

BOOK REVIEWS

Calian, Carnegie Samuel. *The Ideal Seminary: Pursuing Excellence in Theological Education*. Louisville: Westminster /John Knox, 2002. 137 pp.

Carnegie Samuel Calian is the president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the author of *Survival or Revival: Ten Keys to Church Vitality* and *Theology without Boundaries: Encounters of Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Tradition*, both available from Westminster/John Knox Press.

If a seminary is seriously seeking excellence, it will need the cooperative efforts of all who have “ownership” in the seminary. This is why Calian writes his book to all who have such a stake: administrators, faculty, students, as well as the church and community. Although Calian admits that an “ideal” seminary is not easy to define and even more difficult to produce, he proceeds to search for that definition and to outline necessary steps toward “pursuing” that goal. He writes with the authority that comes from over twenty years of contemplation on this theme as President of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

The book’s twelve chapters are organized into three sections: (1) Institutional Challenges, (2) Program Challenges, and (3) Student Concerns. Although the contents of the book do not seem to fit neatly into these stated divisions, the discussions in each section are important to the elusive quest for the ideal seminary. The emphasis is on the various challenges that must be overcome if the Seminary is going to fulfill its mission to prepare leaders for the church and the community.

Each chapter concludes with “discussion starters” to assist the Seminary community in contextual application which moves it towards the ideal. It is in the first section that Calian asks us to consider who really “owns” the seminary. Are we “accountable” to the students, faculty, or board? Do we make our decisions and policies for the accrediting agency or for the church? The mission, objectives, and programs of a seminary will be influenced by our answers to these questions. The reader will discover the heart of this chapter in this key sentence, “Ownership of our schools starts with God and ends with society, and within this range of ownership there is more interdependence than we have admitted to ourselves” (40). An ideal seminary will recognize this truth and endeavor to find the right balance, under God, as it weighs the input of all its “stakeholders.”

Calian focuses next on curriculum in the second section. He believes that “there continues to be a gap today between learning and doing in seminary life” (48). This is not an argument for more ministry and less learning. Instead, he observes that seminaries often attempt to emphasize the practical ministries without the proper preparation. The seminary is where the spiritual core and the theological foundations are discovered and internalized so that ministry will not be guilty of “malpractice.” These foundations must include the gospel of love and reconciliation as well as “missional” motivation. He reminds us that a love that approaches that of John 3:16 love will drive us to understand the world and its societies so that we can serve them effectively. This should be the objective of the curriculum in the ideal seminary.

In directing our attention to the student concerns in section three, the author asks if it is possible to attend the Seminary “without losing your faith” (90). He reminds us that academically studying truth does not automatically bring spiritual revival. Faculty must consciously endeavor to build faith rather than destroy it. This is important because seminary studies invariably lead the students to questions they have never asked before. He says insightfully, “Too often we theological educators sacrifice the art of being simple in our attempts to be academically more precise” (93). Calian thus challenges seminary administration and faculty to consider the importance of prayer, devotions, and small group interaction as tools to keep faith alive while we investigate deeper concepts in the classroom.

The strength of this book is the quantity (and quality) of its questions. It will cause all seminary-connected readers to focus on important areas that need improvement in their school. Unfortunately, this is also the weakness of the book. Because the author covers a multitude of issues and asks more questions than he can supply answers, the book is not smooth, relaxed reading. This should not, however, deter any person with concern for the excellence of our seminaries from reading the book. Take each chapter as an area to study and analyze for your seminary’s context. Even better, use each chapter as study material with a group of your “stakeholders.” There is very little in these pages that the reader would find irrelevant to his or her context.

Lester P. Merklin, Jr.

Doukhan, Jacques B. *Israel and the Church: Two Voices for the Same God*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. x + 108 pp.

Jacques B. Doukhan is professor of Hebrew Language, Exegesis, and Jewish Studies, and director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at Andrews University. He is the editor of *Shabbat Shalom* and *L’Olivier*, two journals devoted to Jewish-Christian dialogue. He is the author of several works, including *Secrets of Daniel*