

ARTICLE

# Christian Formation and Education in Episcopal Boarding Schools: Historical Origins, Contemporary Context, and a Proposal for Reform

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## Abstract

This article will consider James K.A. Smith's proposal for Christian educational reform by examining the historical animating principles and the contemporary embodied practices of Episcopal boarding schools in the United States. Drawing on historical accounts of the early years of Episcopal boarding schools, this paper will surface resonances between Smith's vision for Christian education and the hopes of the first rectors of Episcopal boarding schools. Moving from the founding of these schools to their contemporary configurations, this paper will draw on ethnographic accounts of Episcopal boarding schools to complicate Smith's vision of the formative Christian school. Ethnographic accounts of Episcopal schools offer further support for Smith's cultural liturgies paradigm; at the same time, the concrete realities of Episcopal boarding schools will call into question Smith's convictions regarding the potential for Christian schools to operate counter-liturgically. A consideration of the Episcopal Church's ecclesial mission will demonstrate how it departs from Smith's post-liberal ecclesiology to suggest realistic ways forward in the negotiation of Christian identity and practice in the context of Episcopal boarding schools.

**Keywords:** Christian education, ecclesiology, Episcopal boarding schools, ethnography, formation, mission, practice

## Introduction

James K.A. Smith's *Cultural Liturgies* project charts a new course for Christian worship and education by recovering an Augustinian anthropology of the person as a desiring creature. Smith suggests that cultural institutions capture our desires and draw us into embodied practices, which in turn shape us toward particular ends. Rituals and practices thus function as 'cultural liturgies', forming us,

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largely unconsciously, toward the implicit visions of the good life that undergird them. Establishing the power of cultural liturgies to shape – and oftentimes misshape – the human person by training our desires, Smith suggests that the task of Christian formation and worship is to be ‘intentionally liturgical, formative, and pedagogical in order to *counter* such mis-formations and misdirections’.<sup>2</sup> He posits that contemporary models of Christian education operate with an overly cognitive anthropology, leading Christian schools to focus on imparting knowledge of Christianity rather than inculcating Christian practices in students. He worries, ‘Could we offer a Christian education that is loaded with all sorts of Christian ideas and information – and yet be offering a formation that runs counter to that vision?’<sup>3</sup>

Smith hopes that a renewed emphasis on embodiment accompanied by attention to practice rather than worldview can transform the focus of Christian education: in his view, the aim of Christian education should be ‘formation’ rather than ‘information’.<sup>4</sup> Lamenting the loss of formative force in Christian universities (an analysis he says can be extended to Christian secondary schools), Smith proposes that Christian educational institutions recover their links to ‘thick practices of the church’ so that they can operate as ‘extensions of the mission of the church – as chapels that extend and amplify what’s happening at the heart of the cathedral, at the altar of Christian worship’.<sup>5</sup>

This article considers Smith’s proposal for reform in the context of Christian education by examining the historical animating principles and the contemporary embodied practices of Episcopal boarding schools in the United States. Drawing on historical accounts of the early years of Episcopal boarding schools, I will surface resonances between Smith’s vision for Christian education and the hopes of the first rectors of Episcopal boarding schools. Moving from the founding of these schools to their contemporary configurations, I will draw on ethnographic accounts of Episcopal boarding schools to complicate Smith’s vision of the formative Christian school. In adopting this methodology, this article takes Smith’s own advice. He recognizes the promise in qualitative methods, suggesting that ‘theological claims need to be disciplined by sociological and ethnographic exposure to the empirical realities that push back against theological claims’.<sup>6</sup> Ethnographic accounts of Episcopal schools offer further support for Smith’s cultural liturgies paradigm; at the same time, the concrete realities of Episcopal boarding schools will call into question Smith’s convictions regarding the potential for Christian schools to operate counter-liturgically. A consideration of the Episcopal Church’s ecclesial mission will demonstrate how it departs from Smith’s post-liberal ecclesiology to suggest realistic ways forward in the negotiation of Christian identity and practice in the context of Episcopal boarding schools.

<sup>2</sup>James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 199.

<sup>6</sup>Mark T. Mulder and James K.A. Smith, ‘Understanding Religion Takes Practice: Anti-Urban Bias, Geographical Habits, and Theological Influences’, in Christian B. Scharen (ed.), *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 93–113 (100).

### Christian Education: Counteracting ‘Cultural Liturgies’

In the first volume of his *Cultural Liturgies* trilogy, Smith challenges conventional wisdom that Christian education is about ‘Christian ideas’ and instilling a ‘Christian worldview’ of ‘Christian beliefs, ideas, and doctrines’, arguing that the primary focus of Christian education is really ‘formation of hearts and desires’.<sup>7</sup> Undergirding Smith’s challenge of the worldview model and its underlying anthropological assumption that the human person is fundamentally a thinker or a believer is an Augustinian anthropology: Smith contends that the human being is ‘fundamentally and primordially’ a lover.<sup>8</sup> He suggests that the ‘believer’ worldview model – developed through the Reformation and operating in much of the Protestant tradition – is ‘insufficiently Augustinian’ in that it fails to recognize that love, rather than belief or knowledge, is the primary way that we relate to the world.<sup>9</sup>

His Augustinian anthropology understands the human person as an affective, embodied, sensing being, led by the ‘heart and hands’ rather than the head.<sup>10</sup> Moving through the world as loving, desiring beings, human persons are dynamic, intentional, and teleological. Our desire has a *telos* that suggests ‘a specific vision of the good life’.<sup>11</sup> He stresses that our sense of what human flourishing looks like is not a set of concepts; rather, it is an ‘aesthetic picture’ formed in the imagination.<sup>12</sup> Drawing on Charles Taylor’s concept of the ‘social imaginary’, Smith suggests that we make sense of our world not through a cognitive ‘worldview’ but instead in affective, noncognitive ways, through narratives and images that become ‘frameworks of meaning’.<sup>13</sup> On this account, what motivates our action is not our cognitive assent to a particular belief system, but instead our imagination’s attraction to a particular picture of the good life captured in ‘stories and myths, images and icons’.<sup>14</sup> We live into the particular version of human flourishing that captivates our imagination and our desires, that we thereby picture as the ‘good life’.<sup>15</sup> Smith terms these ‘visions of the good life’ that we all desire versions of ‘the kingdom’.<sup>16</sup>

We live out these desires through our habits and dispositions, which Smith says become ‘inscribed in our heart through bodily practices and rituals that train the heart . . . to desire certain ends’.<sup>17</sup> Importantly, our desires are constructed and situated within community and ‘embodied traditions’ that incline the person to perceive the world and act within it in particular ways. Smith draws on French anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* to explain how individuals develop habits and dispositions embedded in community. Bourdieu defines *habitus* as ‘a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same

<sup>7</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 38.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 48.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 61.

<sup>14</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 53.

group or class'.<sup>18</sup> Like Bourdieu, Smith sees *habitus* as 'transposable' through institutions, even when we are unconscious of the embodied rituals that reproduce our *habitus* and guide our actions toward particular ends.<sup>19</sup>

Smith wants to reorient the aim of Christian education to strive toward the conscious development of a Christian *habitus*.<sup>20</sup> If we understand our desires to be shaped through practice, Smith believes, we will focus on how practices express and lead us toward 'what we love'.<sup>21</sup> In order to argue for the urgency of Christian formation, however, Smith makes it clear that formative practice does not emerge exclusively in Christian contexts. The desiring human person is 'always already embedded in a nexus of social relationships and institutions' – formation happens in those spaces as well.<sup>22</sup> To explain how cultural institutions become formative, Smith argues that they can function as liturgical institutions, facilitating our participation in particular rituals and inculcating certain habits, all of which serve to shape our desires toward particular ends.<sup>23</sup> Smith explains that 'our habits are formed by practices', which he divides broadly as either 'thick' or 'thin'. He concludes that because thick practices engage our 'core desire', contribute to our identity formation and to the end at which we ultimately aim, they can operate as liturgies, defined as 'rituals of ultimate concern'.<sup>24</sup> Smith's broader understanding of liturgy involves any ritual that is 'formative for identity' and instills a particular vision of human flourishing, thereby 'shaping our desire for what we envision as the kingdom'.<sup>25</sup> These 'liturgies' carry within them 'visions of the good life', which Smith argues become 'embedded in us' through our embodied participation in them.<sup>26</sup>

This expansive understanding of liturgy opens his consideration of what is relevant for Christian formation beyond explicitly Christian spaces to any cultural institution that operates as a 'pedagogy of ultimate desire'.<sup>27</sup> From Smith's perspective, secular liturgies are often at odds with the Christian vision of the good life: through cultural liturgies, secular institutions can shape us to desire a diminished version of the good and to 'love something very different from the kingdom of God'.<sup>28</sup> Having established the threat of secular liturgies to mis-form the Christian, he argues that 'Christian worship needs to be intentionally liturgical, formative, and pedagogical in order to counter such mis-formations and misdirections'.<sup>29</sup>

Importantly, Smith acknowledges that Christian practices themselves run the risk of being co-opted by these very mis-formations and mis-directions. By

<sup>18</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 86.

