

HOW UNIVERSITIES CONTRIBUTE TO THE CORRUPTION OF YOUTH

1. The Current State of the "Christian University"

"The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the son of God; to advance learning in all lines of truth; to defend scholarship against all false notions and ideals; to develop a Christian love of freedom and truth; to promote a sincere spirit of tolerance; to discourage all partisan and sectarian strife; and to render the largest permanent service to the individual, the state, and the nation, and the church. Unto these ends shall the affairs of this university always be administered."

So reads the bronze plaque that rests in the middle of Duke University. Yet at the recent inauguration of the president of Duke University, the chairman of the board of Duke read this statement leaving out "set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." That he did so is certainly appropriate, as there is no visible evidence that teaching or scholarship at Duke is decisively determined by adherence to Jesus Christ. To be sure, Duke Chapel continues to stand in the middle of the campus and is used as the symbol of Duke on most of the campus publications, but that it does so is more a witness to its aesthetic than its Christian nature.

Christians built and supported universities because they thought them important for enabling us to live better as Christians. Yet now statements such as that on the bronze plaque at Duke are often seen by those who make up the modern university as, at best, quaint sentiments from the past or, more likely, potential threats from the religious right. For example, one seldom sees emblazoned on Harvard's shield its full motto—i.e., *Veritas: Christo et Ecclesia*. *Veritas* is quite enough challenge for the contemporary university.

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Why and how this transformation took place no doubt involve complex social and intellectual issues. Even if I had the competence to account for the loss of Christian control of their universities, that is not my primary concern. Rather, I am only interested in noting this change insofar as it helps us now to face the issue of how as Christians we are to understand our commitment to, and participation in, the life of the modern university. I certainly do not believe it is possible or desirable to recapture Duke or Harvard as Christian universities. The question is not whether Duke can be Christian; but rather how Christians should understand what they are doing as teachers, administrators, and students at Duke, Harvard, and the University of North Carolina.

Of course, some may well think they do not need to have the issue put so contentiously, as they support or teach at less secular universities. The possibility of being a "Christian college" still exists at smaller schools that specialize in liberal arts or pre-professional education. In such contexts it not only remains possible to assert the union of knowledge and religion as set forth in the teaching and character of Jesus Christ, but a genuine attempt to determine the morals and character of students can be made. Thus, the mission statement of Anderson College in Anderson, Indiana, reads "Our mission is to be an institution of Christian higher education at its best. We understand this to mean building that quality program which will enable each member of the campus community to become stronger in body, mind and spirit; to experience what it means to love God and 'neighbor'; to purposefully adopt a style of servanthood in all of life (Based on Mark 10:35-45; 12:28-33)."

It is not for me to judge how well or completely Anderson and the many schools like it accomplish this purpose. I am sure it differs from school to school. Yet I do have general questions about the coherence and/or practicality of such mission statements in the society in which we live. Such statements confirm and comfort those who work to maintain such colleges, but I suspect the reality often belies the stated ideal. That it does so is not because anyone is being willfully deceitful, but because we are dealing with fundamental issues and conflicts which are not easily resolved.

For the problem with bronze plaques such as the one in the middle of Duke is that they give the impression that there once was a golden age when it was possible to maintain "Christian universities." Due to the pluralism of our culture that time may have passed for such universities, but now that mission can be carried on by smaller colleges which have a more homogeneous constituency. Yet I think questions of how Christians are to be related to universities and colleges were in fact no clearer

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in the "golden age" than now. The only difference now is that living in a more secular culture means we are less able to avoid such issues.

For example, in Anderson College's mission statement we are told that as a "Christian institution of higher education" they are committed to building a "quality program." Yet the nature of that "program" is not spelled out. It usually takes the form of some pledge of commitment to the "liberal arts," which assumes that there is some intrinsic connection between being Christian and having a "well-rounded" education. But I know of no theological justification for such an assumption. After all, a "humanistic education" does not necessarily insure more humane students. Even more important the sense of "humane" sponsored by such an education may undercut the student's being Christian.

