

Burtchaell, James Tunstead. *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. xx+868 pp. Hardcover, \$45.00.

James Burtchaell's *Dying of the Light* is a tour de force on the topic of the withering of the relationship between various Christian denominations and the colleges that were founded with some connection to them. Following in the wake of George Marsden's *Soul of the American University*, Philip Gleason's *Contending With Modernity*, and Douglas Sloan's *Faith and Knowledge*, Burtchaell deals with the denominational disengagement of institutions with historic roots in the Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, and evangelical churches in the United States. Choosing those denominations, he admits, gave him a sampling of the traditions that founded the largest number of colleges and universities, but it forced him "to leave aside what may have been even more interesting stories: those of the Mennonites, Mormons, the Quakers, the Disciples of Christ, the Episcopalians, the Seventh-Day [sic] Adventists" (x).

Altogether the book tells the story of seventeen institutions. The schools selected were not only geographically and denominationally varied, but were also diverse in terms of size and prestige. Thus schools as varied as Dartmouth, Boston College, Millsaps, and Gettysburg were treated. In spite of the differences the schools, Burtchaell found a remarkable similarity in their stories.

Of special importance in the volume is the concluding chapter—"The Story within the Stories." That chapter sets forth the author's synthesized thoughts on the topic and is well worth reading by itself for those who do not have the time to wade through the volume's entire nine hundred pages.

Burtchaell discovered that not all of the schools were founded with the same fervor of denominational identity. Some of them, in fact, were more akin to community endeavors that held to their church connections because of their need for funding and students. But even those schools more closely related to their denominations found funds and students a good reason to keep the marriage alive. With the withering of those crucial needs, however, schools in both categories found it quite normal to gradually trade in their "embarrassing" denominational connections for academic respectability and freedom. While they may have achieved a certain amount of "respectability" in the transition, the book points out, they certainly did not achieve freedom. They had merely traded the perceived or actual control of a church for the definite control by outside secular agencies and a secular mind-set that contextualized all their activities.

Secularization did not take place instantaneously. Rather, it was a process that began when the faculty gradually became more dedicated to their academic disciplines than to their employing institutions. That left the administrators in charge of the religious aspects of their schools. Being busy people, however, the administrators delegated the responsibility to a new class of religious functionaries—chaplains, "Y" secretaries, and deans of students. Thus over time the essentially religious elements were sidelined.

Beyond being sidelined, Burtchaell demonstrates that religion came to be viewed pietistically. That had two results. First, religion became an individual matter rather than a collective endeavor. Second, pietism emphasized the affective

over the cognitive. The upshot was that religion became a matter of personal preference that had little or nothing to do with communal learning.

The book effectively illustrates the fact that secularization took place progressively across generations with committed Christians in the leadership. That leadership in nearly all cases appears to have been sincere in setting forth Christian platitudes, but as time progressed, the substance undergirding the platitudes became weaker and weaker until it finally ceased to exist.

Burtchaell's massive study is must reading for every person who is interested in the future of Christian higher education. While following in the line of research opened up by Marsden and others, this volume will hopefully not be the last in that sequence. It is to be hoped that some scholar will follow the challenge set forth by Burtchaell and examine the secularization process in the "even more interesting stories" of those schools belonging to denominations that are still quite closely tied to their founding organizations. In addition, Burtchaell never sought to provide "instruction on how to avoid the failures of the past (and present)." As he puts it, "that is not the purpose of this book" (851). While that is true, we look forward in anticipation to a volume that does undertake the task.

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Carro, Daniel, and Richard F. Wilson, eds. *Contemporary Gospel Accents: Doing Theology in Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia, and Latin America*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996. xv + 142 pp. Paperback, \$21.95.

In 1995 the Baptist International Conference on Theological Education was convened in Buenos Aires in conjunction with the Baptist World Alliance Congress. The commission responsible for organizing the meeting felt that there was a "profound need for a deliberate contextualization of our faith"(ix) and invited fourteen Baptist theological educators from the "southern" zones of earth: Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, to "speak for themselves." This book is comprised of the fourteen papers presented at the session, two introductory essays, a concluding summary, and a brief essay on the gospel and culture.

Obviously the theologians involved responded to the challenge and utilized the occasion to voice their concerns openly and freely. R. F. Wilson of Mercer University, in an introductory essay titled "Contextual Theology and Global Baptists," which appears to be motivated by a concern to prepare the "Western" church to accept the principle and reality of contextualization, and possibly also to counter the shock "which some Westerners might experience upon reading the papers," wrote, "Until now there have been no attempts to explore Baptist confession and practice in light of contextual theology" (10). Obviously some Baptist communities have done quite a little contextualizing, and this statement, in itself, sounds mild enough, but it really serves notice of the magnitude of the change some felt necessary.

Perhaps the flavor of the conference is better conveyed by a sampling of the kind of statements that recurred during the conference than by an attempted description.

"North Atlantic theologies are regarded as 'central theologies'; . . . others . . . are discerned as peripheral to the main issues of theology" (13).