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Abstract

The complex issues surrounding cultural pluralism are rapidly turning the public square into a battlefield that divides our country. As Charles Haynes summarized, "At issue for this nation, as for much of the world, is the simple but profound question that runs through modern experience: How will we live with our deepest differences?" (Haynes, 1994). At a time when many citizens of our diverse nation have become disillusioned with the motto *e pluribus unum*, the Christian higher education community deals with issues involving race, ethnicity, and gender through a variety of responses ranging from isolationism to unqualified inclusion.

Evangelical institutions of higher learning are not new to the discussion of multiculturalism. They have rather a rich history of commitment to living out Christ's commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself (Mk 12:31) regarding each other through the unity of faith in Christ (Gal 3:28). This paper addresses the historical context for understanding cultural pluralism together with the scriptural and religious imperatives for engaging Christian and secular audiences on this issue. It identifies several of the issues surrounding cultural pluralism faced by evangelicals today, while also developing criteria for celebrating and confronting pluralism. Finally, it articulates strategies for pursuing common ground in the public arena and discusses implications for Christian higher education in addressing cultural pluralism within and beyond the college classroom.

Addressing Cultural Pluralism from an Evangelical Christian Perspective

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The complex issues surrounding cultural pluralism are rapidly turning the public square into a battlefield that divides our country. As Charles Haynes summarized, “At issue for this nation, as for much of the world, is the simple but profound question that runs through modern experience: How will we live with our deepest differences?” (Haynes, 1994). At a time when many citizens of our diverse nation have become disillusioned with the motto *e pluribus unum*, the Christian higher education community deals with issues involving race, ethnicity, and gender through a variety of responses ranging from isolationism to unqualified inclusion.

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The United States of America has always been a culturally pluralistic country that has struggled with its identity as one nation under God. We believe that this demographic and historical reality is an educational imperative for understanding and effectively teaching students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. We do not advocate nor represent, however, the postmodern view of multiculturalism that every culture’s belief system must become part of an overarching worldview that

significantly dilutes this nation’s Judeo-Christian moral framework.

The Historical Context and Religious Imperatives for Cultural Pluralism in Nineteenth Century Evangelical Colleges

To understand the issue of cultural pluralism, we should examine the contributions that evangelicals made to the forward movement of marginalized people in the nineteenth century. Historians such as Don Dayton, Ruth Tucker, and William Anderson (Anderson 1986; Dayton, 1991; Tucker 1987) have chronicled the tremendous sacrifices made by scores of evangelicals. These evangelicals invested their lives to the battle for equitable treatment of people from different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

In 1833, a group of Congregationalists dedicated a small piece of land in Oberlin, Ohio for an institution that attracted enough attention to bring radical, abolitionist minister, Asa Mahan as its president (and, later, evangelist, Charles Finney). Another Protestant group, the Wesleyans, founded reform-minded colleges in the nineteenth century whose charters explicitly addressed the issue of cultural pluralism. For instance, on a summer day in 1853, a small group of Wesleyan Methodists made their way to a tall prairie knoll on land owned by the first founder of Wheaton, Illinois. There they prayerfully dedicated a forty-acre tract of land for Illinois Institute, an institution committed to reform principles. The institution’s focus was the abolition of slavery and caste-like conditions in America coupled with the education of all persons regardless of race, ethnicity and gender (Hardman, 1987; Taylor 1977). Before the outbreak of the Civil War, Protestant colleges in the Midwest such as Illinois (1829), Knox (IL-1837), Grinnell (IA-1846), and Berea (KY-1855) also educated women and people of color before the outbreak of the Civil War.

Schools such as these were committed to ushering in the kingdom of God via a “martyr-age” of men and women, and fueled by a post-millennial view of

evangelical reform (Dayton, 1976). This post-millennial eschatological view of the return of Christ served as a singular vision for a “perfect state of society” (Clouse, 1977). As a result, they viewed their mission of universal education and equal treatment of all persons born in the image of God as a sacred calling. They would brook little external opposition to these goals for their colleges, and expected no less of a commitment from their graduates.

