three categories impacting or being impacted by the other two. The

researcher then took each of the 1600 pieces of data within these categories and aligned

them to the three worldview descriptions within the literature review chart. When

multiple worldviews were described within a single answer, the researcher noted the

interaction between them.

The final analysis entailed reading through the data collected within each of the

sub-categories of the three worldviews and noting the emergent themes. Within those

emergent themes, the ones containing significant data were broken down into smaller

sub-themes. Categories and themes missing from one of the worldviews yet found within

another were noted, as well as data that was consistently found throughout every

interview or most of them. As with the worldview chart, the interview answers were also

not as clear-cut as their placement within their category made them appear. Chapter 5

addressed some of the overlap between these categories and the surrounding data that

explained with more nuance their placement on the chart.

Each of the categories of analysis aligns with the three research questions. The

research analysis was arranged by the following three research questions, in short:

flourishing, living truthfully, and doing good. A summary concludes the analysis.

Flourishing

The first research question sought to determine how CCSDPs describe what it

entails for a student to flourish. Their answers were coded for consistency with one or

more of the three worldviews (Proverbs, modern, and postmodern). For the research

question on flourishing, seven types of questions describe the themes that emerged. These

types of questions include what is most real about a person, what can be known about a

person, what impacts a person's character, what is one's identity, what is central to

human flourishing, what leads to flourishing, and what are the consequences of choosing rightly or wrongly. In answer to these types of questions, the seven themes that arose are the following: (Proverbs-aligned) the real self as integrated and empowered by the Spirit of God; external daily actions reflective of internal and transcendent realities; the heart and will as central to human flourishing; flourishing with God, self, and others vs. fear, shame, and harm; (modern-aligned) flourishing through progress, education, and self-fashioning; (postmodern-aligned) the prioritization of internal identity crafting and external racial identity; and flourishing through self-care, safe spaces, and emotional support.

The Real Self as Integrated and Empowered by the Spirit of God

Several of the CCSDP spoke about what is most real about a person in ways aligned with Proverbs. Proverbs presents the internal heart of a person as being what is most real about them, and at the same time, acknowledges that a person's actions reveal and impact the heart. Natalie spoke about this deeper internal reality. She said her past actions "don't have to define me." Her internal "sense of security doesn't have to ride on what this person thinks of or says about me." She mentioned that what is most real is the deeper reality of what God says is true about a person. Ryan also spoke about a reality that was deeper than a person's behavior. He said that although one might receive consequences for behavior, "it doesn't define you forever."

Lily reflected Proverb's integration of the internal heart and external behavior when she said that people's real selves are "integrated selves." The "spiritual" self, she said, is not a subset of life but integrated with day-to-day activities and relationships. As

with Proverbs, she affirmed that the internal life of a person's soul and spirit are most real, but these are integrated into the reality of one's outward physical life.

External Daily Actions Reflective of Internal and Transcendent Realities

Like Proverbs, several participants said that a person's character can be known mostly by what is observable in their actions. Ryan talked about a coach whose "integrity is unbelievable." He said that although "no one was looking over [the coach's] shoulder," the coach always calls Ryan to let him know if there is ever the slightest regulatory infraction. He stated that people can see from the coach's behavior that "he is unwavering in his commitments to integrity." Natalie also pointed out that when she mentors students, she will let them know that she has "noticed" certain behaviors that might not be helpful to flourishing, ones that are becoming ingrained in their lives. She said that "observation of students' lives" can reveal what is going on in their heart.

Half of the CCSDP mentioned things that impact a person's character in ways that align with Proverbs. Proverbs declares that things outside and inside a person can impact a person's character, such as one's associates or the daily, small choices of the heart – which inform actions and shape it. Regarding daily choices, Kai, Natalie, and Matteo mentioned the importance of these choices for character formation. Kai said that how students live and what they think about "gets kind of bake[d] in and shapes" the students' hearts. Natalie talked about "faith rhythms," the daily habits of reading the Bible and praying as being powerful for the character formation of her students. Matteo mentioned the importance of stepping away from daily imminent tasks to create habits of attentiveness to God for positive character formation.

A few of the CCSDP spoke about identity in ways that aligned with Proverbs. Proverbs presents identity as the product of things inside and outside a person, particularly regarding the orienting factor of their mind, the object of the desires of their heart, and their actions in the world. Each one of these three was mentioned at least once. Regarding the orienting factor of the mind, Isaac spoke about identity going awry when a person lacked "understanding of the Lord in relation to the self." Regarding the desires of their heart, Lily said that the formation of a person's identity is grounded in "loving God…loving each other [and] loving themselves." Ryan mentioned actions several times as being a component of a student's identity. He spoke about their strengths and abilities as part of who they really are. And Lily summed up identity as an integration of all these components. She said, "When we are integrated…I think we actually truly reflect God." For her, identity had a transcendent reflective quality.

The Heart and Will as Central to Human Flourishing

Like Proverbs, several of the CCSDP mentioned the heart and its desires as central to the course of one's life and human flourishing. Maria spoke of the importance of students' desires to be healthy as a needed step in their healing process. Natalie and Matteo talked about the need for students' hearts to be engaged for them to experience the fullness of life. They used phrases such as "their heart to be pricked" and "energized into good works rather than [simply] another thing on their to-do list." However, Lily brought in the need for the human heart to be communing with transcendence. She spoke about "loving God" and "inviting Jesus into what is happening" as the ultimate hope for flourishing.

Each of the CCSDP spoke about what leads to flourishing in ways that aligned with Proverbs. Central to flourishing in Proverbs is human choice, or the will. Proverbs declares that choosing right authorities, attitudes, and actions will ultimately lead to human flourishing. There were over twenty references in the interviews to the importance of right choices for human flourishing. These were evenly distributed around authority, attitudes, and actions.

Regarding choices about authority were the concepts of the authority of God, God's word, Jesus, wisdom, and truth. As an example, Lily talked about submitting "one's whole self" to God. Ryan spoke about the need to "line up your feelings with the Word of God." Jessica said, "I think in their flourishing, I want to help in their becoming…how Jesus would want it to look for them." Several CCSDP mentioned believing lies instead of truth as antagonistic to flourishing. What was mentioned most in this category was the harmfulness of believing the words of people over the words of God, particularly concerning one's identity. Physical truth was also mentioned. As an example, Natalie spoke about the reality of "how God has wired [people]." Several CCSDP spoke about people's physical limits that could not be breached without negative consequences to flourishing.

Regarding choosing right attitudes, gratitude and patience were mentioned the most often as attitudes leading to flourishing. Ryan and Matteo spoke about the significance of "practicing gratitude" or "having a grateful heart" as imperative to living well in "difficult circumstances." Jessica named Western culture as "a microwave culture." She talked about the negative impact that an impatient culture has on students. She said that "it kills flourishing because everyone wants everything right now."

Regarding choosing right actions, appropriate self-care and right relationships with others were mentioned most as actions leading to flourishing. Every CCSDP interviewed mentioned appropriate self-care as important for human flourishing. As an example, Isaac mentioned weekly practical actions such as physical exercise, participation in interesting hobbies, and getting outside to walk a dog. Matteo spoke about "stewardship of my own body and even my own limits." Lily talked about the importance of "consistent self-care." Regarding relationships, half of the CCSDP spoke about service to one's neighbor as an essential aspect of flourishing. Kai said, "You have to help your neighbor flourish." Lily spoke about helping vulnerable communities as part of people's essential formation. Two CCSDP brought up the importance of choosing right actions (staying connected and not running away during conflict) in one's relationships with family, friends, and roommates.

One-half of the CCSDP mentioned the concept of discomfort as a part of flourishing. Ryan most directly stated it when he said, "faithful followers of Jesus" must "engage outside our comfort zone." Isaac said that those who choose the discomfort of being honest with "themselves invariably come back and flourish." And Matteo spoke about the freedom that comes with the occasional discomfort of conforming oneself to a higher reality.

Flourishing with God, Others, and the World vs. Fear, Shame, and Harm

The positive consequences of right choices mentioned by several of the CCSDP matched up with those mentioned in Proverbs. Proverbs declares that choosing rightly leads to flourishing in all areas of life, including spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical. As an example, Matteo mentioned that choosing rightly leads to an

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"overflowing cup" spiritually in one's relationship with God and the emotional benefit of "rejoicing" even in "stressful things." Natalie mentioned "healthier" relationships. And Isaac spoke about "encounter[ing] unexpected [physical] blessings."

The negative consequences of wrong choices mentioned by a few of the CCSDP also matched up with those mentioned in Proverbs. Proverbs declares that choosing wrongly leads to spiritual dissatisfaction and harm, social shame and disgrace, and physical decay and death. Isaacs said that those who choose not to be honest and open in their relationship often end up in fear and shame. He said that they were afraid that they might "lose whatever ground they gained in relationships" and that others might "judge them harshly." Natalie talked about how those who move ahead without the Lord's leading might end up "dying on a sword" to which they have not been called. For these two respondents, not making choices aligned with the correct authority leads people away from flourishing.

Flourishing Through Progress, Education, and Self-Fashioning

There was little data from the interviews that aligned with the modern perception that what was most real about a person was their rational mind and physical body. Nor was there data aligning with the modern notion that identity is primarily rooted in a collective national identity and defined by conformity or lack of conformity to that which is rational, virtuous, and civil as defined by the scientific elite.

However, there was alignment to some degree with the modern social imaginary regarding what leads to human flourishing. The modern worldview sees personal and social progress as central to human flourishing. It sees these ends as being achieved through education, effort, and rationality without the aid of anything transcendent.

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Several CCSDP alluded to this kind of flourishing. One mentioned the need for

organizations to "evolve and change" in more productive ways, having "the greatest

gains for the short and long term." They referenced that IBM "never makes a computer

anymore," and said that "they've evolved to cloud, AI, and tech business consulting."

Another CCSDP spoke about a student being "given the ability to pursue their potential

in this space." The underlying concept in these statements aligned with the modern notion

of individual and organizational flourishing through progress, the type of progress created

by personal effort and productivity.

In questions related to flourishing, many CCSDP mentioned concepts that aligned

with the modern social imaginary of progress through education and educational tools.

As an example, one respondent said that he tells students, "If you want to succeed you

have to have more tools in which to do those things, so while you're young, get all the

tools you need." Another talked about students in emotional crisis who simply "needed a

lot of treatment." He talked about students learning to flourish through the tools and

education they received from outpatient programs. In both cases, flourishing was not

described in relationship with a transcendent reality but was instead presented as simply

having the right tools and input from experts and putting them into practice.

The Prioritization of Internal Identity-Crafting and External Racial Identity

Half of the CCSDP interviewed made comments about identity that aligned with a

postmodern social imaginary. The postmodern social imaginary regarding a person's

identity revolves around two themes, one of which is internal and the other external. The

first theme is that of internal identity crafting. In the postmodern worldview, what is most

real about a person is their personally chosen identity which is obtained by looking within

to one's feelings and desires. Identity manifests as the self-declared self-understanding of the psychological self and one's "lived" experiences. Maria aligned with this understanding when she said that "it can be scary, very scary…particularly for the LGBTQ population" because "the hiding of who they are leads to really, really negative psychological outcomes." For Maria, the sexual desires of the internal person are an essential part of their identity; furthermore, when those desires are unexpressed, it becomes disastrous for the person's flourishing. Regarding chosen identities, several CCSDP made mention of the importance of not letting "your identity" be chosen by others but "developing your own identity." As an example, Jessica said that "sometimes [a person's] identity can be decided for [them]" when speaking about the problem of "super involved" parents. Regarding self-understanding as integral to identity, one CCSDP spoke about the importance of "self-esteem." The idea being conveyed was that the positive esteem of oneself was a necessary factor for a healthy identity.

The second theme of the postmodern social imaginary regarding identity is external in nature. In the postmodern worldview, race is preeminent for identity as well as the social tribe to which a person feels most represents their psychological, social, or physical self. Several CCSDP exemplified this prioritization of race regarding a person's identity in statements about "representation." One respondent said that "Koreans felt like [an Asian-oriented campus group] has never really embodied them or represented them." "If that's true," the respondent said, "then why don't you just start your own organization? I'll support it." Several other CCSDP made statements that began with a declaration of their race or gender while others mentioned certain spaces as "[a particular race] spaces" since many people that frequented that space belonged to that race. From

the frequency at which the CCSDP named a person's race or defined spaces in terms of race, it appeared as though race was preeminent for their understanding of identity. Two other identity categories were mentioned (gender and people with mental illness), but these were not mentioned as often or by as many respondents as a person's race.