It is perhaps unfair to single out bronze plaques and mission statements, as they are meant to be written at the highest level of generalization. Yet such generalizations can too easily become ideologies that repress rather than encourage the kind of critical questions we must ask as Christians if we are to understand our commitment to "higher education." For example, why was it assumed by those who wrote the words on the bronze plaque at Duke that advancing all forms of learning is compatible with the teachings and character of Jesus Christ? To be sure, such learning is done in the name of truth but as those of us in the university know, that is an essentially contested notion. Or why was it assumed that advancing such truth will necessarily be of service to the state, nation, and church, or even why those three social realities should necessarily exist in harmony with each other?

In truth, we must say that as Christians we have not thought hard about what intellectual difference Christian convictions might make for what is considered knowledge. As a result, our universities and colleges increasingly look like any other.¹ Thus, "Christian liberal arts colleges'" curriculum looks like any liberal arts college's curriculum. When asked what makes it Christian, administrators appeal to campus atmosphere or to the convictions of those teaching. But what is not clear is how those convictions, which no doubt are often quite real and genuine, make a difference for the shape of the curriculum and/or the actual content of the courses. After all, why should it, since those teaching at such schools did their graduate work at universities where they were taught to honor the autonomy of their field? It is good to have Christians teaching sociology or history, but we would be very doubtful of them if they claimed that their being Christian made a significant difference in the content of their courses. The same basic textbooks in economics, political science, and biology are used in Christian colleges just as much as they are in

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more secular institutions. It would be a terrible thing, would it not, if Christian students lacked the intellectual frame of reference to be actors in our society?

Moreover, I think it is clear that those who support Christian universities and colleges would be quite upset if the qualifier came to mean that the education students received might put them at a disadvantage for being a success in America. For education, no matter how much supporters of liberal arts might protest, is meant to give students power that they would not otherwise have. It is not simply the power to have a job, but the power that comes from being introduced to the high culture of a civilization which underwrites and legitimates those who rule through education. In the absence of any epistemological and social alternative, the Christian university has no choice but to perform that task.

2. Moral Education in an Allegedly Pluralist Culture

That Christian universities and colleges have found it difficult to maintain intellectually and institutionally their identity as Christian is at least partly the result of having to work in an allegedly pluralist society. I emphasize "allegedly," as I think it doubtful if genuine pluralism—that is, the belief that the unity of political community will not be endangered by allowing the proliferation of groups—has ever been the working policy of America.² Obviously, America is a nation that has a plurality of religious groups, which made it necessary to avoid any established religion as well as to provide freedom of religious groups. But this does not insure that our social policy in fact is pluralistic.

For example, consider the strange results this has had in matters of education. John Westerhoff points out that since the national government took no responsibility for education, "Church-supported schools, with clear religious identities and orientation, were expected to induct persons into life in the new nation. However, the increasing need for national unity, loyal citizens, and common values combined with a growing rationalism, skepticism, and empiricism to give the original principle of separation of church and state a new meaning. What occurred was understandable, but not expected. Freedom in education for religious identity (so long as it did not promote separatism) became freedom from religious identity on behalf of civil harmony. Thus the doctrine of separation of church and state had come full circle. Not only was the right to teach religion and interpret life and history from the perspective of a

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religious tradition prohibited from state schools, but public support of church-related schools was denied. A national commitment to the education of the public had become identified with public education. The state's right and duty to encourage higher education became the right and duty to educate. The result was a functional elimination of religion from its original place of central importance in higher education."³

In principle, pluralist social strategies are meant to reinforce the ability of religious groups to maintain their own integrity but in fact the result is the opposite. For as Westerhoff points out, the "church's interest in pluralism locates in freedom which is necessary for faithful life in loyalty to God alone. The state, on the other hand, defends pluralism from the point of view that order and loyalty are necessary for its survival and health."⁴ This contrast becomes particularly critical in relation to the church's educational institutions, which often are justified insofar as they serve what our society and state understand by pluralism rather than the church's understanding of pluralism.

