

## **REPLY TO CLIVE AND CARA BEED**

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My aim in the paper on which Clive and Cara Beed comment was to assess critically the state of what is often called “integrative” Christian Economics.

Having criticized that literature as un-influential (and often uninteresting) for more than two decades, I found to my pleasant surprise that the past decade’s contributions have changed my mind. They include many research contributions that are catching the attention of an audience of both economists-of-any-religious-persuasion and religious-scholars-of-many-professional-disciplines-besides-economics. To me, this is heartening. These contributions are having a scholarly impact, unlike their predecessors, in the spirit of George Marsden’s influential (1997) manifesto for integrally Christian scholarship.

To assess the scholarly impact of this literature, I relied principally on my own judgment as an economist and believer.

But to go beyond my own opinion, and to begin to measure scholarly impact, I also made recourse to a simple illustrative metric – *relative* raw citation counts. If a book or article purporting to contribute to the integration of faith and economics was cited *relatively* more often than some norm, I concluded that it was having a scholarly impact. If less cited, or not cited at all, I concluded that it was having little scholarly impact.

Impact, influence, and interest are my conception of scholarly “quality” (and, I infer, George Marsden’s conception, too).

The Beeds are among many who have long criticized that particular citation metric (e.g., Beed and Beed (1996)) as an indicator of either quality or impact or integrity. My response to

their specific criticisms is “of course.” I have reservations only about their nihilist conclusion (quality is un-measurable; don’t even try) and the reductionist forcefulness of their rhetoric.

The Beeds do not survey (or cite!) the impressive evolution of refined bibliometric methods that seek to ameliorate their wearying criticisms. Nor do they observe how pervasive are increasingly sophisticated relative-citation metrics in today’s economics (Card and DellaVigna (2013), Stern (2013)). And they would obviously not *endorse* either the evolution in such methods or the trend in applying them to economics.

In making their main point, they are missing my main point. The reader of our exchange will of course decide whose main point is more important. I would nevertheless have appreciated more suggestions than the one they wryly suggest at the end of their paper – academic-library acquisition counts -- for alternative metrics. I would speculate (even wager) that the main point of my paper – that integrative Christian Economics is beginning to attract scholarly attention after decades of torpor – will remain intact regardless of the indicator we use to measure scholarly attention.

Finally, it’s obvious that the Beeds are malcontent with more than mere metrics and citations recourse in my paper. Unlike me, they find mainstream economics far too confining (they characterize it distastefully as a self-referential invisible college, without wrestling with the implications of *all* scholarly disciplines being such). They wanted me to provide better representation of: 1. economic interpretations of Scripture; 2. broad so-called “heterodox economics”; and 3. “principlizing” -- their apt coinage from Beed and Beed (2012) – distilling principles from the Bible to guide economy and society, well-illustrated by Catholic Social Thought.

With some exceptions, I find these three all to be worthwhile activities. Many of them are well-surveyed in other contributions to the edited volume in which my paper appears (Oslington (2014)). Others I by-passed, with apology and explanation, merely to make my task manageable.

My task was to assess the state of integrative Christian economic scholarship, economics that was both integrally Christian, *and* scholarly bait to fish for the attention of economists without any Christian persuasion. I am gratified that, during my career, early inauspicious and obscurant efforts have been displaced by the promising and fertile contributions that my paper surveys. Integrative Christian economists are emerging from the slough of despond. They are “no longer living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence” (the still-relevant nightmare of Charles Malik (1980), p. 34). That is good news indeed. The Lord be thanked!

**References.**

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