

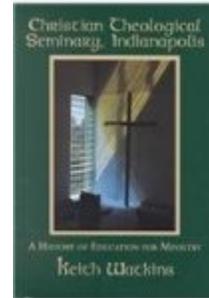
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Keith Watkins. *Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis: A History of Education for Ministry.* Zionsville: Guild Press of Indiana, 2001. x + 320 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57860-092-2.

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Protestant Theological Education in Indianapolis

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Histories of individual educational institutions written by insiders more often than not are boring, uncritically celebratory, and narrowly focused. Happily that is not the case for the book under review here. A professor at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) for over thirty years, Keith Watkins (now retired) has created a history of his school that is interesting, well-written, objective at the crucial points, and sensitive to the larger contexts in which the school has both struggled and prospered. Only on rare occasions does Watkins' prose turn a bit purple and his praise of accomplishments seem a mite gratuitous. And only rarely does he take a position on faculty disputes or declare on the worth of an administrative decision in such a way that he might appear jaundiced to parties on the other side. Overall his treatment is fairminded and balanced.

The basic story line of Watkins's history is the evolution of CTS from the Disciples of Christ North Western Christian University in the middle of the nineteenth century, to a department and then a college for training Disciples ministers housed within Butler University, to an independent seminary that would eventually serve almost as many United Methodist as Disciples students in a building that is one of the stellar architectural achievements in Indianapolis. Peopling this institutional history are the persons who met with vision and hard work the changing opportunities and challenges of the school—persons like Dean Frederick Kershner, presidents Beau-

ford Norris, Thomas Liggett, and Richard Dickinson, as well as a long line of trustees and benefactors from the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller family of Columbus, Indiana, and a host of committed and able members of the faculty. Providing the denominational and intellectual context of the school's history are the developments and controversies within the Disciples community, divisions over higher criticism of the Bible and the importance of baptism, and changes occurring in theological education across the United States. For this reviewer, the book takes on special value because it places the life of the seminary in a wider cultural context still: the influence of the Ku Klux Klan on Indiana institutions in the early twentieth century, the decisive impact of the country's economic cycles on the moods and prospects of the theological school, the disruptions brought to most institutions of higher education by the student protests of the 1960s, and the changes wrought on the shape of theological education by recent increases in women and second-career students.

This book obviously should be of interest to alumni, professors, and students of CTS, to Disciples wanting to know an important segment of their educational history, and to scholars of theological education. Because of its breadth of interpretation and clarity of style, it should also appeal to Indianapolis citizens and other Hoosiers desiring to understand their vital institutions and the links of those institutions with city, state, and national developments. In 1959, CTS board chairman J. Irwin Miller said that the purpose of the school was "to hold up

to the churches a mirror of themselves as they are and a serves as a similar mirror—of the school and its cultural glimpse of what they may become” (p. 142). This book and social connections.

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