<sup>19</sup>James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), p. 81.

<sup>20</sup>Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, p. 84.

<sup>21</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 65.

<sup>24</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 78.

<sup>25</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 26.

<sup>27</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 79.

<sup>28</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 80.

<sup>29</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 80.

acknowledging the potential for Christian practices to malform, Smith avoids a common pitfall in Christian recoveries of practice. As Lauren F. Winner argues, proponents of 'practice' in Protestant theology tend to emphasize Christian practice as counterweights to practices that 'malform'.<sup>30</sup> For instance, Stanley Hauerwas saw Christian practices of prayer, baptism, and the Eucharist as transformative challenges to the practices and habits of capitalism and militarism.<sup>31</sup> While Winner recognizes the potential for practices to serve as a 'strategy of recuperation, repair, or reform', she focuses on the danger of Christian practices to 'carry with them their own deformations', a problem Smith turns to in *Awaiting the King*.<sup>32</sup> While *Desiring the Kingdom* focuses overwhelmingly on the potential for Christian practices to counter secular liturgies, Smith spends his third volume responding to the fact that there are 'people who have spent entire lifetimes immersed in the rites of historic Christian worship who nonetheless emerge from them not only unformed but perhaps even malformed'.<sup>33</sup> Smith terms this 'the Godfather problem', citing the well-known scene from the film *The Godfather*, in which the viewer sees Michael Corleone assume the role of the godfather in a Catholic baptism, profess belief in the Trinity, and renounce Satan and his works, interpolated with scenes of assassinations ordered by Corleone.<sup>34</sup> In this scene, it is clear that immersion in Christian liturgy does not in and of itself offer good formation.

While *The Godfather* scene is a dramatic example of this problem, Nicholas M. Healy makes a similar point with a more mundane example. A Catholic who crosses herself with holy water when entering a Roman Catholic church because she believes that 'doing so will ward off accidents and other evils during the coming week' may appear to be engaging in 'a perfectly good practice from within a Roman Catholic construal', but based on her misunderstanding of the 'point' of using holy water, is, argues Healy, engaging in a 'substantially different practice', even a 'wrong and unchristian' one.<sup>35</sup> Healy thus contends that 'repeated performance of behavior does not, of itself, issue in the right formation of church members nor acquisition of Christian virtues'.<sup>36</sup> Christian practices have the potential to form character, but only if the agent performs them with the appropriate *telos* in mind.<sup>37</sup>

Because people are immersed in a world with competing and overlapping liturgies, Christian liturgies are often vulnerable to being compromised in ways that throw their 'their kingdom orientation' off-kilter.<sup>38</sup> Citing egregious examples of Christian liturgies contributing to injustice and violence, including the Rwandan genocide and the abuse of indigenous people in Christian residential schools,

<sup>30</sup>Lauren F. Winner, *The Danger of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 169.

<sup>31</sup>Winner, *The Danger of Christian Practice*, p. 172.

<sup>32</sup>Winner, *The Danger of Christian Practice*, p. 180.

<sup>33</sup>James K.A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), p. 167.

<sup>34</sup>Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup>Nicholas M. Healy, 'Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5.3 (2003), pp. 287-308 (294-95).

<sup>36</sup>Healy, 'Practices and the New Ecclesiology', p. 295.

<sup>37</sup>Healy, 'Practices and the New Ecclesiology', p. 295.

<sup>38</sup>Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 181.

Smith finds that liturgy is the site of both potential and risk: it holds promise for Christian formation, but it also frequently becomes the place for Christian malformation. In light of these distortions of liturgy and our complicity in them, Smith concludes that Christians need to repent for these failures, and further, attend more closely to the formation that emerges from ecclesial communities.<sup>39</sup> Here, Smith affirms the contributions of ethnographic methodologies to examine and critique the ‘functional theologies that trump the official theologies of our churches and congregations’, to surface ‘our complicity and compromise’.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Smith finds that recognizing the importance of practices for formation not only helps us to identify Christian practices that form toward the appropriate ends, but also to ‘make sense of our deformation’.<sup>41</sup>

Examining the concrete realities of Christian formation with Smith’s paradigm in mind will involve unearthing the version of the kingdom enacted in practice. Smith worries that Christian universities bifurcate a ‘Christian perspective’ from practices and habits, leading to the vision of the kingdom embodied in practice to be ‘not the kingdom of God but rather the kingdom of the market’.<sup>42</sup> This article will take up similar questions not in the context of the Christian university, but in the context of Episcopal boarding schools (high school level). First, an examination of the founding of various Episcopal boarding schools will illuminate a vision of Christian formation that resonates with Smith’s account. Second, a consideration of ethnographic accounts of Episcopal boarding schools will demonstrate that these schools have, to a great extent, left their religious origins behind. Though they retain their religious trappings, elite Episcopal boarding schools often reinscribe hierarchy, reinforce values of individual achievement founded on meritocracy, and train students to act as embodied elites through institutional liturgies, thus exemplifying Smith’s notion of ‘liturgical capture’. The Christian character of the schools contributes to the formation of students toward a vision of human flourishing that prizes the embodiment of ease in elite spaces, suggests inequality is inevitable, and oversells excellence, a vision that I would argue is largely at odds with a Christian imagining of the kingdom.

### Episcopal Boarding Schools in the United States, Then and Now

As Dwight J. Zscheile explains, Episcopalians in the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century interpreted the mission of the church to be primarily ‘an establishmentarian enterprise . . . The mission of the Episcopal Church was concentrated in education, health care, and church expansion, or “good hospitals, good schools, and right-ordered worship”’.<sup>43</sup> Zscheile explains that the establishment of the denominational mission society of the Episcopal Church in the early nineteenth century suggested a missional ecclesiology by ‘equating the mission society

<sup>39</sup>Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 191.

<sup>40</sup>Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 192.

<sup>41</sup>Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 202.

<sup>42</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 198.

<sup>43</sup>Dwight J. Zscheile, ‘Beyond Benevolence: Toward a Reframing of Mission in the Episcopal Church’, *Journal of Anglican Studies* 8.1 (2009), pp. 83–100 (87–88).

with the church itself, so that every baptized member would be a missionary'.<sup>44</sup> With designs to become the national church in the United States and resolve denominational divisions, the Episcopal Church of the nineteenth century pursued its missionary impulse through 'institution building rather than evangelism', establishing schools and hospitals.<sup>45</sup>

This context helps explain the proliferation of Episcopal boarding schools founded across New England in the mid-to-late 1800s and early 1900s. For instance, St Paul's School was founded in Concord, New Hampshire in 1856; Groton School was founded in the town of the same name in Massachusetts in 1884; and Kent School was founded in Kent, Connecticut in 1906. Though all three schools (along with others founded around this time) retain their affiliation to the Episcopal Church to this day, the schools' religious expression has changed significantly since their early years. Now, elite Episcopal boarding schools are prized as premier institutions for college preparation. Their founding histories suggest a more robust religious character, animated by the missional impulse Zscheile describes, while the mission of college preparation was largely absent. As Shamus Khan notes of St Paul's School, 'only five of the first seventy graduates ever attended college'.<sup>46</sup> Now, every graduate of St Paul's expects to attend a four-year college or university, and the religious character of the school has largely faded into the background.