In such a situation the role of the "religious college or university" becomes that of training students in virtues necessary to sustain not the church—but the society and the state. When religious colleges do so, however, they are not so much reinforcing the particularistic identity necessary for a pluralistic society, but rather educating people to live in an open society. The latter differs from pluralism, as it assumes that a good society is one in which positions and associations are open to anyone regardless of ethnic, racial, or religious convictions. As Thomas Green has observed, what is often "described as an increasingly pluralistic society is in fact only an increasingly open society in which status is determined less by ascription and more by achievement or some other criteria."⁵ As a result, Christian colleges which were built and supported in the interest of maintaining the integrity of religious groups, become the means of assimilation in the name of creating a society in which "differences between people are simply irrelevant as long as they do not inconvenience the conduct of affairs either in the polity, in the economy, or in the family."⁶ This is "make-believe pluralism" which results in producing people who live by an equally make-believe morality.

This is not to say that contemporary universities and colleges, Christian or secular, do not morally train students. Contrary to the often-made claims that the university today is at best amoral, I find that most higher education does a good job of initiating, or at least reinforcing, in our students the dominant morality of our culture. It does this not by explicitly teaching courses in "ethics" but by the very way colleges and univer-

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sities structure their curricula. Of course, I believe the morality thereby embodied to be corrupt and corrupting, but it is nonetheless a morality.

It is important that I not be misunderstood. By suggesting that the Christian college corrupts the youth, I am not suggesting that higher education has that much power. Rather, I think it is the case that the university simply reinforces the corruption that has already been well begun. Quite simply, the university underwrites the assumption that morality is something we create through individual choice rather than it being the shaping of our lives through the disciplined discovery of the good. No better example of this assumption can be found than those who want the contemporary university to teach values. Used cars have some value, but I suspect that values have very little to do with any substantive account of morality. For universities to teach values—or to help students clarify values—only reinforces the idea that the moral life is but another form of consumer choice.

Of course, that is exactly what we would expect a capitalist society to suggest as the basic form of morality. Thus, the modern university or college depends on convincing those who come to it that any need they have can be met. In such a context, the university or college cannot help but appear as a gigantic cafeteria. The student comes to it as a cipher to be filled up by pushing trays along the line, taking a salad of math or computer science, some potatoes of philosophy (just to be sure they are introduced somewhere along the way to some “big ideas”), little corn of literature (to insure they will be recognized as “educated” people), and finally some meat: a major in business, physics, or history (the traditional pre-law major) which puts one on the appropriate career track.

Moreover, individual courses assume the same structure. The idea that a course might actually attempt to initiate students into practices that make the students more truthful is thought to be oppressive. Rather, each course should present various alternatives so that in the process the students can “make up their own mind.” Of course, the teachers may want to argue that one position is better than another but in doing so they must make clear they are only giving “their own opinion.” For example, would it not be shocking for a philosopher or theologian to argue that modern ethical theory is corrupt or corrupting and thus refuse to have students read modern theory? A curriculum made up of courses that only present “alternatives” confirms the moral assumption that we are or should be autonomous consumers whose power is increased by providing us increased choice in the market.⁷ In the name of objectivity we refrain from trying to shape the lives of our students in a manner that might change their image of what they are or should be about. The most

teachers can hope for is that some student becomes so interested in their subject he or she might decide to major in it or even to pursue it in graduate school. But the notion that we ought to teach or shape our curricula in a manner that might actually change a student's fundamental moral stance is unthinkable. As a result, we more or less leave students morally exactly the way we found them—i.e., people who pride themselves on their autonomy and who are increasingly aware that all moral positions are "relative" or "subjective" because they are matters of choice.

