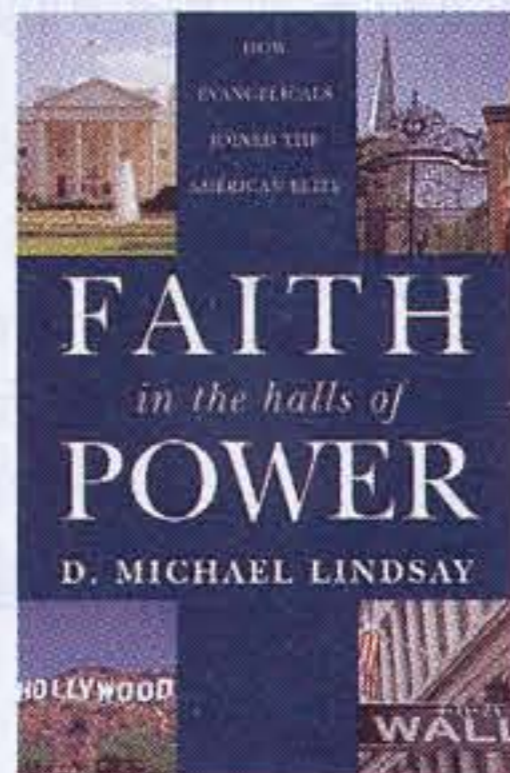


On the way to what?

POLITICS: Evangelical ascendancy to the halls of power in the United States is not enough **by MARVIN OLASKY**

THIS WEEK MADE IT SEVEN years since evangelical George W. Bush entered the White House, a feat celebrated in D. Michael Lindsay's *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

The book is a useful compendium of interviews with upwardly mobile evangelicals in not only politics and business but university life. Lindsay exults that "academic prestige and educational credentials can enable a group to move from the social margins to the intellectual mainstream, and evangelicals are well on the way." But the question



should be asked: On the way to what? What profiteth evangelicals to gain prestige and credentials when during their ascendancy many wear

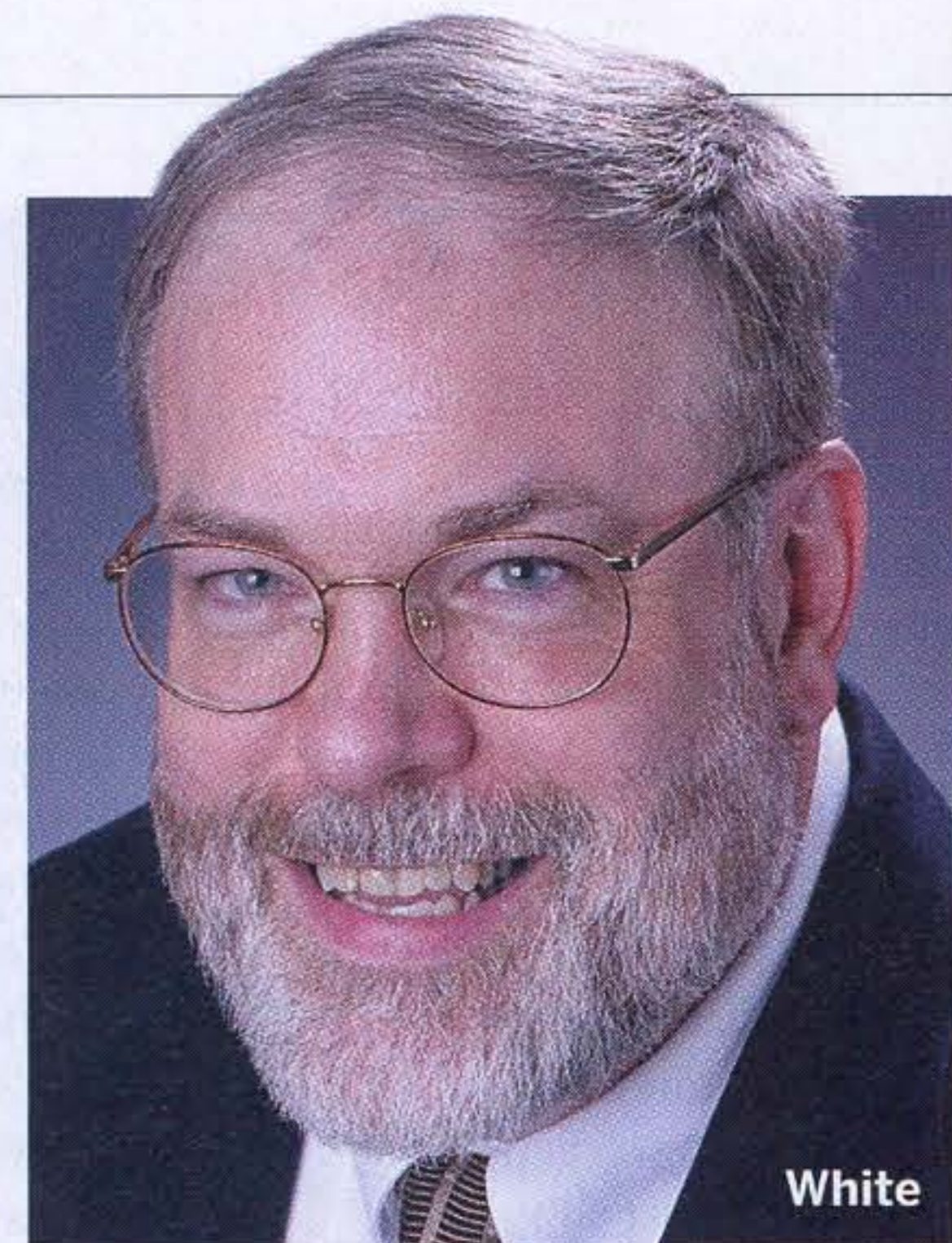
masks, and then find that their faces have changed to fit the masks?