Flourishing through Self-Care, Safe Spaces, and Emotional Support

The majority of the CCSDP interviewed spoke about flourishing using some concepts that aligned with a postmodern understanding. This postmodern understanding sees being free to be one's chosen self and happy as central to human flourishing. Happiness, in the postmodern social imaginary, is a pain-free, pleasurable life obtained through living in an accepting and safe environment where one is free to express one's truths while feeling the support and approval of others. Several of the CCSDP referenced "self-care" as a priority for flourishing. A few used the term "self-care" to mean a proper stewardship of oneself that acknowledges God's authority and personal physical limitations. Others used the term without reference to an authority outside of one's internal feelings. As an example, one of the CCSDP spoke about "LGBTQ" students needing to "actively engage what they needed for their own well-being" and that "prioritizing that self-care piece" was a "huge step of courage." They spoke about helping these students "take care of themselves back in the closet for the summer" with their "unaccepting families." Another spoke about staying away from something "that's really stressful for [them]" because they did not "feel as though it fit with [their] gifting" and "that's not where [their] family was at." In these statements, feelings appear to be the authority for one's decisions regarding self-care.

Two of the CCSDP referenced expressing one's truths or naming one's identity without influence from the outside as necessary for flourishing. One stated, "I think in their flourishing, I want to help them in their becoming" as they "come into their own voice." The other spoke of the hopelessness and internal hate that would come from "hiding who they truly are." These statements appear to be saying that for a person to flourish, they must be the ultimate authority for their beliefs and identity and learn to confidently express them to others.

Some of the statements made by a few of the CCSDP appeared to be aligned with the postmodern belief that flourishing is obtained through a pain-free, pleasurable life. One spoke about those who are not flourishing and mentioned students who did not feel that chapel was a "refreshing space" and that something was wrong with the chapel experience since it did not refresh the students. Others spoke about the "alarming" increase in anxiety and connected the students' anxiety to a lack of safe spaces. There were over thirty references from the participants for the need for spaces for student flourishing. One participant was concerned for her students whose families were not supportive of their LGBTQ identity. She stated that "we have some students whose families were so unsupportive that coming to college is actually safer than home." For this CCSDP, any environment that did not accept a person's stated identity was an unsafe environment. She further spoke about the incredible damage to student flourishing that occurs in these unsafe spaces.

Safe spaces were defined in a variety of ways by the participants. They were defined as places where "students can in a safe way be vulnerable with each other," where they can share "what [they] really believe or think for [themselves]," where they

can "feel like they are seen and heard," and where people "hold space for each other's stories," and "can share without judgment, without condemnation." Another took this further and defined a safe space as a place where "nothing you say will be used against you," where "it will remain confidential," and will be "without consequences." They stated, "We want everyone to feel comfortable, not judged, and safe with us." Judgment and consequences were unsafe for students. In many instances, safe spaces were defined as places that "felt" safe for students. It did not matter if the place was physically, emotionally, or spiritually safe by an outside metric. What mattered was the students' internal feelings about the space.

Emotional support was another factor mentioned as a necessity for flourishing. For the postmodern social imaginary, feeling the support and approval of others is essential for flourishing. Isaac mentioned that a student began to flourish when he received emotional support. He stated, "With emotional support, [the student] starts doing a little better…and at the end of the semester he's different" because he received the "right level of support." In this response, there was no mention of anything transcendent regarding flourishing. From what was said, the right level of emotional support led to the student's flourishing. Another CCSDP mentioned that not being in an accepting, supportive environment for LGBTQ students leads them to "hide who [they] truly are" which "causes them damage" and causes them "to carry the weight of having to hide." Lily talked about making sure that everyone in a small group feels seen, heard, and known in that space" and "also has a sense of belonging." As a leader, it was her responsibility to emotionally support her students in such a way that they felt each of these things. Another CCSDP talked about "doing [her] best to make sure that [a student]

feels seen, heard and safe here." Maria spoke about emotionally supporting and accepting

students so that they "leave here with their heads held high; not hiding, not shamed. I

think to me that's kind of my highest hope." From these statements, flourishing appears

to happen when a person feels safe, heard, and accepted by emotionally supportive

people in safe spaces.

A few CCSDP spoke about the consequences of students not being in spaces

where they felt heard, safe, and as though they belonged. One spoke of it as "trauma."

Another presented the tragic outcomes of this kind of environment. They said:

> "[There are] certain populations who feel like they cannot be wholly
> honest in a Christian environment because of the judgment that may exist
> and the psychological damage, and the increased hurt that is experienced,
> and the increased hopelessness that leads oftentimes to self-harm, and
> suicidal ideation, and kind of the more severe kind of outcomes of hiding
> who they truly are."

These statements concerning the negative consequences of not feeling emotionally safe,

happy, and accepted for one's self-chosen identity, sound like the postmodern notion of

flourishing.

Summary of Flourishing

From the interviews, it appeared that the participant's ideas about human identity

were formed from both a Proverbs worldview and a postmodern worldview. Regarding

the Proverbs worldview, several of the participants mentioned that a person's true self

was grounded in a deeper internal reality known by God. This real self could be observed

in a person's actions, and subsequently, these actions could also impact the person's real

self. Like Proverbs, the participants spoke about the importance of orienting one's mind,

desires, and actions toward God to be formed well. At the same time, many also spoke

about identity in postmodern ways; as being rooted in one's social tribe or one's personal beliefs about oneself. In these types of answers, external factors and internal feelings seemed to define a person more than how they aligned their heart, mind, and actions toward God.

Many CCSDP spoke in ways consistent with a Proverbs-aligned understanding of flourishing as the product of choosing right authorities, attitudes, and actions. Like Proverbs, several spoke about choosing in this manner, which leads to a good relationship with God, self, and others. They spoke about choosing poorly as leading to fear, shame, and harm in each of those relationships.

In ways consistent with a modern worldview, some named flourishing as personal and social progress through the utilization of the right tools and input from experts. However, many spoke about flourishing in ways in line with a postmodern worldview by referring to the inward feelings of the individual. They mentioned that students who were not flourishing were feeling emotionally distressed or lacked a sense of safety and belonging. Each of the students mentioned as examples for these perspectives was also described as being a member of a racial, sexual, or mental health minority group. The corrective course of action prescribed by the CCSDP for the students was to encourage self-care, provide safe spaces, and offer non-judgmental emotional support. Similar to a postmodern worldview, flourishing was defined by the feelings of the individual and contingent on the student's perception of their environment.

Living Truthfully

The second research question sought to determine "How do CCSDPs describe what it entails for a student to live truthfully?" Their answers were coded for consistency

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with one or more of the three worldviews (Proverbs, modern, and postmodern). For the category of living truthfully, seven themes emerged regarding what is authoritative for truth, how one obtains truth, what is required to live truthfully, and the consequences of living aligned or not aligned with truth. The themes are the following: (Proverbs-aligned) truth found in God and his Word; truth obtained by a right relationship with the Lord; living truthfully requires obtaining truth and living it out; freedom, understanding, and a good reputation vs. painful discipline, confusion, and shame; (modern-aligned) truth found in scientific reasoning and experts; (postmodern-aligned) truth found in the internal psychological self and the self-revealed lived experiences of marginalized, non-majority, others; living truthfully requires living authentically and against conformity.

Truth Found in God and His Word

Each of the participants, except for one, made several references to God or scripture as holding ultimate authority for understanding reality. Aligning with the book of Proverbs, these participants made statements showing they believed that God and his Word reveal what is true. Regarding the authority of scripture, Jessica said, "God's Word is ultimately authoritative. It does not contradict itself. Any claim that God is telling a person to do something that conflicts with scripture is a false claim." There was no equivocation for Jessica when God's Word and human understanding conflict. For her, living truthfully entailed aligning one's sense of reality with God's Word. Lily described the same concept in a different way when she said, about studying, that "it is important that at the center of that is 'what does Scripture say?'"

Ryan claimed that when God's Word and feelings collide, the Word of God is ultimately authoritative. He said, "Align yourself with that, instead of aligning the Word

of God with your feelings." He added that "if the truth of God's Word is not the anchor of your heart, your feelings will become your guide." He directly addressed the fact the current postmodern culture has, in his words, "tossed out the authoritative Word of God and made the individual the authority." Feelings, according to Ryan, must be in submission to the truth of Scripture.

Natalie made references to the concept that what "God" or "Jesus" said about things is true. She asked the question, "What does God say about that?" and then stated, "I think that directs us back to what is true of this." She used the phrase, "come back to the Truth of truth" when referencing the promise of Jesus to redeem the world.

Not only was God and his Word ultimately authoritative for the majority of the CCSDP interviewed, but it was also declared by most of them to be authoritative for their values, identity, and behavior. Regarding one's value system, Lily stated that "because they are important to our Father's heart, we prioritize them." Regarding one's identity, Isaac, Jessica, and Kai reference God as the true source of one's identity. Isaac most clearly stated it when he declared, "Our relationship with Christ is so important because he tells us the truth about who we are." Regarding behavior, Natalie, Lily, and Maria referenced God or scripture as authoritative for ethical and vocational decision-making. Natalie said that students needed to be "honest with themselves about…areas of sin"; while Maria encouraged students to "pray and ask for discernment…about what God is calling you to."

Most of the CCSDPs interviewed referenced other valid authorities such as truth and the wisdom collected from a council of many advisors. These are also authorities validated by Proverbs. About truth as an authority, Kai claimed that "we do believe in a

capital T, so I do not think everything is relative or relativized." Lily stated that "all truth is God's truth." And Natalie said that "we know that there is a truth" that "is the actual Truth." Regarding the authority that lies within the council of many, Isaac claimed that he was "not always the greatest judge," and that he needs his team to "figure it out together." And Lily spoke highly of those students "willing to take advice." She spoke further about what she believed held greater authority than the advice of others. She said, "It's important that at the center of that [willingness to take advice] is, 'What does scripture say?'" For Lily, the advice of others held authority, if, and only if, that advice aligned with scripture.

Truth Obtained by a Right Relationship with the Lord

In alignment with the book of Proverbs, most of the CCSDP made statements indicating that truth was obtained by having a right relationship with the Lord. Isaac said it most clearly when he stated that "our relationship with Christ is so important…because he tells us the truth about who we are. When we rely on that truth, it is life-altering." When asked about engaging students to live more truthfully some of the answers from the other CCSDP included: "cultivating a relationship with God," "being in God's presence," "confessing and surrendering to the Lord," and "a lot of prayer." These responses indicate different aspects of a relationship with the Lord. One of the CCSDP noted more specifically that within one's relationship with the Lord, one receives truth by inviting and receiving it from him. She used the phrase, "invite Jesus into [it]," and "it is just something we need to receive." Each of these six CCSDP noted that being with God, talking to God, and surrendering to God was the primary means of obtaining truth.

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Living Truthfully Requires Obtaining Truth and Living It Out

All but one of the participants included statements that placed primacy for living truthfully on being positively engaged with transcendent truth, or as Natalie phrased it, "capital T, Truth." This positive-oriented engagement with transcendent truth to live truthfully sounds like the wisdom presented in Proverbs. The participants who included statements intimating the primacy of a positive engagement with transcendent truth, did so in a way that closely paralleled Proverbs.

Collectively these CCSDP referenced the importance of seeing, knowing, accepting, surrendering to, aligning with, and living truthfully with one's actions as important aspects of living truthfully. Half of the participants spoke about seeing truth or looking at truth. As an example, Lily said it was important "to keep [truth] at the front and center," while Kai used the phrase "Keep that always ahead of you." Ryan said, "It was so clear about why we daily read and ingest God's Word." Other respondents spoke about acknowledging or knowing the truth. Matteo talked about "a healthy conviction" that acknowledges the truth of one's sins. He also stated that students need to "know who we've been created to be." As part of that knowing, several spoke about the need to study God's word and understand it. They made statements such as "making sure I'm in the Word," and "I think she needs a deeply rooted understanding of what is true in order to resist the currents of the moment."

