practices in the context of a college course might better support and extend the role of the church. Similarly, these readings prompt us to consider if there are practices that are corporate by nature (or should be practiced in groups where people have a commitment to one another) and other practices that are more individual.

In addition, TCP highlights the challenge of students’ varied religious backgrounds and knowledge. Just as we can no longer assume substantial biblical literacy, even among the much-church ed of our first-year students, we also cannot assume that students know much about Christian practices such as prayer or meditation. Therefore, TCP contributes note that they had to spend time educating and preparing students for these practices. How much time and depth should be provided such that students have a shared vision before a practice is instituted? Is it acceptable for students to “learn by doing” without the background knowledge? Faculty cannot assume that what students “take away” will make what they intended—hence, course reflection, assessment, and refinement may be needed. Given that student learning from Christian practices may vary, reflective exercises seem critical and are a common theme in TCP. Such exercises (whether written, conversational, or otherwise) deepen student understanding and also provide opportunities for faculty to answer questions or deal with misconceptions that arise. Faculty also note a range of positive and negative effects for themselves. How may faculty be impacted spiritually, emotionally, and relationally by engaging in these practices? The quest for faith-learning integration can take a toll on faculty and students alike (in terms of resource and time costs) but may also offer fruits to the faithful (DeYoung and Sanders). In considering relative costs and merits of applied Christian practices in higher education, we might imagine multiple models for such integration.

What Might Have to Be Sacrificed?

It’s no secret that Christian higher education tends to be under-resourced in both financial and human terms. We are vulnerable to economic stressors as well as ideological stressors. We may also be under-resourced in imagination, as David Smith suggests in his closing chapter, “Recruiting Students’ Imaginations.” In Smith’s view, faculty must not only require students to practice Christian behaviors but also stir students’ imaginations to participate in a shared vision of the “good life”—envisioning, desiring, and pursuing the kingdom together. Yet in responding to the imaginations of TCP, we should also consider the practical pressures of adding or extending Christian practices within academic programs that may already feel saturated by a mass of academic standards and goals. Christian practices seem necessary for faithful living, but we may understandably question the practicality of these practices within our institutional environments.

How so might we, as Christian educators, newly imagine the integration of faithful teaching practices? Three distinct models emerge from such practical imaginings: two models emerge quickly (as a false binary), and one more slowly (as a third way). The first two models are supplemental and sacrificial integrations: we must either supplement our academic teaching practices and goals with Christian practices, or we must sacrifice something from our current habits in order to “prepare the way” for faithful disciplines. However, these models assume a limited, material economy: do Christian practices really occupy curricular space and time in the same way as traditional academic elements? And if so, what are the consequences?

If we conceive of “space for God” in higher education in terms of time for something like reflection on practices (e.g., Wallont’s “reflective infrastructure” of rhythmical learning), then perhaps we must concern ourselves with traditional academic and material economies. If we do, we might consider supplementing existing courses with unusual field trips (e.g., Woodvis’s pilgrimages) or more traditional supplements (e.g., labs and discussion groups) without sacrificing any content or lowering any standards. We might also link courses more closely to existing chapel, ministry, or student life programs and rely on campus staff to help students practice Christian behaviors (indeed, much of Christian higher education already relies on this staff-driven supplemental model).

However, if we are to recommend that “more is more” and can overburden faculty, staff, and students alike without attending to Christian disciplines in which “less is more” (e.g., silence or fasting). In holding to supplemental imaginings, we may unintentionally mimic the frantic pace of the rat race rather than walking faithfully and reflectively in Christ’s steps. If such supplements require investments of human or financial resources, we may also anticipate resistance from those stewarding resources in climates of significant stress.

Another option is to address academic economies boldly and counter-culturally, reflecting on what we may sacrifice from academic habits in order to allow more space and time for Christian practices. In a sense, this model claims that “less is more”—or even that “more God is more.” In promoting charitable approaches to reading, David Smith was willing to make “some modest sacrifices of previously assigned texts” in order to allow time for repeat readings of a single poet, among other attempts at charitable reading. While some may understandably resist sacrificing any academic content for faith-learning integration, we might profitably consider alternative standards (both versions of excellence from within the Christian tradition, standards typically ignored by the contemporary academy).