3. The Problem of the Socratic Ideal for the University

Some may well think that the critique of the modern university I have made here is grossly unfair.⁸ Of course the university reflects the primary moral values of its society, they would argue. There is nothing peculiar about that, as the university has always more or less mirrored the social order in which it exists. Those who would hold up as a goal, the liberal art curriculum of the past and its correlative model of gentleman-scholar as teacher fail to realize that such curricula and teachers served to reinforce a class bias which we now believe unjust. Contemporary curricula may be less coherent but they also are more open to the democratic ethos of our society.

This line of defense usually goes on to suggest that the task of the university is not moral formation but rather the introduction of students to critical inquiry and questioning. In support of such a task, Socrates' method is often called forward as the standard or ideal of what university education ought to be about. The universities' task is not so much to give students answers as it is to make them relentless questioners of every unexamined assumption or piece of conventional wisdom. There is a sense in which this is seen as a moral task, insofar as this kind of education makes people more aware of themselves and others. The university is morally justified in the sense that the examined life becomes our ideal.

It is certainly not my intention to argue for a return to a liberal arts curriculum as more appropriate to Christian commitments. I do not believe that such a curriculum ever existed as coherently as its defenders presuppose, nor do I believe that a return to such a curriculum would be a moral advance. I do not think there is anything inherently incompatible between more practically oriented education and Christian commitment to the university. Yet I do not think that that justifies

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the failure of the modern university to provide any rationale for the education it provides other than the assumption that by taking a variety of courses students will be better informed and possess more inquiring minds.

Please note I am not suggesting that the university fails in its task to initiate students into the Socratic task of critical inquiry; rather, I am suggesting that the Socratic method itself is suspect for moral development. No one has made this case more clearly than has Martha Nussbaum in her article, "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom."⁹ Noting that Aristophanes failed to understand the difference between Socrates and the Sophist, Nussbaum argues that Aristophanes rightly criticized Socrates' teaching for its largely negative effect. It is one thing for Socrates to try to show that conventional morality and virtue lacked reasoned defense, she argues; it is quite another to engage people in dialectic when one has no substitute to offer, as Socrates often confessed he did not, other than the examined life itself.

What Aristophanes saw, according to Nussbaum, is that Socrates was negligent in his indifference to the antecedent moral training of those he engaged in dialectic. In Aristophanes' view, Socrates mocked "habituation without acknowledging that it might be essential in forming a pupil's moral intuitions to a point at which the search for justification can appropriately begin. He entrusts the weapons of argumentation to anyone who will expose himself to teaching, without considering whether he is one of the people who will be likely to put the teaching to good use. He implies that teaching is sufficient and habituation is irrelevant. This intellectualism is what Socrates' pupils retain from his teaching: this insistence that moral teaching is the business of experts, not elders, that a technical training enables one to scoff at ordinary norms" (p. 80).

The problem with Socrates' strategy was that even though Socrates said his interest was not in undermining conventional morality, that was its inevitable effect. Because he emphasized argument rather than character, an inference can be drawn that any belief is permissible as long as one is clever enough. Aristophanes (and Aristotle) therefore criticized Socrates for failing to make clear the difference between his ironic aloofness and the immoralism of those who conclude from his method that conventional morality lacks adequate rational defense. What Socrates failed to see is his very method of inquiry requires an account of the virtues that he failed to give. That he did so is due to his assumption that virtue is like an expert craft or skill which can be gained only by the

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dialectic engendered by an expert teacher. Preceding or further training, apart from the teaching itself, is not required.

