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# Canadian Evangelical Review

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## Christian Higher Education in Canada: A Bookish Review

KEN BADLEY AND GORDON SMITH

For over a decade, Canadian Christian higher education has been compelled to undertake continuous self-evaluation. Widespread computer use, shifting student demographics, and an ongoing shortage of operating funds have worked with other forces to provoke doubts about traditional residential/classroom models of theological education. Bible college students now demand university transfer credit. Many Bible colleges are seeking new mandates. With Redeemer College in Ontario gaining the right to award degrees with conventional names, the academic community and the public are demonstrating increasing acceptance of Christian liberal arts education in Canada.

During the same period that higher Christian education has undergone such extensive re-examination and change on the institutional side, one book has appeared that has launched singlehandedly a new round of discussion on the foundational side of Christian involvement in higher education. Mark Noll has reignited the perennial debate about faith and reason with his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). Noll's *Scandal* actually appears in a large company of titles that have recently addressed graduate and undergraduate Christian liberal arts education, and the connection of faith to public higher education. This review surveys about a dozen such books with reference to our assessment of the Canadian scene.

## Theological Education

We begin with those titles addressing theological and seminary education, noting first *Hurrying Toward Zion* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995), Conrad Cherry's carefully detailed retelling of the familiar story of Protestant theological education in the context of the evolution of the American university. Cherry uses at least one category, however, that renders his tale different from most. Readers of histories of North American theological education will readily recognize specialization, professionalization and social reform as catalysts. But Cherry also names pluralism as a reason seminaries changed. Including pluralism is not the only surprise in *Hurrying Toward Zion*. Cherry parts company with most historians of higher education in his treatment of the familiar themes as well:

Although the divinity schools witnessed around them powerful pressures leading to the breakup of the religious educational system on which they had come to depend, they themselves contributed to the disintegration of the system with their emphasis on specialization. Though the ministers they educated were in many ways disfranchised by an expanding culture of professionalism based on technical expertise, the divinity schools were often leaders in their universities in promoting specialized competence and professional standards.

If Cherry is right, then the divinity schools did their own share to professionalize the universities: one senses here more leading than following. A few lines later, Cherry summarizes the approach he takes to pluralism in the book:

For all their efforts to place religion at the centre of the university, the schools fostered an appreciation for a pluralism that would render the university one of society's most decentred institutions. No helpless victims of blind historical forces, the university divinity schools were, rather, active contributors to the transformation of their own heritage. (25)

Late in *Hurrying Toward Zion*, Cherry makes reference to a 1993 Lilly-funded survey of seminary presidents' views of the most pressing issues facing divinity schools today (292). The answer was not finances; it was connection to the university and the broader culture. On Cherry's account, this connection is not only the contemporary question for seminaries; it is the historic question as well. And those living today need not think themselves the first to deal with the question of making theological education relevant. By God's grace, may we not be the last.

For many years, Thomas C. Oden has taught in the kind of divinity school about which Cherry writes. His title, *Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) is not so much a lament for theological education as it is a lament for the church. But, for Oden, the left-liberal fog into which the mainline seminaries seem to have become engulfed is the first cause of worry and the first major section of Oden's argument. He makes clear he does not wish to exclude from the seminary conversation voices more radical than his own (35), but he does want space created in seminaries for believers of more orthodox persuasions.

In *Requiem*, Oden offers a passionate and personal book. He structures his essay around three feasts which he either could have attended or did attend, and he narrates his experience of each of these feasts to introduce the book's three sections. The first feast, the one he unhappily left, celebrated the goddess. He uses this story to introduce his critique of theological education. Oden missed the second feast, a private communion service held by the Pope in the Vatican. Oden did not participate, out of respect for Roman Catholic canon law.

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Following a rather useless digression into American politics, Oden does move from the eucharist he missed to an argument for genuine ecumenism, and especially for greater openness among liberals toward evangelicals. Oden introduces the final section of the book with an account of the feast he did not expect, a Chinese-language communion service in Manhattan. As he participated, he realized deeply and anew his participation in the whole church around the world. He moves from that story into his discussion of postmodern evangelical spirituality, a spirituality grounded in classic Christian understandings of God and Scripture.

