

# *The Lost Idea of a University: Reflections on a Squandered Inheritance*

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Foreword by Stanley Hauerwas

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## Introduction:

Almost 20 years ago, George M. Marsden opened the eyes of scholars and administrators in Christian higher education to the imperiled nature of the religious identity of their institutions. James Tunstead Burtchaell would tell a comparable story four years later in *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of the Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Eerdmans, 1998). While most scholars and administrators knew that almost all of the oldest and most well-established colleges and universities in the United States once claimed religious roots, Marsden's *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford University Press, 1994) brought the details of this transformation from ties to the sacred to secularity into stark relief. However, part of what made his account so shocking to some is not that this transition took place but that it was initiated by leaders who believed they had the best interests of Christianity in mind.

These American Protestants, seeking the benefits offered by German academe, crossed the Atlantic in greater numbers as the nineteenth century progressed in search of the latest advances in knowing. In the eyes of the Western world, the Germans, according to Thomas Albert Howard, had won "the envy and emulation of scholars and educational leaders throughout the world" (*Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern University*, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 5). Howard goes on to argue that this envy was produced by the German application of scientific naturalism as the new methodological standard for establishing knowledge. Since what we could verify through our immediate senses became preeminent to this new science, theology came to be viewed as an "obstinate repository of darker times, yawning sinkholes in the path of progress" (p.2).

In contrast, during theology's reign as the Queen of the Sciences, the Christian narrative proved to be the definitive means by which knowledge was assessed and organized. As a result, knowledge was viewed as incomplete unless its place in some larger whole was properly identified. With the rise of scientific naturalism the impulse to reduce knowledge to smaller and smaller categories emerged. Theology's claim as the arbiter of the disciplines also became more and more difficult to justify. Eventually, theologians became satisfied if their work was even considered one among equals. In some universities, this position held. In other contexts, theology came to be referred to in broader and less confessional terms such as religion and then even religious studies (D. G. Hart's *The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies in American Higher Education*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). While the study of peoples professing to be religious would prove to be a legitimate scholarly endeavor, the doctrinal fabric upon which such beliefs were based was deemed obsolete.

Just as these new departmental homes were coming to be established, dissatisfaction with what came to be known as the modern research university poured forth. Although arguably sparked by the temper of their times, students in the late-1960s and early-1970s turned against their own

institutions in numbers and with an intensity previously unseen. Part of this dissatisfaction proved to be a sense of alienation that students perceived from their alma maters. Somewhere between feeling like just a number and the fragmented curricular and co-curricular lives they were being asked to lead, students at universities such as Columbia, Harvard, California-Berkeley, and Wisconsin-Madison (naming only a few) resorted to violence to make their case.

While student unrest has since subsided, faculty members continue to turn critical eyes upon their institutions. Often resorting to apocalyptic language to make their case, many faculty members with no sympathy for the role theology once played have argued that the university has lost its soul (for example, Frank Donoghue's *The Last Professor: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*, Fordham University Press, 2008; Stanley Fish's *Save the World On Your Own Time*, Oxford University Press, 2008; Harry Lewis' *Excellence Without a Soul: Does Liberal Education Have a Future*, PublicAffairs, 2007; Anthony Kronman's *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*, Yale University Press, 2008; and Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins*, Harvard University Press, 1997). One of the most recent critics, Mark C. Taylor, argued in *Crisis on Campus: A Bold Plan for Reforming Our Colleges and Universities* that "the education bubble is about to burst" (Knopf, 2010, p. 5). A knowledge base that continues to be driven to greater levels of specialization means, according to Taylor, that "the curriculum becomes increasingly fragmented and the educational process loses its coherence as well as its relevance for the broader society" (p. 4).

While we share in the concerns these critics of the university raise, we believe that the various remedies for recovering the universities soul that they propose are doomed to fail. What an increasingly fragmented university or multiversity lacks is a language capable of evaluating and organizing various ways of knowing—a language known as rightfully practiced theology. As a result, the argument we make in this book is that the contemporary search for a unifying perspective to guide the university is an inherently Christian enterprise. The compulsion to come to terms with the full sweep of knowledge and the integrated nature of that knowledge has distinctively Christian roots that originate with how the Church has understood the Triune God. Past arguments that theology deserves a place in the university prove to be too small. In contrast, we argue theology is necessary for the university to be the university.

