

TRUTH AND HONOR

The University and the Church in a Democratic Age

1. What is the Christian University?

Many excellent historical and critical essays have been written about what kind of relation has and ought to pertain between the church and the university. Yet this question, like so many other kinds of perennial questions, has remained unresolved. Moreover, it is not even clear how one can make any progress toward resolution since it is seldom clear exactly what are the issues involved.

Part of the difficulty in this respect is that the question about how the church is or is not related to the university changes from one period to another as the relative strengths, social standing, and character of the respective institutions change. For example, it is interesting how seldom we now discuss whether academic freedom is possible at church-related institutions. Rather, the issue that seems to confront us now is what justification, if any, can be given for the continued existence of Christian universities.

But again it is not clear what kind of question this is. Sometimes it seems born of grim necessity. For historical reasons Christians have found themselves inheritors of institutions of higher learning to which they continue to have financial relations and supply students. But the current financial condition of many of these institutions makes us ask why Christians have a stake in maintaining these schools. Though such schools continue to exist at great personal and financial sacrifice for many, they are not able to provide an education that is in any way superior to that of the local branch of the state college.

Of course, we are all familiar with the answers that have been given to justify the continued existence of the Christian college. The Christian

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college is justified because it alone is committed to providing a liberal arts curriculum that is commensurate with Christian and humanistic convictions. Or, the Christian college is concerned with the "whole student," which at least means that good counseling service is provided as well as is the opportunity to get to know the professors outside the classroom. Or, the Christian college offers value education by requiring religion and philosophy courses as well as providing a general atmosphere that fosters the development of moral responsibility. In other words, St. Alonzo of the Left Elbow of the Immaculate Conception on the Mount may not be a multiversity such as Indiana University and we thank God for it.

Even though these answers are often given, their frequency does not make them any more persuasive. We know that the liberal arts curriculum does not make one liberal—even if we knew what being liberal meant or we could show that to be such was an inherently good thing. Indeed, we know that the relation between course work and the development of a particular kind of person is far too subtle to be reduced to any formula. In such a context the Christian colleges' proclamation of the importance of the liberal arts appears as an ideology which attempts to hide the fact that they cannot afford to do anything else. Moreover, the liberal arts college has recently discovered that if it is to compete with other colleges for students it must water down the requirements that have traditionally been associated with a liberal arts education. For example, it is amazing how quickly Christian colleges are willing to cancel a liberal arts requirement when they find out they can attract students by offering courses in nursing and/or computer science.

In addition, our reputed care or personal regard for students, even when manifested with the best intentions, is interpreted as an unwarranted attempt to control the student's personal life. Also, it is not clear what rationale can be given for much of what has come to fly the flag in the name of student services at our supposedly academic institutions. Often our services only act as a way to delay the student's growth out of adolescence.

If we take our refuge in the justification of Christian colleges on the basis of value education, we are left holding an even weaker reed. After all, Jeb Magruder of Watergate fame did take an ethics course under William Sloane Coffin. Of course, this is but a trivial example of the more profound Platonic insight that goodness or virtue is not something that can be taught—or, if it can be taught, the teaching of it is a much more subtle process than the simple expediency of taking an ethics or values course. But even if this were not the case, we find ourselves in the

embarrassing position of not being sure what values we want or should want to recommend. To be sure, it is a good thing to be honest, but we are not sure what that means or how it is to be done today.

The kinds of problems with this set of justifications for the existence of the Christian university, however, may help us see that perhaps we have the wrong question. For to ask why the Christian university should continue to exist presupposes that we have some sense of what a Christian university is. But I think that is just the matter at issue—namely, the reason that we have trouble in saying why the Christian university should exist is that we remain unsure what distinguishes such an institution from other universities. This is particularly true since secular institutions have become increasingly regarded as paradigmatic for all universities. The Christian university thus seems left with a dilemma of wanting to measure up to the paradigm—we are just like them (perhaps with a little something added)—while at the same time being forced to realize that the more it fulfills the paradigm, the less distinctive its own contribution becomes and the less reason there is for its continued existence.