Yet as Nussbaum points out, the assimilation of morality to an expert craft is questionable. "It neglects, as Aristotle points out, the crucial importance of early habituation and the training of desires; dispositions to behave morally are not like capacities to perform. A craft can be separated from the desire to use it well; a good doctor is also a good poisoner. It fails to identify with sufficient precision the aim or end of morals, that of which the expert is an expert producer. In most of the Socratic dialogues we find no positive account of the human good" (p. 84).¹⁰ Socrates' failure to attend to virtue as a form of habituation accounts, moreover, for the irresponsible manner by which he selected his dialogue partners and students. For he made no attempt to determine his students' prior training or beliefs. As a result, his method of questioning often had unanticipated results as his students too easily concluded that they must create their own morality.

Though it is not crucial to my case whether in fact Nussbaum's defense of Aristophanes' critique of Socrates is fair to every aspect of Socrates' position, I think the most obvious objection should be met. For who gives a more impassioned defense than Socrates of living virtuously? Nussbaum agrees that Aristophanes certainly overlooked much that is favorable to Socrates, but she maintains that "Socrates' concern with virtue and its justification, at least as depicted in Plato's early dialogues, leads to no clear or obvious results. In the one place, where the theory of the good does become more concrete, it is in a form that invites, rather than prevents, confusion with immoralism. It would not be unfair to say that most of Socrates' concern for virtue remains in the realm of personal choice and good intentions for others" (p. 86). Thus, Socrates' prestige and influence had helped to undermine conventional standards no matter whether he intended to do so or not.

Moreover, Nussbaum argues that the direction of Plato's more mature work suggests he had come to understand this. "Plato, from his perception of the great threat that open dialectic poses to social stability, and his belief that without social stability men cannot live good lives, infers the necessity of restricting dialectic to those who are both initially well-trained and outstandingly intelligent" (p. 88). In short, Plato came to understand that Socrates was too optimistic about the potential of the common man for moral growth and understanding. Unless we are well prepared, Socratic dialectic can as easily be destructive as therapeutic.

As an alternative to Socrates, Nussbaum defends an Aristotelian view of education. Aristotle was no less concerned than was Socrates that the

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virtuous must not only know they are virtuous but be able to justify their convictions. Yet in contrast with Socrates, Aristotle argued that the virtues are neither natural capacities nor pieces of learned wisdom, but habits formed by practice in choosing and doing the appropriate actions. Natural appetites are not bad, Aristotle thought, but through training the young must learn to find pleasure in the things that reasonable adults agree are right; "a pre-rational training must prepare the soul for the full reasoned understanding of virtue. The good city, ruled by men of practical wisdom who have a clear and explicit picture of their concept of the good, will establish a system of training which makes use of traditional methods—but in the service of the full life of virtue to come" (p. 90). Such an ethos therefore depends on the existence of men of practical wisdom. For the good can be discovered only through the deliberations of virtuous people weighing the appearances in an effort to achieve the most nearly true judgments about matters that matter.

Aristotelian justice is therefore not an underwriting of the conventional, since the wise person can give reasons for preferring his or her way. Nor is justice thought to be determined by some transcendental standard. Rather, the standard is the judgments of people who have proven themselves wise. They are not "experts" in the sense of knowing something we do not know, but rather they are special because they see "better and more clearly what we all, collectively, know. Thus moral argument and moral change will take place within a climate of reasoned debate, and will represent an attempt to reach the best possible ordered articulation of our moral intuitions" (p. 91).

What is problematic about Aristotle's views is that they are not easily applied to political reality where reason is seldom sufficient to settle conflict. Aristotle thought that a system of early education that imparts to all citizens a shared concept of the good at least holds out some hope of moderating such conflicts. Moreover, the system of laws that summarizes the decisions of people of practical wisdom will also help provide sanctions to chasten hedonism which threatens disorder. The process of legislation itself will also help train many about the good life. But most important of all is the ruler(s) must foster "friendship among men in the polis qua citizen, so that, even if a law seems repugnant to an individual or a group, those men will be inclined to obey it out of good will to the regime itself and to their fellow citizens who are benefited by it" (p. 93).