Aside from seeing and knowing truth, several Proverb-aligned concepts like accepting, surrendering to, aligning with, and obeying truth were referenced. Matteo talked about a type of non-internalized truth that could be known with the mind but not fully accepted. Ryan spoke about needing to "surrender to the Lord" to walk more

truthfully. He also shared about students who were "letting go of the authoritative Word of God" and were instead aligning with their "feelings." Isaac, Jessica, Lily, and Kai all spoke about submitting to and obeying truth as a means of living truthfully. Isaac mentioned disobedience to God and declared that "sin can keep a student from living truthfully." Lily said, "It's all about being formed right as we submit to the lordship of Christ." And Jessica told a story about actively loving an "irritating student" and having to "treat [them] like a child of God." Although there was a close parallel between the participants' collective answers and Proverbs regarding obtaining truth and living it out, there appeared to be one significant omission. None of the participants mentioned the importance of the fear of the Lord to live truthfully.

Freedom, Understanding, and a Good Reputation Vs. Painful Discipline, Misunderstanding, and Shame

One-half of the respondents referenced the positive consequences of truthful living in ways that aligned with Proverbs. Proverbs repeatedly declares that aligning oneself to what is true, as opposed to what is false, will lead to God-given protection and success in the material or spiritual world. The respondents presented several positive consequences of living according to the truth found in scripture; however, one consequence was repeated often: the concept of freedom. This was mentioned in a few different ways. Ryan described it generically as "finding freedom in [one's engagement with scripture.]" Natalie described it as a freedom from the pressure of having others "like us." Matteo equated truth with freedom. He said, "When I think of truth, I really think of freedom." Two respondents mentioned that walking aligned with the truth of scripture brings about a better understanding of oneself and a good reputation with both

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God and others. For each of these respondents, there were associations in their answers between a life aligned with scripture and worldly and eternal benefits.

Several respondents referenced the negative consequences of living falsely in ways that paralleled Proverbs. Proverbs reveals the consequences of those aligned with falsehood. It says they are misled into immediate and eternal harm and declares their relationships and actions will ultimately fail. Natalie spoke about these consequences generically when she said that these false "actions have [negative] consequences." Two respondents mentioned that those who engage in lies will end up receiving unwanted and painful discipline from their leaders. One stated that "if you reject [the Lord's truth] and go your own way, then we're going to have another conversation down the road," meaning a disciplinary conversation. Other types of negative relational consequences were also mentioned. Ryan pointed out that living a life not aligned with truth will result in future "shame." Isaac mentioned that people misunderstand themselves and others when they are not listening to "Christ…[who] tells us the truth about who we are." Isaac pointed out that when one builds relationships on falsehood, the end consequence "is painful" when truth is eventually revealed. These respondents cite confusion, shame, discipline, and pain as possible results of a life aligned with falsehood.

Truth Found in Scientific Reasoning and Experts

Over half of the participants made references to human reasoning and scientific experts as holding authority or ultimate authority for understanding reality. Aligning with a modern worldview, these participants made statements showing they believed that human reasoning and scientific experts ultimately reveal what is true. Regarding human reasoning, one CCSDP interviewed declared, "If we don't believe we have an ability, it

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limits our success." Further clarifying, he stated, "The lack of a person's understanding of their ability to achieve success can lead to their diminishment." He then defined understanding oneself as one's awareness of one's understanding. Regarding decision-making, this same participant said, "We figure things out to the best of our ability in terms of decision-making." Another participant said, "I want to stretch students to do their own thinking." In these instances, human thinking or reasoning is referenced as the arbiter of what is true.

Scientific experts were cited even more than human reasoning as being authoritative for defining truth. One-half of the participants affirmed this modern worldview authority several times. Both Isaac and Maria referenced psychological professionals as the ultimate authorities to define the nature of human flourishing and the means to achieve it. Isaac said, "I rely on those individuals [psychologists, therapists, and physicians] to tell me what is it that this person needs." He referenced what he tells students when he stated, "[do] what the professional is telling you to do." Isaac also referenced "the literature," by which he meant the scientific journals, when he defined what it means for individuals to flourish. Maria said that she thinks "it will help people flourish by getting them the professional level help [they need.]" She said that if a particular student had "gone to therapy three years ago, [they] could have been flourishing this whole time." She added, "They had to be willing to engage in the treatment recommendations." The inference being that aligning oneself to the scientific expertise of the professionals would lead to flourishing. For many of the CCSDP interviewed, scientific professionals, their research literature, and their recommended treatments were a significant authority for truth.

In alignment with the modern social imaginary, one-half of the participants mentioned that truth could be obtained by the scientific method or one's inherent and independent rational understanding. Jessica stated that "one's opinion" was not enough to know what is true; one also needed "to be pairing it with research." According to this statement, pairing one's opinion with scientific research would enable a person to know what is true. Maria stated that she and her team could "figure out" difficult psychological cases together by "sorting them out to best of [their] ability." And a few of the participants mentioned helping students to "do their own thinking" by generating and evaluating their own options. Each of these concepts aligns with the notion that truth is something that may be obtained from rational independent thinking through a scientific process.

A few of the CCSDP spoke about negative and positive consequences regarding one's alignment with truth that resonated with a modern understanding. In a modern understanding, efficiency and progress are seen as positive results of alignment with scientific rational truth. One of the CCSDP mentioned that the institution of the university was like a "slow-moving ship" and that it wasn't progressing with the times. She offered, "We need to speed it up." She said that "it may not be effective anymore." Another of the CCSDP mentioned that "small business truths" can lead to a lot of "great gain" if one aligns one's practices with them. Not moving with the times or following the professional standards for business interactions was presented as leading to the modern-aligned negative consequences of ineffectiveness and regression.

Truth Found in the Internal Psychological Self and the Self-Revealed Lived
Experiences of Marginalized, Non-Majority Others

Most of the CCSDP interviewed made references to the internal psychological self or the self-revealed lived experiences of marginalized, non-majority others as holding authority for understanding reality. Aligning with a postmodern worldview, these participants made statements showing they believed that the internal psychological self or the self-revealed lived experiences of marginalized, non-majority others reveal what is true.

Regarding the internal psychological self, one CCSDP referenced daily self-examination through "journaling" and the use of a historical religious tool "to kind of walk themselves through their days and process out emotions so they don't store up stress they haven't processed" and to "acknowledge their emotions on a daily basis." The authority referenced appears to be "oneself" in which one engages to sort out one's emotions. Unlike a modern approach, this CCSDP said that she tells students that she is "not going to tell [the student] what to do" because "this is your life." She acknowledges that she can help direct the conversations but only so that the students "can hear" themselves. Another CCSDP referenced "helping [students] to draw conclusions about themselves and their own agency in relation to their mental health concerns." He further stated that his role entailed helping students to "better understand themselves, and what their needs are, and how to meet their needs. It's them living their truth." According to this CCSDP, a student who can draw conclusions about themselves within themselves while understanding and executing their own agency, is "living their truth."

Several of the CCSDP referenced "oneself" or "one's feelings" as something to which students ought to listen. As an example, Maria said, "Give yourself permission to

pick and choose your battles." Kai stated that he desires students to "feel like they're being fed." In the first statement by Maria, the student was encouraged to seek within themself for permission. In the second statement, it was the student's feelings that were referenced as authoritative.

Authenticity was mentioned by a few of the participants as being true to what one feels on the inside. As an example, Jessica stated that she has a "lot of respect" for those students who feel very strongly about things and express that internal reality. She said, "I don't think God can use us well when we're not honest about where we are." She continued, "For people to be honest about who they are is a really, really big deal." By "who they really are," she was referring to students' internal passions. She then stated that having to hide that "definitely kills authenticity."

In alignment with the postmodern social imaginary, as described by Haidt and Lukianoff, several of the CCSDP made references to the self-revealed lived experiences of marginalized, oppressed, non-majority people as being important sources for truth. As an example, one participant referenced their race and minority background as lending weight to "[their] perspective." Another talked about their leadership team needing to listen to and align with the revealed feelings of those with mental health struggles for policy change. There was no mention of aligning those feelings to a higher reality or to other sources of information.

Several of the CCSDP answered questions about living truthfully in ways that aligned with a postmodern view of how truth is obtained. In the postmodern social imaginary, truth is obtained by understanding one's inner voice as well as the revealed lived experiences of marginalized and oppressed, non-majority others. Isaac mentioned

several times that one looks reflectively within to understand who one is. Knowing oneself, for him, entailed "becoming more self-aware." In response to a question about students living truthfully, he mentioned one student "coming to the realization that now is not the right time for him to be [at the university]." Truth was presented as the student awakening to an internal insight about what was the right next step for himself. Others mentioned self-awareness as important for living truthfully. Jessica stated, "I've spent a lot of time trying to make sure I'm really self-aware." Maria talked about how a student "could be doing so much better if [they] were in therapy and learning more about [themselves]" through self-reflection. In these examples, self-awareness did not include referencing a higher authority to examine one's self-understanding. Regarding truth being obtained by listening to oppressed, non-majority others, one participant referenced that racism is now worse than ever because they heard it from a black seminarian and the black community.

Living Truthfully Requires Living Authentically and Against Conformity

Many of the participants gave several answers that aligned with a postmodern concept regarding what is required to live truthfully. In a postmodern imagination, knowing one's deepest desires, being proud of them, expressing them to others, and living them out against the pressure to conform to the demands of dominant, oppressive groups is what is required to live truthfully. Several of the CCSDP mentioned concepts aligned with authenticity and expression. As an example, Jessica mentioned that "walking in integrity" is being who you say you are. She mentioned that even students have said "you really are who you say you are." Authenticity in these statements appears to be defined by the alignment of one's actions with the way a person names themselves.

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Maria stated that she often thinks "about how difficult it is for LGBTQ students to live truthfully on this campus." By truthfully, she is referring to how those students name themselves. Regarding expressing one's internal psychological self, Maria said, "For the LGBTQ population, the hiding of who they are leads to really, really negative psychological outcomes." This response appears to be saying that living truthfully requires acknowledging one's personally named internal reality and expressing it publicly.

Another postmodern theme that emerged within the interviews was the concept that truthful living requires living out one's truth against the pressure to conform to a dominant group. Many of CCSDP mentioned some form of this concept, but the primary form was the family or parents as the dominating group. As an example, Jessica said, "Parents are just super involved, and so sometimes your identity can be decided for you." Kai talked about a student who had to "radically deconstruct her life…and she had to take a deep dive into how she is formed largely by her parents." Maria spoke about giving students strategies when they return "home to unaccepting families" and how difficult it was for them to have to hide their real selves. In these examples, it sounds like the CCSDP connected living truthfully with getting out from under the oppression of a false identity imposed by family and instead living according to a self-determined identity.

Several of the respondents gave answers that aligned with a postmodern view of the consequences of living falsely. In a postmodern view, the negative consequences are living an oppressed, stilted, unhappy, un-actualized life (particularly regarding one's sexuality) within a society where the majority continues to oppress a marginalized and underprivileged minority. Psychological damage and oppression were the two aligning

themes from the interviews. One example of this came from a respondent who said that because of the history of the church, "the LGBTQ population" must "hide who they are which leads to really, really negative psychological outcomes." Another answer included this statement.

> They cannot be wholly honest in a Christian environment because of the judgment that may exist, and the psychological damage, and the increased hurt that is experienced, and the increased hopelessness that leads oftentimes to self-harm, and suicidal ideation, and the more severe outcomes of hiding who they truly are.

In both answers, oppression from a majority culture leads to suppressing the real self which in turn leads to psychological damage. Several more respondents mentioned the harm of an oppressive, stress-inducing chapel environment and an ever-increasing racist society brought on by an oppressive majority culture. According to these statements, not living authentically to one's inner self and not adapting the environment to the revealed lived experiences of non-majority others result in psychological damage and an ever-increasing oppression of minority groups by majority groups.

Summary of Living Truthfully

From the interviews, all three of the worldview's highest authorities were referenced as being somewhat, if not ultimately, authoritative. Similar to Proverbs, the clearest and most definitive ultimate authority referenced by the CCSDP was God and his Word. These were referenced the most and by the most CCSDP. Also like Proverbs, there were many references to a right relationship with the Lord as how truth is obtained. Similar to the modern worldview, many made multiple references to scientific professionals and their research as an authority for truth. Truth was often presented as something obtained from rational independent thinking through a scientific process. In

alignment with a postmodern worldview, most of the CCSDP made statements placing

the internal psychological self as an important arbiter for truth. Self-awareness was

mentioned often and in a way that appeared to mean self-reflection. It did not seem to

include the idea of self-examination that acknowledges a higher authority than oneself. In

addition, several of the CCSDP made references to the self-revealed lived experiences of

marginalized, non-majority others as holding authority for understanding reality.

