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Reviewing *The Cruciform Faculty: The Making of a Christian Professor*

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The Cruciform Faculty: The Making of a Christian Professor. By Mark H. Heinemann, James R. Estep, Jr., Mark A. Maddix, Octavio J. Esqueda. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2016. 61 pp. ISBN 978-1-68123-679-7 (PAPERBACK) \$20.

*T*he *Cruciform Faculty*—by Mark H. Heinemann, James R. Estep, Jr. Mark A. Maddix, Octavio J. Esqueda—offers valuable insights in developing Christian professors today. The author’s foundational premise asserts a professor’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ transforms his or her profession into a calling, which informs and requires a course of action as a teacher, scholar, mentor, and servant. These very roles define the criteria by which most faculty are promoted and tenured in state and religious institutions. According to the authors, this book “provides a concise portrait of the general role of faculty from a distinctively evangelical Christian perspective, using the metaphor of being formed by the cross, that is, cruciform” (2016, p. xii).

To fill the role of professor, James Estep, Jr., encourages faculty to integrate their Christian faith with the various aspects of their personal and public lives. Challenging the secular teaching perspective, Estep asks: Do faculty acknowledge a calling on their lives or is teaching approached as career, and do faculty take on a pastoral role as a professor or is professorship a professional pursuit? Along with such questions, Estep offers practical advice on spiritual formation in various contexts.

Octavio Javier Esqueda reflects on essential principles for cruciform teachers. He recommends faculty develop a teaching philosophy underpinned by a Christian worldview informed by affirmations such as (1) academic inquiry is based on God’s truth, and all academic disciplines belong to Him; (2) teaching and learning are an indivisible process—an exchange within a community, where teachers and learners grow together; (3) faculty teach who they are through their transparency and interaction with students; and, (4) faculty demonstrate whose they are in their personal and professional demonstration of faith. Though mastery of content is important, Esqueda reminds faculty the goal of teaching is student learning. The way students learn should dictate the way professors

teach. The book would be strengthened by a further discussion on how to engage this generation through effective teaching strategies and best practices.

James Estep, Jr., next considers the Christian scholar. Faculty influence can help transform the academy and the Church. He contends faculty should be knowledgeable, current, and relevant in the classroom, academia, the church, and community. Their knowledge and wisdom combat anti-intellectualism found in the church and larger society. Estep articulates the challenges to the Christian scholar in publishing. Denominational publications can hold rigid, dogmatic positions resisting different perspectives and new findings. Novice scholars must find their niches within the publishing world where peers compete to voice their views and present their research. Finally, every academic institution has a culture with a given set of values, stated or implied. Research and scholarly publications may be institutional goals, but the lack of financial support or release time leaves the onus on the individual faculty member's initiative, time, and personal funding.

Mark Heinemann examines mentorship as “giving and receiving mutual help growing as learners and as persons on a spiritual journey” (p. 36). In such an exchange, both grow in their understanding of teaching and learning. Heinemann reminds faculty these relationships must be in trust-safe environment. He suggests mentors focus on foundational, life-changing principles that work in virtually all relationships, rather than a methodological approach alone. Heinemann notes the importance of seasoned faculty sharing research-based instructional strategies with their younger counterparts. Mentorship with students also should not be narrowly defined to subject matter, but have a broader scope, including study techniques, research, resume writing, and professional development. Such a relationship offers an excellent opportunity for further spiritual formation. Heinemann, citing Willimon and Naylor, reiterates all professors are “producers of character whether we like it or not” (1995, p. 122).

Mark Maddix defines the professor's servant role as helping the body of Christ by giving one's gifts and talents for the sake of others. Christian higher education often places service as one of the benchmarks for faculty promotion and tenure. Servant-minded faculty are willing to sacrifice to serve their institutions. Typical servant roles might include serving on and

leading committees; academic advising and mentoring; participating with students in extracurricular activities; and serving outside the institution in one's profession, church, and community. Service and service learning offers meaningful experiences for students and faculty alike. Partnerships with local agencies serving the community can transform both students and organizations. Interestingly, Maddix cites Greenleaf's *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (1977, p.164). He points out not all faculty are suited for this role of serving others and the institution. Greenleaf suggests some faculty are better suited serving through other pursuits, such as research.

Having guided faculty through the promotion and tenure process for over a decade, I found *The Cruciform Faculty: The Making of a Christian Professor* valuable. It's a primer for new faculty joining faith-based schools. It is especially helpful for prompting faculty coming from the secular academy into Christian higher education to reconsider their roles, including how they might relate to their students pastorally. The book offers readers the opportunity to consider matching their calling and gifting with various aspects of the cruciform faculty. The authors' reflections may offer a wider set of considerations for promotion and tenure committees within the Christian academy, and ones which intersect the integration of faith in the profession. The book can refresh veteran professors, reminding us of why we teach.

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Dr. Even Culp earned his B.S. in Communication (1974) and his M.S. (1975) in Instructional Design from Florida State University. He earned his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Tulsa. Dr. Culp has taught a variety of courses in the communication area over the past 40 years and now serves as the Director of the Center for Faculty Excellence

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