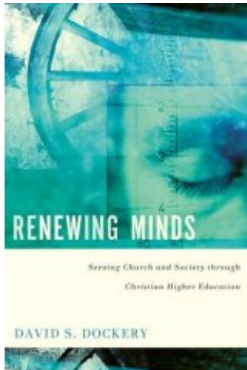


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## Why Do We Need Christian Higher Education?

Monday, October 15, 2007



Martin Luther once warned Christians with these words: “I greatly fear that schools for higher learning are wide gates to hell if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scripture and impress them on the young folk.” The great Reformer knew of the importance of Christian education and the development of Christian thinkers, but his great fear of schools as potential “wide gates to hell” is all too justified.

In his new book, *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education* [B&H Academic], David S. Dockery proposes that the Christian college or university should not be merely an academic institution with Christian teachers and Christian students, but instead it should be “the academic division of the kingdom enterprise.”

Dockery serves as president of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee and that school serves, in substance, as evidence of his vision for Christian higher education. Dockery’s central model is the Christian university, combining several disciplines of learning and professional study within its institutional reach. He proposes his own vision for making all of these areas of study accountable to Christian truth.

He also calls for the recovery of the Christian mind and the development of Christian thinkers:

*Our task will be intellectually challenging. The work is not easy, but it is faithful to the calling upon Christ-followers. There is no room for anti-intellectualism in Christian higher education. We are to have the mind of Christ, a concept that certainly requires us to think and wrestle with the challenging ideas of history and the issues of our day. To do otherwise would result in another generation of God’s people becoming ill-equipped for faithful thinking and service in this still-new century. A Christian worldview is needed to help interpret an ever-changing culture. Instead of allowing our thoughts to be captivated by culture, we must take every thought captive to Jesus Christ.*

To their shame, many Christian institutions of learning fall short of a model of responsible Christian scholarship. Dockery calls for a reversal of this trend and a reassertion of the scholarly vocation and responsibility.

In his words:

*Serious scholarship is often described as “a search for knowledge or a quest for truth,” phrases so familiar as to be clichés in higher education. Our task must not be described carelessly or flippantly. When we speak of scholarship from a Christian perspective, we speak of more than scholarship done by Christians. Rather, we speak of a passion for learning based on the supposition that all truth is God’s truth. Thus, as Christian scholars related together in a learning community, we are to seek to take every thought captive to Christ.*

But the recovery of Christian scholarship and the development of young Christian minds also requires the recovery of the vocation of the teacher. Even as many of the most prestigious academic institutions in the land elevate research above teaching, the Christian school can never forget the central role of the teacher in the educational process. At the same time, those teachers must be practicing scholars who model the academic vocation and the life of the mind.

Dockery explains:

*In the large majority of Christian universities, it is teaching that is rightly prized and prioritized, but we also need a complementary place for Christian scholarships. Rightly understood, Christian scholarship is not contrary to either faithful teaching or Christian piety. Christian scholarship provides a foundation for new discovery and creative teaching as well as the framework for passing on the unified truth essential to the advancement of Christianity.*

*This revealed truth is the foundation of all we believe, teach, and do. We believe that this God-revealed truth is the framework in which we understand and interpret our world, the events of human history as well as our responsibilities toward God and one another in this world. This is what it means for us to advance the Christian intellectual tradition and to love God with our hearts, our strength, and our minds.*

*Renewing Minds* is a genuine and helpful contribution to evangelical scholarship. Furthermore, it comes from one who leads a major Christian university and has earned the credibility to set forth his vision. This book should be read by pastors, parents, educators — and all who share a passion to see the renewal of Christian minds in this generation.

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PROGRAM NOTE: Dr. David S. Dockery, President of Union University and author of *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education*, will be our guest on today's edition of *The Albert Mohler Program*. Join the conversation with Dr. Dockery by listening and by calling the program with your comments or question.

Listen to the program [here](#).



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