All of this about Socrates and Aristotle may be interesting enough, but it may be thought to have little to do with the modern university. But I think the implications are direct and significant. For if Socrates' method

subtly led to the corruption of the youth of Athens, the contemporary university's degraded form of the Socratic method does so in a more direct and almost inevitable manner. In the name of exposing students to critical questions through a chaotic curriculum filled with equally chaotic courses, we only reinforce the disdain for reasoned discourse. Our students are even less prepared than were Socrates' interlocutors to begin the demanding task of engaging in reasoned discourse to know better the good and true. They lack the virtues necessary for sustaining the life of the mind, as there exists no community capable of directing them to the good in the first place.

Put differently, the very idea of university education as moral education becomes problematic in our culture, which not only does not require the development of virtue but sees such development as an impediment to freedom. We lack a community of law and/or friendship that gives direction to such education. The contemporary university not only does not challenge that set of conventional assumptions but in the name of the Socratic method underwrites a false sense of objectivity, believing that objectivity is insured by giving every position a hearing. Thus the Socratic method, in the name of being unconventional, underwrites the conventional morality that is based on the inviolability of each person's subjectivity. The only interesting question about our situation is whether our culture possesses the resources that might make something like the Aristotelian alternative a real possibility.

4. On Being Christian in the University

I know that I have, to this point, painted a fairly stark picture. I also know that in some ways it is an exaggerated depiction. I know that much good education does go on at both Christian and secular universities.¹¹ I know that students continue to find teachers who provide them with visions of the good which become habitual ways of responding to the world. I know that teachers discover students who have moral convictions and intellectual commitments that startle and almost frighten the teachers with their seriousness. Yet on the whole I think the picture I have drawn is largely correct. Even more troubling, however, is that I have no ready solution to offer.

I think my analysis, however, has not been without benefit, as we now better know how to state the problem. Moreover, the analysis I have provided is some comfort for those like myself who are identified with the university. For if I have been right, the problem is not only in the

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university, but in wider society and the church. Thus, it would seem that the result of my analysis is to shift the responsibility away from the university, since the university can only be as good as the community that sustains it.

I am not satisfied, however, with that conclusion. Indeed, I think those of us committed to the university as Christians can do better, and I think we may be doing better than we can say. In a way, the situation of the university is a bit like the lives of the people described by Robert Bellah and his coauthors in *Habits of the Heart*. For the authors note that the common difficulties their respondents face in justifying the goals of a morally good life point to a problem for all people in our culture—namely, “for most of us, it is easier to think about how to get what we want than to know what exactly we should want.”¹² They go on to suggest that too often people lack sufficient moral language to describe the good they do or want to do and instead must interpret the good they do in terms of “expressive individualism.” In like manner, I suspect, the good that the university does or that those in the university want to do fails to be acknowledged because we lack the common language to celebrate that good.

For example, universities of all kinds still give some people the time and resources to do nothing but study and teach the debates about the Trinity. That they are allowed to do so is right and good, as it is through such study we maintain the essential memory necessary for us to understand the moral and theological commitments of our forebearers. Our difficulty is that we cannot lift up such activity as crucial to the university’s moral task, because it lacks “relevance.” As a result we have to justify the university in terms that will insure success in our society, in the hopes of sustaining the study of the Trinity.

This is an odd situation for the university, since the university more than any institution in our culture is committed to maintaining the habits necessary for reasoned discourse so we can better understand what it is we should want. In the terms I used above to describe the Aristotelian perspective, the university is the place where we should train those with the wisdom to help us all know better what is best about us. Such training comes by the discipline of confronting texts and figures of the past and present in the hope of continuing discussion of our forebearers. For, finally, the university is the way a culture insists that its forebearers have not lived (or died) in vain. That does not mean they must agree with their forebearers; they just must remember that they are part of the conversation.