The voyeur in most of us will read with particular interest Oden's "Expanding List" of Post-modern Paleo-Orthodox Writers (Appendix D). He classifies those he lists within Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and five different Protestant traditions, offering a range of writers from Joseph Ratzinger to Peter Berger and Clark Pinnock. On Oden's account, these are the people who have dared to criticize the modernist intellectual establishment and its liberal theological offspring.

Rebecca S. Chopp's offering is *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997). Like Oden, Rebecca Chopp focuses her essay on mainline Protestant seminaries. Chopp's book looks far different from Oden's: her talk of narrativity and feminist constructions of church seem to be just what prompted Oden to walk out of the first feast. But Oden and Chopp both seek a church less indebted to modernity in its makeup.

Chopp responds to the writings on theological education of such persons as David Kelsey and Ed Farley, familiar territory for some *CER* readers. But she also situates her work in a stream of conversation running back to about 1980 which some readers may find new. This stream includes feminist reflection on theological education and on the church in general. Chopp openly admits her debt to critical theory in her own approach to understanding theological education, and she proceeds to ask how to transform theological education along lines that reflect feminist questions more accurately. The first step in that transformation

for Chopp is to push her readers to rethink the "subjects" of theological education. Her opening chapter title, "Women as Subjects of Theological Education," indicates something of the direction that her envisioned transformation needs to take; we must recognize that the biblical and theological disciplines--the curriculum--are not the only subjects one encounters in a seminary.

The central three chapters of Chopp's book deal with narrativity, ecclesiality and theology. The first of those, on narrativity, deals most directly with the shape of theological education and will present the greatest challenge to those who think that adjusting credit hours for various curriculum streams are the vital issues of our time. Chopp argues persuasively that many students today, especially women, are "actively engaged in the practice of composing their lives in and through theological education" (31). Her argument should shock no one. The seminary demographic profile, especially for mainline seminaries, has been shifting for years toward second-career adults and especially women. Furthermore, some have always argued--and more have recently--that all education implies some kind of formation. In one sense, then, Chopp is not proposing anything new. But she envisions the formation of a subjective person who functions among other persons; in doing so, she has parted company with many in the liberal arts tradition who envision an autonomous, objective person being formed by education. She has also thrown out a challenge to any in theological education who see their vocation as the transmission of the same essentially-fixed canon of doctrine to any who will listen.

In "Places of Grace," her middle chapter, Chopp envisions the church as an inclusive community whose purpose is to announce grace. Theological education waits in the wings during this chapter, but taken with the next chapter on theology, "The Warming Quilt of God," the implications of Chopp's ecclesiology for education become quite clear. Early in the theology chapter, she summarizes Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza as follows:

Theology no longer uncovers unchangeable

foundations or hands down the cognitive truths of tradition or discloses the classics or even figures out the rules of faith, as suggested by modern and contemporary metaphors of doing the work of theology. Rather, quilting, weaving, and constructing become the focus of theological work as a communal process of bringing "scraps" of materials used elsewhere and joining them in new ways (73).

If doing theology is like making a quilt then Chopp is right: theological education will need transforming. At the end of *Saving Work*, however, one is left wondering if the task of education is not both to transmit and to transform. Surely twenty centuries of church and theology have left us something worthwhile that warrants telling another generation. But one also wants to thank Chopp for waking us up to the need for theological education that has at its heart the project of transformation.

We turn next to *Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education* by John H. Leith (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997). After a life-time as a churchman and theological professor, Leith muses on the state of theological education. He writes as a Presbyterian and writes specifically to an American Presbyterian context.

The title says it all: like Oden, he clearly sees the current dilemma as a crisis. He decries the loss of theological orthodoxy on the one hand and the loss of a dynamic connection with the church on the other. While this study has some important insights that might otherwise have commended it, his critique is ineffective for a number of reasons. First, he does little more than harangue the church and theological schools; his critique lacks finesse, grace and precision. Second, he seems to lack a vision for the theological education of the laity within theological schools, failing to see that the church has changed fundamentally and that ministry is largely a partnership between clergy and laity. If anything, he demonstrates a one-dimensional understanding of ministry relying largely on paid pastors. Third, he harks back nostalgically to an era no longer possible--a kind of "Oh, that we were in the 1950s"--and regularly celebrates professorial appointments

made in those days with little affirmation for more recent faculty appointments. Finally, he maintains the unrealistic expectation that seminary admissions should be tied to a prior certainty that each individual admitted is called to the professional ministry. One gets the impression that what Chopp celebrates, Leith is not yet aware of.