Since Lindsay broadly defines evangelicals, it's not clear if and how many of his leaders put Christ above kudos. For example, his Bush-related list includes Karen Hughes, an elder in the decidedly unevangelical Presbyterian Church USA, and John DiIulio, a Catholic good guy who hurt the faith-based initiative in 2001 by publicly scorning many evangelicals.

Some of Lindsay's organization descriptions also seem strained. For instance, the Pew Charitable Trusts once reflected the staunchly conservative views of money-making Pews now deceased; liberals captured the organization during the 1980s and began funding the left, so it's strange for Lindsay to write about staff members still "fulfilling the founder's mission." This lack of discernment leaves the book as a fine record of interviews but an unreliable guide as to whether significant change is occurring.

Lindsay cites Baylor University's movement as an example of evangelical success, but *The Baylor Project*, edited by Barry Hankins and Donald Schmeltkopf (St. Augustine's Press, 2007), goes deeper. It asks on its cover, "Can a Protestant University Be a First-Class Research Institution and Preserve Its Soul?" The answer is decidedly ambiguous and may depend on defining the question. If "first-class" is defined by secular standards, the answer in many fields is no.

Humanities and social sciences research shaped by biblical presuppositions is sometimes derided and (if done well technically) at other times politely applauded, but Christophobia is real. Its reality should not be an excuse for lackadaisical effort but an incentive to work even harder—yet Christians are to work for God's glory and not for favorable press mentions.



'Heart of wisdom'

I'M STARING AT TWO BOOKLETS by Chris White: *Judgment or Revival, Which Will It Be?* and *God and Man and Monkey at Yale*. Their publisher is not the prestigious Oxford University Press but New York's New Testament Missionary Fellowship. Their author entered Yale in 1971, the year I graduated. We were both told that our duty was to join the American elite.

White at age 19 felt called to be an evangelist. Over the years he has led college Bible studies, preached in Central Park and Times Square, taught high-school math, and done much besides. Since 2004 he has evangelized in Colombia, the country from which his wife comes.

His in-laws wonder why a Yale graduate isn't walking the halls of power. One reason may be White's frequent prayer that God "would grant us a heart of wisdom to understand how little we know, and how much we still have to learn. . . . The more we grow up in Christ, the more we will understand that the Christian life is not about mastering a body of knowledge, or even about achieving a level of self-sufficiency. The Christian life is about learning to walk in a continual, growing dependence on Jesus Christ."

His in-laws wonder. By the way, White—realizing that he is reaping what others have sown, and that God is in charge—has directly led almost 1,000 people to make a serious profession of faith in Christ.

It's a wonderful life. —M.O.