The natural career choices for these graduates were found in the pulpits and schoolhouses across America. What separated the post-millennial reform colleges from their New England counterparts was their incredible zeal to reform America’s social and political ills. The leaders at these colleges believed that there was an inseparable connection between educational and political/social reform. Therefore, these graduates were strongly encouraged to enter professions which were considered “callings” — a mandate from God to change their vocational environments and make the United States ready for the establishment of Christ’s earthly reign. For them, causes ran deeper than careers (Taylor, op.cit.).

The Civil War period temporarily stymied the efforts of these reformers and dealt a severe blow to the post-millennial vision of these collegiate leaders. However, their commitment to maintaining a pluralistic religious and educational community did not waver. Both Oberlin and Wheaton remained non-denominational, evangelical colleges that welcomed students and professors of faith from across the country who shared their beliefs in the reliability of Scripture and the dual calling of the scholar-reformer (Marsden, 1980, 1994).

In many ways the shifts that these two colleges made in the Progressive Era (1890-1920) were emblematic of the changes that were occurring at many collegiate institutions across the United States. During this period, the German-inspired, positivistic model of university education gained ascendancy over the British model of character education. This resulted in a move away from integration of the sacred and the secular at colleges such as Oberlin. This movement eventuated in a twentieth century secularizing separation of church and college in most of these former evangelical institutions. A few, like Wheaton, remained committed to their original mission with a toned-

down version of political and social reform and a fundamental preoccupation with “saving the soul” (Gallien, 1995).

The dilemma for current evangelical educators is how to balance the saving message of the Gospel with the demands that Scripture and our radical heritage place upon them as proponents of social righteousness. It becomes a more complex task in the context of late twentieth century secularism which has as its goal a commitment to tolerance for all viewpoints and lifestyles. For evangelicals, the claims of Christ, as outlined in Scripture, are exclusive (Jn 14:6), but, paradoxically, open to all who call upon His name, regardless of race, class, gender or lifestyle.

We find it necessary to separate ourselves from Christians who would call America back to a mythological Christian past. Nor do we believe, however, that an open-ended pluralism with its relativistic, non-religious view of morality is the answer to changing demographics and an ever-increasing multicultural nation. The answer is not found, either, in collegiate diversity programs that frustrate and divide ethnic and racial groups, resulting in artificial collegiate communities.

We also take issue with Christians who hold that God has ordained individual differences as a means of ordering a rigid patriarchal hierarchy in both church and society. Some of these same groups also believe that public education is thoroughly secular and a danger to people of religious devotion. Many advocate abandonment of public schools. Their ideas for educational reform center around corporate measures of competition and meritocracy together with a “religious freedom” amendment to the Constitution for public schools as correctives to the spirit of secular humanism, rampant relativism, and poor academic performance as measured by standardized tests. These measures, however, fail to help teachers who must face the reality of cultural and religious pluralism in public schools.

We believe that all people are born in the image of God but are fallen, finite creatures. They possess an inherent worth and dignity which is coupled with a need for a redemptive experience through the cross of Christ. Also, since all are recipients of divine grace, we may not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, class, or gender. We have a historical commitment and a spiritual “calling” to

prepare teachers to educate and uphold all racial, ethnic and religious groups.

