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Ream & Glanzer's "The Idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination for Today's University" - Book Review

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Todd C. Ream and Perry L. Glanzer
The Idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination for Today's University
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013 pb. 158 pp. \$18.00
ISBN: 13:978-1-61097-327-3

This is not the first time Ream and Glanzer have written together. In fact, generous elements of the central arguments of this reexamination have been shared elsewhere (for example, in their 2007 volume, *Christian Faith and Scholarship and An Exploration of Contemporary Debates*). Their collaboration this time was written to honor Arthur F. Holmes, long-time professor of philosophy at Wheaton College, and author of a groundbreaking 1975 book by the same title. Holmes' book became required reading for many undergraduate students and almost all new faculty joining a protestant, faith-based institution. And although he didn't coin the phrase, "the integration of faith and learning," Holmes is the person most associated with it, now a recognizable code word and slogan for the Christian college. The authors are to be congratulated for remembering and recognizing Arthur Holmes's teaching and writing, and for honoring his legacy and influence on Christian higher education.

Writing to students, faculty, and administrators in faith-based institutions, the authors rightly point out that much has changed in Christian higher education since 1975. They point to three: the changing nature of worship and the church, a more developed understanding of what it means to be fully human, and the rise of the Christian university. While their reexamination is roughly organized to shadow the chapters of the original volume and each chapter starts with a quotation from Holmes, it is these three major changes that frame the arguments presented. The book moves thoughtfully, combining theological and philosophical arguments with real-life stories and campus examples, making it accessible and inviting. However, although the cover suggests that this would be good reading for all first-year students in Christian colleges, the arguments are more applicable to graduate students, faculty and administrators. And the book has a certain reformed orientation, much like Holmes's original. Persons from other traditions (Wesleyan, Anabaptist, Quaker, etc.) will find the recurring focus on reforming and redeeming learning, learners, teaching, curriculum, institutions, disciplines, professions, co-curricular activities, and almost everything else to be a bit wearisome at times. Those from the Reformed tradition, however, should feel right at home with this description of the Christian mandate.

Ream and Glanzer argue forcefully for the centrality of corporate worship as the shaping centerpiece of institution life. This ecclesial emphasis was not addressed by Holmes in 1975, and the authors worry that the absence of corporate worship today signals trouble for any institution that names Christ, particularly so given the move of many Christian colleges to minimize or cancel altogether their chapel services. On the other hand, if the intent is, indeed, to make disciples and promote spiritual formation, very few pastors would suggest that the way to do so in their congregations would be to add another worship service. Many institutions are looking to more small-group oriented activities to achieve the goal of spiritual formation. This book offers a timely reminder of the importance of worship and it pushes the conversation forward with a serious caution.

The second major change Ream and Glanzer address is our developing understanding of what it means to be human and the continuing importance of attending

to the formation of the whole person. Particularly in this age of specialization (not something specifically addressed by Holmes), this book is a crucial reminder of the importance of vocation and calling, the necessity of wise friends and mentors on campus, and the significance and consequence of finding our identity in Christ. On campus, we are reminded of the interconnection and mutually-supportive nature of co-curricular and classroom activities.

The third change since 1975 is the emergence of the Christian university with the addition of professional programs, graduate students, and an emphasis on the discovery of new knowledge (scholarship). Certainly in 1975, Holmes had the liberal arts college in mind (perhaps with Wheaton as a model, given that he worked there), while Ream and Glanzer have in mind the Christian university (perhaps Baylor, since they both have appointments there). Their emphasis on the Christian university continues a yeasty conversation about the role, nature, and demands of Christian scholarship in our institutions. It should be noted that there are really very few Christian research (R1) institutions. As the authors noted, just calling yourself a university does not make you one. Honestly, most Christian colleges and universities have neither the money nor the mission to become R1 institutions. While the few (Baylor and Notre Dame to name two) serve legitimate purposes, I wonder if the focus on the Christian research university is prudent. Clearly most Christian colleges and universities are teaching institutions. Perhaps it is better to think of Christian institutions as T1—transformational institutions—whose mission is to teach, to shape, and to send rather than to produce new knowledge. A yeasty conversation, indeed!

Ream and Glanzer set out to honor Arthur Holmes, to update the consideration of Christian higher education given major changes since 1975, and to focus attention on the importance of corporate worship, the consideration of the whole person, and the emergence of the Christian university. In that effort, they have been successful. I recommend this book to all advanced students, faculty, and administrators learning and serving in faith-based institutions. Ream and Glanzer have faithfully pushed the conversation forward. Now it is up to each of us to join the conversation, too.

Patrick Allen