In recent years, more universities have sought to recapture ways in which theology provides them with a definitive shape for their identity. Perhaps the most public expression of this kind of effort occurred at Baylor University through the development and implementation of Vision 2012. However, similar efforts are currently taking place at both Protestant and Catholic universities around the world. In addition, an ever-increasing number of Christian liberal arts colleges are adding programs and restructuring themselves as universities. However, such efforts are taking place with little thought being given to just how quickly the fragmented nature of the multiversity can emerge.

This book is designed to raise awareness of these challenges while also providing a resource for individuals striving to advance the mission of the Church through institutions of higher education. In fact, we believe and will make the rather large argument that the absence of rightfully practiced theology yields, at best, what critics have labeled a "multiversity." Institutions resembling this descriptive label lack a coherent vision of God, human personhood,

and human flourishing. Consequently, their mission becomes confined to more narrowly focused narratives, such as becoming credentialing factories for particular professions or supporting the civic virtue necessary for a particular type of nation-state. Even those institutions that place theology into particular disciplinary departments and/or university-sanctioned chapel programs prove susceptible to the characteristics defining the multiversity as they treat theology as merely one minor story among many other competing narratives and purposes.

#### Review of Comparable Texts:

In many ways, our proposed book shares sympathies with the previously mentioned titles by George M. Marsden, James Tunstead Burtchaell, D. G. Hart, and Thomas Albert Howard. However, it also draws upon the efforts made by philosophers and theologians such as James K. A. Smith in *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Baker Academic, 2009), Gavin D'Costa in *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy, and Nation* (Blackwell, 2005), Alasdair MacIntyre in *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), and Michael L. Budde and John Wright (eds.) in *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society* (Brazos Press, 2004). Each one of these titles explores the idea of the Christian university but does so by directly thinking through what kind of relationship the university shares with the Church.

In addition to these books that deal directly with the topic of the Christian university, we also draw from books that explore the role of theology in the university. After doing a search for books that deal explicitly with this topic, we initially found only three – David Ray Griffin and Joseph C. Hough's (eds.) *Theology and the University: Essays in Honor of John B. Cobb, Jr.* (SUNY Press, 1991), Darlene Bird and Simon G. Smith's (eds.) *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives* (Continuum, 2009), and Brian W. Hughes' *Saving Wisdom: Theology and the Christian University* (Pickwick, 2011). In our estimation, each one of these books communicates a problematic view of theology because they do not grant it a large enough role and thus leave the university susceptible to the kind of fragmentation that is at the heart of our concern.

Perhaps the most helpful books on this topic concerning the role that theology plays in the university are Oliver Crisp, Mervyn Davies, Gavin D'Costa, and Peter Hampson's (eds.) forthcoming *Theology and Philosophy – Faith and Reason* (Continuum, January 2012) and Peter Hampson, Gavin D'Costa, Mervyn Davies, and Oliver D. Crisp's (eds.) forthcoming *Christianity and the Disciplines: The Transformation of the University* (Continuum, June 2012). From these two books (and the willingness of the editors to share their manuscripts with us), we have drawn considerable insights. In the end, these volumes, by virtue of their edited nature, prove to be more conversation starters than comprehensive treatments of this topic.

For a couple of years we have politely yet persistently asked Stanley Hauerwas if he were interested in developing a comprehensive follow-up to *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God* (Blackwell, 2007). Each time he responded with a resounding no. Given that it is unlikely we will be able to change his mind, our proposed project is an attempt to offer such a systematic contribution to this conversation. We will draw on the

historical, philosophical, and theological observations offered by the previously mentioned texts, other education scholars, and a host of theologians including the Church Fathers, Thomas Aquinas, and Henri de Lubac in a way that creates a vision for a Christian research university. Works such as David F. Ford's *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Hans Boersma's *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Eerdmans, 2011) also provide us with helpful frameworks for re-thinking the nature of the research university.