A Biblical Example for Dealing with Cultural Pluralism

In Scripture a profound example of fruitful dialogue with people from differing cultures and beliefs is found in Paul's address on Mars Hill (Acts 17). The intellectual dexterity that Paul displays here is truly remarkable. He addressed an intellectually dissimilar group of people ranging from Epicurean and Stoic philosophers to the idolatrous men of Athens. How was Paul able to do so successfully? Paul's formal education at the feet of the Jewish rabbi Gamaliel (Ac 22:3) was an important starting point and a good "commercial" for the pursuit of academic excellence for contemporary Christians (Gal 1:14):

Paul's course of study would have included courses in Greek culture and philosophy (as evidence from the Talmud indicates). When we add to this the extensive knowledge of Greek literature and culture which is reflected in his letters, it is manifest that Paul was neither naive nor obscurantist when it came to knowledge of philosophy or Gentile thought. Given this background, training and expertise in Scriptural theology, Paul was the ideal representative for the classic confrontation of Jerusalem and Athens. (Bahnsen, 1980)

Also, the town of Tarsus where Paul resided in his youth had a reputation for learning:

The people of Tarsus . . . applied themselves to the study of philosophy, the liberal arts and the whole round of learning in general—the whole encyclopedia—so much as that Tarsus in this respect at least surpassed even Athens and Alexandria, whose schools were frequented by more visitors than by their own citizens. Tarsus, in short, was what we might call a university city. (Bruce, 1977)

Paul's formal education and his frequent mixing people from disparate cultures meant that he knew his audience. He did not go "willy-nilly" into the fray without an academic frame of reference. He sought first to understand what cultural groups represented (Ac 17:17) and then attempted to build bridges by appealing to their common religious understanding (Ac 17:22). Contemporary

Christians, on the other hand, often go into PTA or school board meetings or teacher conferences without doing their homework. They fail to thoroughly and genuinely understand the issues at hand and may even view others as "enemies." The results have been misunderstanding and, all too frequently, permanent alienation.

This does not have to be the case, however, when competing epistemologies or world views collide. Again, Paul's example speaks to us as he sought to reach out to those with differing world views by appealing to common ground held among all the competing philosophies at Areopagus (Ac 17:27). No doubt the teeming statutes of idols infuriated Paul. Yet, he addressed his audience in a considered and controlled manner. Paul related to his audience by knowing what they believed. He listened well to their arguments and sought common ground. At the same time, he did not compromise the gospel but proclaimed the message of the Gospel in word and deed.

For us as Christian educators, an important lesson from Paul's address at Mars Hill is that we need to take our academic training and preparation seriously as an accepted form of devotion to Christ and His cause. Moreover, our main motivation for debating people from different belief systems can never be to belittle or disprove their arguments. If, however, we genuinely care for the people at the other end of the room or table, then our demeanor and deeds will speak as loudly and, perhaps, as effectively as our reasoned arguments. We need to remember these points before we enter serious dialogue with people from competing world views. Paul emphasizes how we must place ourselves in the shoes of others as we reach out to them:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. (1Co 9:19-22)

Cultural Pluralism and Current Educational Issues

How then do we apply Paul's example as we seek to prepare Christian teachers for schools that are increasingly racially, ethnically and philosophically diverse? How do we "become all things to all men" in the classroom? How do we as Christian educators help our students understand the cultural context of teaching and learning? The following experiences illustrate three educational issues relating to cultural pluralism. We need to prepare inservice teachers (1) to be culturally aware and sensitive, (2) to look out for and resolve conflicts that focus on cultural or religious differences, and (3) to handle the deliberate marginalization of Christian faith in the public arena, including education.

An eager white young preservice teacher struggles in an impoverished urban high school setting. His reality differs vastly from his expectations when he requested this assignment. He thought he would be imparting the wisdom and passion for the wonders of literature. In reality, he meets indifference and resistance—and teaches remedial reading. He is floundering with "basics" that he assumed students had mastered long before. Both he and his learners are uncomfortable with the fit of their roles.

His experienced African-American cooperating teacher works to help them adjust with more specific direction. She requires a weekend assignment of him that includes the development of a strategy lesson on utilizing context clues. "What's a context clue?" he naively asks. The second part of his assignment is to come up with a list of five or six novels by African-American authors that would interest his grade 9 students yet be at no higher than grade six grade readability. Again, he is clueless.