I think, however, that the Christian university can be distinctive and that there is good reason for it to exist. I have no grand idea or definition of what a Christian university is, but rather for me a university is Christian if it receives its financial and moral support from the church. In other words, I am enough of a realist to assume that whoever pays the bills will determine the character, for better or worse, of an institution. The issue is not, therefore, whether there is such a thing as a Christian university, but rather *do we have a church that is distinctive enough that it can set priorities and purposes for its universities?*

Generally my answer to this last question is no, but the reason for this, I think, helps illumine what distinctive character a Christian university should have. For it is my thesis that the university as an institution that is characterized by the virtues of honor and truthfulness has been undermined by certain democratic values. This has happened not only to the university but also to the church. If my analysis is correct in this respect, then I think we will also have a sense of how the church and university may renew their ancient bond—namely, that the church supports the university by developing a people capable of bearing the burden of honor and truthfulness, a people without which the university (and, interestingly, democracy), as I conceive its task, cannot exist.

This is obviously as complex and obscure a thesis as it is controversial. To try to bring greater clarity to it I will first analyze the meaning of honor, suggest why it is such an important virtue for universities, and

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show how truthfulness gives form to honorable behavior in the university. I will then try to suggest how this analysis helps us see why the institutions that support the university financially and morally (and in particular the church) are so crucial for its character.

2. The Meaning of Honor

I must admit I did not develop my sense of the importance of honor for the university by chance, but rather because I was asked to serve on a committee at Notre Dame to investigate why the honor system had failed and what the possibilities were for its reinstatement. Generally, serving on committees is a beneficial experience, as it gives one a healthy sense of the limits of human rationality. However, much to my surprise, serving on this committee jogged me from a kind of dogmatic slumber as I became aware that the concept of honor, especially in relation to the university, is much more important than I had assumed.

Initially, I had strong reservations about the idea of honor, since historically and sociologically I associated it with forms of life for which I have little sympathy. That my reservations in this respect are not just a personal quirk is suggested by how little honor is used as a working word in our everyday speech—we no longer think of our moral behavior as a matter of honor, but doing the right, performing praiseworthy actions, or “doing one’s own thing.” The contexts in which honor is still used are highly regimented and associated with institutions that seem to imply that honor consists in uncritical obedience to the commands of superiors. Thus, to defend the idea of honor or to reassert its importance seems to be either hopelessly naive or perversely conservative and authoritarian.

However, these sociological considerations are misleading, since the idea of honor suggests important aspects of our moral life that cannot be lost without our lives becoming poorer. I think this is especially true for institutions like the university that cannot long forget what they are about without becoming perverted. The skill to articulate such purpose involves the idea of honor, since honor is a moral bridge between the self and its society. To be honorable requires an effort of will from the agent, but honor has significance for the social order beyond an individual’s possession of it. Grammatically, therefore, honor is one of those interesting notions that are at once related to the moral agent and his or her social contexts. Our ability to display it in our lives depends on being

able to strike the right balance between the agent and society, to preserve their interdependence without reducing one to the other.

It is instructive to look at the institution of dueling to understand better the nature of honor. I am aware that more compelling examples could be chosen to recommend the idea of honor, but dueling has the virtue of not biasing the moral case too quickly. What is particularly interesting about duels is that they were often fought over what we today would consider arbitrary or insignificant insults which were dignified by being described as "affairs of honor." But it is exactly the insignificance of the insult and the willingness to risk one's life to redress the wrong that makes the whole institution of dueling intelligible. For the concern the "gentleman" showed for such matters is exactly what made him a gentleman—namely, someone who was to be granted special treatment due to his station in society.

This point, I think, is analogous to Veblen's explanation for the necessity of the American rich to consume. The rich do not buy expensive, extravagant, and nonutilitarian goods because they can, but to mark themselves off as rich in a society that has no established criteria for a leisure class. The rich must consume not because they are rich, but because if they did not engage in consumption of unnecessary goods there would be no way to establish their status in a democratic society that ideologically claims to be classless. The gentleman was insulted by what we would regard as insignificant acts because that is exactly what made him a gentleman. If he was not willing to fight the duel he was a traitor to his class, since he refused to perform the action necessary to reinforce his social position and its advantages. It was the gentleman's willingness to die for the insignificant that at the same time established and communicated that he was not like other men.