Doing Good

The third research question sought to determine "How do CCSDPs describe what

it entails for a student to do good and just things in the world?" Their answers were coded

for consistency with one or more of the three worldviews (Proverbs, modern, and

postmodern). Regarding doing good and just things in the world, seven categories

emerged as to what is the nature of the situation, the types of people in the world, how

one does good things, what is good to do, and what does doing good lead to. The themes

are the following: (Proverbs-aligned) the illumined, true, and straight path that leads to

life; trusting God, seeking his will, and obeying him; honest, just, and wise actions;

(modern-aligned) equipping the individual to progress the self and benefit society;

effectiveness and productivity for the common good; (postmodern-aligned) oppressors

and oppressed in an evolving world; and mental health, safe spaces, authenticity, and

affirmation.

The Illumined, True, and Straight Path that Leads to Life

Most of the participants answered questions in ways that aligned with how

Proverbs speaks about the nature of the situation. Proverbs tells its readers that there are

true and illumined paths and false and dark paths. There are also straight and crooked paths and those that lead to life and death. As an example, Jessica spoke about the mission of her office as laboring to produce "Christians that are lights in a dark world." She also said, "However the Lord uses me, I'm going to allow my light to shine, sometimes…with my words, sometimes…with my actions." Regarding true and false paths, Kai asked the question, "How do you give [students] the tools to both learn to discern those false or gray areas, sort through them, and then cling to what's true?" For Kai and Jessica, as for Proverbs, some ways are true and full of light, and some ways are false and dark.

Several of the CCSDP mentioned the nature of the situation as one that contains avenues leading to both flourishing and harm. Ryan answered a question about flourishing by saying that sometimes students are "at a fork in the road, and if they keep going down that path," they will "not [continue being] a student here." He added that he wanted students to flourish by choosing the path that leads to "growth." Natalie talked about "step[ping] into truth." She spoke about students who "are believing lies" and how it was not leading to flourishing in their life. For Ryan and Natalie, the nature of the situation is that there are paths that lead to life and those that lead to death.

Maria spoke about the good and evil paths that students take. She said that "there are so many injustices in the world," and that "to do good in the world" students need to "actually pay attention to the ills and injustices" and choose ways that support justice. For Maria, as with Proverbs, there are just and unjust ways in the world.

Regarding the types of people in the world, a couple CCSDP made statements that aligned with how Proverbs describes them. Proverbs speaks of the world having godly

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and evil people, integrous and treacherous people, and wealthy and poor people. In alignment with Proverbs, Ryan talked about those who have integrity versus those who do not. He defined an "integrous" person as someone who lives aligned with what is true and righteous as defined by God. Jessica mentioned students who are poor and how their experience at college can differ from those who are wealthy.

Trusting God, Seeking His Will, and Obeying Him

All the CCSDP mentioned how one does good in ways that align with how Proverbs describes it. Proverbs says that trusting God and seeking his will leads to the good and right path. It calls people to do good by understanding wisdom and embodying it through a disciplined, physical undertaking. There were over seventy references by the participants that aligned with these concepts. Trusting God and seeking his will was mentioned by most of the CCSDP. Many also mentioned the necessity of understanding and embodying wisdom through disciplined effort.

Regarding trusting God, Lily spoke about the importance of trusting in difficult circumstances. She said, "In the midst of [grieving a loss], still show up and trust God. Trust God in the midst of this thing that is hard." Natalie referred to a conversation she had with a student leader. She said, "God is sovereign over [their area of responsibility] and what does it mean to trust him and walk faithfully with him." Ryan spoke about seeking God's will by "engaging scripture." Jessica and Maria talked about seeking God's will regarding vocation. Jessica said, "You better know that God called you to do it," regarding a student's choice of action. In reference to fighting against injustice in the world, Maria said, "You can be more effective if you just focus on what God's calling you to do instead of every terrible thing."

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Understanding and embodying wisdom through daily effort was mentioned by all the participants as a factor in doing good and just things in the world. Regarding the concept of understanding, there were many references to listening, learning, and discerning truth. Kai spoke about giving students "the tools to both learn and discern." Matteo talked about giving students "context so that then they can at least listen and learn and eventually participate." When asked about doing good in the world, Ryan referenced a student who "reserved judgment until she could get closer to find out why [this thing] is important…what am I not understanding?" Natalie said, "If you don't learn the stories about what's broken, you can't step into them with good and just action." For these CCSDP, doing good entails first understanding through listening and learning.

Daily effort and disciplined embodiment was another theme that was regularly mentioned. This embodied action was often spoken of in conjunction with wisdom and as the purpose of it. Matteo talked about gaining truth and learning how "to wield it with scalpel precision." For him, not only should one gain wisdom, but if one desires to do good in the world, one should also execute that wisdom with precision. Natalie spoke about people needing "to do the hard work." Lily said, "It is so important to ground yourself in disciplines to help you stay attuned to God, yourself, and others in meaningful ways." Jessica and Isaac spoke about the need for daily effort if one is to do good in the world. Isaac said he needed to "exercise my intellect [on a regular basis] because it is easy to be complacent." And Jessica spoke about the importance of "celebrating just the normal, everyday [good works] that don't necessarily always get a lot of recognition." Regarding embodiment, she said to a student, "Let's walk together, and you get to see

what I do and not just what I say." For these CCSDP, doing good in the world entailed daily effort and discipline.

Honest, Just, and Wise Actions

All but one of the CCSDP talked about what is good to do in ways that align with Proverbs. Proverbs mentions that doing things that are honest, faithful, just, fair, and right is good to do. Regarding honest actions, several participants mentioned honesty and integrity. As an example, Natalie mentioned honesty related to not separating a student's actions from their consequences. She spoke about "helping people see the consequences of their actions." She also talked about honesty in relation to truthfully sharing one's feelings about a situation. She said, "I think we're losing the art of being able to be honest with one another." Ryan talked about honesty in regard to integrity. He said that students can see that a particular staff member "is unwavering in his commitment to integrity." He said there are some who "can keep people from living truthfully if [that person] in authority doesn't have integrity." Living with integrity for Ryan is good to do because it is aligned with truth and therefore honest. Another side of honesty mentioned by some of the CCSDP was repentance. As an example, Ryan spoke about the "daily repenting of my sins," and Matteo said, people need to "learn to apologize [and] accept someone's apology." For these CCSDP, being honest about one's guilt is good to do.

Another concept mentioned within the category of honest actions was modeling godly behavior to students. There were dozens of mentions of modeling as something good to do. Lily said that "discipleship is not taught. It's caught." Jessica said that she "allow[ed] her light to shine…in her actions." Kai talked about trying "to exhibit a

freedom in Christ" to his students. Living aligned with truth in front of students was considered an honest action.

Many of the respondents mentioned doing good as doing just things. They mentioned it was good to do things that brought about shalom, gave back to the community, and served those in need. Lily spoke about doing good as helping people and cultures to experience "shalom" which she said was a type of "justice that is at the heart of who God is." Jessica said it was good to "give back and volunteer" while Matteo said, "contributing to something and giving back." Natalie said that it was good to "care for others and give [one's] life away" while Lily spoke about helping "refugees or people struggling with homelessness." These CCSDP saw doing good as doing just things that allow for a community to flourish.

Several of the CCSDP spoke about doing good as doing wise actions, particularly regarding one's speech. For example, Ryan spoke about the wisdom of a student going to those above her "with respect" and not "smearing anybody or gossiping." Natalie talked about the importance of "finding the right words and the right moment…and having wisdom and discretion." And Matteo talked about the importance of "defining" words with clarity. These CCSDP saw doing good as doing just things that allow for a community to flourish.

Several of the CCSDP talked about what doing good leads to in ways that align with how Proverbs describes it. Lily said that when a person does good things, they gain wisdom about God. They learn about "who God is and what he cares about." Natalie talked about how doing good leads to doing even more "good and just and beautiful things." Kai said that doing good to one's neighbor brings about one's own success and

flourishing. He mentioned that it helps in "one's formation." These results (wisdom, goodness, and flourishing) align with how Proverbs describes the results of doing good in the world.

Equipping the Individual to Progress the Self and Benefit Society

Many of the CCSDP interviewed mentioned how one does good in the world in ways that align with a modern social imaginary. The modern understanding of how one does good in the world is by the progression of the self and society through the control and utilization of nature. Regarding progressing the self, Isaac spoke about his students being "given the ability to pursue their potential in this space." He said that he did this through education. He used the phrases, "education in relation to coping mechanisms," and "providing internal resources" for the "prevention" of destructive behaviors. Regarding progressing society, Maria said that doing good entailed, "identification of the ills in the world we were put on the planet to address." In addition, she said that people may not be able "to cure all that ails them" but that they can help give others "a positive experience [so that] they would be willing to try again in the future." For these CCSDP doing good entailed educating students to better themselves and society.

One CCSDP mentioned the importance of educational tools to do good and just things in the world. He said that "with higher ed [education] tools," he could "equip [students] to be able to navigate [life] and do that well for themselves and community." He talked about his role as giving students "the tools [they] need for the rest of [their] life]. He said, "I think that's what's key in the office" is to give "specific tools." He mentioned that "even [racial] "terminologies are tools." For this CCSDP, doing good in the world entailed providing practical tools for student growth and cultural betterment.

Effectiveness and Productivity for the Common Good

Many of the CCSDP talked about things that are good to do in ways that align with a modern social imaginary. For the modern social imaginary, good things to do include becoming virtuous and adhering to certain social ideals, sacrificing, and transcending differences for the sake of a common goal, and things that are effective or productive and lead to the technical advance and wealth for society. Of all the CCSDP interviewed, no one mentioned becoming virtuous or adhering to certain social ideals, yet several mentioned the other two categories. Ryan and Kai talked about the importance of sacrificing oneself for the good of the greater community. Ryan spoke about an athlete doing good by having a "vision for the team" since it's "not about me" it's "about us." For Ryan, to sacrifice oneself for the team is part of doing good in the world. Kai spoke about the importance of not "building everything around oneself" when in leadership. He said that although "you get less glory and fame" it's important to "centralize everything…for the greatest gain for the short and long term." He mentioned something being "unwise" because it was "not practical." He also spoke of a colleague in positive terms who was "always trying to equip her own self" to work more effectively with her Gen Z students.

Several of the participants answered at least one question regarding doing good in ways that aligned with a modern worldview. The modern worldview sees good actions as leading to moral perfection, human achievement, and a civil society of peace and prosperity. As an example, one of the participants spoke about evidence-based data as helping to "build a church and benefit society." Another spoke about students feeling stuck because they felt unable to bring about peace to troubled areas of the world, such as

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"Israel and Palestine." She said that students needed to realize that they can impact these troubled areas by doing small "day-to-day things." Several of the CCSDP aligned with her idea that human effort and data can help to correct "the ills in the world that [humans] were put on the planet to address."

There were many statements that aligned with the postmodern concept that the world is primarily a place where those with power and privilege oppress those without power and privilege. Several CCSDP began their answers with statements about their or another's identity as an oppressed minority, for example: "As the first black female computer science graduate"; "For the LGBTQ population"; "For students of color"; and "As a black woman in a majority white school." Following each of these descriptions were statements about the pain and suffering experienced by those in the minority who lived among the privileged majority. Some of the pain and suffering was described by one CCSDP as a life "where every day was almost an assault on [the person's] self-esteem." Another described it as " racial trauma," while a third said that for the LGBTQ population, being on campus "leads to really, really negative psychological outcomes." These statements appear to align with the postmodern understanding of the world being divided primarily into the oppressors and the oppressed.

