

**MacLeod, A. Donald
C. Stacey Woods and the Evangelical Rediscovery
of the University**

Downers Grove (IL), InterVarsity Press, 2007, 283 pages.

| 193

A. Donald MacLeod, research professor at Tyndale Theological Seminary in Toronto, studies in this book the life and work of C. Stacey Woods (1909-1983), an important yet not widely known figure of twentieth-century world evangelicalism. Born in Australia in 1909 and raised in the Brethren tradition, Woods arrived in Canada in 1934 to be the first full-time general secretary of the Canadian branch of *InterVarsity Christian Fellowship*, which he led through eighteen years of development. Woods also led the founding and expansion of InterVarsity in the United States -a position to which he devoted most of his energy by 1952 as IVFC Canada released him of his duties-, while also helping to form and lead the *International Federation of International Students* (IFES) by 1947 onwards. MacLeod aims, and largely succeeds, at establishing Woods' invaluable contribution to postwar evangelicalism, in North America and elsewhere.

Like most great figures in evangelical history, Woods was an indefatigable religious entrepreneur, a builder who left behind him an impressive institutional legacy as well as a prolific author. And like other figures of his kind, his strong personality and outspokenness made it sometimes hard to work with him, as he was “voluble, occasionally talked too much, and could deeply antagonize individuals, even those once closest to him.” (20-21). It is all the more remarkable that a man who was so active at trying to reconnect evangelicalism with its lost intellectual

heritage did not have any opportunity to receive post-secondary education.

On both sides of the border, the IVCF was probably the most active and successful campus ministry during the post-WWII era and amid North America's biggest academic boom ever. Since the late 19th century academic revolution and the rise of research universities, religion's formerly central role in American higher education had undergone increasing marginalization, a process described in length by George Marsden in *The Soul of the American University*. This dynamic was deepened by the strong anti-intellectualism that permeated evangelicalism and fundamentalism after the Scopes trial and the mid-twenties. Although the IVCF and other competing initiatives such as the *Christian Campus Crusade* could not turn back the effects of the academic revolution, they managed to (re)-establish the evangelical presence on colleges and universities campuses by forming evangelical student unions and engaging actively and positively with university faculties.

MacLeod makes it clear that Woods' quality in leadership had much more to do with vision than administrative skills. Besides overseeing -sometimes uneasily- the expansion and the thriving of an organization that would eventually includes hundreds of chapters in universities and foreign missions, Woods was involved in the postwar neo-evangelical drive towards intellectual respectability and social responsibility, and away from negativity and intellectual isolation that characterized fundamentalism. Woods' strive for excellence and lucid vision for the evangelical mind was embodied in *HIS*, IVCF's magazine which became his "bully pulpit" (121). He positioned the newly-formed American IVFC on the "evangelical middle ground"

represented by the *National Association of Evangelicals* people like Harold Ockenga, Carl F. Henry and Billy Graham, away from the “shrill separatism of the right and (...) from the fuzzy accommodations of the left.” (119). The book’s last part is mostly devoted to Woods’ leadership of the IFES after his resignation from the American IVFC. More than anything his work to establish a worldwide student ministry made up of indigenous movements allowed the busy traveller he was to fulfill his vision of global, unlimited and transnational evangelicalism that could engage positively with all cultures.

| 195

MacLeod should be credited for detailing Woods’ career without losing himself nor the reader in the networks of organizations and people his main subject was involved in. The book is based on solid research, as the author -himself a former director of IVCF Canada- did a very good work at finding relevant archival material and meeting people who worked with Woods themselves, both in North America and Australia. The book’s writing is clear and accessible. The only clear flaw of the book - not the author’s fault- is its poorly-designed index and its many missing names and references. All in all, MacLeod provides us with a very interesting piece of work which fits perfectly the existing scholarship on the postwar revival, and also contributes to the growing body of works addressing evangelicalism as a global subculture.

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