The author's most helpful contribution is found in his critique of the curriculum itself, and here his comments apply to the theological schools of many denominational traditions. In particular, he notes the loss of Systematic Theology from a central place in the curriculum, including both the study of the history of doctrine, and teaching from and for a particular theological tradition. This is a major problem which, in our own estimation, means that students increasingly conclude their seminary studies without having given specific and intentional reflection to the formulation of the faith. They leave unequipped to do theology.

Another 1997 contribution to the discussion of theological education comes from Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire and Penny Long Marler. In *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), they inquire into the formation of theological students. While there is no doubt that the faculty, the curriculum, the library and other factors are all critical to this process, this study focuses on the impact of organizational culture. By *culture* they mean the "worldviews, beliefs, ritual practices, ceremonies, art and architecture, language and patterns of everyday interaction" that shape and direct the life of the academic community.

Through an examination of two very different schools, the authors document the formative role of culture. One school is distinctly evangelical and is so designated in the study--which keeps secret the actual names of the schools. The other is identified as mainline. The former is strongly and traditionally Reformed in its identity; the latter is self-consciously liberal. Through accounts of classroom activities, community life and faculty meetings, the four researchers bring together three years of observations in a study that effectively supports

their thesis: however different the two schools are, their cultures play a formative role in the educational process.

Theological schools are primarily involved in the mediation of a particular culture. And, in both schools, students who have sufficient exposure to the elements of the respective organizational culture are changed. Furthermore, while they do not usually adopt the whole of the prevailing institutional ethos, most students make it substantially their own, or at least integrate that culture with the perspectives that they had when they began their studies.

The authors note that while faculty are the primary purveyors of the culture, they are not necessarily the manufacturers of that culture. Administrative practices, church connections, historical patterns, and the buildings themselves may have much to do with the character of that culture. But the faculty remain the primary means by which students are exposed to the school's culture.

“Some students are hardly influenced by their seminary's culture because of a lack of significant encounter with that culture. In other words, the impact of the seminary's culture is largely dependent on the level of exposure to it by the student. One must *be there* to be formed by it . . .”

With the shift away from full-time seminary study, however, both of these schools are probably losing their capacity to shape, fundamentally, the life of their students. Some students are hardly influenced by their seminary's culture because of a lack of significant encounter with that culture (266). In other words, the impact of the seminary's culture is largely dependent on the level of exposure to it by the student. One must *be there* to be formed by it--

thus the book's title.

This study reminds us of the critical place of culture in academic institutions and of the need for more intentional reflection on that culture--both how it develops and how it can be made more healthy (concerns also of both Oden and Chopp). It is thus also a call to consider what impact theological schools are able to have when students are increasingly absent from the schools from which they are purportedly being educated.

Readers should not miss *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, edited by D.G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996). Their title is a vital contribution to the discussion about the state and character of theological education for evangelicals and as such is a critical part of the current conversation about the history and character of evangelicalism. It is dense and well-informed throughout.

Evangelical theological schools now constitute 30% of the accredited institutions within the Association of Theological Schools and comprise over 50% of the students, in part because the five largest seminaries in North America and the two largest in Canada (Regent and Tyndale) are evangelical. If one looked only at numerical growth, one would detect no crisis in evangelical theological education. But this book argues that theological education within evangelicalism is in crisis and that that crisis is largely a reflection of the assumptions and norms established in the experience and practice of previous generations of evangelicals (17). On this account, one is likely to encounter some common themes among evangelical schools: a tension between the laity and the clergy; the central place of Scripture with the abiding conviction that theology matters; and, of course, the usual debate about the right relationship of scholarship, piety and practical application.