Realizing that the organizational framework of the research university is a by-product of a secular age and thus inherently harbors an impulse for perpetual subdivision, our project will go beyond simply a Christian overlay. In contrast, it will offer a critical examination of essential concepts such as the academic vocation, the nature of the disciplines, the relationship shared by the curricular and the co-curricular, and academic leadership.

### Outline:

Prologue: The University and Its Critics – The subdivision, fragmentation, and confusion found in the research university has produced no shortage of critics. This book will open by reviewing the work of those critics (such as the previously mentioned Frank Donoghue, Stanley Fish, Harry Lewis, Anthony Kronman, Bill Readings, and Mark C. Taylor) and what their insights have offered the current conversation concerning the state of the university. However, this section will also argue that the lack of historical awareness plaguing these critics has led them to overlook the critical role theology or the Queen of the Sciences must play in granting integrity to the university.

Section One: Defining Academe – By its very nature, a university is designed to cover the full sweep of knowledge while showing that such a knowledge base is reflective of a larger and integrated whole. While this philosophical ideal still remains in place, in practice the university is now at best a fragmented multiversity.

1. The Idea of a University – In this chapter we will compare the rise of the German research university with John Henry Newman's vision of the university. The former stressed service to the nation-state and the national economy in ways that magnified the differentiation and fragmentation of knowledge that began during the Reformation. The latter sought unity through theology and the Church.
2. The Demise of Philosophy (*and the University*) – In its early years, the ethos defining the German research university was set by its philosophers. One could argue that the agenda followed by these metaphysicists was primarily set in motion by Immanuel Kant through what can roughly be described as the fact/value distinction. In their own ways, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, Johann Gotlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel sought to rectify this initial point of subdivision. In the end, philosophy would find itself relegated to the realm of the theoretical and speculative and thus ultimately of no practical value.
3. The Demise of Theology (*and the University*) – We will argue in this chapter that the triumph of the German model led to the differentiation of knowledge thus to also theology's fall from its place as the Queen of the Sciences. Under the auspices of this

model, theology became just another discipline and in the United States was transformed into a subdivision within a religion (or even a religious studies) department. Scientific naturalism, with its impulse for subdivision, became the dominant standard for knowledge within what came to be known as the modern research university.

4. The Idea of a Multiversity – Clark Kerr identified the modern university that grew out of this history as a multiversity. The multiversity he described is an institution that is “as confused as possible for the sake of the preservation of the whole uneasy balance” (*The Uses of the University*, Harvard University Press, 1963/2001, p. 14). This chapter will elaborate further on the nature of the confused contemporary multiversity and the arguments of its defenders.

Section Two: The Lure of Division (*and Sub-Division*) – The increasing division of labor within a university is understandable in light of its growing size and sophistication. However, this division can prove destructive if nothing holds together a unified vision of human knowledge and flourishing that can guide individuals populating the university. This section will describe the lure afforded by the impulse for subdivision and how that impulse manifests itself in different dimensions of the university community.

5. The Lure of the Divided Educator – We will open this section by detailing how the definitive commitments of the academic vocation (as found in teaching, research, and service) have less and less to do with one another and thus often pull collegiate-level educators in diverse directions. As a result, no one scholar or set of scholars is able to exhibit what was once called an imperial intellect or the ability to appreciate knowledge as a whole and exhibit those qualities to a variety of publics. Too often, what we now have are scholars who know a considerable amount about a small segment of knowledge. As a result, physicists can talk to physicists but they cannot perform cross-disciplinary work with biologists. The larger and more specialized the faculty grows, the greater this dilemma. In addition, faculty find it more and more difficult to work with students and even interested community members beyond their own professional guilds.
6. The Lure of Divided Disciplines – Building upon the ideas presented in the previous chapter, this chapter will cover the impact of the continual proliferation of academic disciplines and sub-disciplines without a similar growth in a field that provides an understanding of how all of these pieces fit together. Building upon the argument Alasdair MacIntyre makes in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (University of Notre Dame, 1990), encyclopaedic and genealogical apprehensions of truth lack a coherent framework which grants meaning to the whole. Fragmentation or a divided array of disciplines then becomes the inevitable outcome. This absence then proves particularly problematic, we will argue, for those seeking to provide some coherent rationale for general education or a core curriculum.
7. The Lure of Curricular and Co-Curricular Division – This chapter will explore the emergence of the student development movement, its inevitable separation from the faculty ranks, and the awkward (yet much needed) attempts to reintegrate the two.