Affirming Inward Authority and Equitable Distribution of Power

Most of the respondents made statements about how people do good things in ways that align with a postmodern social imaginary. In the postmodern social imaginary, one does good things by affirming the inward authority of the individual and equitably distributing power and privilege in society. As an example of affirming the inward authority of the individual, Isaac spoke about "helping [students] to draw conclusions

about themselves and their own agency in relation to their mental health outcomes." He said that it was good to "help them to identify what's going to be helpful to them." Natalie spoke about helping students "find what is going to work for them." Jessica said doing good entailed "helping students become comfortable with their own voice and saying [to them] this is who you are." For these CCSDP, one does good by affirming the inward authority of a person through helping them to name themselves, name what it is that will ultimately be helpful for them, and encouraging them to become comfortable with their own voice.

One-half of the respondents made statements aligning doing good with helping to redistribute power and privilege in society in equitable ways. For example, Jessica said that she came "into student development knowing that it is a majority white space and then asking [herself], 'how do I make this a more inclusive space for everybody.'" Kai spoke about helping students by giving them language "tools" such as the term, "Latinx" (meaning helping students to consider language that was more equitable between men and women.) For these respondents, how one does good includes helping to redistribute power equitably between the privileged majority and the underprivileged minority.

Mental Health, Authenticity, Safe Spaces, and Affirmation

All but one of the CCSDP spoke about what is good to do in some ways that aligned with a postmodern worldview. In a postmodern worldview, what is good to do includes balancing one's mental health through one's preferred method, living out one's own against conforming to a model imposed from the outside, affirming the chosen identity and expressions of others, and action and speech that does not psychologically harm the oppressed. Regarding mental health, Lily spoke about the importance of being

mentally "regulated." Maria said that students "needed to prioritize that self-care piece for their own well-being." She called it a "step of courage" to "get the level of care that they truly needed." Isaac referred to doing good as helping students to unwind in ways that they found helpful. For many of the participants, self-care was the first response to questions about doing good and just things in the world.

Several CCSDP talked about helping students not be influenced by outside forces regarding their identity and life choices as something good to do. For example, Jessica said that she tries to alleviate student guilt when their beliefs differ from their parents. She said that she asked them, "Is this what you really believe or think for yourself?" Kai talked about how it was good for a student to "radically deconstruct her life [when] she had to take a deep dive into how she [was] formed largely by her parents." Maria spoke about doing good as the "recognition of [the] different perspectives" of the LGBTQ population because she believed that "hiding is psychologically damaging." For several of the CCSDP, helping student to name their own identity and create their own belief and faith structures, sometimes against known influences from outside forces, was one of the ways to do good in the world.

Within the category of "what is good to do," the concept of creating safe spaces was mentioned the most. Spaces were considered safe for a variety of reasons. For Maria, it entailed a space that was "confidential and without consequence[s]" regarding breaking college rules. For Isaac, it was a place "to be vulnerable with one another about things they are struggling with so that they have a good sense that they are not alone in what they are experiencing." For Jessica, a safe space was an "inclusive space for everybody." For Ryan, it was a place that was not "shaming." For several of the participants, safe

spaces were safe if the students in them felt safe. Maria used the term "sense of safety" while Ryan spoke about students "feeling" as though the college was not safe because of a particular policy. He said that because of "this feedback," he changed the policy. One participant spoke about chapel not being a safe space because it "was not refreshing" for students of diversity. For these CCSDP, creating spaces where students felt safe was a concept that came quickly to mind when asked about good things to do.

One CCSDP spoke about unsafe environments as environments that were not affirming of the beliefs or feelings of students. Maria spoke about students "hiding because of their lack of faith or support of certain political agendas…because they don't feel like this is an environment where they can disagree." She added that "students have been wounded by the church and other Christian institutions." Doing good for Maria included creating a safe space for these students to be authentic to their true feelings and beliefs and then "honoring" that truthfulness.

Summary of Doing Good

The CCSDP spoke about the nature of the situation in ways most closely aligned with how Proverbs describes it. They spoke most often about the world having different paths that lead to either a flourishing life or a diminished life. The flourishing life was most often spoken about as aligning with integrity. Regarding the nature of people, the participants answered questions in ways most aligned with a postmodern social imaginary. They often referenced themselves and others as belonging to one of two categories; a member of a minority group experiencing oppression, or a member of a majority group responsible for that oppression.

The questions about how people do good were divided between all three worldview categories. In alignment with Proverbs, there was mention of seeking, trusting, and obeying God and then using one's resources well through embodied daily effort in wise and discerning ways. Aligned with the modern worldview, several CCSDP spoke about progressing the self and society using tools and education as the means of doing good. Progress was spoken of in ways that were the result of human effort and education. Transcendent reality was not usually mentioned at the same time. Many spoke about the means of doing good in ways aligned with the postmodern concept of affirming the inward authority of the individual and the equitable distribution of power and privilege in society. Often mentioned was listening to and learning from others which was talked about in ways that sometimes aligned with a Proverbs worldview, as a means of wisdom and discernment, and sometimes aligned with a postmodern worldview, as affirming the internal authority of the individual.

When asked questions about actions that are good to do, the participants answered in ways divided between a Proverbs worldview and a postmodern worldview. The actions mentioned most that aligned with a Proverbs worldview were honesty, integrity, faithfulness, wise words/actions, and service. The actions mentioned most that aligned with a postmodern worldview were engagement in self-care for optimal mental health and the creation of non-judgmental spaces of affirmation where students felt safe and authentic to whom they imagined themselves to be.

Summary of Findings

This chapter examined how CCSDP described the nature of the self and how students experience flourishing, the nature of authority and how students align with it,

and the nature of the world and how students do good in it. The data collected from the eight CCSDP and the resulting analysis revealed that the participants spoke about these concepts in ways that aligned with multiple worldviews. For each of the three research questions, participants answered in ways that aligned with a Proverbs worldview, a modern worldview, and a postmodern worldview. Often a participant would answer in ways aligned with one worldview in one question and another worldview in a different question.

Regarding the nature of the self, the CCSDP spoke about the real self in ways aligned with Proverbs as an integration of one's thoughts, affections, and actions empowered by the Spirit of God, and one's external daily actions as reflective of internal and transcendent realities. In alignment with a postmodern social imaginary, the real self was presented as something internally crafted by the individual and strongly shaped by racial/minority group identity. In alignment with Proverbs, the heart and will were spoken of as central to human flourishing, and flourishing was described relationally as right living with God, self, and others instead of fear, shame, and harm. Flourishing was also spoken about in ways aligned with a modern social imaginary as the progression of self and society through self-fashioning and education. And finally, it was spoken about in ways aligned with a postmodern social imagery as something obtained through safe spaces, emotional support, and self-care.

Regarding the nature of authority, the CCSDP spoke in ways aligned with Proverbs placing God and his Word as ultimately authoritative and truth as something obtained through a right relationship with the Lord. In alignment with a modern social imaginary, scientific reasoning and experts were spoken about as ultimately authoritative.

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In alignment with a postmodern social imaginary, the internal psychological self and the self-revealed lived experiences of marginalized, non-majority others were spoken about as ultimately authoritative. Regarding how students align with truth, the CCSDP spoke in ways consistent with Proverbs as having a right relationship with the Lord, obtaining truth, and living it out. Like Proverbs, the CCSDP spoke of the outcome of aligning with truth as freedom, understanding, and a good reputation instead of painful discipline, confusion, and shame. In alignment with a postmodern social imaginary, living truthfully was spoken about as living authentically and against conformity.

Regarding the nature of the world, the CCSDP described it using concepts aligned with Proverbs as containing ways that are illumined, true, and straight that lead to life as well as dark, false, and crooked that lead to death. In alignment with a postmodern social imaginary, they described it as an evolving struggle between the advantaged majority and the disadvantaged minority. Regarding how students do good in the world, the CCSDP aligned with Proverbs when they described trusting God, seeking his will, and obeying him through honest, just, and wise actions. In alignment with the modern social imaginary, they described doing good as equipping students to progress themselves and society for mutual advantage. In alignment with a postmodern social imaginary, they described it as listening to and affirming the feelings of students, creating safe spaces for them to be their authentic selves, and encouraging mental health through self-care.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how CCSDP described what it entails for students to flourish, live truthfully, and do good in the world. In Chapter 2, the review of literature provided insight into the differences between the Proverbs, modern, and postmodern social imaginaries and how each perceives the good, true, and beautiful life.

The following research questions guided the research.

1. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to flourish?

2. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to live truthfully?

3. How do CCSDP describe what it entails for a student to do good in the world?

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study reviewed relevant literature in three areas and analyzed interview data from eight CCSDP. The literature review confirmed that to live in a culture is to be impacted by that culture and the shared social imaginary that underpins it. It showed that each of the social imaginaries in the literature review (Proverbs/Christian, modern, and postmodern) conceives differently of the nature of authority, the self, and the situation and how one lives truthfully, flourishes and does good in the world. The interview data analysis sought to answer questions regarding the impact on CCSDP who live within all three social imaginaries; the secular, imminent social imaginaries of 21st-century modernism and postmodernism and the sacred, transcendent Christian imaginary of the Bible. Duke theologian and ecologist, Norman Wirzba said, "The naming and narrating of the world is not a trivial thing…because the way we name and narrate the world [and

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ourselves] determines how we are going to live in it."[277] Because CCSDP are positioned to form and shape the minds, hearts, and actions of the next generation of Christian college students, it seemed particularly important to gain clarity into how CCSDP name and narrate the world and in particular how they describe their engagement with students to flourish, live truthfully, and do good in it. Those descriptions helped give greater clarity into which worldviews were being described.

The interview data revealed that the CCSDP's engagement with the hearts, minds, and practices of their students has been impacted, to some extent, by all three social imaginaries: the Christian, the modern, and the postmodern. The interview questions and resultant data analysis helped clarify which social imaginaries the CCSDP were describing in their answers to questions about flourishing, living truthfully, and doing good in the world. Two summary charts were created from the source materials in Chapters 2 and 4 as quick references for the reader: one three-page chart with descriptions of each of the three social imaginaries from the literature review (the nature of authority and aligning with it, the nature of the self and experiencing flourishing, and the nature of the world and doing good in it) and another three-page chart with examples from each of those categories extracted from the interview transcriptions. Following the summary charts is a discussion of the findings and recommendations for practice and further research.

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[277] Norman Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World*, The Church and Postmodern Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 18–19.

	Proverbs	Modern (mid-modernity) Social Imaginary (MSI)	The Postmodern (mid-Postmodernity) Social Imaginary (PSI)
	A broad description of how Solomon (and other Proverbs authors) described these topics	A broad description of how the MSI generally manifested in culture (not an exact definition or rendering)	A broad description of how the PSI generally manifests in culture (not an exact definition or rendering)
The Nature of Authority & Aligning with It	The highest authority for truth is: -The Lord and His law (God's law reveals what is true and good) Other valid authorities: -Truth, wisdom, a wise parent/teacher/leader (Truth is that which comes from God and what wisdom reveals) Obtained by: -A right relationship with the Lord, the author of all truth Living truthfully requires: -Fearing, loving, and obeying Him and obtaining the wisdom that comes from Him by: -Paying attention to, concentrating on, and remembering true things -Loving wisdom and treasuring knowledge -Crying out, looking for, and walking in wisdom's ways with one's actions Positive consequences of living truthfully: -The protection and success given by God in the material and/or spiritual world Negative consequences of living falsely: -Being misled into immediate and eternal harm and failure in one's relationships and actions	The highest authority for truth is: -Scientific reasoning (Truth becomes limited to that which is effective in the natural world and located in the human mind. Feelings are compelling but not reliable) Other valid authorities: -Scientific experts and one's common sense (common human nature or conscience) -Human nature is seen to possess an accurate understanding of what is good and true without God's law Obtained by: -The scientific method, one's senses, and one's inherent and rational understanding of virtue and vice Living truthfully requires: -Obtaining empirical facts and data and aligning one's life with them by: -Adapting one's practices to the evidence that science and scientific experts present to society Positive consequences of living truthfully: -Greater efficiency and control of nature leading to an abundance of material goods/comforts and social progress Negative consequences of living falsely: -Lack of sophistication, technological advances, wealth, and social progress (having a superstitious view of nature instead of a scientific/rational view)	The highest authority for truth is: -An individual's internal psychological self Other valid authorities: -Authenticity and passion -The self-revealed lived experiences (personal claims of emotional safety or harm) of "marginalized, oppressed," non-majority others Obtained by: -Understanding one's own inner voice as well as the revealed lived experiences of non-majority others Living truthfully requires: -Knowing one's deepest desires, being proud of them, expressing them to others, and living them out by: -Being mindful and meditative to better hear one's inner voice, and if possible, going to a counselor to better hear, accept, and align with one's inner voice -Expressing and living one's truth out against the pressure to conform to the demands of dominant groups and oppressive institutions -Listening and learning from "marginalized, oppressed", non-majority others and adapting one's life to their revealed truth if one is in a majority group or a less "marginalized, oppressed" group. Positive consequences of living truthfully: -Personal freedom, happiness, and self-actualization (particularly regarding one's sexuality) -A society where oppressors are held in check and all people have freedom and equitable privilege Negative consequences of living falsely: -Living an oppressed, stilted, unhappy, un-actualized life (particularly regarding one's sexuality) -A society where the majority continues to oppress and the minority is marginalized and underprivileged