The book includes an examination of theological education within various streams of evangelicalism, but one gets the sense that two models in particular capture the fundamental issues: that of the Presbyterians, who sought through theological education to form the scholar-pastor, and that of the Methodists, whose goal was to form the effective

“Christian worker.” Those familiar with the Methodist or Wesleyan-Holiness stream know of the commonly-found distrust of theological schools that is rooted in fear that scholarship will undermine practical training and personal piety.

Yet personal piety, the authentic experience of God's grace, has always been viewed as essential within every stream of evangelical theological education. The debate focuses instead upon whether or not scholarly activity is a threat or a means toward genuine piety. Luther, for example, was a scholar-pastor who would have been unequivocal on the need for personal piety, and the same could be said

“With sixty-three self-professed evangelical schools in North America, including a dozen in Canada, one wonders if evangelical seminaries have proliferated to a point where their effectiveness might be jeopardized . . . Do evangelical schools have the resolve to be selective in their admissions and evaluation so that those who eventually graduate truly offer extraordinary depth of piety, competence for ministry and theological integrity? Seminaries will accomplish this ideal only if they reject the western god of pragmatism.”

of the Puritans with their call for the learned pastor. But throughout the modern era the debate has continued, fuelled in part--as James E. Bradley notes in one of the best essays in this collection--by American pragmatism and by the anti-intellectualism of North American revivalism.

It is clear, though, that evangelical theological education has been and will be at its best when it is able to wed genuine piety with sound scholarship and practicality--the competencies of the pastoral

ministry. This conception of good theological education comes through effectively in the three essays on Spiritual Formation and Theological Education--perhaps the strongest part of the book. (Canadian and Canada-based readers will be happy to find a review of the situation in Canada authored by the late George A. Rawlyk. Rawlyk chronicles the rise of “liberal” Protestantism, noting that by the 1920s virtually every academically recognized theological school in Canada was in liberal hands. By 1990, however, there were as many students in evangelical schools as non-evangelical and by that time evangelical theological education was, in his mind, growing ever stronger.)

An obvious omission in this otherwise-excellent book relates to the question of appropriate growth within evangelical theological education. With sixty-three self-professed evangelical schools in North America, including a dozen in Canada, one wonders if evangelical seminaries have proliferated to a point where their effectiveness might be jeopardized. Does the church really need the number of ministerial candidates that are graduating from these schools? Are financial pressures leading to lax admissions policies? Do evangelical schools have the resolve to be selective in their admissions and evaluation so that those who eventually graduate truly offer extraordinary depth of piety, competence for ministry and theological integrity? Seminaries will accomplish this ideal only if they reject the western god of pragmatism.

### **Christian Liberal Arts Education**

The 1980s saw a plethora of books about Christian liberal arts education. In the subsequent decade, we have not seen so many. Perhaps the increasing maturity of what is now the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities has eliminated the need for as much discussion as was once the case. Still, one would expect the increasing legitimacy of Christian liberal arts education in Canada to spark more written conversation here than we have seen so far. Nevertheless a few worthwhile titles, including the Canadian Festschrift with which we deal first, have appeared and deserve

recommendation.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Concordia University College of Alberta, faculty there produced a volume of essays on the connections between faith and various academic disciplines. Neil Querengesser, the campus pastor at Concordia, has edited *Pathways of Grace and Knowledge* (Edmonton: Concordia University College, 1996). Not all the essays in this collection will give readers value for their time, but at least three of the more general essays warrant mention here. In "Concordia's Historical Roots: From the Reformation to the Present" (1-17), Richard Kraemer, Concordia's President, places Concordia's history in the context of the Reformation, its educational outworkings (especially in the curriculum reforms initiated by Luther at Wittenberg), and Lutheran educational initiatives in the United States following Lutheran immigration to Missouri in 1839. Those wanting a summary of Lutheran efforts in education would do well to read Kraemer's chapter.

Two essays address the vocation of teaching. Bernie Potvin, who recently left Concordia for the Baptist Union's Church Resource Centre in Calgary, contributes "Teaching for Grace and the Moral Order" (114-28). Potvin argues that in the face of postmodern relativism, professors must be attuned to plurality. But he cautions that we must also affirm wisdom, grace and moral order. In "Grace Under Pressure: The Christian Teacher's Vocational Task" (92-113), Jim Parsons and Tara Fenwick exhort teachers to follow four principles: (1) build "family relationships" in the classroom; (2) "get real, get relevant," by which they mean that professors should remember that students have lives outside the classroom; (3) "politicize the world," that is, help students reconcile their course content with the world they live in; and (4) accept and recognize your gifts and limitations, that is, "actively celebrate your vocation" as a teacher in higher education.