The motivation for founding Episcopal boarding schools was explicitly religious and reflected a High Church ecclesiology common in the Episcopal Church at the time. According to David Hein, 'High Churchmen held that Christ had established the Church with its sacraments and three-fold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons to be the way of salvation. They went so far as to identify the present Episcopal Church with the pure, apostolic Church of the first centuries'.<sup>47</sup> In emphasizing apostolic succession, they effectively viewed non-episcopal ordinations as invalid and remained at a distance from interdenominational associations established by evangelicals.<sup>48</sup> Because of their distinct ecclesiological perspective, the schools established by Episcopal High Churchmen differed significantly from religious schools founded by other religious denominations around the same time.<sup>49</sup>

Direct connections to the Episcopal Church are evident in the various schools' founding histories. For instance, St Paul's School was founded as an 'Episcopalian Church school' with the intended purpose of extending and promoting the ministry of the church writ large with support from the Episcopal Church.<sup>50</sup> Prominent Episcopal ministers and bishops frequented St Paul's to give sermons and facilitate the school's connection to the wider church.<sup>51</sup> The school hoped to promote

<sup>44</sup>Zscheile, 'Beyond Benevolence', pp. 87-88.

<sup>45</sup>Zscheile, 'Beyond Benevolence', p. 89.

<sup>46</sup>Shamus Rahman Khan, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 29.

<sup>47</sup>David Hein, 'The High Church Origins of the American Boarding School', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42.4 (October 1991), pp. 577-595 (591).

<sup>48</sup>Hein, 'The High Church Origins', p. 591.

<sup>49</sup>Hein, 'The High Church Origins', p. 593.

<sup>50</sup>Frederick W. Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard: Protestant Faith and the American Boarding School Experience: 1778-1940' (Doctoral Dissertation: University of Notre Dame, 2004), p. 218.

<sup>51</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 242.



‘traditional High Church beliefs in the value of liturgy, the authority of the Church, and church governance’, while also integrating typical antebellum evangelical priorities, including respect for the Bible and conversion.<sup>52</sup> The founders of Groton School had similar motivations: William Lawrence, the Bishop of Massachusetts in the Episcopal Church in the late nineteenth century and the second president of the Groton Board, supported the founding of the school because he saw it as another way for the church to remain relevant to future generations.<sup>53</sup> According to Frederick Jordan, Groton’s Episcopal mission was ‘clearly first and foremost’ in its early years. Founder Endicott Peabody ‘hoped that the school would be a place in which boys would become Episcopalians, and would in adulthood serve the Church’.<sup>54</sup>

At St Paul’s, Episcopal identity was also a clear priority, as founder George Shattuck’s ‘Deed of Gift’ along with the corporation’s by-laws ‘required that the trustees and rector (the term used as St. Paul’s for the headmaster) must be communicants of the Episcopalian Church’.<sup>55</sup> Further, the school prioritized the construction of a chapel in its first-ever fundraising campaign, which opened two years after the school’s founding.<sup>56</sup> The growing student body outgrew the chapel over the next two decades, necessitating the construction of a new chapel in the late 1880s. The first-ever rector of St Paul’s, an Episcopal priest named Henry Coit, believed the chapel to be “the bond and center” of life at St. Paul’s.<sup>57</sup> The chapel served as a clear connection between the school and its Episcopal identity. Jordan cites a Board of Trustees’ resolution that describes the purpose of the chapel as:

separated henceforth from all unhallowed, worldly, and common uses, and dedicated to the worship and service of Almighty God for reading and preaching His holy word, for celebrating His holy Sacraments, for offering to His glorious Majesty the Sacrifices of Prayer . . . and Thanksgiving, for blessing His people in His Name, and for the performance of all other Holy offices, agreeable to the terms of the Case and of Grace and Salvation in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and according to the provisions of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, its Ministry, Doctrines, Liturgy, Rites and Usage.<sup>58</sup>

This suggests an image of the chapel set apart from ‘worldly’ uses, explicitly intended for Christian worship. As we will see later, the role of the chapel has changed over the course of the school’s history.

Smith argues that Christian practices, in order to be truly transformative of one’s ultimate desires, should go beyond Sunday worship and should be integrated into each person’s everyday life.<sup>59</sup> This sentiment seems to have been shared by Episcopal boarding school founders. For instance, at St Paul’s, student routines were

<sup>52</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 223.

<sup>53</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 285.

<sup>54</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 287.

<sup>55</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 224.

<sup>56</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 236.

<sup>57</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 237.

<sup>58</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 237.

<sup>59</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 193.



constructed based on the notion that ‘constancy of devotion and practice would produce spiritual growth’.<sup>60</sup> The day was bookended with devotional practice: each morning started with prayer, followed by breakfast at 6:00 am, and ‘the day ended with the entire school gathering in Coit’s study for the reading of a chapter or two from the Bible, each student reading several verses in turn’.<sup>61</sup> One weekday evening a week, Coit would offer a sermon ‘admonishing the boys against bullying and use of slang, exhorting them to “the outdoor life,” and so on’.<sup>62</sup> The entirety of Sunday was set aside as a Sabbath day, packed with devotional activities, including three required religious services, a ‘Sacred Studies’ course, the recitation of prayers, and the singing of hymns. Leisure time on Sundays was restricted to contemplative time outside and the reading of books of a ‘suitable nature’.<sup>63</sup> The integration of faith into the daily rhythm of boarding school was one of the primary motivations animating their founding. Bishop Doane of New Jersey supported the establishment of Episcopal schools because ‘the influence of a Sunday school one day a week could not “counterbalance the evil tendencies of six”’.<sup>64</sup>

The founder of Groton School in Massachusetts, Endicott Peabody, evinced a similar motivation in founding Groton. He envisioned ‘a religious community where there should be opportunities for preaching to boys and instruction in what was called Sacred Studies; but where above all other features of the life there should be opportunities for worship, and that in accordance with the spirit and method of the Episcopal Church’.<sup>65</sup> Just as Smith hopes for a Christian environment that can offer holistic formation of students through worship, ritual and embodied practice, Peabody endeavored to create a ‘spiritual atmosphere’ at Groton that would have ‘a conscious or unconscious effect upon all who entered into the life of the School’.<sup>66</sup> This effect, for Peabody, was not limited to overly religious activities. Bishop Lawrence cites an alumnus of the school to demonstrate that every aspect of student life at Groton during Peabody’s tenure had the potential to be formative: ‘studies, games, holidays, personal relationships, and the choice of a future career are all included among the activities that Christ cares about, and if these are considered within the sphere of religion, their quality is made different’.<sup>67</sup>

As was the case with St Paul’s, even the layout of the Groton campus was meant to reflect its Christian identity. By forming a central quad surrounded by a gymnasium, dormitories, the schoolhouse, and the chapel, the founders of Groton aimed to form well-rounded men, who would incorporate all aspects of life (study, worship, athletics, etc.) into their daily routine with ease.<sup>68</sup> The chapel was seen as dominant

<sup>60</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 237.

<sup>61</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 237.

<sup>62</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, p. 237.

<sup>63</sup>Jordan, ‘Between Heaven and Harvard’, pp. 237-38.

<sup>64</sup>Hein, ‘High Church Origins’, p. 591.

<sup>65</sup>Frank Davis Ashburn, *Peabody of Groton: A Portrait* (New York: Coward McCann, 1944), p. 72.

<sup>66</sup>Ashburn, *Peabody of Groton*, p. 72.

<sup>67</sup>William Lawrence, ‘The Rector’s Spiritual Leadership’, *The Groton School Quarterly* XIII.3 (June 1940), p. 23.