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The Nature of the Self & Experiencing Flourishing Flourishing	What is most real about a person? -The internal is what is most real but the external reveals and impacts the internal. -The heart reflects the real person What can be known about a person? -The way one acts is the way one is known. -People know the character of a person by their behavior. -Character and bad choices reveal themselves in behavior and also on the physical body -Internal feelings are not fully known by others but they are fully known by God What impacts a person's character? -Things outside a person can impact identity (One's associates, wisdom, circumstances) -The daily small choices of the heart which inform one's actions and shape the heart What is one's identity? -A product of things inside/outside a person -The orienting factor in their life (mind) -The object of their desires and affections (heart) -Their actions in the world (actions) What is central to human flourishing? -The heart determines the course of one's life What leads to flourishing? -Choosing right authorities, attitudes, actions -Listen to wisdom and accept its authority, love it, and walk in its ways -Conforming the heart and body to spiritual and physical realities Choosing rightly leads to: -Flourishing in all areas of life (Spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational) Choosing wrongly leads to: -Spiritual dissatisfaction and harm, social shame and disgrace, physical decay and death	What is most real about a person? -Their rational mind and physical body/ senses to receive empirical data What can be known about a person? -Their character revealed through a mastery of virtues or a lack of them -Their physical characteristics and behaviors revealed through scientific analysis What impacts a person's character? -Training, education, and self-determination as well as the environment in which one lives (but the internal is most impactful) What is one's identity? -One's primary identity is rooted in a collective national identity -One's individual identity is defined by conformity or lack of conformity of one's actions to that which is rational, virtuous, and civil as defined by the scientific elite What is central to human flourishing? -Personal and social progress What leads to flourishing? -Self-fashioning through education, effort, and rationality (without the aid of God) -Embodying virtue and civility -Technological and social progress through the physical and social sciences Choosing rightly leads to: -The progress of civilization (peace, order, and prosperity in society) (Individual flourishing is curtailed by the greater flourishing of society) Choosing wrongly leads to: -Barbarism and living without the help of technology like irrational and uneducated savages controlled by their appetites	What is most real about a person? -Their feelings and desires (and their interpretations of their "lived" experiences) -Their chosen identities What can be known about a person? -What they share is true about themself -Their preferred (sometimes conferred) social tribe What impacts a person's character? -"Virtues" are simply the creations of the powerful to privilege themselves and their tribe. There is no such thing as character, only self-definition -Some like Rousseau, believe that human nature is basically good when given freedom, others like Freud, believe that deep down humanity is irrational and ruled by desires and appetites (especially sexual) What is one's identity? -One's primary identity is the self-declared, self-understanding of the psychological self -One's social identity is the social tribe(s) to which one feels most represents one's psychological, social, or physical self What is central to human flourishing? -To be free to be one's chosen self and to be happy What leads to flourishing? -To be in an accepting and safe environment where one can express one's truths and feel the support and approval of others -To experience a pain-free and pleasurable life (particularly regarding sexual pleasure) Choosing rightly leads to: -Pleasure for the physical body and happiness for the inward self Choosing wrongly leads to: -An unhappy life of self-deception and/or suppression from power-hungry tribal enemies who are looking to control you for their advantage

The Nature of the World & Doing Good in It			
	What is the nature of the situation? There are a variety of ways and paths that people can take: -light and dark ways - ways that do or do not have the light of truth (normative) -ways that lead to life and to death – ways that do or do not lead to ultimate flourishing (existential) -straight and crooked paths- paths that are or are not aligned to what is good (situational) There are ways known by the people who take them: -the way of the upright is light (they can see reality), and it leads away from evil -The way of the wicked is dark (they cannot see reality), and it leads toward evil. (Identity can be known by the paths one takes, or the path can be known by the identity of the one taking it) **What are the types of people in the world?** Godly people and evil people (the situation from above) Integrous people and treacherous people (the internal situation) Rich people and poor people (the external situation) **How does one do good things?** Trust God and seek His will leads to the good and right path Understand wisdom and embody it -The undertaking is physical and requires effort like discipline -Doing good helps bring about an understanding of the good **What is good to do?** That which is right, just, and fair -Being honest, just, and faithful will enable a person to understand what is right, just, and fair **Doing good leads to:** Being good, wise, and successful	**What is the nature of the situation?** -Humans are living in a created—or after Darwin—evolving, ordered world to be subdued and conquered for material gain -Human nature is basically good but, in its base, raw form needs to be controlled and re-shaped **What are the types of people in the world?** Those who are: -Disciplined and living by virtue vs. undisciplined and living by vice -Civil (controlled and educated, following science/reason) vs. Savages (uncontrolled, uneducated following natural impulses) **How does one do good things?** Progress the self and society through: -reason, education, and virtuous living -Control and utilization of nature through science and technology for mutual benefit **What is good to do?** -Become virtuous and adhere to certain social ideals -Self-sacrifice and transcend individual differences for the sake of a common goal -do that which is effective or productive and leads to the technical advance and wealth of society **Doing good leads to:** Moral perfection, human achievement, and a civil society of peace and prosperity	**What is the nature of the situation?** -An evolving material world devoid of the sacred -There are no more metanarratives- all is subjective (no more facts; only interpretations) -Truth is socially constructed and determined by power -Human nature is a product of animal instincts, one's internal environment (brain's chemical balance....etc.) and one's external environment **What are the types of people in the world?** -A panoply of individuals who are whatever they claim to be (Each person has their own way to realize their humanity) -Oppressors and oppressed (those with power and privilege oppressing those without) **How does one do good things?** -Affirm the inward authority of the individual, including oneself, and an equitable distribution of power and privilege in society **What is good to do?** -Balance one's mental health through one's preferred method: healthy food, exercise, stress reduction (i.e.. no toxic people), or medicine -Identity crafting and expressing one's individuality (living out one's own against conforming to a model imposed from the outside) -Affirm the chosen identity and expression of others -Action and speech that does not psychologically harm the oppressed and helps to redistribute the power and privilege unjustly gained by the oppressors -Action and speech that affirms the rights of non-human entities, such as animals and the earth (humans are simply one part of nature) **Doing good leads to:** Personal happiness and justice in the world

Table 1. Literature review analysis created from source material
Source: (See Chapter 2 bibliography)

	Proverbs	Modern (mid-modernity) Social Imaginary (MSI)	The Postmodern (mid-Postmodernity) Social Imaginary (PSI)
	Some examples from the CCSDP interviews that align with the wisdom of Proverbs:	Some examples from the CCSDP interviews that align with a modern social imaginary:	Some examples from the CCSDP interviews that align with a postmodern social imaginary:
The Nature of Authority & Aligning with It	The highest authority for truth is: "God's word is ultimately authoritative." "The most positive thing we can do is help students engage with scripture." "Because [these values] are important to our father's heart, we prioritize them." Other valid authorities: "All truth is God's truth." "We do believe in a capital T, so I do not think everything is relative." Obtained by: "Our relationship with Christ is so important because he tells us the truth about who we are." Living truthfully requires: "Integrity is integrity to God's calling." "Sin can keep a student from living truthfully." by: "Making sure I'm in the Word" "See God as part of the picture" "Living a life of repentance" Positive consequences of living truthfully: "That people would find freedom [in] scripture engagement" Negative consequences of living falsely: "Their actions have consequences" "They've become lazy. They've become something negative."	The highest authority for truth is: "Do what the professional is telling you to do or you won't come back." "I rely on [a recommendation from a professional] to tell me what it is that this person needs." Other valid authorities: "The literature says that individuals who are flourishing are..." "We want everyone...ready for a deeper therapy process." Obtained by: "Some students need...a lot of treatment...they need to be willing to engage in the treatment recommendations." Living truthfully requires: "You can't just have an opinion about something...you also need to be pairing it with research." by: "Healthy sexuality...informed by my mental health training." Positive consequences of living truthfully: "[small business concepts] can lead to a lot of great gains...really open the door to a lot of things." Negative consequences of living falsely: "We need to speed up [the slow-moving ship of higher ed]...it may not be effective anymore.	The highest authority for truth is: "We are not going to tell you what to do. This is your life, but I can help you...hear yourself." "What you really believe or think for yourself." "Give yourself permission." Other valid authorities: "Someone who does not fit the norm, or the mode of what we find biblically acceptable in regard to sexuality." "I heard it from [a black seminarian] that racism is now worse." Obtained by: "Just becoming more self-aware." "Acknowledging minority experiences" "Helping students to draw conclusions about themselves... It's them living their truth." Living truthfully requires: "For students [to be] authentically themselves." "To radically deconstruct her life...realizing she is formed largely by her parents." by: "Helping students become comfortable with their own voice, and saying, okay, this is who you are." "How do we help people who are struggling with their theology...[we] really learn to listen." "We have to honor the process and time...for them to reach that level of safety...to share church [hurt]" Positive consequences of living truthfully: "[For LGBTQ students] to be accepted on this campus and truthfully themselves." "For students to be more authentically themselves." Negative consequences of living falsely: "For the LGBT population, the hiding of who they are leads to really, really negative psychological outcomes."

The Nature of the Self & Experiencing Flourishing			

The Nature of the Self & Experiencing Flourishing

Column 1:

What is most real about a person?
"Our formation, everything that we are and do, is being worked at by the Spirit of God."
"Seeing the bigger picture...I'm loved by God, God is sovereign, and this doesn't have to define me."

What can be known about a person?
"They see that he is unwavering in his commitment to integrity."
"I challenge that a little bit...from observation of student's lives."

What impacts a person's character?
"I think flourishing is almost like a process and an end product."
"You have to work toward changing patterns, having a grateful heart. The Lord and Holy Spirit [also] do a lot of that work."

What is one's identity?
"It's your mind, body, and soul, the entirety of who you are."
"Loving God...each other...and themselves ...it's contributing to their formation."

What is central to human flourishing?
"You can't want it for them more than they want it."

What leads to flourishing?
"Our life...is being formed right as we submit to the Lordship of Christ."
"Their becoming...should look...like how Jesus would want it to look for them."
"Learning...how God has wired them."

Choosing rightly leads to:
"Experiencing the goodness, generosity, and freedom that we have in Christ."

Choosing wrongly leads to:
You broke the rule...you get the consequences."

Column 2:

What is most real about a person?

What can be known about a person?

What impacts a person's character?
"You've really grown so much through [therapy]"

What is one's identity?

What is central to human flourishing?
"I also get really excited about things that evolve and change."

What leads to flourishing?
"While you are young, get all the tools you need for whatever life."
"Some students needed a lot of treatment."

Choosing rightly leads to:
"The ability to pursue their potential in this space"

Choosing wrongly leads to:
"Losing ground gained."
"A de-evolution is happening because you're not keeping pace."

Column 3:

What is most real about a person?
"For the LGBTQ population, hiding who they truly are..."
"Individuals who have gone their whole lives without experiencing a role model [who] is like them." (referring to race)
"What does it mean, as women, to really feel safe in this body?"

What can be known about a person?
"We just have to honor the process and the time it took for them to reach that level of safety and trust to be able to share some of those deeper things with us."
"I just want to get to know you. So, take off [your mask]"
"Whose own identity development"

What impacts a person's character?
"Reducing the fear and shame"

What is one's identity?
"Identity challenges, particularly around gender"
"Parents are just super involved, and so sometimes your identity can be decided for you."