Put more theoretically, *honor is morally significant as a means to mark off those forms of behavior that are to be done as ends in themselves.* This is a bit misleading, however, as these referential acts cannot be abstracted from their societal context; such acts are significant exactly because they are the way a particular society reinforces and articulates to itself the forms of life that give that society its reason for being. The concept of honor and its associated practices in a society are not important because without them that society could not exist, but rather because without them the reasons that make that society what it is would not be present. In other words, it is exactly the nonutilitarian aspect of honor that makes it so important for a society's understanding of itself.

This point is consistent with De Tocqueville's insight that "there is a close and necessary connection between what we call honor and in-

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equity of condition."¹ It is the dissimilarities among people that give rise to the notion of honor, and thus "as such differences become less, it grows feeble; and when they disappear, it will vanish too" (p. 627). It is therefore especially important, if a class is to maintain its dominant position, to honor and emphasize those virtues that have their "share of magnificence and renown and which easily go with pride and love of power" (p. 627). Such a class must be bold to invert the commonsense assumptions about how best to survive to give those virtues that legitimate their position precedence over all others.

The concept of honor thus does not operate like the more or less common assumptions shared by all persons about right and wrong. The forms of honor usually presuppose an established society in which the moral conditions for the survival of that society are well set. The concept of honor in its particular manifestation is therefore more characteristic of one age or one country or one class. Thus, in the feudal world an act that would have no importance if done by a commoner would be considered dishonorable for the noble, since the aristocracy was exactly that class that could afford not to be subject to the forms of convention ordered by the necessity of survival. Honor is a correlative of aristocracy, as the latter would rather have the general society ruined than see the values they embody lost.

Even though De Tocqueville associates honor with aristocracy, he makes the broader claim that "every time men come together to form a particular society, a conception of honor is immediately established among them, that is to say, a collection of opinions peculiar to themselves about what should be praised or blamed" (p. 620). Society, on this view, cannot exist without established distinctions among classes. That is why democracy presents such an interesting test case for De Tocqueville, for even though he finds that honor still plays a part in the American ethos, he suggests its form and practices will become increasingly ambiguous. For as a society erodes all class distinctions, the precepts of honor will be fewer and fewer, and such precepts will draw continually closer to the moral custom accepted by the population at large.

This perhaps helps explain why the idea of honor appears so often as an ideological leftover "in the consciousness of obsolete classes, such as military officers or ethnic grandmothers."² Berger associates the decline of the age of honor with the use of the idea of dignity with its anti-institutional and individualistic assumptions. Like De Tocqueville he associates honor with groups that retain a hierarchial view of society, such as the military and traditional professions like law and medicine. "In such groups honor is a direct expression of status, a source of soli-

parity among social equals and a demarcation line against social inferiors" (p. 340). Thus, the concept of honor is inextricably linked with institutional roles. However, dignity relates to the intrinsic humanity of each person, divested of all socially imposed roles or norms. To have dignity pertains to the self as such, to the individual regardless of his or her position in society.

In a democratic age which adheres to this individualistic conception of dignity, it is not surprising that the concept of honor appears morally doubtful. The past conceptions of honor appear to us as arbitrary forms of class distinctions which unjustifiably robbed some people of their due rights. Moreover, the concept of honor seems rooted in an understanding of the human being that places far too much emphasis on social context for the definition of each person's identity and moral worth. The concept of dignity suggests that identity is achieved exactly as we express ourselves against our institutional roles.

Berger argues, however, that there are anthropological constraints on our age's peculiarly strong stress on dignity. For the concept and ethics of dignity, if pressed too consistently, finally begin to erode the essential sociality of the human on which any sense of identity is possible. I will not try to suggest the complex causes that underlie our current sociological situation; it is sufficient to indicate that the institutional fabric, whose basic function has always been to provide meaning and stability for the individual, has become incohesive and deprived of its plausibility. "The institutions then confront the individual as fluid and unreliable, in the extreme case as unreal. Inevitably, the individual is thrown back upon himself, on his own subjectivity, from which he must dredge up the meaning and the stability that he requires to exist. Precisely because of man's intrinsic sociality, this is a very unsatisfactory condition. Stable identities can only emerge in reciprocity with stable social contexts."³