<sup>68</sup>Sam Aldred, ‘“The Gentleman’s Burden”: The Anglican Heritage of Episcopal Boarding Schools, 1880–1940: “Cui Servire Est Regnare” (To Serve is to Rule) – Groton School Motto’, *Anglican and Episcopal History* 98.3 (September 2017), pp. 272–86 (281).

over all others, because, according to Peabody, 'the spiritual life shall dominate the development of the boy's character'.<sup>69</sup>

Smith worries that the Christian mission of schools is vulnerable to being co-opted for other ends, concluding that the *telos* of a school's rituals should be examined to ensure that accommodations made to wider society do not dilute the school's Christian character.<sup>70</sup> A similar tension emerges within the first few decades of St Paul's founding. Whereas early on, Coit embraced an evangelical approach to the school's Episcopal identity, preaching about salvation in the Gospels and worked to initiate deep conversion among students through daily ritual, he turned in his later years to the task of producing 'Christian gentlemen'. As Jordan concludes, the overarching mission of St Paul's was reoriented from 'produc[ing] Christians or Episcopalians' to forming 'good character' in students.<sup>71</sup> As Jordan notes, St Paul's and its rector were not immune from what Smith would likely term the 'secular liturgies' of the time. In particular, a Gilded Age furor over athleticism and exercise infiltrated the sermons of Henry Coit: he began to preach 'a Muscular Christianity in which athletic ability, manliness, character, and Christian faith existed alongside one another in so thorough a blend as to defy separating any of these virtues from the others'.<sup>72</sup> The gymnasium was elevated in importance to be 'practically co-equal with the chapel' in its capacity to develop student character.<sup>73</sup>

The emergence of 'Muscular Christianity' is but one example of the kinds of negotiations Episcopal boarding schools made as they contended with cultural changes in the late nineteenth century. As Jordan explains, the rise of industrialization and materialism, along with a new focus on naturalistic science and empiricism as primary epistemologies, challenged Protestant educational models on both the secondary and university levels.<sup>74</sup> Leaders of American colleges reformed their institutions to adapt to the new emphasis on the sciences and industrialization, relegating religion to the periphery.<sup>75</sup> Episcopal boarding schools faced pressure to adjust their aims in similar ways, as a new, lucrative market emerged for boarding schools to prepare the children of the wealthy for admittance to the new modern university.<sup>76</sup> Episcopal boarding school leaders attempted a compromise: while the schools were initially founded with the understanding that Christianity was authoritative, the new arrangement made Christianity and science two 'co-equal moral authorities'.<sup>77</sup> As a result, Protestant faith was no longer essential to character building in secondary education, but instead was viewed as a 'desired option'.<sup>78</sup> Christianity thus became an 'optional appendage' to new ends of character development and college preparation.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>69</sup>Endicott Peabody, 'The Aim of Groton School', in *The Church Militant* III.3 (April 1900), p. 3.

<sup>70</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 199.

<sup>71</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 252.

<sup>72</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 256.

<sup>73</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 256.

<sup>74</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 263.

<sup>75</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 263.

<sup>76</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 267.

<sup>77</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 269.

<sup>78</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 271.

<sup>79</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', pp. 580-81.

In reaction to broader social trends that marginalized the role of faith at Christian boarding schools, Samuel Drury, the third headmaster of St Paul's, attempted to reinvigorate religious life at St Paul's by integrating it back into the entirety of student life.<sup>80</sup> Tradition held that Sundays would have students in church three times, so as to keep them from getting into trouble, but Drury worried that this could instrumentalize worship and send the wrong message. He preferred to risk a few students 'getting into mischief than to make two hundred tire of church'.<sup>81</sup> He implemented a two-service schedule on Sundays, which included more student participation in the liturgy and gave students free time to spend Sundays pursuing 'true religion', which for him consisted of walks in the woods and time spent in silence.<sup>82</sup> Over his long tenure at St Paul's, Drury endeavored to recover the school's spiritual center: for him, the fundamental purpose of the school's educational mission was to 'convince each one of its hundreds of young human pilgrims that he is first of all and always God's child'.<sup>83</sup> Drury was unhappy with the new trend of excluding religion from academic subjects in favor of subjects that would prepare students for college, seeing it as a concerning result of a growing tendency to artificially separate religion from 'real knowledge', which hindered the coherent religious formation of students.<sup>84</sup> In Drury's concern for holistic formation of students through catechesis and practice, we can see resonance with Smith's vision of Christian education. Though Drury may reflect in some respects a preoccupation with instilling Christian knowledge (or 'information') in St Paul's students, his revisions to the students' routine and his acknowledgment of contemplative practices as relevant for formation suggests that he, like Smith, saw practices as crucial for faith formation.

In the evolution of St Paul's from its first to third headmaster, we can see conflicting notions regarding the appropriate ends of Christian education. For Drury, the Episcopal boarding school's fundamental mission was Christian formation, which was threatened by new emphases on scientific knowledge, industrialization, and materialism. While Drury viewed these forces as a challenge to Christian mission, others worked toward compromise, integrating scientific education into Episcopal boarding school curricula and reducing the emphasis on Christian formation in favor of character development and college preparation. These efforts toward compromise were buoyed by financial concerns: Episcopal boarding school leaders recognized that they could situate their schools as the preparation ground for college, but only if their offerings aligned with the modern university.

This connection helps explain why the tensions Smith describes in the Christian university exist at the secondary level as well. Smith sees the Christian university as a 'hybrid institution', caught between its identity as a provider of higher education connected to other universities focused on teaching and research and its Christian identity, 'which situates it in the ecosystem of the church and various

<sup>80</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 534.

<sup>81</sup>Roger S. Drury, *Drury and St. Paul's: The Scars of a Schoolmaster* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1964), p. 68.

<sup>82</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 538.

<sup>83</sup>Samuel Drury, quoted in Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', p. 551.

<sup>84</sup>Jordan, 'Between Heaven and Harvard', pp. 551-52.

other institutions of Christians mission'.<sup>85</sup> While Episcopal boarding schools began in the 'ecosystem' of the Episcopal Church, they have, over time, developed connections and ends outside of their initial ecclesial context. As we have seen, balancing these two facets, along with their respective liturgies and distinct ends, is a difficult, and ongoing, task. The struggle to accommodate new ends without losing the distinctiveness of Christian identity emerges as a challenge of negotiating between a Christian 'vision of the kingdom' and a secular one. Smith, recognizing these difficulties, proposes that we reform Christian schools to function as 'ecclesial colleges' that are 'animated by the specificity of Christian liturgical practices'.<sup>86</sup> He goes so far as to suggest that Christian colleges 'would represent a kind of "new monasticism,"' extending the church as a 'chapel connected to the nave of the cathedral'.<sup>87</sup> Smith's suggestion sounds remarkably similar to the founding principles of Episcopal boarding schools – in fact, the Kent School was founded by an Episcopal monk with a distinctly monastic take on the New England boarding school tradition. Although Smith's proposal resonates with the early history and aims of Episcopal boarding schools, the difficulties that their founders encountered in negotiating the Christian identity of their schools with cultural, epistemological, and financial concerns suggest that enacting Smith's vision would be immensely challenging.

Further complicating this challenge is the fact that, historically, even those aiming to create Christian institutions with formative practices that counter secular liturgies, often end up influenced by the forces they hope to counter. Early innovators in Episcopal education exemplify this problem. While Episcopal schools claimed to serve the purposes of forming children as Christians, their primary goals have historically been co-opted by concerns related to race, class, and gender. A brief examination of the contrast between two different kinds of Episcopal boarding schools operating in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States will make this clear. While the aforementioned elite Episcopal boarding schools in New England catered to white, wealthy male children of elite Episcopalians, residential schools for indigenous children operated by Episcopal missions in states like South Dakota furthered federal efforts to assimilate indigenous people. Though little is known at this point about the residential schools in the United States, J.R. Miller suggests that in indigenous residential schools in Canada, the mission of Christian education effectively became an assimilation project predicated on an understanding of indigenous people as inferior:

Christian thinking in Canada, as in the United States and Great Britain as well, had become suffused with racist preconceptions . . . For the people who operated missions and schools, it was simply taken as 'scientific fact' that the Aboriginal people to whom they ministered were inferior to them culturally, morally, and economically . . . in this highly charged atmosphere of scientifically racist Christian attitudes, it was increasingly likely that missionaries would assume that the most effective and lasting way of

<sup>85</sup>Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 199.