His cooperating teacher questions his college supervisor, "How can this young man say he wants to teach inner-city youngsters English and come so unprepared? How many reading courses has he had? Didn't he realize that grade 9 English here is reading? Where is his background in multicultural young adult fiction?" Her indictment is stinging because of its accuracy. This inservice teacher needs to move beyond viewing his students in terms of what they cannot do. He must believe that all his students can be successful. To be culturally relevant, he must perceive his role as "mining" their prior knowledge and recognizing their accomplishments.

While we cannot sketch the specific realities of every inner-city school setting, we must assist our students to develop knowledge of and sensitivity, respect and appreciation for the multicultural communities in which they will teach. There are no simple solutions, but we can teach them how to ask questions about their complex surroundings. We can help them discover cultural context clues. We need to explore how as evangelical teacher educators we can turn a sense of spiritual calling to teach in an urban setting from a heartfelt but romantic notion into a well-researched and achievable goal. This is our challenge of nurturing reflective Christians to serve in multicultural situations.

A second example of cultural pluralism in education illustrates how we need to help our inservice teachers to be prepared to mediate conflicts between district policies and Christian parents' personal beliefs.

An experienced, suburban elementary school principal sits across the conference table from a concerned parent who worries that her son is learning an instructional strategy she believes to be inconsistent with Scripture. Armed with a magazine article, this mother cites "evidence" that this non-traditional method will harm her child. This year it is the problem-solving emphasis in the math curriculum that is under attack; a few years ago it was the reading approach and the use of developmental spelling. Next year it may be, yet, a different form of pedagogy or evaluation. "I seem to spend more and more time defending our policies and curriculum to some of our Christian parents than anything else it seems," she later wearily relates. This distrust extends from the educational system at large to the neighborhood public school even when, as in this case, the principal is herself an evangelical Christian.

Today's instructional paradigm recognizes multiple learning styles and objectives as well as collaborative and constructivist learning strategies that are suitable for our diversity of students. While research shows these foundational principles to be effective in reaching a greater number of learners, some conservative Christian parents question them. They believe that the hidden curriculum of a learner-focused, culturally pluralistic classroom may become self-centeredness. They object to students being encouraged to construct meanings

that may not be consistent with biblical teachings. They worry that their children are taught to question authority. These parents feel alienated from public education by the perceived lack of representation of their viewpoints and values (Brandt, 1996). We need to prepare our inservice teachers to deal with this alienation in a positive way and to retain the trust of all parents while using instructional strategies suitable for the diversity of students they face.

Dealing with the complex issues surrounding cultural pluralism challenges the personal convictions of evangelical teachers as well. A young, untenured music teacher who works within a religiously diverse community has been informed by her principal that her students cannot learn any musical works that have references to God or Scripture in them. This administrative mandate contradicts recent court rulings on the place of religious music in public education. As a result, she cannot teach spirituals or even patriotic songs that have any type of scriptural inferences in them. She does not dare challenge her principal for fear of losing her job. It is one of the great paradoxes in an age of cultural pluralism that sensitivity and even voice are extended to every belief except orthodox Christianity. Yet this inconsistency is seldom acknowledged, much less remedied. In an attempt to avoid controversy, many educators and textbook publishers have sought to avoid religion altogether (Haynes, 1994). Often, this silence is perceived as hostility.

How do we develop an evangelically consistent view of cultural pluralism as it applies to teacher education? This is not achieved by our students merely reading a college text on multiculturalism. We must also prepare teachers to choose and develop curricula that accurately reflect the many voices of our diverse citizenry and heritage. It is no easy feat to celebrate cultural pluralism without allowing it to obscure the common purposes essential for systematic teaching and learning (Delattre, 1988). As Christian educators, we must be deeply concerned with seeking and maintaining this difficult balance.

