

Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education

Volume 8 | Issue 1

Article 6

2018

Reviewing *Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age*

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Recommended Citation

Bosch, Chancey (2018). Reviewing *Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age*. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education*, 8(1), 39-43. Retrieved from http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/vol8/iss1/6

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REVIEWS

Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age. By Perry L. Glanzer, Nathan F. Alleman, and Todd C. Ream. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 384 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5161-4 (HARDCOVER) \$40.

*T*he 60 pages of notes and references at the end of this book serve as the proper beginning to review *Restoring the Soul of the University* (2017) by Perry L. Glanzer, Nathan F. Alleman, and Todd C. Ream. The extensive list of resources serves as evidence of this book's academic, scholarly, and source driven examination of the metaphysical in the personified higher education institution. Charles Habib Malik's *A Christian Critique of the University* (1982) may have been a call for Glanzer, Alleman, and Ream's research, structure, and strategy. The immediate profit of the research-driven writing is the anchoring of an institutional story, which is usually misunderstood, misrepresented, and mystified. The work provides much-needed facts for what many lack, validation to what many feel, and brainstorming for what many dream.

The three authors, Dr. Perry Glanzer, Dr. Nathan Alleman, and Dr. Todd Ream, share a connection to Baylor University and the profession of Christian education. They begin the book with a dedication to the educators and individuals who helped them build their own experience and character and end the book with an explicit yearning for us all to experience an educational community complete with a redeemed soul, mission, and pursuit. These bookends serve to anchor the tough task of creating a structure to not only the soul's expression but also the expression of the institution's soul.

The text is organized into three parts: Part One: Building the University, Part Two: The Fragmentation of the Multiversity, and Part Three: Restoring the Soul of the University. This highly organized structure serves as cognitive boundaries and emotional safety to explore the creation, destruction, and redemption of Christian higher

education. It is strenuous not to identify the process in higher education as an analogy for the life of an individual. Moreover, it is beneficial to understand the individual journey towards redemption as a schema for *Restoring the Soul of the University*.

In Part One, the authors connect the philosophical underpinnings of the text to the dream of Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141), which was man's pursuit of wisdom through an intellectual friendship with a perfect God for a personal restoration of God's divine image (pp. 20-21). Narrative, symbols, and metaphor described this philosophical underpinning as institutions of higher learning were established and multiplied throughout the developing world.

Wisdom was the primary construct in the development of learning systems and the formation of higher education. Wisdom's source and purpose are presented as the foundation for personal growth. The pursuit of wisdom led to the creation of educational communities and academic disciplines. Theology was quickly separated from other disciplines and placed in an elevated position as a metaphorical queen residing in a tower overseeing her castle of education. The metaphorical model of theology became the model for geographical iterations of institutional education. However, the reformation's religious fragmentation and the enlightenment's political fragmentation fractured the educational structure. 1

With no central Biblical interpretation, wisdom expanded, and theology specialized; the queen of the tower lost its position. With theologically informed wisdom secluded to a silo, "nature and not nature's God provided freedom" (p. 55). An extension of the natural order of things became the worldview through which nationalization would rise, and the purpose of the educational community would shift to the good of the state's sovereignty and not the good of the individual's soul. A multiversity was created from growing conflict about the metaphysical, resulting in the removal of theology from the curriculum. The result was the educational shift from Hugh of St. Victor's description of a divine friendship restoring humanity as the perfect image of God to an institutional contract to produce practical knowledge for the nation state.

In Part Two, the authors delineate the institutional components experiencing fragmentation, including the professor, the students, the

curriculum, administration, athletics, and competition. “Fragmentation” is an appropriate term for the second part of the book. It describes the commonality of each element in the university to drift away from a coherent vision, far from the dreams of early Christian educational thought and in disregard to the effort expended to establish universities.

Even the newly constructed multiversity, created by a fragmented soul, would fragment itself. The professor has lost sight of the unifying mission and is relegated to self-reliance and sustainability. The emphasis on research has made the professor servant to the institution and the national agenda, instead of to the wisdom, the soul, and humanity’s need to reflect the image of God. The curriculum has become more esoteric with departments functioning as silos, without any coherence with the Creator. Students have become consumers of student affairs/student services initiatives. Their emotional, physical, spiritual, and moral needs have been separated, served by different departments. The services they receive align to nationally desired standards, behaviors, ethics, and values, instead of with divine wisdom. Administrators are isolated from the community as leadership is specialized, decentralized, and fragmented from the image making process. Athletics has become the religion of the university, providing a source of growth, funding, energy, purpose, and identity. Institutional power and prestige are benefits of athletic commercialization and external contracts. Competition with other universities and businesses is a self-serving agenda. It is its own machine, loosely connected by fragmented parts.

In Part Three, the authors present a proposal for change in the differentiated elements outlined in the previous section. Using terminology like “reimagining,” the authors subconsciously shift the reader into the role of Hugh of St. Victor, dreaming of what a unified institution could accomplish if its theology, professors, administrators, and curriculum pursued being image bearers of God. Restoring the soul of the university begins with reimagining what it would take.

Foremost, theology would need to return to the institution, but not as the queen in the tower, but rather as the servant to the institution. As a servant, theology can restore intellectual pursuit, process, and product. Theology cannot rest in the confines of a silo, a department, or a single stakeholder group. The vocation of education needs to return

the professor to a profession of being an image bearer of God and to a practice transcending academic domains. Leadership needs to regain divine congruence between the narrative, symbols, and metaphors and the names, rituals, and stories they use. The disciplines need to work together and no longer quarrel over the spoils of enrollment. General education and the liberal arts need to free the individual to experience and imitate God. They need to create humility in students established in divine virtue. The co-curricular must form a community that protects all stakeholders. A greenhouse that exaggerates conditions for growth, softens external climate, and prepares the student for image bearing.

Overall, the book is an excellent and organized proposal for not only the existence of a university's soul, but also for the rise, fall, and future hope of the university. *A Christian Critique of the University* concludes with the question "What then can be done?" (1982, p. 109). For any stakeholder involved in higher education, this may be an answer. Agreement with the authors' few assumptions makes the book's position stronger. First, the philosophy described by Hugh of St. Victor is the premise from which the book launches. The reader is better served to agree with the purpose of education. However, if taken as only a historical perspective, the book still gives the reader understanding.

Second, to read this work is a decision to examine oneself, the Christian higher education institution, and the combination of both within contextual society. The reader will find a foundation to anchor drifting thoughts, a structure to organize perspective, and a path to follow. A reader looking to establish a secular soul, or center, to the higher education institution may stand at odds with the Biblical foundation for humanity and goal of the educational process. Without these, the process of restoring the soul may be lost. Last, the reader accepting the philosophical underpinnings and the divine purpose of man should be prepared to reflect on personal and professional elements. A cognitive process and behavioral practice may lead to an individual restoration of the soul and a clearer reflection of the Creator.

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