<sup>87</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 201.

converting the Aboriginal population to Christianity was simultaneously to reconstruct them as pseudo-Caucasians.<sup>88</sup>

Indigenous people's memories of their boarding school experience in the United States suggest similar approaches were adopted in the United States residential school context. As Pearl Chanar, an Alaskan Athabascan, recalled in a recent panel hosted by the Episcopal Church's Office of Indigenous Ministries, the boarding school she was sent to, hundreds of miles from her own village, prohibited her from speaking in her indigenous language and from engaging in cultural traditions.<sup>89</sup> Christian missionaries educating indigenous children in North America drew inspiration from 'schools for the urban poor rather than the boarding schools for upper class children', which is evident from the 'harsh practices in the residential schools and the tendency to treat children as "inmates" rather than as residents . . .'.<sup>90</sup> In this context, Episcopal boarding schools' Christian mission was tainted with colonial logics and racist assessments of indigenous people, thwarting the aims of Christian education toward cultural genocide.<sup>91</sup>

While residential schools aimed to assimilate indigenous children into Euro-American culture, New England's Episcopal boarding schools aimed to preserve the race and class status of elite White Christian families through the education of young men. Only in recent memory have these schools expanded who they would admit: the first Black student was admitted to St Paul's in 1960, and the school began admitting women in 1971. Though the schools' explicit aims were religious, their demographic makeup (i.e., white, wealthy, male) betray an implicit commitment to another task: 'acculturating the members of the younger generation, especially those not quite to the manor born, into an upper-class style of life'.<sup>92</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, the sociologist who coined the notable term 'WASP', explains that 'throughout the nineteenth century, the leading bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church were intimately allied by birth and breeding with the eastern

<sup>88</sup>J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 414.

<sup>89</sup>David Paulsen, 'Indigenous Leaders Lament Intergenerational Trauma Inflicted by Boarding Schools, Some with Episcopal Ties', *Episcopal News Service*, October 12, 2021, <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2021/10/12/indigenous-leaders-lament-intergenerational-trauma-inflicted-by-boarding-schools-some-tied-to-episcopal-church/>.

<sup>90</sup>Eric Taylor Woods, *A Cultural Sociology of Anglican Mission and the Indian Residential Schools in Canada: The Long Road to Apology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 45-46.

<sup>91</sup>The topic of abuse and trauma in residential schools, including those with Episcopal ties, deserves further research and analysis. The Episcopal Church has only recently begun to reckon with this history; at this point, very little is known of the particular histories of these schools. A recent statement by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings laments the abuse of indigenous people in residential schools and calls for efforts toward truth and reconciliation in partnership with indigenous communities as well as funds to support research into residential school history. 'Statement on Indigenous Boarding Schools by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings', July 12, 2021, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/publicaffairs/statement-on-indigenous-boarding-schools-by-presiding-bishop-michael-curry-and-president-of-the-house-of-deputies-gay-clark-jennings/>.

<sup>92</sup>E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (New York: Free Press, 1958), p. 294.

seaboard aristocracy'.<sup>93</sup> Baltzell identifies J.P. Morgan as an example of this close connection, for Morgan contributed to 'various church causes', participated as a lay leader in the General Convention of the Episcopal Church every year, and served as an original board member of Groton with Bishop Lawrence, a friend and ally.<sup>94</sup> While some Episcopal clergymen remained concerned about the vast wealth disparities in American cities and the concentration of money and power within Episcopal congregations, J.P. Morgan resisted efforts to integrate the working class into the leadership of his own congregation, St George's.<sup>95</sup>

Baltzell suggests further that Episcopal boarding schools effectively 'reinforced the development of a national upper class in America' through these ties. Though Groton founder Endicott Peabody 'desired to prepare his students for the Episcopal ministry', some 'church laymen wanted the school to perpetuate the upper-class mores and manners of Wall Street'.<sup>96</sup> Peabody was fighting a losing battle, it seems. The first trustees of Groton School (Bishop Phillips Brooks, Bishop William Lawrence, William C. Endicott, James Lawrence, J.P. Morgan, S.E. Peabody, and Endicott Peabody) represent, according to Baltzell, 'a judicious blend of clerical, financial, and family prestige in America', which helps explain why Peabody's ministry-oriented aims for the school were overshadowed by the interests of elite Episcopalian businessmen.<sup>97</sup>

Clearly, these historical Episcopalian efforts to educate and form Christians were susceptible to cultural forces of the time, skewing any Christian orientation they had toward ends of assimilation in the case of the residential schools and elitism in the case of East Coast boarding schools. Although Smith acknowledges the potential for Christian institutions and practices to be influenced by cultural malformations to the point that these institutions bear little resemblance to any recognizable vision of the Kingdom of God, his discussion of Christian education focuses on dangers of distortion in Christian education due to secularization and capitalism. The examples reviewed above indicate that colonial logics and race hierarchies have historically infiltrated the formative practices of Christian secondary schools in the United States, highlighting the vulnerability of Christian educational institutions to biases of race, class, and nationalism.

While the residential schools all closed their doors, Episcopal boarding schools in New England have persisted, evolving from their initial founding as religious schools to further develop their reputation for forming the elite. Peter W. Cookson and Caroline Hodges Persell term schools like St Paul's and Groton 'status seminaries' because they serve to orient students toward status: 'in a seminary, novitiates learn the norms, values, and mores of their particular group, but whereas the religious novitiate pursues a spiritual vocation, the prep novitiate has what might be

<sup>93</sup>Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, p. 231.

<sup>94</sup>Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, p. 232.

<sup>95</sup>Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, p. 233. As Baltzell points out, however, the association of the Episcopal church with the business aristocracy and wealth runs alongside their history as the first Christian labor organizers in the United States, founding and leading the Church Association for the Advancement of the Interests of Labor (CAIL) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) (234).

<sup>96</sup>Mark Denis Desjardins, 'A Muscular Christian in a Secular World' (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1995), p. 58.

<sup>97</sup>Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, p. 303.



called a “status” calling’.<sup>98</sup> The perpetuation of a privileged, elite class as an achievement of Episcopal schools is evident from data on their students’ admission to Ivy League universities. Richard L. Zweigenhaft found that among Harvard and Radcliffe students who attended public schools, St Grottlesex schools (a catch-all term used to describe six elite boarding schools in New England: Groton, Kent, St George’s, St Mark’s, Middlesex, and St Paul’s, all of which are affiliated with the Episcopal Church, except Middlesex, which is non-sectarian), and other elite boarding schools in the mid-1960s, St Grottlesex alumni had the lowest grades and lowest college boards, whereas public school graduates had the highest grades and highest college boards.<sup>99</sup> They thus conclude that ‘marked advantages in admissions have been given to those who already have economic privileges’, including wealthy students attending St Grottlesex schools.<sup>100</sup> Zweigenhaft found further that Harvard students who had attended the ‘St Grottlesex’ schools were more likely than others to become lawyers.<sup>101</sup> While public school graduates of Harvard accumulate cultural capital through academic achievement and credentials, Episcopal boarding school graduates ‘gravitate to careers where social capital is useful’, which aligns with Cookson and Persell’s evaluation of Episcopal boarding schools as forming students to cultivate and maintain social status.<sup>102</sup>

In a contemporary context, the association between elite boarding schools and top-tier colleges continues to be a significant motivator for prospective students, far beyond any attraction to the religious character of the school. Cookson notes, ‘parents often send their children to boarding school for nonreligious reasons’, primary among them being college admissions. Clearly, the shift in the late nineteenth century toward college preparation as the primary *telos* of the Episcopal boarding school has persisted, in part due to financial incentives. As Cookson explains, ‘Nearly all boarding schools are financially driven by the need to demonstrate that they have the educational and social power to enable graduating students to attend selective colleges and universities’.<sup>103</sup> Boarding schools emphasize their academic prowess and extracurricular opportunities as qualifications in preparing students for college, but Smith’s focus on cultural liturgy encourages us to examine how these schools prepare students for ‘assimilation’ into elite, educated classes through embodied practice.

Shamus Rahman Khan’s ethnographic study of St Paul’s persuasively demonstrates how boarding schools train students to be elite in an embodied way. Like Smith, he draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* to emphasize the importance of embodied practice to formation of students. Khan argues that boarding schools like St Paul’s teach students ‘corporal ease’, a ‘mark of privilege’ that appears

<sup>98</sup>Peter W. Cookson Jr. and Caroline Hodges Persell, *Preparing for Power: America’s Elite Boarding Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 22.

