

CHRISTIAN STUDIES

SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE CHURCH

A PUBLICATION OF THE FACULTY OF AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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Editor

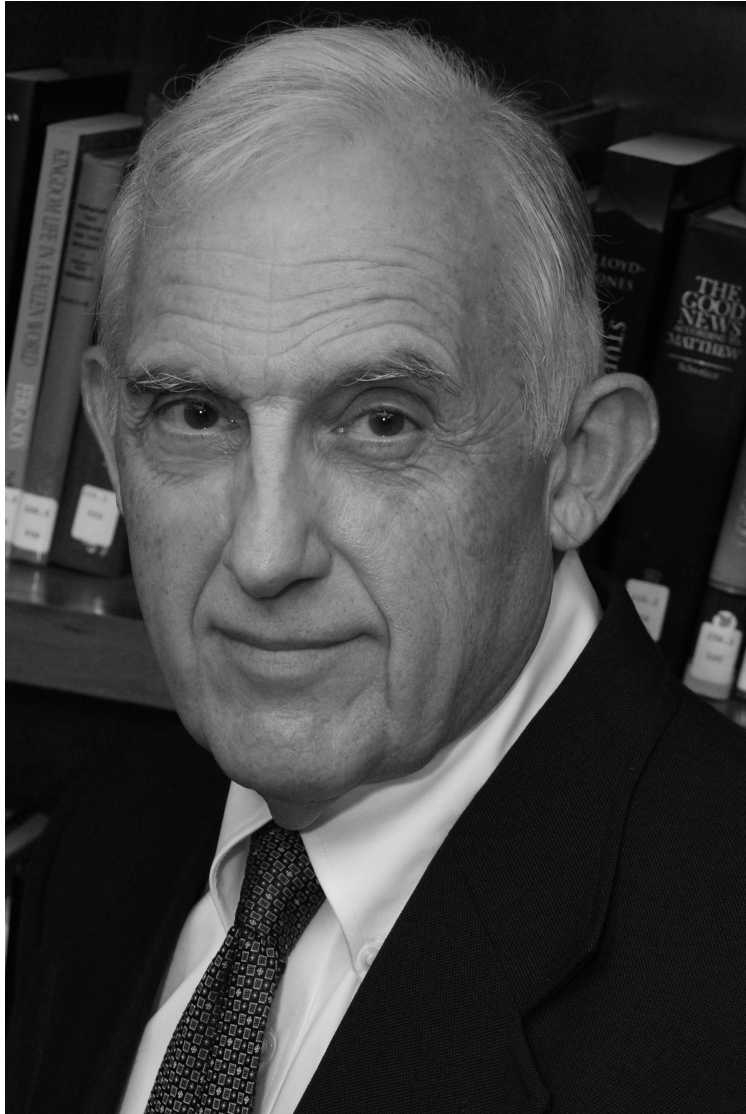
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**Photograph by Kay Taylor*

Michael R. Weed
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A Written Legacy: A Bibliography for Michael R. Weed

M. Todd Hall

In volume 23 of *Christian Studies*, the subtitle “Scholarship for the Church” was added to the publication. In part, this was a descriptive addition: *Christian Studies* is not, primarily, an academic journal. It is meant to offer, rather, scholarly thinking in service of the church. Additionally, the subtitle was added to provide direction for the future of the publication as senior faculty members approach retirement and prepared to deliver oversight of the publication to their colleagues.

The subtitle could also rightly be used to describe the academic career of Michael Weed. Michael’s seminary education was formative for him. From brilliant teachers such as Stuart Currie, E. T. Thompson, and Prescott Williams, Michael learned that theology is a long-running conversation which is meant above all to nourish the life of the church. Michael relates the story of a discussion he once had with professor Currie about possibly pursuing further graduate work. “We would be happy if a few of our students continued on to pursue PhDs,” Currie said in his southern accent, “but this is a seminary, and we mean to provide educated ministers for the church.”

Drawing from his experience with professors dedicated to the service of the church, Michael has made this his life’s work. His publications reflect this concern. In looking through *Christian Studies* (including its *Faculty Bulletin* iteration), I noted that Michael published an article in every volume.

This publication became his venue for exploring and critiquing church practices in light of socio-cultural developments vis-à-vis theology.

In addition, Michael has walked the fine line described by Pelikan in regard to the church's inherited faith: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living." Michael's faith was born from and nurtured within the restoration tradition. His deep affection for this tradition, especially as expressed within churches of Christ, has driven him to offer thoughtful—and thought-provoking—articles. In some cases, Michael has found himself driven, out of his love for this tradition, to perform the thankless task of the watchman, calling out danger from the walls. He has analyzed every issue from legalism to postmodernism, but perhaps his most insightful work has been his examinations of the entertainment culture and its impact on church practices. In each of these reflections, Michael has expressed his deep concern for the church's well being and faithfulness.

Those of us who have been blessed to know Michael as a teacher and friend have seen the *praxis* of his scholarship. Michael has engaged students pastorally countless times in his long teaching career at Austin Grad, whether in academic or personal crises. These moments were, for Michael, moments in which theology became incarnate. Many students, friends, church members, and colleagues have been blessed through his concern.