Therefore, the ethics of dignity, with its strong anti-institutional bias, has paid a costly price for whatever liberation we may have achieved. Berger thus suggests that a rediscovery of honor in the future development of modern society is both empirically plausible and ethically desirable, as this can be done without sacrificing the conviction that the weakest member of society has an inherent right to protection and dignity. "Man's fundamental constitution is such that, just about inevitably, he will once more construct institutions to provide an ordered reality for himself. A return to institutions will, *ipso facto*, be a return to honor. It will then be possible again for individuals to identify themselves with the escutcheons of their institutional roles, experienced now not as self-

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estranging tyrannies but a freely chosen vehicle of self realization. The ethical question, of course, is what these institutions will be like. Specifically, the ethical test of any future institutions, and of the codes of honor they will entail, will be whether they succeed in embodying and in stabilizing the discoveries of human dignity that are the principal achievements of modern man."⁴

3. Honor, Truthfulness, and the University

This analysis of the idea of honor helps explain why it is both so important and yet so difficult to use the concept of honor to discuss many of the problems of the modern university. For the university is an institution of aristocracy in a democratic world. As Frederick Olafson suggests, "In the eyes of many—both supporters and critics—the university is still an essentially medieval institution in its formal institutional structure and in its dominant conception of knowledge and culture. In both domains it still bases itself on a conception of hierarchy—that is, of an ordering of academic life and of the corpus of knowledge and culture through a system of ranks within which certain fixed attributions of authority to the superordinate ranks exercise a controlling role in the life of the university."⁵

The nobility of the university is not, however, that established by birth. Rather, those who occupy the hierarchy of the university are there because they are distinguished by their willingness to expose themselves to the truth by developing the skills of critical intelligence. It is important, however, to note that such intelligence is not the same as intellectual cleverness. Indeed, one of the marks that the modern university is in trouble is that it selects students primarily on the basis of intelligence, determined by skills measured in terms of standardized tests. Yet we know that the intellectual life or the life of wisdom demands courage and other virtues which guide the inquiring mind. The university is an inevitably elitist institution but it should not be an elite determined by I.Q. but rather by the willingness to expose our ignorance in the search for wisdom.

An institution formed to train the critical mind must be formed by a shared past that creates present expectations that determines matters of honor. For the university is not waiting to be created; it is an institution that knows why and for what purpose it exists: the development of the critical person who would rather know than not know. We know that the willingness to expose ourselves to critical scrutiny is no easy task, as we

all prefer to rest content on the conventional wisdom of the past,⁶ especially as it assumes the status of scientific or scholarly knowledge. Thus, the university is that institution we depend upon to honor those who provide us with more truthful ways of understanding and knowing.

Berger suggests, however, that the values of democracy have tended to undermine the university as an institution of honor committed to truthfulness. The university's attempt to maintain and impose a code of conduct that is commensurate with its purposes appears to result in an arbitrarily established difference among people rather than a context for their equality. That this should be viewed negatively is inevitable if, as the democratic model seems to demand, the task of the university becomes the enhancement and the fulfillment of the individual's desires—e.g., "What do you want to learn about?" or "That course is no longer relevant since it does not help me in my chosen profession"⁷—than the creation of a class of people distinctly marked by their love of truth.

Thus, the idea of the university as a society dedicated to providing people with the skills to articulate truthfully what they know and should know has shifted to the idea that the university's primary task is to serve the needs of the individual and society as immediately experienced. Such needs can come in the form of training for the job market or the military, or in helping solve the problem of dignity. For the "interest model" rests on the assumption that the university should not only serve a democratic social order,⁸ it should *be* one and thus subject to the interests of those that make it up. Without an institution like the church that provides the space and time necessary for people to engage in the work of the mind, the university can only exist in spite of, rather than because of, its social purpose.

Connected with the democratization of the academy is the tendency of college graduates to claim that though they have a college education, they have not been essentially changed by the experience. But universities necessarily pass on and investigate what Olafson has called the "high culture" of our civilization, which certainly has roots in our everyday life⁹ but which one does not come in contact with without it affecting our "natural and parochial selves." Thus, Olafson suggests that "much of the frantic current emphasis on ethnicity and 'pop' culture by people in the universities appears to be an attempt on their part to assure themselves that exposure to intellectual life has not really changed them and that they retain the myopic parochialism of their origins."¹⁰

To be sure, the ethic of individual dignity has helped eliminate many unjustified impositions on students and faculty which were inconsistent