<sup>99</sup>Richard L. Zweigenhaft, ‘Prep School and Public School Graduates of Harvard: A Longitudinal Study of the Accumulation of Social and Cultural Capital’, *The Journal of Higher Education* 64.2 (Mar.-Apr. 1993), pp. 211-25 (222-23).

<sup>100</sup>Zweigenhaft, ‘Prep School and Public School Graduates of Harvard’, p. 223.

<sup>101</sup>Zweigenhaft, ‘Prep School and Public School Graduates of Harvard’, p. 220.

<sup>102</sup>Zweigenhaft, ‘Prep School and Public School Graduates of Harvard’, p. 220.

<sup>103</sup>Peter W. Cookson, Jr, ‘Education: Boarding Schools’, in Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Religion in America* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), p. 620.



to be natural but is in fact 'learned through repeated experiences in elite institutions'.<sup>104</sup> Learning ease is one way that the 'new elite' distinguish themselves from everyone else. With the diminished importance of rules of etiquette and other erstwhile markers of status, 'knowledge of how to carry oneself within the world' becomes the distinctive marker of the elite.<sup>105</sup> Although Khan believes that corporal ease is in fact acquired through immersion in a place like St Paul's, it is typically assumed to be natural; thus, students who do not possess it are thought to 'not naturally have what it takes'.<sup>106</sup> This assumption that ease is natural obscures how privilege affords opportunities to learn ease.<sup>107</sup> Anthony Abraham Jack makes this clear in his discussion of the role of secondary education in shaping the experience of lower-income black undergraduates at elite colleges. Like Khan, he highlights how private high schools familiarize students with practices of the elite, which proves to be an advantage in elite college settings: lower-income black undergraduates who attend private high schools 'enter college already accustomed to navigating elite academic arenas, already familiar with the ways and customs of the rich'.<sup>108</sup>

Schools like St Paul's thus teach students how to 'assimilate' into the elite. As Jack observes, these lessons prove to be advantageous for the future success of students from demographics that were initially excluded from elite education. Being schooled in these environments not only helps lower-income black students adjust to elite college life, but it also helps them get there in the first place: 'over 50 percent of the lower-income black undergraduates who attend elite colleges get there from boarding, day and preparatory high schools'.<sup>109</sup> Though learning ease allows minoritized students to excel in predominantly white institutions, it encourages students to buy into the standards of schools like St Paul's.

For students who historically were excluded from St Paul's, this can create tension: as Khan explains, 'the opportunity of being at St. Paul's comes with a catch – the adoption of an orientation that sometimes runs firmly against one's own experiences and perhaps those of one's family . . .'.<sup>110</sup> Khan describes the experience of Carla, a black student at St Paul's, who was frustrated that her success at the school depended on her adopting the mannerisms and behaviors accepted there. She recalls doing poorly in her classes at first and worrying that she was 'dumb', but realizing over time that she was not unintelligent, but just unfamiliar with the ways of talking and writing accepted at St Paul's: 'until I learned how to talk like you wanted me to talk, how to write like you wanted me to write, I was dumb'.<sup>111</sup> As Khan describes, Carla excelled at St Paul's by going through the motions, but she evaluated this process as 'bullshit', suggesting that she did not consider the standards of St Paul's to be legitimate.<sup>112</sup> While some students wholeheartedly embrace the standards St Paul's

<sup>104</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 84.

<sup>105</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 83.

<sup>106</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 84.

<sup>107</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 84.

<sup>108</sup>Anthony Abraham Jack, *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), p. 11.

<sup>109</sup>Jack, *The Privileged Poor*, p. 10.

<sup>110</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 108.

<sup>111</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>112</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 102.

endorses, others, like Carla, are skeptical of St Paul's vision and resist the assimilation the school encourages.

While Smith might hope that the school's religious commitments could function as a counter-liturgy to the secular liturgies of the elite common in boarding school environments, Khan's study suggests that without more deliberate efforts at places like St Paul's, the school's religious identity serves to support its elite-making practices, functioning less as a counter-liturgy and more as another instance of 'liturgical capture'. This becomes clear in Khan's detailed analysis of the use of the chapel, which reveals that its primary influence appears to be to reinforce hierarchies and power dynamics among students, faculty, and staff. Considered with Smith's paradigm in mind, Khan's account will demonstrate that Christian worship at St Paul's has been co-opted by secular visions of the kingdom that reinforce institutionalized hierarchies, affirm the myth of meritocracy, and orient students toward a vision of human flourishing predicated on a narrow view of excellence, achievement, and recognition. Examining Smith's suggestions for reform in Christian education will surface challenges therein: more particularly, his proposal does not consider how the lack of a critical mass of participating and invested worshippers in the context of a boarding school could influence the formative power of the liturgy, nor does it consider the impact of a pluralistic student population with a diversity of religious backgrounds.

Khan, a St Paul's alumnus and former faculty member, explains that 'much of the daily life of the school revolves around the Chapel'.<sup>113</sup> This includes four weekly chapel services and 'official rituals of the school', like Evensong.<sup>114</sup> This seems to align well with Smith's suggestion that Christian institutions facilitate students' devotional practices 'beyond Sunday'. Time spent in chapel at St Paul's makes space the more familiar to students. While intimidating at first for students, over the years, 'the Chapel is transformed from an intimidating space to a kind of living room: an everyday place that can be inhabited with ease'.<sup>115</sup> Khan explains that seniors often show up to morning chapel in pajamas (which may suggest that they have become too at ease in the chapel). Beyond facilitating students' familiarity with Gothic-style religious spaces, chapel services shore up students' sense of their belonging at St Paul's, not just as members of the school community, but as members placed in a particular location within the school's hierarchy.

The sense of belonging to the school that emerges through chapel is most evident in the recitation of the school prayer. Khan relates that upon his return to St Paul's as a faculty member, he attended the first night's chapel service, which is typically 'performed with enormous symbolic weight'.<sup>116</sup> The rector, Craig Anderson, began with the school prayer: 'Grant, oh Lord, that in all the joys of life, we may never forget to be kind. Help us to be unselfish in friendship, thoughtful of those less happy than ourselves, and eager to bear the burdens of others. Through Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen'. Prior to its recitation, Khan assumed he would not remember the words, but as it began, he realized, 'I did not need to read it – the

<sup>113</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 44.

<sup>114</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 44.

<sup>115</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 44.

<sup>116</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 91-92.

words fell from my mouth as if by reflex. I remembered'.<sup>117</sup> He contrasts his meaningful experience of the prayer with the impression he had of new students' recitation, which was 'mostly lifeless'. For them, the prayer had not yet accumulated meaning as it had for Khan over years of recitation.<sup>118</sup> It is possible that the repeated recitation of the school prayer accomplishes aspects of embodied Christian formation that Smith would appreciate; at the same time, Khan's description of the prayer's influence on him suggests that its meaning for students connects to their belonging at St Paul's: they know the 'school prayer', a prayer that is likely not prayed in other Christian contexts (unlike other common Christian formulas – e.g., the Our Father, the Nicene Creed). Thus, the recitation of the school prayer in a chapel full of students and faculty members shapes students through practice to perceive themselves, along with their fellow students and with faculty, as part of the St Paul's community.