So, how can our future teachers balance the call to evangelize and still be responsible citizens in a pluralistic society? How can people from diverse cultures, beliefs and lifestyles work together as a community of learners without sacrificing personal

convictions? Teacher educators and their students in Christian higher education are compelled to reflect upon and struggle with these questions in this era of unprecedented demographic and religious change.

Pursuing Common Ground in the Public Square

In schools with diverse populations, a prevailing approach has been to muffle differences and to limit content to generally accepted facts. In an overreaction to neutrality, sensitive subjects such as the influence of values and beliefs on culture have been ignored or dealt with in a relativistic way making them inconsequential (Haynes & Nord, 1993). This limiting approach results in partial education and a dichotomy of knowledge that discourages true synthesis of basic principles and ideas in a meaningful way. Despite the intent to be impartial, the public education curriculum is neither value-free nor religiously neutral.

To understand the role of teacher education in Christian institutions vis-à-vis multiculturalism, Newbigin's (1989) distinction between the fact of plurality and the ideology of pluralism is helpful. Plurality refers to the variety of people in our nation from different cultures, religions, and lifestyles. The ideology of pluralism, on the other hand, is based on the concept that everything is relative and subjective, and that therefore truth may exist for one but not for all. Evangelicals reject such pluralism. There are absolutes in religious views and ideologies. We offend God if we live in ways that are contrary to Biblical values.

Yet, God delights in variety. Cultural diversity is consistent with biblical principles. Often we can celebrate and honor plurality. Jesus Christ himself provides a fresh set of lenses to see, affirm and celebrate the richness of different groups (Newbigin, 1989). Mouw (1992) puts it succinctly: "Learning to appreciate cultural differences in the light of biblical revelation is an important and necessary part of our maturation in Christ" (p. 78).

Thus for Christian teachers to have a comprehensive outreach, they must formulate and verbalize truth in a way that the world will recognize it as a valid voice in our plurality—and will want to listen. That means that a solution consistent with Scripture must renounce the familiar methods of domination, control and discord that characterize what Hunter (1991) calls the "culture wars." An authentic approach for pursuing common

ground in the public square espouses a middle ground featuring acceptance of mutual relatedness, tolerance within biblical limits, and civility without disavowing personal conviction (Mouw, 1992).

God is committed to public righteousness. He sent Christ to reconstruct culture and wants Christians to act as agents of transformation in this world. As agents of transformation, Mouw (1992) pleads for cultivating a “convicted civility” which is tilted in support of toleration. He writes, “Our ability to tolerate other convictions and lifestyles will have moral limits, but we must be careful not to decide too quickly that we have reached those limits. And within the limits, we can compromise” (p. 38). Wolterstorff (1966) argues against coercive strategies that force non-Christians to grudgingly conform to practices reflecting Christian beliefs.

Scripture insists that human beings should choose, not be forced to be obedient. In the New Testament, Christians are to conduct themselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making sure that conversations are gracious and seasoned with salt (Col 4:5). Believers are to give no offense to others so that there will be no reason to turn away from God (1Co 10:32-33). Followers of Christ do this by portraying courtesy (Tit 3:2), living peaceably with all (Ro 12:18), and demonstrating genuine gentleness and respect for others (1Pe 3:15-16). The message to the larger society is credible only if the Christian’s walk and civil behavior point non-believers to Jesus of Nazareth (Mt 5:14-16).

It is clear how evangelical Christians are to deal with those who disagree them. They must demonstrate basic courtesy to anyone with whom there is seriously disagreement on important matters. God made all people in his likeness. In recognizing people espousing other perspectives, Christians are honoring the image of God. This approach calls for renewed confidence in dialogue. Christians must be willing to sit at the table in the public arena to listen, learn and actively inform decisions in order to transform culture.