Finally, a third way for integration emerges: the way of synergy. Rather than assuming that integration of Christian practices necessarily requires either supplemental or sacrificial, we should imagine possible synergies among traditional academic standards and Christian standards and practices. In this imagining, we can seek surprising, high-impact practices in which either “less” and “more” can be “most.” DeYoung found that implementing rhythms of practice and reflection on practice in her philosophy class allowed space for powerful metacognition as well as motivation for her students to teach peers in residence halls about vices and their remedies. Her pedagogical model included sacrifices of speech (i.e., a week of silence about the self) as well as supplements of speech (such as “reflective theorizing”). Such synergies between sacrifice and supplement can lead to students’ deeper comprehension of philosophical content (a traditional academic teleology) as well as more powerful self-examination as part of spiritual formation (a Christian telos). A number of TCP’s contributors demonstrate such imaginative, synergistic relationships among Christian practices and student learning, engaging with high-impact practices.

When God Talks Back
Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God
T. M. LUHRMANN • KNOPF, 2012 • $36.95

TCP argues that it is the inner experience of this personal communicative relationship in the imagination of her subjects that overcomes the disabling effects of skepticism about many other aspects of Christian faith. God’s presence in the imagination is more powerful than God’s apparent absence in the disenchanted sensorium, and, in fact, attention to God’s presence in the imagination offers leads subsequently to sensory manifestations. Doubt about God’s presence does not disappear for Luhrmann’s subjects because of this imaginative exercise—the difference is that they can meet doubt with a cognitive subjective relational response, as opposed to an empirical argument. Like Job, they can say in the face of radical alienation, “I know my Redeemer lives.” Luhrmann saw these practices in action over the course of several years by immersing herself as a participant-observer in the lives of two Vineyard churches near the universities where she taught, first in Chicago and then in Palo Alto. She joined Bible studies and prayer groups and attended weekly services and occasional worship nights. She sang songs, read Scripture, retained a spiritual director, and spent hours, formally and informally, with Vineyard congregants. But most of all, they prayed. Vineyard people, she discovered, pray all the time, and it is in the context of these practices of prayer that God is most often experienced as alive and communicative. Thus, the core of Luhrmann’s book is an examination of responses to a wide variety of theologically rooted and therapeutically self-conscious practices of prayer, designed to train the imagination of individual participants to know God as real, personal, and unconditionally loving.

This cognitive training is not about adopting a particular style of prayer. In her experience of the Vineyard there is no formula for praying correctly. All that is required is willingness to risk and expectation manifested in concrete practices. First, one must be open to the possibility that, if one prays and waits, God might speak, and second, one must undertake practices that reinforce that openness. For example, some of her subjects self-consciously took conversational prayer walks with Jesus. Another rode the bus with Jesus. One pastor suggested that congregants pray while drinking morning coffee, and set out a second cup of coffee for Jesus. This practice was intended to reify the reality of his presence and the possibility that he might speak—everyone involved knew that it was an imaginative exercise. If

CALEB J. D. MASKELL

Coffee with Jesus

T. M. Luhrmann’s fascinating new book, When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God, is an attempt to understand how it is possible for a living God to become real to modern evangelicals. To be a 21st-century modern, she claims, is to live in a technologically-mediated world built on the fruits of reductionist scientific skepticism and devoted to the empirical evidence of the senses. Modernity thus poses unique challenges to American evangelicalism, whose democratic, existentialistic faith calls people to stand before God and hope for what their eyes do not see and their ears do not hear. Such faith, she says, “asks people to consider that the evidence of their senses is wrong.” How can this tension be overcome?

The answer, according to Luhrmann, lies in sets of practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind” practices that allow “evangelicals” (we’ll come back to that) to cultivate what she calls a “new theory of mind”...
the coffee from Jesus’ cup began to disappear, sip by sip, this would have been a

1 Luhrmann has since written an article for Christianity Today that reflects on these dynamics. See christiantoday.com/st/2012-

When God talks back...