The chapel teaches students more than just belonging: it shows students 'their place' at St Paul's.<sup>119</sup> As Khan explains, faculty and students are assigned a seat in the chapel; by contrast, staff members, 'from the school's many cooks to the cleaning crew to administrative members, are not granted seats'.<sup>120</sup> As students find their assigned seat in chapel, they learn, literally, that 'there is a place for them at the school', whereas staff are not afforded that privilege.<sup>121</sup> While Smith imagines a worship context assembling a 'motley crew' of people from all walks of life who have 'gathered in response to a call', St. Paul's chapel services effectively exclude members of its own community, and it is safe to assume that many attend because it is required by the school, rather than out of a sense of faith or ecclesial responsibility.<sup>122</sup>

The absence of staff at chapel services already hints at the hierarchies operating at St Paul's, but as Khan notes, the chapel services themselves make the hierarchy even more evident. Students progress closer to where the faculty sit as they advance in age each year, 'looking down at the younger children beneath and the places they once sat'. The faculty are seated by seniority, 'with the most senior faculty seated toward the front of the Chapel, next to the rector and the deans'.<sup>123</sup> At the beginning of each school year, a chapel ritual called 'the taking of one's place', where students take the seat that they will sit in for the rest of the year for the first time, impresses upon students the importance of their seat in the chapel. Khan argues that this ritual and the repeated practice of sitting in one's place teaches students that 'the world is a hierarchical place and that different people are placed in different spaces within

<sup>117</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>118</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>119</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>120</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>121</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>122</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 147. Of course, it may be that Smith hopes that children and teenagers wrangled into attending church by their parents or their schools would, through that coerced attendance, be formed in such a way that they would eventually respond to the call to worship themselves. I hope that is the case, but I would venture that in a context like St Paul's, it is more likely that students associate the chapel with the identity of the school as a community than the church, so I would be surprised if chapel attendance shaped most students to join ecclesial communities outside of the school context.

<sup>123</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 45.

this hierarchy', advancing through merit and hard work.<sup>124</sup> Because the seats in the chapel are immovable, this hierarchical system appears to be permanent, timeless, and perhaps preordained. A far cry from 'the priesthood of all believers', students thus learn that hierarchies of seniority among students and faculty persist in the context of worship.<sup>125</sup>

When the school successfully recruited more non-white teachers to join its faculty, the hierarchical seating in chapel was abandoned because 'the image of almost all of the non-white faculty [the new teachers] sitting in the back was too reminiscent of pre-civil rights era blacks sitting in the back of the bus'.<sup>126</sup> This change seems to resolve the 'secular liturgy' that infiltrated the worship context; however, once the non-white faculty members advanced in seniority, 'the hierarchy was reinstated', as it no longer appeared to indicate that race determined the seating arrangement.<sup>127</sup>

One might wonder whether St Paul's is a unique case. Could it be that other Episcopal boarding schools manage to avoid reinscriptions of hierarchy in their chapel services, offering a counter-liturgy through worship? Though there is less ethnographic research conducted in other Episcopal boarding school contexts, a study conducted at the pseudonymously named 'Weston School', an elite New England boarding school, suggests that not assigning seats can also reinforce hierarchies operating in the school. In his ethnographic research at 'Weston', Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández explains how a group of students on the Equity Committee posted signs in the school's chapel 'marking and naming' the implicit seating arrangements of students in the chapel. This acknowledgment of the seating arrangements – and the implication that the seating arrangements were divisive and unfair – caused discomfort for some students, generating a discussion at a student forum the following week.<sup>128</sup> Attempts to challenge the seating arrangement appeared to fizzle: a freshman student, Adam, explained how he and his friends staged a 'sit-in' with his friends occupying seats in chapel where the 'fresh posse' (a clique-like friend group of 'cool' students) normally sat. As a result, the female students comprising the 'fresh posse' responded with anger and resentment; because of this tension, the male first-year students did not attempt to take those seats again.<sup>129</sup>

In any given gathering of people – especially of teenagers – hierarchies, cliques, and divisions may emerge; what is notable here is that the Christian ideal expressed in Gal. 3.28, that we are 'all one in Christ Jesus', which could counter-act the hierarchies operating at places like St Paul's, are not challenged in the chapel but instead are reinforced. Smith would likely lament this missed opportunity for chapel liturgies to function as counter-liturgies and identify it as an instance of worship being domesticated for ends at odds with the gospel. Having identified boarding school chapel services as sites of what Smith calls 'liturgical capture', we can examine whether Smith's proposal for reforming Christian education could help establish

<sup>124</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 45.

<sup>125</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 45.

<sup>126</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, p. 71.

<sup>127</sup>Khan, *Privilege*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>128</sup>Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, *The Best of the Best: Becoming Elite at an American Boarding School* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 118.

<sup>129</sup>Gaztambide-Fernández, *The Best of the Best*, p. 121.

liturgies that would counter rather than confirm secular liturgies of social hierarchies in Episcopal boarding schools.

### Reimagining Christian Formation

Smith proposes that the Christian university (and, by his own extension, Christian secondary schools) operate as an extension of the church, allowing Christian practices to have a transformative influence across the institution. Smith argues that students should not be attending campus worship on Sundays; instead, 'Christian students and teachers should be immersed in the gathered, sacramental worship that happens in parishes on Sunday mornings'.<sup>130</sup> He highlights the intergenerational character of parish worship as crucial to formation, challenging the idea that 'chapel or campus worship [is] a substitute for church'.<sup>131</sup> St Paul's chapel services, while inter-generational, clearly lack some of the formative qualities of parish worship, in that they reinforce school hierarchies and exclude those who are not students or faculty. Therefore, I would suggest alongside Smith that Episcopal boarding schools find creative ways to integrate their worship with the wider community. (In addition to its formative benefits, this could help Episcopal boarding schools recover their ecclesial connections as well.) It is worth acknowledging the logistical difficulties accompanying this suggestion. Many Episcopal boarding schools are situated in small New England towns, which have churches that could not accommodate hundreds of students every Sunday. Further, most students are not able or allowed to drive off campus, making it difficult to travel to churches located elsewhere. A more feasible adjustment would involve inviting community members and boarding school staff to chapel services and, where it exists, eliminating hierarchical seating. To counteract the emergence of implicit hierarchies, schools could assign seating in other ways that intentionally disrupt hierarchies.

Once everyone is seated, and the worship service actually begins, how can Episcopal boarding schools celebrate a formative liturgy? And how can this brief time, out of the many activities undertaken in a boarding school context, so profoundly shape students? Smith responds that Christian liturgy is 'dense and charged'; it 'activates the whole body' and is 'packed with formative power'.<sup>132</sup> He asserts this after describing in lofty terms the embodied practices enacted in Sunday worship services across a broad swath of Christian denominations, but it is worth considering whether this description captures the typical church-going experience in a boarding school context. His description of singing in the context of Christian worship, for instance, suggests full, wholehearted, enthusiastic participation in hymn-singing: as he puts it, 'song often pulls us into dance or raising our hands in praise. Thus in song there is a performative affirmation of our embodiment, a marshaling of it for expression . . . the delights of harmony also attest to an aesthetic expression of interdependence and intersubjectivity'.<sup>133</sup> This description seems to assume a context of Christian liturgy in which participants intend

<sup>130</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 203.

<sup>131</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 203.

<sup>132</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 190.

<sup>133</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, p. 155.

to be there. While Smith's description communicates well the potential impact of singing hymns in a congregational worship setting, he does not offer much reassurance that this description reflects the realities of worship.

In chapel services of Episcopal boarding schools, any visitor is likely to witness no more than a handful of voices soldiering on through each verse of the hymn, while most students fidget, whisper to friends, furtively check their phones, or lapse into sleep. The most audacious among them might wedge an AirPods headphone in their ear and conceal it under their hair, drowning out the hymn with a song of their choice. In a parish context, teenagers attending church with their families might be more closely supervised, eliminating some of these distractions. In a boarding school chapel, however, most participants in the liturgy are likely attending only because it is required and thus barely participate. Smith asserts that 'worship requires full, active, conscious participation even if it is also forming us in ways that elude our conscious awareness'.<sup>134</sup> Merely 'going through the motions' means that 'we are not really practitioners – we are more like free riders who float along in an environment without investment or identification'.<sup>135</sup> He qualifies this to acknowledge that some people, like children and new believers, 'will be "carried" by the practices more than an adult who has been immersed in the faith for a lifetime'.<sup>136</sup>

As was just noted, a boarding school liturgy will include mostly students (children) without their families, with only a small number of faculty to model participation and carry forward worship practices. Smith does not address how embodied practices work (if they do) when most participants are 'going through the motions' or do not yet understand the 'point' of going to church. One remedy for this problem would be to catechize students more intentionally to understand what is happening in the liturgy. Through liturgical catechesis, students could gain 'a more conscious, intentional awareness of what we're doing and why we're doing it when we gather for worship', which Smith believes will develop into 'a conviction that then moves us to be committed to immersion in the practices'.<sup>137</sup>

Teaching students the importance of worship should be grounded in an approach to youth ministry that identifies youth as active and valued participants, rather than passive recipients. Sharon Ketcham proposes a youth ministry paradigm grounded in mission, which 'beckons youth to join with the mission of the church and treats youth as valued persons'.<sup>138</sup> In order to empower youth to participate in the church, 'adults must develop a potential ecclesiology in which they see youth as

<sup>134</sup>Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, p. 187.