Finding a way to deal with religious and lifestyle differences while still upholding values that serve the common good may be the largest challenge facing society today. Addressing religious and lifestyle issues requires a two-pronged approach. First, there is a “foundational moral wisdom” which serves the common good. There exists a significant

consensus concerning qualities of good character such as honesty, courtesy, persistence, and compassion that should be purposefully promoted in the public arena. A well-informed citizenry without agreed-upon principles to guide thinking, believing and acting leads to a fragmented nation. A cohesive society that celebrates differences must endorse a core set of values to sustain a common culture (Boyer, 1989; Glenn, 1989; Haynes & Nord 1993).

The source for spiritual truth is not restricted to Scripture. Some believers view character education as secularizing religious values. They are reluctant to applaud outlooks expressed in non-Christian religions even if they are consistent with biblical teaching. The Christian faith has no monopoly on concepts like honesty, fairness, kindness, and justice. Believers should not shy away from endorsing these values since they are embedded in the Christian value system.

Second, there are limits to consensus and society faces a dilemma when confronted with issues where convictions run the deepest, yet vary the widest. On questions such as human origins, homosexual lifestyles, dispensing condoms in schools, and abortion there does not seem to be common or even neutral ground. On these controversial issues, the optimal approach is to orchestrate dialogue between people in the community representing all perspectives on the issue. The purpose of this conversation is to find some common ground for the common good. Using the First Amendment as a framework for the ground rules, these representatives work to find an approach that will best protect the rights of all students. The most successful strategy is to simultaneously hammer out a comprehensive policy to address a number of cultural or religious issues before any conflict occurs (Creel, Boyer, Mesch, & Nanji 1993; Haynes & Nord 1993). Without strong emphasis on civil dialogue, our nation is in danger of harboring isolated separatists at best, and inflaming tribal warfare at worst (Heie 1992).

Even for deeply divisive topics such as the teaching of origins, opportunity exists to address issues without tearing communities apart. It is possible, as recounted in an ASCD symposium entitled, *Religious Communities as Potential Allies of Education* (Creel, Boyer, Mesch, & Nanji 1993), to bring together evolutionists, creationists, and theologians for a fruitful dialogue on the

presentation of origins in the public classroom. The group concluded that the creationist view is part of history and that discussing it in the science classroom serves the useful public purpose of exploring diverse perspectives. Educators must find ways to conduct honest, open conversations and to teach prevailing theories and critiques of those theories without imposing their own views.

Implications for Christian Higher Education

What does all this mean for Christian higher education? How should programs change to meet the needs for living and learning in the 21st century? Bush (1989) articulates a vision for Christian higher education:

[Programs should] challenge those young adults toward commitment, understanding, compassion, wholeness, and inclusiveness – an inclusiveness that negates the destructively fragmenting dualism that has separated the sacred from the secular, and impels them to become world Christians. We are to help them understand that to be a Christian is to be called and empowered by God to do good in both the public and private areas of life. (pp. 2-3)

How can Christian higher education best equip Christian citizens to conduct themselves in a Christ-like fashion in a society where fairness for all cultures, faiths, and lifestyles must be preserved? The answer to this question requires some paradigm shifts. Change is difficult in Christian higher education because there tends to be a mindset that is instinctively wary of other points of view. In some respect that is a useful quality that prevents Christians from falling prey to educational fads, but it also inhibits needed reevaluation and readjustment.

We posit three initial recommendations. First, the curriculum must exemplify inclusion in a biblically informed way. Our task is to become more purposeful about cultural diversity in all aspects of college life. This approach replicates the curricular paradigm that many Christian college campuses have adopted for the integration of faith, learning, and living (Holmes, 1975). To become authentically multicultural requires Christian colleges to do more than just count the color of people's faces. Our institutions must become a truly culturally diverse milieu. Embracing multiple perspectives demands a

multicultural frame of mind: personal openness, acceptance of others, and a willingness to learn from people of other cultures. This mentality cannot be engendered in students by requiring them to enroll in a course to fulfill a general education requirement. Rather, it requires a faculty with a multicultural mind that weaves multicultural perspectives throughout the fabric of the entire curriculum (Parkyn, 1992). This might involve (1) designing a one year series of symposia, guest lectures, and workshops on multicultural approaches; (2) providing grants for faculty members to examine syllabi for inclusion of multicultural perspectives; (3) encouraging integration of multicultural perspectives within and outside of the classroom by reporting efforts on an annual faculty activity report; and (4) supporting cross-cultural experiences where students enroll in course work before going to a third world location for six months to work in their academic areas.