Under the editorship of David Gill, the successive occupants of the J. Omar Good Chair at Juniata College present *Should God Get Tenure?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). Like the Concordia volume, this volume gathers essays that

attempt to address questions of Christian faith in higher education. Also, like the Concordia volume, the quality varies considerably. *Should God Get Tenure?* includes some outstanding essays, notably David Gill's introduction, Richard Mouw's "Evangelical Civility and the Academic Calling," and Mark Noll's "The Evangelical Mind in America" (much of which appeared in his *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*).

Mouw's essay in particular connects clearly with concerns raised by Rebecca Chopp in *Saving Work*. Mouw agrees with Mark Noll's call for an evangelical mind, but he also calls for civility. Here is the point of connection with Chopp's concerns: the civility that Mouw seeks finds its roots in academic spirituality. Summarizing Mark Schwehn's *Exiles From Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation*, Mouw writes that the great academic communities of the past were first of all communities, and second were "undergirded by such 'spiritual' values as humility, faith, self-denial and love," qualities sustained by "affections, liturgical practices, and symbol systems that are intimately intertwined with religious convictions" (119). At a time when the desire to achieve respectability within the Canadian academy tempts many of us in CETA, we all need to hear Mouw (and Schwehn) clearly on this question of what undergirds our academic work and our institutions.

In May 1994, professors in education programs of what is now the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities gathered for their first biennial conference at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. The proceedings of that first meeting and a second at Azusa Pacific University (in May 1996) have now appeared as *Nurturing Reflective Christians to Teach*, ed. Daniel C. Elliott (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), and *Nurturing Christians as Reflective Educators*, ed. Daniel C. Elliott and Trinity Western University's Harro van Brummelen (Washington, DC: Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities, 1997). While these essays come from education specialists, many still warrant a reading by anyone interested in improving the teaching of theology and religion, primarily because they focus on the development of

teachers who teach out of a comprehensive Christian world and life view. As one would expect from conference proceedings, quality varies, but quality remains in evidence, especially in the second, rather substantial volume.

### Other Titles of Interest

We are left with four excellent, but less-easily-classified, volumes. Any readers who work with university students will likely find the first of these helpful. In *The Abandoned Generation*, William H. Willimon and Thomas H. Naylor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) focus on American university education but their modest book has application to the Canadian scene as well. They begin by surveying various problems on public university campuses, arguing, for example, that widespread binge drinking is but a symptom of a deeper malaise:

Broken homes, teachers who don't teach, the failure to integrate the residential and academic components of college life, the professionalization of college athletics, grade inflation, curriculum sprawl, and the absence of community on campus are all important pieces of the puzzle. (14-15)

For Willimon and Naylor, even these problems remain secondary. For them

above all is the abandonment by higher education of the moral, character-related aspects of education, the widespread but, we believe, erroneous assumption on the part of administrators that it is possible to have a college or a university without having an opinion on what sort of people ought to be produced by that institution. (15)

Concern for this lack of values pervades the whole of *The Abandoned Generation*. They skewer the popular views that an institution and what happens there can be value-neutral (42), that students are the best judges of what has lasting value (52) and that the moral character of professors has no bearing on

the outcomes of higher education (56).

As Potvin, Parsons and Fenwick all did in the Concordia volume, Willimon and Naylor point their readers to the relationship between the teacher and the student as a key to addressing the loss of meaning in higher education: "We believe that the path forward begins with a look backward, back to the basic unit of education, namely, the teacher engaged with a student. That is the source from which education's power flows, the holy moment at the heart of the enterprise" (84). While it may seem out of place to allude openly to Philippians 4:8 in a book about higher education, Naylor and Willimon do so. They claim that "we must not abdicate our responsibility to serve the social order through sustained discussion of what is good, what is true, and what is beautiful" (126).