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with or not necessary for the university's purpose. However, this ethic is ultimately not sufficient for the university if the university is an institution committed to a task not subject to those who currently happen to be associated with it. For the purpose of the university is not subject to democratic vote nor is it legitimated by the amount of participation of its constituent members in the processes that give form to that purpose.¹¹

Of course, since one of the main things that those who work toward skills of truthfulness learn is that they have no corner on truth, the citizens of a university community tend to place great value on the importance of discussion for giving the university direction. This does not mean, however, that the university must assume that all behavior that takes place within its bounds deserves to be regarded as part of that dialogue. If the university community has become so unsure of its purpose that it no longer feels able to articulate acts of dishonor for those participating in its work, then it is not worthy of surviving as an institution dedicated to learning and scholarship.

The task of the university is not one that everyone is called upon to perform, though of course everyone must be truthful, but rather it is the duty of those with the intellectual and moral virtues necessary for this kind of task. For though we assume that all people wish to know rather than not know, we generally fear the truth like the plague. We prefer our illusions, which are often rooted in our concern not to hurt others or ourselves rather than risk encountering the wildness and unpredictability of reality which ultimately defies our categories. Those called to such a task cannot afford to be deficient in intellectual or moral virtue, as the absence of one without the other will leave us prey to the conventionalities we are always tempted to call the truth because of the sheer weight of their general acceptance.

Contrary to much of the reigning thought about universities, truth is not something we learn simply by perceiving or analyzing further; it requires the qualification of the self. To know the truth requires correspondence to the truth. Most of us are rather lacking in this regard, but the pervasiveness of our failure must not be allowed to blind us to this requirement for those who pursue academic study—whether they be students or professors. Such moral commitment is not to be equated with the mediocrity and triteness of the reigning piety; rather, it has more to do with such virtues as integrity, honesty, justice, humility, humor, and kindness.

It requires integrity, for those who labor in the academy are constantly tempted to sell their wares at the current cultural store. It requires honesty, because learning is essentially a matter of recognizing our

limitations. It requires justice in the sense that we must learn to gaze fairly at reality as it is, not as we wish it to be. It requires humility, as we recognize that we can never contain the truth within our conceptualizations. It requires humor to guard us against the most dangerous of all intellectual sins, the temptation to take ourselves too seriously. (To have humor is to recognize that the viability of truth does not rest on our particular formulation of it.) Finally, it requires kindness and mutuality, as the demands of truth can be so hard and destructive that only the love of others can sustain us in the endeavor.¹²

It is therefore to be expected that the university, as the institution that provides for the class of people to do this kind of work, defines some behavior and practices as honorable and others as dishonorable. Since the ability to know the truth in its many and various contexts and levels is always a process rather than a status, it is necessary to establish conditions for the process. These conditions at least are the faithful reporting of what we have learned in a way that clearly distinguishes one's insights from those of others. There are definite acts we can associate with this condition that should not be done—e.g., using another person's work as representative of one's own. Cheating is thus a class term which judges the individual as engaging in behavior inconsistent with the ends of the university, regardless of the motivation or excuses the agent might give to explain such behavior. The university's concern with cheating is not a moralistic attempt to restrain petty immorality but is the articulation to itself of what it is about. The reasons why certain persons cheat may be of interest to their welfare or even indicate some problems in the university's social fabric, but such response cannot qualify the meaning and significance of cheating itself.

It is one of the ironies of the current situation that it is assumed that one of the marks of the Christian university is to be understanding and forgiving to those who have cheated or engaged in other activities detrimental to the university's purposes. The campus chaplain's office too often becomes the comfort station to protect the student from the demands and consequences of undertaking the task of the university. What must be remembered is that before the church becomes a dispenser of comfort to the afflicted, it must first be a dispenser of truth.¹³ When the church's rightful ministry of forgiveness is turned into a cheap policy of understanding and acceptance, both church and university have compromised their commitment to truth.

The church's stake in the university is that we believe that the God we find and worship in Jesus Christ is the true God. Christians thus believe that they have no fear of the truth, but rather they have a stake in having

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the truth of our existence stated as clearly as possible. We do not assume that such truth will make us whole, for the truth can be as destructive as it can be healing, but rather we seek the truth because it is our duty. If we compromise our duty because we are gripped by sentimental accounts of Christian kindness, we neither serve the church nor the Gospel well.