Second, Christian educators must guard against providing an exclusive approach in preparing students to live in a pluralistic society. The teacher education curriculum should help students acquire the substantive knowledge required to teach about many cultures, world views, and lifestyles. Exposure to alternative claims to knowledge helps students develop their personal world views. It can also foster attitudes and understandings necessary for treating controversial subjects sensitively. Active dialogue with people of other traditions and lifestyles helps students explore areas of disagreement and assists in finding common ground. For example, a Buddhist may be invited to speak to a philosophy class. Representatives from gay or lesbian groups may speak in a class on marriage and the family. Supporters and detractors of a controversial reading series such as *Impressions* may debate issues in a curriculum class.

Third, for a dynamic public presence and voice, Christians in academia must wrestle with integrating the secular and sacred aspects of their lives. Evangelicals must be a significant force not only as consumers of research but also as producers of ideas and knowledge. They must provide moral guidance for dilemmas in the public arena. Contributions from Christians in areas of current confusion in public education such as multiculturalism, religion, values, and morals will

benefit from this facet of public discipleship. Carter (1993) writes,

In our sensible zeal to keep religion from dominating politics, we have created a political and legal culture that presses the religiously faithful to be other than themselves, to act publicly, and sometimes privately as well, as though their faith does not matter to them. . . . It ought to be embarrassing, in this age of celebration of America's diversity, that the schools have been so slow to move toward teaching about our nation's diverse religious traditions. (pp, 3, 208)

The anti-religious forces, and particularly those opposed to the religious right, are much in vogue today. The 1995 Report of the AACTE's Chief Executive Officer indicates that "an increasing number of educators believe that standards-based reform movement is in danger of unraveling very quickly as a result of the concerted attacks by the Religious Right and the New Majority" (p. 25). A colleague in higher education shared how a substantial portion of an educational methods course in her institution was devoted to responding to criticisms by the religious right. A state superintendent related how the student academic standards were being cleansed to prevent criticism from the religious right.

A troubling aspect for Christians is the discrediting of their concerns as extremist by public policy makers who appear to have little understanding of the diversity in evangelical positions. Religious people have been portrayed as a monolithic group representing only one perspective. As a result many teacher educators in Christian higher education withdraw into timid isolation, reluctant to identify with the broad brush used to describe all religious people, and rationalizing that integration of the secular and sacred aspects of living is not possible or is too problematic (Carter, 1993).

If Christian teacher educators are to be agents of transformation in a non-Christian world, they must express concerns in ways that the public sector understands. Evangelicals must abandon sectarian language and develop a public language as they converse about religion and values. Conversations should focus on fairness in developing an inclusive curriculum. These exploratory suggestions for

educators in Christian higher education do not represent an exhaustive list of approaches for curricular or pedagogical changes. They are intended to propose some beginning steps for educating Christians for the 21st century.

What is clear for evangelical teacher educators is that we have a responsibility in this era of unprecedented demographic change to provide leadership and vision for the next generation to participate in meaningful dialogue with people of difference. We can no longer afford to either ignore or abandon our public voice in favor of a reductionist or balkanized position with respect to cultural pluralism. In other words, we cannot move far enough to avoid this reality; it has come to our front door.

To guide us in meeting this responsibility we have inspiring stories from Scripture of leaders such as Joseph, Esther and Daniel. They thrived in pluralistic communities. The admonition that Esther (Est 4:14) received from her Uncle Mordecai may be as apropos for us as it was for her: "Who can say but that God has brought you to this place for such a time as this?"

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