Willimon and Naylor offer four lines of solution to the problems they catalogue early in the book: shrinking and humanizing institutions of learning; emphasizing teaching; revising and focusing the curriculum around larger questions of meaning; and developing learning communities. We may have heard their solutions proposed before. Certainly the language of "learning communities" has spread across Canadian education and Canadian Christian higher education in particular. But their expressions are fresh and the problems they identify remain.

Steven Garber approaches the same questions as Willimon and Naylor, but directs *The Fabric of Faithfulness* to university and college students themselves (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996). CER readers may not find much new in this paperback, but in treating Christian worldview as inseparable from Christian behaviour, Garber separates his title from many books purporting to deal with worldviews. Furthermore, in one stroke, he addresses the very questions of meaning that, according to Willimon and Naylor, the universities themselves have abandoned. Most Christian university students would benefit from a reading of Garber's book.

We note the volume that Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian have edited, *Models for Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). This work is unique in that it provides

an assessment of Christian schools from the perspective of the specific religious or denominational tradition with which they are affiliated. Monographs include introductory essays that examine how a particular theological heritage might contribute to higher education followed by historical narratives that consider schools within that tradition.

Each of these narratives responds to critical questions. How has faith and learning been integrated within the context of schools within these diverse traditions? How has the theological or denominational tradition shaped and informed a model of higher education, making it distinctive? How has this shaping been a factor in the success of these institutions (one notes the assumption that a distinctive denominational heritage is a critical factor in this success)? And how has the faith commitment enabled these Christian colleges to achieve academic excellence? Most colleges that were once church-oriented have long since abandoned their confessional heritage in favour of a pursuit of truth in the tradition of the Enlightenment. But the colleges described in this study have chosen to sustain a vital sense of their spiritual, theological and denominational heritage along with a commitment to academic excellence.

The underlying premise in *Models for Christian Higher Education* is that there is no such thing as generic Christian education. Indeed, a major strength of the study is the appreciation that Christian faith is expressed within the context of specific faith communions. The schools described are classified as Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Mennonite, Evangelical/Interdenominational, Wesleyan/Holiness or Baptist/Restorationist. Both the similarities and the differences of each school's experience are instructive. Readers may find remarkable how each college has changed since its early years. And though each of the schools developed along a unique path, there were some common patterns.

Each school, for example, became less parochial and more inclined to embrace the broader cultural and academic community. This very "opening" became critical to academic success. These schools became more accommodating to culture even

though most were established in a counter-cultural mode. In choosing to become less separatist, however, they have effectively become institutions in which learning, study and formation is more intentionally geared towards the transformation of culture.

For some this broadened outlook was a matter of commitment to a broader appreciation of the nature of the church. For others it was strategic. For example, the leaders of Fresno Pacific College, a Mennonite Brethren school, perceived a lack of intellectual, financial and student resources within their denominational constituency. Seeing that lack, they concluded that to sustain a strong college they had to expand their financial and student base.

Read together, the historical narratives lead to another observation: strong leaders are needed--whether in the office of the president or the dean or on the board of trustees--to sustain the dual commitment to a faith tradition and to academic excellence.

But while there were common themes, there were also some notable differences between the schools. In some cases schools arose within traditions that had a deep commitment to and passion for education, such as the Roman Catholic and Reformed. In other cases, the schools managed to succeed despite a denominational constituency that had historically been apprehensive about the intellect and higher education. We expected to discover two distinct tendencies or temptations in this regard--that those traditions that affirmed education might have schools that tended towards dry scholasticism and that schools within traditions apprehensive about education might have to fight battles against sentimental pietism or revivalism. But while the latter is surely true, there seems to be little indication of the former. The great danger to genuine academic excellence seems to come consistently from the pietistic side of the ledger.

Each case makes clear that the denominational heritage brought strengths but also limitations. The limitations were overcome and the strengths were optimized when leadership sustained a broader, more ecumenical spirit, and drew on resources from outside their specific traditions. Thus while *Models*

shows truly the absence of any such thing as generic Christian higher education, it also makes clear that excellence lies in the capacity to be particular without being sectarian.