What is central to human flourishing?
"I just want everyone to feel comfortable, not judged."
"They had to be willing to actually engage what they needed for their own well-being and prioritize that self-care piece."
"Self-esteem"

What leads to flourishing?
"Providing the right level of support"
"Providing safe spaces where students can, in a safe way, be vulnerable with one another about the things they are struggling with"
"I want to create a space for [minority] students to flourish because...their experience is prioritized."
"Self-care and avoiding burnout"

Choosing rightly leads to:
"See[ing] students leave here with their heads held high, not hiding, not shamed...that's my highest hope."

Choosing wrongly leads to:
"I think anytime you're hiding who you truly are, you're causing yourself damage." (referring to self-described LGBTQ students)
"Chapel...it's supposed to be this refreshing space, but it isn't for everyone."
"[The lack of] that sense of self-esteem."

The Nature of the World & Doing Good in It"		
What is the nature of the situation? "You're at a fork in the road...you have an opportunity to really learn and grow from it." "She has a deep vision....for the kingdom of God." "Justice...is at the heart of who God is." **What are the types of people in the world?** "Our athletics director...his integrity is unbelievable" "And that is true, and so she lives like that" **How does one do good things?** "Trust God in the midst of this thing that is really hard." "God is sovereign...what does it mean to trust him...and walk faithfully with Him." "However the Lord uses me, I'm going to allow my light to shine, sometimes it's with my words, sometimes it's just with my actions." **What is good to do?** "Live their life worthy of the calling they received" "She is growing in her faith. I'm just really impressed with her." "We all need to be engaging in Scripture." "Being slow to speak...and swift to hear" "Helping people realize that their actions have consequences" **Doing good leads to:** "Help[ing] your neighbor flourish" "It's not only for who you're serving...it's a part of our formation"	**What is the nature of the situation?** **What are the types of people in the world?** **How does one do good things?** "Providing education in relation to coping mechanisms" "Another aspect of prevention is providing...internal resources" "She's always trying to equip her own self" **What is good to do?** "To pursue their potential in this space" "Make sure I am continuing to exercise my intellect" "Getting the tools you need for the rest of your life" "Giving them some tools...to equip them...do that well for themselves, but in community also" "I do think there are more effective ways to communicate it" "Processing things, centralizing everything...I think those are the greatest gains for the short and long term" **Doing good leads to:** "It's given us evidence-based [data] to do more across more parts of the college...to help us build a church and benefit society." "Identification of the ills in the world we were put on the planet to address"	**What is the nature of the situation?** "I also think institutions [can be] out of touch with current needs." "I think for students of color...just being like, I'm one or two percent of the population, and I'm essentially paying to go here...but [CCSDP do not understand] how to care for [those] not a part of the majority culture." "It isn't always comfortable...for you to have to ask me these questions, but I'd rather you go through me and ask me so that when you interact with others...you would not come off as disrespectful or allow guilt and fear to paralyze you." "Speaking as a black woman dealing in a majority school" "And because of the power dynamic" "This is not an environment where they can disagree." **What are the types of people in the world?** "The LGBTQ population"; "Latinx student"; "As a woman"; "Students of color"; "Minority students" **How does one do good things?** "Helping them to identify what's going to be helpful to them." "A better understanding of themselves and what their needs are and how to meet their needs." "[creating] a space to...help them find what's going to work for them." "Helping student be comfortable with their own voice." **What is good to do?** "Create that sense of safety...we just want this to be safe, and confidential, you know, without consequences." "Knowing it is a majority white space and asking, how do I make this a more inclusive space for everybody." "What are the systems and structures that I want to contribute to making better." "Prioritize that self-care piece." "We want everyone to feel comfortable, not judged, and safe with us ." **Doing good leads to:** "Healing racial trauma." "I hope they have left here psychologically healthier and more self-aware." "Once she did that her self-esteem started to go sky high."

Table 2. Examples of the Proverbs, modern, and postmodern social imaginaries created from source material
Source: Interviews (eight anonymous Student Development/Student Affairs personnel from the Midwest of the United States from one institution within the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities). Conducted by Kathleen Haase, December 2023.

Discussion of Findings

Although there were examples of all three social imaginaries from the interviews, the transcription data pointed most often to an alignment with the wisdom of Proverbs. Some categories of analysis had significant alignment with a Proverbs social imaginary in the amount of interview data within that category or the consistency of all or most of the participants naming similar concepts within that category.

At the same time, but to a lesser degree, some categories of analysis had significant alignment with the modern social imaginary (MSI) and the postmodern social imaginary (PSI) in the amount of interview data within that category or the consistency of all or most of the participants naming similar concepts within that category. The following is a discussion of those significant findings in each of the following categories: The Nature of Authority and Aligning with It; The Nature of the Self and Experiencing Flourishing; and the Nature of the World and Doing Good in It.

Significant Findings within The Nature of Authority and Aligning with It

Like Proverbs, the clearest and most definitive ultimate authority referenced by almost all the CCSDP was God and his Word. For example, one participant concisely said, "God's word is ultimately authoritative." Regarding engaging students to live truthfully, another participant said, "The most positive thing we can do is help students engage with scripture." Several mentioned truth as both authoritative and outside of the individual. They spoke about the reality of a "capital T truth" and that "all truth [was] God's truth." Also, like Proverbs, many mentioned a right relationship with the Lord as a means of obtaining truth. One participant said, "Our relationship with Christ is so important because he tells us the truth about who we are." There was consensus that

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being in a relationship with the Lord and aligning to his Word was ultimately authoritative. At the same time, other interview statements appeared to align with a modern or postmodern social imaginary regarding what is most authoritative and how one lives truthfully in the world.

Where the participants differed the most from a Proverbs worldview regarding the nature of authority was in their descriptions of psychological experts and the internal psychological self. Many described psychological experts, internal feelings, and one's own reasoning as ultimately authoritative to listen to and trust. In alignment with the MSI, as described in the literature review, several CCSDP mentioned scientific experts as the authority to consult for understanding the nature of persons and how they flourish. Social scientists (counselors, therapists, and psychiatrists) along with their expertise and treatment plans were referenced by several CCSDP. One said they "rely on [them] to tell me what it is that this person needs." Others referenced "the [scientific] literature" as the truth to follow.

In alignment with the PSI, as described in the literature review, many named the internal psychological self and one's own reasoning as ultimately authoritative. As an example of the ultimate authority of the self, one CCSDP spoke about telling students to "give [themselves] permission." In Proverbs, one is encouraged to seek the wisdom of the Lord, in the MSI, the scientific edicts of the experts, but in the PSI and in this example, it is one's own permission that is encouraged to be sought. Some CCSDP spoke about human reasoning and feelings as secondarily authoritative to God and his word by referencing that reality within their answers. In this example, however, the CCSDP concluded their answers without referencing a higher authority.

Where the participants differed the most from Proverbs regarding how one obtains truth was in their descriptions of truth being the result of a deep dive into self-awareness. There were several CCSDP who spoke about obtaining truth in ways that aligned with the PSI. For example, one CCSDP talked about obtaining truth by "just becoming more self-aware," while another talked about "helping students to draw conclusions about themselves." They said it was "them living their truth."

Living truthfully for several CCSDP required "student [to be] authentically themselves" and "comfortable with their own voice" because "this is who you are." "Being self-aware" was mentioned by several CCSDP to obtain truth that one could authentically align to. Self-awareness was spoken of as the result of self-reflection and not self-examination using an external measure. As with the PSI, the truth to be aligned to was one's psychological self, discovered by reflection and the "conclusions one draws about oneself." Several spoke disparagingly about receiving truths from outside authorities, particularly those relayed by parents. These truths were to be "deconstructed" and replaced with "what you really believe or think for yourself." Like the PSI, living truthfully in these descriptions required living authentically (a life aligned to one's internal desires and personal understanding of truth) and against conformity to powerful others.

From the interviews, there were competing ideas regarding the nature of authority and aligning with it, both extrinsically, between different CCSDP, and intrinsically, within a singular CCSDP's own answers. Nearly all the CCSDP made statements indicating that God and his Word were ultimately authoritative; yet often, CCSDP answered questions about truthful living in ways aligned with the MSI or PSI. Like the

MSI, they referenced social science experts and their recommended "best practices," and similar to the PSI, they indicated that one lives truthfully by aligning to one's "authentic" self (discovered through self-reflection) and being unhindered by external authorities.

It appeared to this researcher that the CCSDP sincerely believed that God and his Word were ultimately authoritative, and when they were asked directly about their beliefs, would answer accordingly. However, when asked questions about their practices and reasons behind them, some answers did not align with their stated beliefs. From the literature review of the history of American higher education, present-day higher education was shown to be aligned with the PSI regarding the authority of the psychological self and, to a lesser degree, the MSI regarding the authority of scientific experts. This discrepancy in the answers of the CCSDP between stated beliefs and practices seemed to point to the influence of secular social imaginaries on the ideological instincts of the CCSDP, even when their stated beliefs aligned with a Christian worldview.

One interesting finding from the analysis of the interview data was that the fear of the Lord was never mentioned by any CCSDP. Although "the fear of the Lord" is a concept that could fit into the category of "flourishing" or "doing good," the researcher expected it to come up in questions about "living truthfully." The fear of the Lord is mentioned often in Proverbs and is said to be the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom (1:7, 9:10). It is connected to flourishing (10:17) and also righteous living (3:7) To speak about truth, flourishing, and doing good with no mention of the fear of the Lord appeared a significant data point for further research.

Significant Findings within The Nature of the Self and Experiencing Flourishing

Two different concepts about human identity were described most often in the interviews. One of them aligned with the wisdom of Proverbs while the other with the PSI. Like Proverbs, many respondents spoke about a person's truest self as a deeper internal reality that is known and defined by God, who created them, knows them, and desires their flourishing. For example, one respondent said, "Everything that we are" is being "worked out by the Spirit of God" while another referenced the "bigger picture" that understands that "God is sovereign" and "define[s] [us]." In further consistency with Proverbs, many CCSDP spoke about the real self in holistic ways, as "mind, body, and soul" as well as something that could be observed in a person's actions. It was spoken of in formational ways, as something that could be formed through the orientation of a person's mind, desires, and actions, as well as by the work of God. For example, one CCSDP talked about work[ing] toward changing patterns" and "having a grateful heart," while another talked about "loving God…each other…and themselves" as "contributing toward their formation."

Where the participants differed the most from the Proverbs worldview regarding human identity was in their descriptions of the real self as something primarily rooted in one's social tribe and personal beliefs about oneself. These concepts aligned with the PSI, as described in the literature review, and were referenced more often than those aligned with a Proverbs understanding. In both Proverbs and the PSI, the real self is described in both external and internal ways. The difference between the two external understandings is that for Proverbs, one's external actions reveal a greater internal reality, while for the PSI, the greater reality is the social tribe to which one belongs in the external world.

Some examples of this emphasis on a person's social tribe were phrases like, "as a woman," "student of color," "Latinx student," "minority student," or "the LGBTQ population" in response to questions about identity. Some CCSDP made clear reference to membership in a particular population as indicative of a person's true identity, saying things like, "the LGBTQ population, hiding who they truly are." In these PSI examples, the external tribal affiliation is presented as a primary indicator of identity, unlike Proverbs where the external behavior reflects a deeper internal identity.

The difference between the two internal understandings of the self is that for Proverbs, one's deeper, internal self is the product of things inside and outside a person – the orienting factor in their life (mind), the object of their desires and affections (heart), and their actions in the world (behavior). This real self is fully known and understood by God. For the PSI, one's real self is the self-declared, self-understanding of internal feelings, desires, and "lived" experiences. An example of this is references made by CCSDP regarding the problematic nature of a student's identity being decided for them by their parents, instead of the student naming it for themselves. One CCSDP said, "Parents are just super involved, and so sometimes your identity can be decided for you." Another talked about "identity challenges, particularly around gender," referring to a student's decision about the gender they most felt represented them. Identity was talked about as "those deeper things" that one is "able to share." In these PSI examples, identity was described as something that a person names for themselves by reflecting on their internal thoughts, feelings, and "lived" experiences, unlike Proverbs which describes it as a product of one's choices and as something that is known in its fullest reality by God.