Section Three: The Rise of Rival (*and Competing*) Stories – In the absence of a larger integrative presence of theology, the interests of various politically defined publics came to offer alternative narratives that attempted to supply unity for the university. While we will not attempt to

catalogue the various ways these stories have influenced the university, we will demonstrate that these narratives failed to provide a wide enough story that would be inclusive of some of the central plots or functions of the university.

8. The Rise of the State University – This chapter will explore why these political entities recognized the need to establish and support institutions of higher learning and why political ideology now often serves as the guiding narrative for higher education. Recent scholars, however, increasingly recognize that the state university in a liberal democracy has trouble offering answers to difficult ethical issues, matters of purpose, spiritual longings, and holistic understandings of human personhood. This chapter will summarize the powerful points afforded by these critiques but also make the argument that these critiques cannot be adequately addressed in liberal democratic state universities.
9. The Rise of the Professional Administrator – This chapter will explore the increasing rate at which senior administrators are emerging from the ranks of groups other than that of educators (such as the faculty or even student development). As a result, they place the story of the university within another narrative, usually the capitalist story. The end result is that the university no longer addresses larger purposes that go beyond helping students gain competences to help them succeed in the marketplace. Part of the reason for this phenomenon is that higher education no longer prepares these rising administrators to possess a perspective of the university as a whole.
10. The Rise of Intercollegiate Athletics – In this chapter we will argue that scholarship athletics at the NCAA Division I level (the form typically in place at research universities) has emerged as the purveyor of venues that truly draw campus communities together. Logistically speaking, athletics provides the only spaces where the whole campus community can gather. In a bygone era, that venue was the chapel or the venue where theology was practiced. Athletics then also offers an emotional sense of connectivity to something larger than the single individual even if that sense of connectivity only lasts for a couple of hours. We will unpack this issue by exploring examples from the so-called revenue producing sports of football and men’s basketball. We will then focus on both statistics and narrative examples concerning the financing, infrastructures, and media attention afforded these efforts in comparison to other efforts more central to the mission of these institutions.
11. The Rise of For-Profit (*Even When Technically Non-Profit*) Academe – This chapter will discuss how for-profit universities have begun to pose real challenges to the non-profit universities. As a result, the distinguishing marks between for-profit universities and non-profit universities are diminishing as non-profits begin to act more like their for-profit competitors.

Section Four: Fulfilling the Promise of a University – As the Queen of the Sciences, the rightful practice of theology proves to be the means necessary for rectifying the gaps between the ideals that define the university and the challenges that currently besiege it.

12. When Theology is Not a Discipline – This chapter will argue that in order for theology to rightfully reemerge as the Queen of the Sciences and the multiversity as a university, theology cannot be sequestered into a particular bureaucratic department or school. In

contrast, it must begin with the practice of common worship and then be infused into the ethos of the institution as a whole.

13. Re-Envisioning the Academic Vocation – Given the understanding of theology in the previous chapter, this chapter will discuss how the currently competing roles of teaching, research, and service can be re-integrated into a larger whole.
14. Re-Envisioning the Disciplines – This chapter will then explore how a theological understanding of the academic disciplines can allow them to both focus on matters of specific details as well as the rightful relationships they share with one another.
15. Re-Envisioning the Curricular and the Co-Curricular – This chapter will argue that a theologically defined understanding of both the curricular and co-curricular roles will draw the two into greater forms of integration than current efforts can afford.
16. Re-Envisioning Academic Leadership – In this chapter we will argue that the definitive marks of academic leaders are best manifested in their abilities to not only to see deeply within particular sectors of the university but also to see how those sectors embody theologically defined marks of integration.

Epilogue: Is a University Inherently Christian? – This concluding section will argue that because theology is the only discipline that can rightfully serve as the Queen of the Sciences, the very concept of the university is inherently Christian.