Do not think I am suggesting that it is or should be the task of the university to be the church—that is, to preach the Gospel. For the university to do this would be presumptive and destructive, because the task to which the university is committed does not save. Rather, I am arguing the church must charge the university to do what it can—namely, to develop people of critical intelligence—for it is just such a people the church requires for its purpose. But the church must also support the university by providing the resources necessary for the university to continue its work in a world that generally only wants truth on the world's own terms.

Some may object that the position I have developed is far too severe, given the ambiguity of the university as an institution dedicated to the pursuit of truth—i.e., that what I have said may be theoretically accurate, but the university that I defend simply does not exist. We know the university is full of teachers who have little sympathy with the purpose of the university as I have stated it. We also know that few students come to the academy to learn as an end in itself, but instead see the university as but one more hurdle toward the securing of a better job. We know that too many of our classes are taught with no more purpose than the allocation of grades at the end of the semester. Moreover, the competitive nature of the current university, with its constant demand of good grades for admission into good professional and graduate schools, seems to warrant for many a less rigorous stance about dishonorable behavior.

Such a list could be extended almost indefinitely, but it would serve no useful function. For no one would argue that the university is free from hypocrisy or that as a multiversity it assumes tasks tangential to or even antithetical to its essential purpose. Yet this kind of point does not mean that the university should not be concerned about whether its constituents engage in dishonest behavior. There are no pure institutions in this world—not church, not state, not family, not university. Because the church often fails to preach the gospel with integrity does not mean it makes no difference that we try to live true to the gospel. Because the state does not always seek justice does not mean that we should cease to work toward a more just society. How poorly the university would train if it assumed the cynical position that since we are all in sin, there

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is no way to expect anything good of anybody! Surely the university, as still one of the least ambiguous institutions of our society, can require its constituents to act honorably even if it is necessary to exclude some who act dishonorably.

The university has the task of educating young people to bear the burden of truthfulness in a world of ambiguity and hypocrisy. For the university to excuse dishonorable behavior or to expect less than honorable behavior because of its own inconsistencies is to fail in this task. It is each person's duty to decide to be trustworthy regardless of the conditions that surround him or her. To suggest that our honesty is always relative to the moral status of our surrounding environment is a formula of moral cowardice which cannot sustain the work of the scholar or the citizen. Moreover, it is to fail to see all people with the dignity that Berger suggested must be preserved, as it assumes that people cannot rise higher than their social conditions. There is no greater dignity than to treat another as if he or she is capable of honorable behavior.

The moral authority that grounds this kind of ethic at the university is not the administration, or the faculty, or the students, but that band of scholars who are true to the university's purpose. Just as the church's authority rests on the witness of the saints so the university's authority to articulate and embody the ethics of honor peculiar to itself rests on those scholars who have so completely embodied it in their person and work. To be sure, there can be no honor at a university (or in any other society) that does not have in its past and present paradigms of moral and intellectual excellence—that is, people who willingly sacrifice their self-interest for the sake of knowing better and more truthfully. That is why it is so important that the university have not only criteria of dishonor, but ways of recognizing those in its midst who do honor to its purposes.

4. The Christian University

In conclusion, let me try to be as clear as I can be about what implications this analysis might have for how we think about the Christian university. First and foremost, I have not said that the university is just another extension of the church. The university is not, cannot be, and should not be in the business of holding out the salvation that only the church can properly proclaim. Nor can the Christian university simply be the church's institution for inculturation to the intellectual and social culture of the church's surrounding society.

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Rather, I have tried to suggest that the church has a stake in the university because the church has a commitment to the development of critical intelligence. For we exist as a people who have been formed by a gospel that assures us that we have no fear of the truth. We all learn to say this easily, but we know in fact that it is an extraordinary assumption. As Ernest Becker has suggested, it may well be that a full apprehension of the human condition would drive us mad.¹⁴

Yet if my suggestions above are correct, the university is that institution that values the development of the rational life above all else. Such a life is not identified with any specific curriculum or administrative division or academic discipline. Rather, the rational life is that one in which appearances and plausibilities are relentlessly tested in the hope that the realities will be truthfully disclosed in the process. It cannot be the special possession of any one area or discipline.

