The series in which this volume appears (*Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition*) is a welcome contribution to intra-mural reflection on the task and challenges of creating a distinctive approach to liberal education in a Christian context, and the series has already produced some substantial reflections by scholars whose commitment to evangelical perspectives on that tradition and its contemporary practice is evident. The series has produced four volumes prior to this one, and each of them is worthy, each of value not only to students in Christian liberal arts colleges, but also to parents of those students and those who are supporters of such colleges and their mission.

This particular volume, by a member of the faculty at Union University, attempts a wide ranging and integrative survey of the way in which the principal traditional disciplines in any such a program of Christian higher education may function synthetically. How can practitioners of these disciplines conceive of their work as a joint enterprise, contributing to a rich and general appreciation of Christian tradition and contemporary practice in relation to achieving the goals of such education? Fant’s survey contains many useful insights and provocative nodes for future reflection and development in the Christian educational enterprise. Some of these, he suggests, invite a consideration of the ironies which attend upon the history which we inherit from our non-Christian predecessors.

One of these is surely that fact that in the classical world, where education for those of the upper classes who were in distinctive ways free to pursue an education for leadership in the city-state, was relegated to teachers who were themselves slaves. This irony may have been in the mind of that great teacher of the Church, St. Paul, when he presented himself in his letters as, in effect, a slave of Christ. But this point raises perdurable questions for the way
in which the churches since then have regarded those who would teach their children. More could be said about this, but aspects of this irony clearly remain, if in an altered form, in our own time.

Dr. Fant rightly regards the cultivation of a ‘certain wisdom,’ distinct from what the world counts as wisdom, as somehow essential to the achievement of a Christian liberal education which is not merely a sub-cultural imitation of secular education. That is to say, a Baconian predilection for instrumental reason, or a Cartesian notion that all of the disciplines somehow compose a sufficient wisdom, are not a model for what we, as Christian educators, should set out to accomplish, though an understanding of the normative status of instrumental reason and the superstitions attendant upon the ‘expertise’ of secular learning are a necessary component of Christian learning, if only as an instructive contrary. Particularly valuable here are Fant’s reminders that Christian learning must not be devoted to any species of “self-actualization” or inherent forgetfulness that Christian liberal education frees only to the degree that it liberates us from the self-preoccupation and narcissism of our general culture, since self-regarding constructions of educational purpose are actually an initiation into slavery of the darkest, most deterministic kind. The acquisition of information—even important information—must not be imagined to be an equivalent to an inculcation in wisdom.

This little volume is a general survey—perhaps unavoidably so—but it strikes me that Fant’s many insights might be sharpened into a more rigorous argument for a view of education that, in fundamental ways, must be philosophically more contrastive to the secular sources on which we draw than simply a learned adequation of those sources, however well intended. The role of Scripture—of revelation—as catalyst for integration is obviously critical in this regard.

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