<sup>135</sup>Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, p. 187.

<sup>136</sup>Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, p. 187. It is worth keeping in mind here Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore's call to take children seriously as subjects. She points out that people rarely remember the agency of children, forgetting to attend to their experience of ritual and their contributions to worship. She further argues that the invisibility of children in theological scholarship results in part from the spatial arrangements of churches and homes, which often separate adults and children. Boarding schools achieve that same separation in multiple ways: children are separated from their parents and siblings, both in where they live and where they worship. Secondly, boarding school chapels separate children from the local church communities in which their families participate ('Feminism, Children, and Mothering: Three Books and Three Children Later', pp. 4-6).

<sup>137</sup>Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, p. 188.

<sup>138</sup>Sharon Galgay Ketcham, 'Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution' (Doctoral Dissertation: Boston College, 2014), p. 181.

valuable resources to develop'.<sup>139</sup> Ketcham advocates for an ecclesiology that focuses on what she argues is the 'primary purpose of the church: to glorify God through worship, edification, and proclamation (in word and deed)'.<sup>140</sup> She argues that this focus facilitates attentiveness to concrete practice and the communities that participate in these practices together, which can in turn 'allow teenagers to see (exposure to) and do (engagement with) by providing concrete ways for youth to join with the community outside their peer group'.<sup>141</sup>

This mission-driven approach to youth involvement would align well with the heritage of Episcopal boarding schools, which, as noted early on, were founded to extend the mission of the church through formation and education. Smith's argument regarding the importance of embodied practice suggests that students, as the majority of participants in boarding school worship, do play an active role in carrying on the practices that shape our habits and desire. With this framing, students who learned the importance of the liturgy could understand their role in worship to be of great importance in carrying out the mission of the church.

While this strategy has not been tested in the Episcopalian context in the United States, a study from an Anglican boarding school in Sussex, England (pseudonymously referred to as 'Erdbury') suggests that liturgical participation significantly impacts how students view the chapel. Some students interviewed displayed a 'lack of interest in the chapel'; students described it as 'dull', 'boring', 'pointless', and as 'a waste of time'.<sup>142</sup> Students who express apathy toward the chapel seem to do so because they do not connect the chapel to the purpose of the school. One student described the focus of students at the school to be primarily 'learning and just absorbing as much information as you can in a short period of time', which led them to interpret time spent in the chapel as a means of 'wast[ing] time when I could be doing homework or work'.<sup>143</sup>

By contrast, students who played a more active role in the liturgy, either as eucharistic ministers or altar servers, 'recognize the sacredness of a place made holy by God's activity in the Eucharist'.<sup>144</sup> Students who were interviewed distinguished between the experience at chapel of those who take on a role in the liturgy, those who participate in the congregation as believers, and those who either do not believe or are not interested. One student who had been recently confirmed contrasted her engagement with liturgy with her experience in chapel prior to confirmation, describing it as 'hard to engage' and 'very boring'.<sup>145</sup> With more students engaged or serving in some way during liturgy, it is possible to work toward the 'full participation' that Smith sees as necessary for formative worship.

In order to engage more students in formative liturgies, it is necessary to consider the population being served in contemporary Episcopal boarding school contexts.

<sup>139</sup>Ketcham, 'Potential Ecclesiology', p. 184.

<sup>140</sup>Ketcham, 'Potential Ecclesiology', p. 185.

<sup>141</sup>Ketcham, 'Potential Ecclesiology', p. 186.

<sup>142</sup>Julia Ipgrave, 'Imagining the Place: The Multiple Meanings of a School Chapel', in Martin Rothgangel, Kerstin von Brömssen, Hans-Günter Heimbrock, and Geir Skeie (eds.), *Location, Space and Place in Religious Education* (New York: Waxmann, 2017), pp.199-208 (205).

<sup>143</sup>Ipgrave, 'Imagining the Place', p. 205.

<sup>144</sup>Ipgrave, 'Imagining the Place', p. 205.

<sup>145</sup>Ipgrave, 'Imagining the Place', p. 206.



While early on, the entirety of the all-male student body came to school from families practicing their faith in the Protestant tradition, students now come from much more diverse religious backgrounds. Schools have made laudable efforts to mitigate their tendency to perpetuate racial and class-based inequalities by admitting students of varying economic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Khan indicates that this only partially addresses the elitism perpetuated at places like St Paul's, and in terms of religious formation, it adds a further complication to hopes of reforming a specifically Christian formation. Diverging from Smith's vision of a 'new monastic' Christian educational institution, I suggest that the Episcopal Church could reclaim these schools as extensions of their mission by understanding the mission of the school in an ecumenical, justice-oriented and inter-faith key. Connections to local Episcopal parishes and leadership in chapel worship would help Episcopalian students to be formed in the tradition specifically, while inter-faith programming in the chapel context could help form students toward religious literacy and tolerance, a crucial piece of the Episcopal Church's mission. Balancing these aims would help schools both retain their Episcopal affiliation while also avoiding the exclusion of students of varying or no faith backgrounds from religious life.

In addition to offering better formation for students, refocusing religious life at Episcopal boarding schools to inter-denominational and inter-faith efforts could also help combat a secularizing trend in the mission of the Episcopal Church. As Zscheile explains, the Episcopal Church today has abandoned its earlier hopes to function as a 'national church'; instead, it carries out its missionary character by working to 'foster educational, social, and human development'.<sup>146</sup> However, there is one notable difference between the earlier missional approach and the Episcopal Church's current practices: whereas the church formerly committed to establishing 'good hospitals, good schools, and right-ordered worship', the mission of the church now is pursued 'through largely secular means', leaving 'right-ordered worship' in the past.<sup>147</sup> By reinvigorating practices of worship, including traditional liturgies and creative inter-faith services, Episcopal boarding schools could help the church live out its mission, educating and forming students to live in a pluralistic world.

Part of this mission involves a recognition of Episcopal schools' historical participation in the perpetuation of hierarchies of race, gender, and class. Through liturgies of remembrance and repentance, Episcopal boarding schools can examine their exclusionary histories, recognize their own institutional participation in race- and gender-based exclusion, and lament the colonial projects of assimilation of now-defunct Episcopal residential schools. As Smith points out, Christian worship inherently involves 'a habitual recognition of both our failure and our aspiration . . . To show up for worship is tantamount to an admission of failure'.<sup>148</sup> Liturgies lamenting the ecclesial and educational failures of the church can help form students to engage history with an attitude of humility and openness. These efforts would also connect Episcopal boarding schools to broader Episcopal commitments to oppose and root out racism and to repudiate former

<sup>146</sup>Zscheile, 'Beyond Benevolence', p. 89.

<sup>147</sup>Zscheile, 'Beyond Benevolence', p. 89.

<sup>148</sup>Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 207.

alignment with the Doctrine of Discovery.<sup>149</sup> By inviting students, faculty, and staff to examine school practices that further these historical biases and continue commitments to elitism, these liturgies can provide an opening to more thorough reforms of boarding schools that better reflect Christian commitments to justice, liberation, and equality.

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<sup>149</sup>The Episcopal Church has various resolutions recognizing its own historical participation in racism and the need for repentance, continued examination of its own bodies regarding racial bias, and resources directed toward anti-racism efforts. See, for instance, General Convention, 'Resolution # 2015-C019: Work for Racial Justice and Reconciliation', *Journal of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 310-11. Similarly, the Episcopal Church has also formally repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and committed to reviewing its own policies and procedures to work towards 'eliminating its presence in its contemporary policies, procedures, and structures . . .'. See General Convention, 'Resolution # 2009-D035: Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery', *Journal of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), pp. 371-72.