Nor is the rational life one that is devoid of value or emotive concerns. As Julian Hartt has suggested, "the rational life stands out against the life of spontaneous enjoyment either of weal or woe, bane or blessing. And it also stands out against abstract understanding of what is and what is good. The rational life is one in which the right things are rightly enjoyed."¹⁵ The university has no unique claim to achieving such a life, but it does claim to be the place that strives the hardest to support those who wish to develop such a life to do so.

But such an institution is not easily sustained. Financially it is not easy to sustain, for societies have much to fear from the development of such people and therefore prefer to support the university on their own terms. Nor is it easy to attract students and faculty, as few willingly expose themselves to such institutions. And finally, it is not easy to sustain morally and intellectually, for few of us have the moral courage to believe that the truth is worth pursuing.

Thus, the church is important to the Christian university by providing the money to sustain its existence so that the university will not have to sell out to its society's needs. It sustains the university by producing people who are willing to stand the rigors and the demands of such an institution. But finally and most importantly, the church sustains the university by keeping alive the story and the rituals that assure us that falsehood is finally bounded by the power of truth.

NOTES

1. Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by George Lawrence (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), p. 626. Further references in text.

2. Peter Berger, "On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honor," *Archives of European*

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Sociology, XI (1970), p. 339. Reprinted in *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, edited by Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 172-181.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 346-7.

5. Frederick Olafson, "Democracy, 'High Culture,' and the Universities," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 2, 4 (Summer, 1973), p. 386.

6. For an account of our capacity for self-deception, particularly as it is reinforced by our assumption that we desire to know the truth, see David Burrell and Stanley Hauerwas, "Self-Deception and Autobiography: Theological and Ethical Reflections of Speer's *Inside the Third Reich*," in my *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 82-98.

7. This is not to deny that questions of relevance are unimportant to scholarly activity. In fact, one of the difficulties of contemporary universities is how the separation into disciplines has encouraged the growth of hardened orthodoxies about what are and are not areas and methods for scholarly concentration. It is my contention that the Christian university should be that institution with the courage to hire scholars who can challenge the "professionalized" paradigms of academic "specializations." We need to recover the idea that there just may well be something called Christian sociology, economy, etc.—not in the sense that Christian convictions provide special knowledge inaccessible to others, but rather that being Christian may well bring certain interests and concerns to the fore that have been ignored or are not in the province of the sociologist or the economist.

8. Of course, we should not be surprised that the modern university takes as its primary task the training of people for the tasks of democracy. The university always has served the social orders in which it exists. I am suggesting, however, that the ends of the church and the ends of democracy are not necessarily compatible. Therefore, at least conceptually, though I despair at the practical possibility, I assume theoretically that a university supported by the church should provide people with skills that universities supported by the wider society do not.

9. This is important, of course, because an aristocracy of the mind must be seen as important to all people in the society that supports it. Thus, though not every Christian would be called to the university, every Christian must see that they have some stake in what goes on there. As important, then, as the church is for the kind of people that it sends to the university, is the kind of welcome it provides for those it receives back from the university.

10. Olafson, "Democracy, 'High Culture,' and the Universities," p. 402.

11. In the past, the position I am trying to represent has been identified with those who have assumed that truthfulness is only associated with those disciplines that deal with truth as an end itself—democratic models of the university are all right if one wants the university to pursue disciplines that provide practical results. However, I refuse to accept the distinction between theoretical and practical truth such a division implies. It seems to me that a Christian university might well encourage the growth of certain practical disciplines—e.g., nursing—but what becomes important is *how* it encourages reflection in its students and faculty in nursing.

12. See my "Problematics of a 'Christian College,'" *The Cresset*, XXXIV, 7 (May, 1971), p. 7.

13. Julian Hartt, *Theology and the Church in the University* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 156.

14. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 27.

15. Hartt, p. 34. I think this provides the basis for why liturgy is so important for the university's own purposes. Unfortunately, the "college chapel," under the burden of providing worship bland enough for anyone, provides poor faith to sustain and train our desires to enjoy the right things rightly.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hauerwas, Stanley, 1940-

Christian existence today : essays on church, world, and living in between / Stanley Hauerwas.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographies and index.

1. Theology. 2. Christian ethics--Methodist authors. 3. Christianity--20th century. 4. Church and the world. 5. United States--Church history--20th century. I. Title.

BR50.H34 1988

230--dc19

88-18774

CIP

Printed in the United States of America