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Glanzer and Ream's "Christianity and Moral Identity in Higher Education" - Book Review

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timely book given the budgetary reductions and the increased focus on accountability that are the daily fare of most school leaders who may be tempted to assume that a state of crisis is the “new normal.” It will be a poignant read for individuals who are wrestling with their own “reservoirs of hope.” The book also offers important insights for those who prepare leaders and those who support them in the field. Many outside education, especially those in nonprofit, public service, and religious leadership roles, are also likely to find much of their internal world reflected in these pages. If nothing else, any work that encourages school leaders to tell their stories, especially to one another, and to be keenly aware of their need to refill their personal reservoirs of hope is a laudable contribution.

*Gary Sehorn*

**Perry L. Glanzer and Todd C. Ream**

*Christianity and Moral Identity in Higher Education*

*New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009 hb 286pp $85.00*  

Readers familiar with the direction of Glanzer and Ream’s scholarship over the last several years will welcome this addition to their growing corpus of works related to Christian education. In *Moral Identity*, they explore a sobering shift, noting how universities once saw moral formation of students as their mission or part of their mission but today claim no such mandate. In fact, Glanzer and Ream find many universities today going to some lengths to avoid being involved in that task at all.

Glanzer and Ream begin their book by clarifying what they mean by *moral development and moral education*. They note the influence of Lawrence Kohlberg, other stage theorists, and various cognitive psychologists on contemporary thinking about moral education. And they point out how these understandings—which actually deny a role for what Glanzer and Ream call moral education—have shortchanged society. In contrast to such understandings of moral development, they argue for a more Aristotelian and biblical approach that considers moral behavior, not just moral reasoning, as evidence of moral development.

Having made clear both this important distinction and which side of it they prefer, they then connect moral formation to identity. They distinguish three kinds of identity in which universities typically engage (p. 20). First, universities want to produce graduates who will function well in their chosen professions. Some higher educators identify a second purpose by identifying such qualities as citizenship and neighborliness. A few educators and institutions identify a third purpose: to shape good people.

In chapter two Glanzer and Ream provide the historical background to the decline—some might say kidnapping—of the third kind of formation. They argue quite persuasively that, while most educators agreed that the purpose of colleges was moral formation, it was disagreement about moral traditions that led to the
situation we see today. The competing claims of Christian, Enlightenment, and democratic traditions led to compromises and ultimately to large-scale abandonment of the development of moral identity as a suitable aim for higher education.

Chapters three and four return to Kohlberg as well as some well-known observers and critics of higher education, ranging from Jacques Barzun to Stanley Fish. Here Ream and Glanzer open up and explore a concept important to the remainder of their argument, what they call “less than human” moral education. Less-than-human moral education is that which deludes itself into thinking that universities can “engage in the science of objective, tradition-free moral development” (p. 67).

Chapter five begins the second section of the book. The kernel of the book’s purpose appears here with the argument that more human moral education must ground itself in tradition and in community. Glanzer and Ream eschew such sources of identity as citizenship, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as sufficient grounds for moral education. In chapters five and six, readers will find a handful of examples of colleges that have tried to get it right but, on our authors’ terms, still offer moral education that is less than fully human.

Readers start to get at the heart of Moral Identity in the next chapters, where Ream and Glanzer offer more detailed appraisals of a few colleges from the 156 colleges whose materials they studied (all members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities or Lilly Fellows Program). Based on their reading of published materials, the authors chose nine colleges to visit: Bethel, Calvin, Eastern Mennonite, George Fox, St. Olaf, Seattle Pacific, Univ. of Dallas, Univ. of St. Thomas, and Xavier University. These institutions all state—in varying language—that they aim at the development of moral character.

Many of Ream and Glanzer’s readers will have followed the last decade’s discussion of whether Christian higher education has lost its way. For some students of this question, two titles catch the debate. James Burtchaell began the current round of discussion with his 1998 book, The Dying of the Light (Eerdmans). Robert Benne answered Burtchaell with his 2001 title, Quality with Soul (Eerdmans), and several others have raised their voices since Benne’s title appeared. For those unfamiliar with the titles, Burtchaell pointed to colleges that, in his view, had abandoned their Christian mission. Benne provided examples of the opposite. Ream and Glanzer echo Benne’s language with a major subheading in chapter seven: “Quality with Soul in Moral Education: Profiles from Our Case Studies.” Readers dismayed by Burtchaell’s report or encouraged by Benne’s will take special joy in the 25 pages of chapter seven given to reporting on the condition of the campuses that Glanzer and Ream visited while writing this book. In their view, some colleges still “seek to add a moral vision to students’ selves that does not merely attempt to strip away students’ humanity, but actually seeks to offer students the opportunity to enrich and even strengthen portions of it” (p. 222). These colleges go about their tasks in different ways, and they use different language to describe their specific missions, but in Glanzer and Ream’s terms they offer a more human approach to moral education.

Early in Christianity and Moral Identity in Higher Education, Ream and Glanzer list the three audiences they hope will find their book useful: those in the disciplines
that ask what it means to be human, those who study higher education, and faculty and administrators in Christian colleges and universities. On my reading, this volume will appeal to all three audiences. Without doubt, Christian college and university libraries should have *Moral Identity* in their collections. But individual faculty and whole departments would do well to read and discuss this title as well. According to *Moral Identity*, the light has not died. Anyone needing reminding of that claim, or evidence for that claim, will take courage from this excellent volume.

Ken Badley

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Dean R. Hansen and Brent Alan Mai

*Together: Preparing Christian Educators for the Future*

Portland, OR: Concordia University 2011 pb 240 pp


Joel D. Heck and Angus J. L. Menuge

*Learning at the Foot of the Cross: A Lutheran Vision for Education*

Austin, TX: Concordia University Press 2011 pb 199 pp

ISBN: 978-188184814-1

*Together* and *Learning at the Foot of the Cross* are two sides to the same Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) educational coin. The authors of both texts set out to shepherd their readers in the fine points of Lutheran education. As both a student and educator in the LCMS system, I was quite interested to read both texts. I was not disappointed and felt fed by both through somewhat contrasting means. In *Together*, the authors, who are primarily professors at Concordia University System schools or parish workers, present the history, current issues, and future of the director of Christian education (DCE) in the LCMS. Much of the book was spent on defining the role that DCEs play in the church. The authors of *Together* have written the book as a rallying cry for current and future DCEs to know who they are and to embrace the calling that God has given them as religious education specialists in Lutheran congregations. As one married to a director of Christian education, I found myself pleasantly encouraged by the heart of the authors, who also are in DCE leadership within the LCMS. It was evident that *Together* was written to speak to the soul of the DCE and to encourage them in their often diverse roles, including administrator, age group specialist, care action minister, educational program resource, musician, pastoral support, teacher, and volunteer specialist (p. 154).

In a contrasting style, *Learning at the Foot of the Cross* was presented by the various authors, predominantly professors from Concordia University System schools and from other institutions of Lutheran higher education, as a theological and philosophical treatise on what it means to be a Lutheran and an educator. While *Together* speaks to the heart of the educator, *Learning at the Foot of the Cross* has a much more academic tone. The authors present a rigorous and expansive philoso-