Finally, we note *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, by Parker J. Palmer (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998). Like the other titles we have treated in this section, *The Courage to Teach* does not fit easily into the categories of "theological education" or "Christian liberal arts education," but it remains an important part of the collection in that it turns the attention away from institutions and the big picture to the individuals who are the heart and soul of education, the main subjects--in Chopp's language--of education: our students.

Parker Palmer is an astute observer of the craft of teaching and of teachers, and he is an engaging writer who effectively uses stories that prompt his readers' reflection on their own experiences as teachers. Palmer's thesis in *The Courage to Teach* is simple: our approach to teaching must include our giving specific and careful attention to the inner life. He seeks not so much to ask the *what* of teaching, but the *who*--not "how is this done" but "who is the teacher." As readers of Palmer's other books might expect, he refuses to accept that teaching can be reduced to technique. To teach well we must consider the inner life. Only then, he argues, can we truly serve as catalysts for learning communities to develop and for learning to occur in community--for Palmer, community is essential for learning.

Palmer calls the heart of this model *connectedness*. To thrive vocationally as teachers, we must live connected rather than disconnected lives. For Palmer, the danger is that we would be disconnected from our students, from the subject matter and from ourselves, living instead consumed by fear, which is the real enemy: fear of failure, fear that we will be found out, fear of insecurity. Palmer would have strengthened *The Courage to Teach* by including a focused discussion on how to overcome this fear and find the connectedness of which he speaks. But this omission is minor. The message of Palmer's book remains clear: teaching requires courage, and courage is only found when those of us

who teach come to terms with the inner landscape.

### Canadian Christian Higher Education

In view of the ideas presented in these many books, we want to ask now what directions Christians in Canadian higher education are headed or ought to be headed, whether they are connected to confessional or public institutions. How do we as individuals and institutions respond to the circumstances within which we presently find ourselves and to the challenges we face in the next several years?

First, both administrators and faculty would benefit from reading some of the contributions to this significant conversation about theological and Christian liberal arts education. Administrators perhaps are inclined already to read such books as these we have reviewed. But faculty also need to be astute observers of the more global shifts occurring in areas as diverse as institutional mission, tight budgets and changing student demographics. Faculty must not think that they are called only to teach; they can no longer afford such a luxury (if they ever could).

The books reviewed here represent a diverse range of opinion about how we must shape our institutions of higher Christian learning. They give the reader a clear sense that our institutions of theological and liberal arts education ought to maintain a legitimate confidence that, in some sense, we still can and must speak the truth. In the face of pluralism and postmodernity and the calls we hear for students to construct their own knowledge, we should remain committed to models of education that reserve space for transmitting to another generation that which we have received and which is most worthwhile. At the same time, we must recollect that Christians have an historic commitment to education that transforms. The genius of good education is found in the capacity to sustain and bear fruit from the tension between depth of piety and critical scholarship. The focus of true education is found in the knowledge of God, knowledge of self and an understanding of society and culture. Conservative educators call for transmission.

Radical educators call for transformation. The books reviewed above give room--more than that, a mandate--for both transmission and transformation.

One cannot read this much about higher education and not be impressed that money plays a role in the waxing and waning of institutions. Fiscal concerns have pushed institutions of Christian higher education in Canada to view courses and whole programs more as means of raising funds than as means of fulfilling institutional missions. We detect in these readings (and in our own observations) a need for a reorientation of budget priorities so that they become centrally focused on institutional mission statements and faculty development. Focused in this way, funding remains essential to the educational enterprise. We need to think creatively and courageously about fiscal questions. To sustain excellence in our programs and institutions, to provide faculty remuneration that allows them to live in some dignity, our institutions must allocate appropriately the resources they do have and they must persuade potential donors that education is worthy of their investments.

Finally, one cannot read the volumes we have reviewed and then ignore the decisive role that students have in our institutions. We may hear Rebecca Chopp reminding us that students are, in one sense, the subjects we teach, or we may hear Parker Palmer reminding us as teachers to maintain our interior life. The majority of these titles are about educational institutions, but they are also about that extraordinary moment between teacher and student when learning takes place. Anyone in the business of teaching and learning would be rewarded abundantly for time spent in the volumes we have reviewed.

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