I began studying with Michael in 1998. My wife Jennifer and I took several classes with Michael through 1998 and 1999. During this time, I watched him engage theological issues with a precision and insight that I had not seen before nor have I since. It was during the summer and fall of 2000, though, that I saw Michael's theological acumen lived out in a pastoral crisis.

When Jennifer died in June of 2000, I began a long journey of exploration: it was an exploration of suffering, of grief, of hope, of God, of grace. My guide in this exploration was Michael Weed. I include, below, an email I received from Michael regarding a query about Christians and suffering. It is one of many.

Todd

You know there is not an easy answer to the questions you are asking. We live in a universe constructed for rational, social, and dependent beings to grow in wisdom—and, unfortunately, much of that is through suffering.

Actions have consequences—harsh words don't turn into compliments and bullets do not turn into snowflakes. This means that there is a lot of latitude regarding what can happen and much of who we are called to be is shaped in response to the consequences of our own actions—perhaps most of who we are is shaped in response to the actions—good, bad, irresponsible, etc—of others.

We had a member of my congregation killed this spring by a drug addict whose car jumped the divider and crashed head on into his truck with his two daughters in the cab with him. This was an event that is part of a whole scheme of events that unfolded over years. I have no satisfactory answer. I do know that, to me, the alternative, (a) no God, (b) God does not care—provides little comfort and leaves even more unexplained than my trust in a God who takes our suffering on himself. Thus, can we assume that a universe in which free beings are shaped in response to the consequences of their own decisions and actions requires the freedom to commit irresponsible and even evil actions which tragically shape our own lives and those of others? Again, a critical part of who we are is how we respond to those things which we did not cause—but which we nonetheless have to live with and suffer from.

Clearly, Christianity is not an artificial, “Blue Skies and Rainbows” religion. [This superficial understanding perhaps leads many to become bitter when tragedy strikes.] But then, Christianity invests our individual lives and actions with great significance. It is in such circumstances that we image God. Pilate presents Jesus in John 19,

“Ecce homo, Behold the man”—betrayed by one of his own, abandoned by his followers and friends, mocked, beaten—standing in absolute obedient trust in God—here is John's picture of Paul's “Second Adam,” the man we were/are called to be as images of God—faithful in spite of overwhelming odds. Yes, it is painful, lonely, occasionally despairing—but, “Our hope is not in ourselves—our circumstances, our abilities, our emotions—but in God who raises the dead!”

Todd, again, I do not have an “answer.” This is not a math problem. We live in a fallen world—inescapably subject to the intended and unintended repercussions of actions by countless thousands—millions—of others. No, I can't give an answer. I can only find hope in a God who does not abandon us but takes our agony and despair on himself.

God bless you,
Michael

This note illustrates Michael's deeply held *incarnational* thinking. It represents Michael's concern that theological reflection touch the ground where people live. I include this note out of gratitude, and on behalf of all of his students I offer thanks to Dr. Michael Weed for his ability and concern to connect theology to real life. Michael knows that theology, such as the question of human suffering, has real-life implications. He understands that the church's struggle with the culture around it, including the technophilic entertainment culture, can be seen, for example, in seemingly harmless modifications to the church's worship and architecture.

Included below is a select bibliography of Michael's academic work for the church thus far. The list is not complete, and if it were, it could not fully reveal the servant who has dedicated himself, above all, to the guardianship of the church. We who have benefited from Michael's keen insight and deep concern recognize in him a true scholar for the church.

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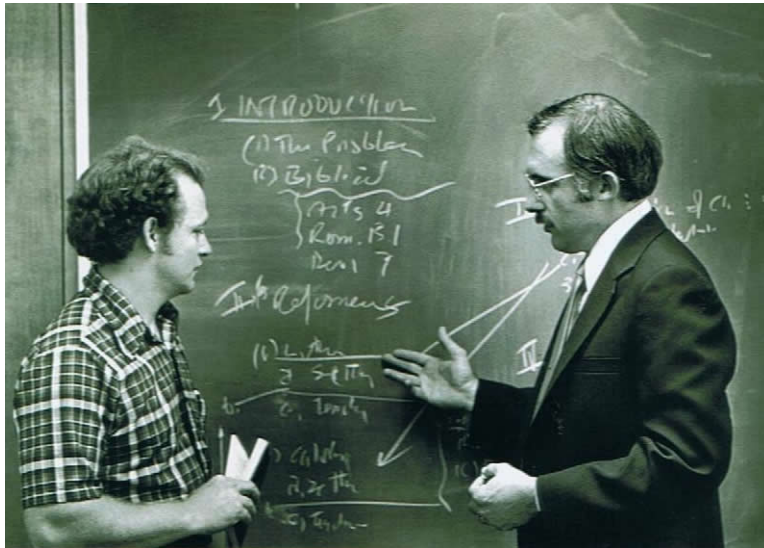
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**For Michael Weed’s full bibliography, visit
http://www.austingrad.edu/academics_weed_resource.html*



Michael with student Bobby Jeffcoat, circa 1980. Michael has endeared himself to students and colleagues in many ways over the years. One of the most enduring remembrances is Michael's "unique" chalkboard/whiteboard drawings and handwriting. This (unusually legible) picture is offered with fond remembrances and in anticipation of many more chalkboard discussions.

MTH

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