Although many CCSDP spoke about student flourishing in ways consistent with Proverbs. There were a few that described it in ways consistent with the MSI and several in ways consistent with the PSI. For Proverbs, flourishing is described as the product of choosing right authorities, attitudes, and actions leading to good and satisfying relationships with God, self, others, and the world. In Proverbs choosing wrongly leads to spiritual dissatisfaction and harm, social shame and disgrace, and physical decay and death. Some examples from the CCSDP that aligned with these notions of flourishing were phrases like: "Our life is being formed right as we submit to the Lordship of Christ," "Their becoming…should look…like how Jesus would want it to look for them," and "Experiencing the goodness, generosity, and freedom that we have in Christ." The few that spoke in ways aligned with the MSI regarding flourishing described the importance of getting "all the tools you need for…life" so that one doesn't "lose ground gained" and can "pursue their potential in this space."

Where the participants differed the most from a Proverbs worldview regarding how students experience flourishing was in their descriptions of flourishing as an inward feeling of safety, belonging, and acceptance in one's environment. Many made comments about how students felt or felt about themselves in particular environments or circumstances. They used phrases like, "feeling emotionally distressed," "lacking a sense of safety and belonging," "sense of self-esteem," "feeling safe in this body," "feeling comfortable and not judged," "seeing students leave [this office] with their heads held high, not hiding, not shamed." Flourishing for Proverbs is the result of right choices leading to right relationships in the spiritual, emotional, and physical world, whereas in the PSI, flourishing is the result of the right environment. If a student is not experiencing

flourishing, which is defined in the PSI as feeling happy and free to be one's chosen self, the solution is to remove themselves from that unsafe and unapproving environment or to remove the factors in the environment which they believe are making them feel unsafe or judged. Phrases such as "I just want everyone to feel comfortable, not judged," "providing safe spaces," "Chapel is supposed to be this refreshing space, but it isn't for everyone," and "I just want to create a space for [minority] students to flourish because…their experience is prioritized" exemplify the PSI understanding of flourishing as the result of one's environment.

The concepts of "safe spaces," "accepting environment[s]," and "self-care" were mentioned the most by the most CCSDP for how to engage students to flourish. One CCCSDP talked about the ill effects of not being in an accepting environment, by saying, "I think anytime you're hiding who you truly are (in reference to a student's LGBTQ identity), you're causing yourself damage." A few CCSDP talked about safe spaces, accepting environments, and self-care as one part of a greater balance that included challenge as well as support, and effort as well as self-care. However, many CCSDP spoke about flourishing as the effect of a student's environment without also mentioning the impact of a student's choices regarding the orientation of their mind, the object of their desires, and their actions in the world. In this type of PSI, a person flourishes and stays safe, not by trusting the Lord, desiring him above all else, and obeying him, but by making sure one is in an emotionally and physically safe space without judgment. This is a space where someone can vulnerably share who they truly feel themselves to be and their "lived" experiences and are believed, accepted, and celebrated. In the PSI, "lived"

experiences are not to be considered subjective but are instead a form of irrefutable, objective reality.

Significant Findings within The Nature of the World and Doing Good in It

The findings in this section, like the others, were mixed regarding how CCSDP described the nature of the world and doing good in it. Most CCSDP described the nature of the situation in ways most aligned with Proverbs as having paths that are right and wrong to take that lead to flourishing or diminishing. As an example, one CCSDP spoke about being at "a fork in the road" where one could choose the right way and "really learn and grow from it." Another CCSDP acknowledged that there are ways of "justice" and injustice, and the way of justice is at "the heart of who God is."

Regarding the nature of people, more CCSDP answered in ways aligned with a postmodern social imaginary. They often referenced people as belonging to one of two categories: an oppressed minority group with disadvantages, or an advantaged majority group responsible for those disadvantages. What was described by the CCSDP as ultimately authoritative appeared to impact their descriptions of the nature of people and their identity in the world. In the PSI, internal feelings and one's narrative of "lived" experiences are ultimately authoritative, and metanarrative-type truths are simply constructions by the powerful to advantage themselves and others like them who would similarly benefit. With this postmodern understanding of authority, a person's internal identity becomes that which they feel is true of themselves, and their external identity becomes the advantaged or disadvantaged group to which they belong. Proverbs, which has the Lord and his law as ultimately authoritative, names the types of people in the world by their decisions regarding their mind, affections, and body. For the CCSDP, the

nature of the situation regarding the types of people in the world was described primarily by referring to their minority/majority race, their gender, their membership in the LGBTQ community, or their mental health status.

What was described as authoritative and what was described to produce human flourishing appeared to impact how a CCSDP described what it entailed to do good in the world. With a clear description of God and his Word as authoritative, and with a subsequent naming of flourishing as choosing right authorities, attitudes, and actions, doing good was described in ways aligned with Proverbs. In the wisdom of Proverbs, trusting God, seeking his will, understanding wisdom, and embodying it is considered how one does good, and the good that one does should be right, just, and fair. Many CCSDP described doing good in ways that aligned with this understanding. For example, one CCSDP spoke about doing good as, "trust[ing] God in the midst of this thing that is really hard." Another said, "God is sovereign…what does it mean to trust him…and walk faithfully with him." Regarding actions, a CCSDP mentioned "helping [their] neighbor to flourish" while another talked about "living their life worthy of the calling they received."

Along with a Proverbs-aligned description of how one does good and what is good to do, there were also modern and postmodern-aligned descriptions. For those who described human reasoning and social science experts as ultimately authoritative, like the MSI, doing good was spoken about as progressing the self and society by means of tools and education. They said things like "making sure I am continuing to exercise my intellect," "providing education in relation to coping mechanisms," and "giving them tools…to equip them…to do that well for themselves, but in community also." They

mentioned that doing good was providing "evidence-based [data] to do more across more parts of the college" and the "identification of the ills in the world we were put on the planet to address." When science and the scientific mind are authoritative, doing good entails exercising the intellect, attending to expert evidence, and giving people educational tools to identify and fix the world's problems.

For those who described the psychological self as significantly authoritative, like the PSI, doing good was described as affirming the inward authority of the individual and the equitable distribution of power and privilege in society. They said things like, "helping them to identify what's going to be helpful to them," "helping students be comfortable with their own voice," and "to feel comfortable, not judged, and safe with us" and with "no consequences." They also described doing good in ways aligned with the equitable distribution of power and privilege in society; for example, "knowing it is a majority white space and asking, how do I make this a more inclusive space for everybody" and "healing racial trauma."

Where the participants differed the most from a Proverbs worldview regarding the nature of the world and how students do good in it was in their descriptions of the world as primarily composed of two types of people, those who are oppressed and those who are oppressors. They described doing good as affirming the internal authority of the individual and relieving the weight of oppressed students through the creation of spaces for students to feel safe, affirmed, and able to be authentic to the self that they declared themselves to be.

Categorical Hierarchy, Overlap, and Distinctions

Descriptions of authority appeared to have impacted CCSDP's understanding of the world in which people live, how they flourish, and what it entails to do good in it. This aligns with the descriptions in the literature review of the changing social imaginaries of colleges and universities from inception to the present day. What was considered most authoritative within higher education at the time impacted how colleges and universities imagined themselves and their mission. At its inception, American higher education acknowledged the reality of a transcendent authority. It soon denied that authority, replacing it with human reasoning and science and then, eventually, feelings and experience. For each of these iterations, the relied-upon authority of the academic leaders impacted the social imaginary of the communities learning within those spaces. The analysis of data in this qualitative research suggests that this was also true of the CCSDP interviewed. The authority that they consider most primary had the greatest impact on their answers for other categories.

The distinctions between the three social imaginaries in this study were not as clear-cut as they were presented. They were delineated with sharper boundaries for greater contrast and clarity. Often worldviews overlap in what they consider to be true, valuable, and effective. For example, both Proverbs and the MSI place emphasis on effective actions in the world being connected to the will and reasoning, and Proverbs and the PSI emphasize relational dynamics as significantly impactful to individuals and communities. Also, the differences between worldviews can be slight, and simply a matter of which concept is given greater authority or which concept is missing from a more complicated organic idea. An example of the importance of nuance regarding the

categories can be seen in the multiple references to "listening and learning" throughout the interviews, as described in the Chapter 4 summary. Listening and learning from other people can be a component of all three worldviews. The differences would be found in the surrounding data of the interview as to what or whom a person is encouraged to listen to and learn from and for what purpose. Those who spoke about listening and learning as a humble attentiveness to the advice and perspectives of wise others in ultimate submission to the Lord and his commands would be aligning with the wisdom of Proverbs. Those who spoke about listening and learning from scientific experts and their best practices as the definitive truth about the world to be more successful and productive would be aligning with the MSI. And finally, those who spoke about listening and learning from everyone's shared feelings and "lived" experiences, especially the oppressed and disadvantaged minorities, to create a safe space of non-judgmental acceptance and racial equity would be aligning with the PSI. Often there is significant overlap between the worldviews and what they value, but they value them in a different order and for different reasons and purposes.

This study sought to gain a greater understanding of some of those differences by analyzing how CCSDP described their engagement with students to flourish, live truthfully, and do good things in the world. From the literature review of the history of American Higher Education and the three worldviews that have shaped it, the researcher was able to gain insight into which worldview was being described by the CCSDP in each of the three categories and their attending subcategories. The analysis produced a greater understanding of the concepts within each of the categories. It also helped to describe which concepts were misaligned, to some degree, with the biblical wisdom

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described in Proverbs and the potential reasons for those misalignments. From these findings, current and future CCSDP and Christian youth and young adult leaders will be able to see with greater clarity the ideological differences between the wisdom of Proverbs and the wisdom of a secular world. The researcher hopes that this will lend itself to further insight for the student developer regarding which practices to employ when engaging their students' hearts, minds, and actions.

Recommendations for Practice

Considering the findings described above, CCSDP, or other student developers in churches and parachurch organizations, are well advised to take the time and effort needed to gain clarity on their beliefs: the nature of truth/authority and living truthfully; the nature of human identity and flourishing; and the nature of the situation and doing good in it. Prayer, introspection, dialogue, and behavioral assessment could lend insight into a person's actual belief system. The data showed that people are impacted by the social imaginaries in which they live. These social imaginaries can slip into CCSDP's conceptions, affections, and engagement with students, often without the CCSDP being aware of them. An inventory of one's beliefs and subsequent actions could be a good first step toward gaining clarity.

A thorough study of the wisdom of Proverbs, and the rest of scripture, should be considered a critical undertaking for CCSDP. Without an understanding of what the Bible claims is good, true, and beautiful, CCSDP are more likely to fall for the counterclaims of current social imaginaries. The literature review of Proverbs in Chapter 2 gives CCSDP a simplified way to see the wisdom of Solomon concerning the good, true, and beautiful life. Knowing, understanding, and living out this biblical wisdom is a powerful counter to

the faultiness of attending only to one's feelings and instincts or to the wisdom of the world.

The literature review analysis (Table 1) at the beginning of Chapter 5 can be a helpful tool for CCSDP to quickly see the differences between each of the social imaginaries. The examples of the Proverbs, modern, and postmodern worldviews (Table 2) can give helpful examples to "hear" what each of them might sound like in a Christian college setting. Understanding these differences and being familiar with similar examples can help CCSDP recognize which ideas and concepts are not aligned with biblical wisdom.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on how CCSDP described their engagement with the hearts, minds, and practices of their Gen Z students and from those descriptions to gain greater insight into the impact modern and postmodern social imaginaries have had on their understanding of the good, true, and beautiful life. As with any study, there are limitations on how extensive the research can be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable for CCSDP or other student developers in Christian academies, churches, and parachurch organizations: further biblical study for understanding the good, true, and beautiful life; semantic changes in higher education; and the beliefs and values of Christian college counselors.

Although Proverbs was used as a representative of the Christian worldview in this study, it is only one of many ways to express the biblical metanarrative of the good, true, and beautiful life. Other approaches to biblical and theological metanarratives in the

Bible, such as a study of the life of Christ or the Ten Commandments, could give additional insight into this topic.

There have been several studies on the concept of "the fear of the Lord" in the Bible, but there is a lack of research on how CCSDP conceive of the fear of the Lord and how that conception informs their view of the good, true, and beautiful life. There are also word studies that would be helpful for this topic, particularly regarding the words "shame," "pride," "safety," and "truth" and how their definitions have changed over the course of the history of higher education.

From this study, there was evidence to suggest that a person's view of authority significantly impacts their perception of the good, true, and beautiful life. Since college psychologists and counselors were spoken of in this study as authoritative for understanding student flourishing and mental health, an analysis of their descriptions of truth, beauty, and goodness could lend insight to this topic.

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