#### Length:

The prologue, sixteen chapters, and the epilogue will each be approximately 25 double-spaced manuscript pages. Stanley Hauerwas has agreed to offer a foreword of approximately 10 pages. As a result, the full manuscript will be approximately 460 pages.

#### Audience / Possible Marketing Venues:

This book is designed to appeal to theologians, higher education scholars, and administrators serving Christian colleges and universities. While the focus of the book is on the role of theology in institutions we most commonly think of as research universities, its audience also includes individuals serving the ever-increasing array of Christian liberal arts colleges that are adding programs (particularly graduate programs) and thus are restructuring in ways that look more like comprehensive or research universities. For example, just last year Malone College changed its name to Malone University as a way of recognizing its growing undergraduate degree completion and graduate programs. Schools such as Messiah College and Wheaton College intentionally retained the term “College” in their respective names despite the fact that Messiah recently added graduate programs and Wheaton now offers a couple of doctoral programs on top of the master’s programs the institution has offered for years.

In terms of particular graduate programs, one expression of this programmatic growth is just how many Christian colleges and universities have added graduate programs in higher education over the course of the last twenty years. Another expression of this programmatic growth is how many schools now have seminaries and/or graduate programs in theology. We are hopeful that this book would prove to be a required and/or recommended textbook in a number of courses in these two types of programs.

Given these audiences, conferences hosted by organizations such as the American Academy of Religion, the Association for Christians in Student Development, the Association for the Study of Higher Education, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, and the Lilly Fellows Network would prove to be valuable marketing venues for this book. Potential publications for advertisements for this volume would include *Books and Culture*, *Christian Higher Education*, *Christian Scholar's Review*, *First Things*, *The International Journal of Systematic Theology*, the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Modern Theology*, *New Blackfriars*, and *The Review of Higher Education*.

#### Qualifications of the Authors:

Building upon their previous experiences as a college administrator and a policy analyst respectively, Todd and Perry have utilized historical, philosophical, and theological models as means of exploring ways the Christian narrative should define the Church's investment in higher education.

Currently, Todd is the Senior Scholar for Faith and Scholarship and an Associate Professor of Humanities in the John Wesley Honors College at Indiana Wesleyan University. Perry is an Associate Professor of Educational Foundations and a Faculty Fellow in the Institute of Church-State Studies at Baylor University. They are both Research Fellows with Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion.

Together, Todd and Perry authored *Christian Faith and Scholarship: An Exploration of Contemporary Developments* (Jossey-Bass, 2007) and *Christianity and Moral Identity in Higher Education* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). They edited *Taking Captive Every Thought: Forty Years of Christian Scholar's Review* (Abilene Christian University Press, 2011) with Don King, David Hoekema, Jerry Pattengale, and Todd Steen. They currently serve as co-book review editors for both *Christian Scholar's Review* and *Christian Higher Education*.

In the end, this book will provide us with an opportunity to pull together the experiences and knowledge we gained from these previous efforts in a book that captures a systematic vision for the future of the Christian university. We will also employ case studies (drawn from interviews, academic catalogs, admissions viewbooks, and student handbooks) from research universities such as Baylor University, Boston College, Georgetown University, Pepperdine University, and the University of Notre Dame. However, we will also employ case studies of liberal arts colleges and comprehensive universities that are programmatically and structurally moving in the direction of becoming research universities. In some ways, this book is designed to meet the needs of individuals serving the previously mentioned list of research universities. However, we are just as eager to provide a thoughtful guide to colleges and universities that are moving toward behaving like and looking like research universities.

### Completion Schedule:

Work on this volume will begin in October 2012, and will conclude in October 2014. We will then send a draft of this manuscript to at least three leading scholars with a deep working knowledge of both theology and higher education and ask for their feedback. Proposed scholars include Gavin D'Costa, David Ford, David Lyle Jeffrey, Matthew Levering, David Solomon, and Mark Noll. The readers will then return their proposed edits to us in August 2014. We will then incorporate these proposed edits into a draft to be completed and submitted in October 2014.