



David C. Wright. *Integration: A Conversation between Theological Education and the Letters to Timothy and Titus*. International Council for Evangelical Theological Education Series. Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2022.

Some argue that the West's preoccupation with improvement is a function of its obsession with efficiency. This is not untrue. Yet, a similar interest exists with those who desire to steward this brief life well in obedience to the Great Commission. Hence, they will find themselves regularly pondering ways to improve methods and institutions related to the advance of the gospel. David Wright's book *Integration: A Conversation between Theological Education and the Letters to Timothy and Titus* embodies such an attempt.

His book is deceptively short (approximating 150 pages plus bibliography). Though well-written and organized, Wright offers a number of fascinating and weighty insights that require the reader to pause, reflect, dialogue, and then recommence his perusal of the book. Indeed, Wright does an excellent job of harvesting the best fruit from a variety of sources (see the eclectic makeup of his bibliography) in order to offer a fresh voice into the subject of integration in theological education. Note: Wright uses the term "integration" to refer to "the process by which Christian theology, practical ministry skills, and godly character are combined and developed in a person for the goal of exercising ministry" (5). As the definition suggests, the book focuses on both the content and process of integration.

Wright's work is neatly divided into several sections: Part A: The Current Scene; Part B: Integration in the Letters to Timothy & Titus; Part C: Looking Forward. As this division indicates, Wright's reflections on the subject of integration depend on a surface review of what is typically dubbed The Pastoral Epistles. It might serve the reader to note that the book has less to do with 1-2 Timothy and Titus and more about how these letters help develop principles regarding the content and practice of integration. For this reason, this book is not primarily for students and scholars of The Pastoral Epistles but theological educators and other stakeholders in theological education, "such as pastors, students, mission agencies, and denominational officials" (9).

Having some interest in 1-2 Timothy and Titus, I found the section of Wright's book helpful, particularly from the perspective of synthesis. Some will argue that his exegesis is light and even inaccurate in some places. Nevertheless, it is helpful to keep in mind that he is approaching these letters from the perspective of integration. In this regard, his reading is meant to be more theological than exegetical; and I, for one, find his conclusions fitting and helping. The primary recipients, Timothy and Titus for their respective letters, are to purposefully integrate sound teaching and piety into their lives with the intention of modeling such integration for the secondary audience, the believers with them. This pattern holds true equally for the appointed deacons and overseers with the hope that eventually all that belong to the household of faith might be marked by wholism/integration. Again, while Wright's comments on these letters do not come anywhere close to an in-depth analysis, they justify his decision to interact with them on the grounds that they have much to say about training current and future church leaders, that

they themselves address directly central topics within integration (e.g., leadership, personal example, character), and that they address, directly and indirectly, the process of integration.

I devote the remaining portion of this review to interacting with the telos of Wright's book, namely the application of his gleanings from the Pastorals to enhancing integration in theological education. First, the reader will appreciate the way Wright has synthesized the commentaries and monographs of others in his sections "The Content of Integration" and "The Process of Integration." The former highlights theology, skills, character, identity, ministry, and suffering. Second, Wright is charitable and judicious in his assessment of current models of integration in theological education, acknowledging where and how they are succeeding and where much work remains: "The content, and the factors contributing to the process of integration in the LTT find widespread but inconsistent expression in the current proposals of theological education as they promote integration" (117).

Prior to delineating his proposal for a better model for integrated theological education, Wright states his foundational principles (132-3). These are worth stating here with purposeful bolding on my end:

1. Theology, as the knowledge of God and his plan of salvation in Christ, is foundational to theological education.
2. The **church** has theological priority and responsibility for theological education.
3. The goal of theological education is to equip those who will equip the church as the people of God.
4. In theological education, **experience** has sequential priority in learning, and theology is authoritative.
5. Theological education requires a congruence between what is being integrated and the practice used.
6. Theological education requires a variety of learning contexts, providing both involvement and distance, and in which there is congruence between what is being learned and the learning context.
7. Theological education involves strong **personal relationships** between faculty and students; and
8. Theological education requires collaborate partnerships between the **church** and theological education institutions involving faculty and students.

As a seminary professor that has witnessed the demise of more than a few theological institutions in the past decade, I have pondered (perhaps too pragmatically) how they must adapt or perish. Wright is redemptive in offering first and foremost a theological impetus for these seemingly radical proposals, namely that the "church has theological priority and responsibility for theological education" and that experience has a priority even if theology maintains its authority. The two are related: we are wholistic beings; it makes sense, then, for our training to take place in a setting that is concerned with not just information transfer but wholistic transformation. As much as I believe in the goodness and necessity of seminaries with respect to the gospel "enterprise," nothing can—and nothing should try to—replace the unique and extraordinary role of the church in providing integrated theological formation.

There are many important related questions to ask. For example, if we bring seminary education into the walls of church facilities, will such classes be recognized from an accreditation perspective? This raises the related question of whether ordination should require a seminary degree. Also, do churches, especially smaller churches in areas with fewer material, facility, and theological resources have the ability to provide for the kind of theological education Wright envisions? These are difficult but necessary questions to address. Still, Wright offers a helpful work for progressing the conversation on why and how believers can pursue greater integration in theological training. This book is strongly recommended not just for those typically involved with formal theological education (e.g., seminary professors) but especially to church leaders who seek to lead their congregations towards fruitful and lasting gospel-ministry.

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