Such a perspective, moreover, helps us see why it makes sense to think

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of a university that avows Christian identity. Such an avowal is nothing other than the claim that certain past and present conversation partners are crucial for this community to know what is its good. To say that an institution is Christian is to say that certain matters cannot be left out of the conversation if we are to know better what it means to be Christian. Thus, it might be expected that the curriculum of a college that claims Christian identity would look different from those that do not. But even more important, it means that what is taught as history, or psychology, or sociology at such schools, and how they are taught, might be different. That is the most decisive challenge facing us as Christians if we in the university are to be able to claim we are serving well the church and, ultimately, our society. The temptation, even at more conservative Christian colleges is (in the name of being Christian) to be enamored with pragmatic causes—"living simply, feeding the hungry, banning the bomb, challenging abortion—than with learning to think seriously and theologically" about every subject.¹³

In that sense I think we must think seriously about how the continued existence of the Christian college or university's nominal identification with its Christian past may in fact allow us to avoid dealing with the hard intellectual issues facing us as Christians. We must recognize that the very existence of Christian colleges and universities is the result of the hegemony of Christians in this culture that was acquired and is sustained by force and power. The temptation will be to try to count on that culture to sustain the Christian educational enterprise. But if we do that, then we will fail to face our challenge and equally fail to serve the church or our culture. For, as I have tried to suggest, that culture itself is now in very deep trouble.

Let me try to make this as concrete as I can. I recently met a colleague leaving his office from which was coming a strong smell of incense: I asked him what he was doing and he answered that he was meditating, as he was about to teach certain Hindu texts and of course to do that well he ought to pray before doing so. He could get away with such prayer as someone teaching a non-Western religion because such a tradition never had power in our culture. No one teaching New Testament today in a Christian or secular university, however, could do that, because of the power the church has used in our society to force others to attend to our Scripture. We do not trust ourselves with our own heritage because we have used distrustful means to sustain it.

But perhaps the increasing secularism of our culture presents us with a new opportunity in this respect. As Christians lose power they also gain the freedom to call on their convictions to challenge the reigning

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intellectual paradigms, not only in the study of religion but in other disciplines as well.¹⁴ Or they may even find that they have the freedom to make their own colleges more intellectually interesting, as no longer are they used to train people to be like everyone else but rather to sustain our difference as Christians. In doing so, moreover, we believe that we serve our society well, as our difference becomes a reminder of what a genuine pluralism might look like.

I am aware that such a position cannot help but appear to many as a self-destructive formula. What secular university is going to hire economists who maintain that their Christian convictions make a difference for how they do economics? Where is the kind of Christian college I describe going to get financial support and even students? I have no ready response to such questions, though I think there is a more positive response than we imagine. I am convinced, however, that only when we ask such questions will we be on the way toward being institutions that not only do not corrupt our students (and ourselves) but may even help form them virtuously.

Yet finally I must admit that I think there is no solution to the primary moral issue I have drawn. Universities are not primary moral institutions but must draw on the wisdom of a good society that initiates the young into the practice of virtue. Though the university is integral to the sustaining of that wisdom, the university is not well constituted for primary moral training. That must come from elsewhere. If the church is to be serious about the character of its educational institutions, it can do nothing more important than to attend to the character of its youth.

NOTES

1. George Marsden notes how the rise of specialization contributed to the trend of even evangelical colleges losing control over their curricula. "The Ph.D. thesis, a demonstration of technical expertise in an area accessible only by specialists, became the prerequisite for entry into academic life. By contrast, nineteenth-century evangelical colleges had been havens for generalists, theologian-philosophers who provided the community with advice in economics, politics, morality, and often in natural science. The new specialists who were taking over by the end of the century could usually outclass the old-time teachers in any of the specialties. Moreover, their new concept of being scientific meant simultaneously to specialize and to eliminate religiously derived principles from their disciplines. The technical achievements of this new specialization thus reinforced prejudices against evangelicalism, which had been heavily committed to the older generalist approach." Marsden goes on to note that the solution to this potential conflict was "to grant the authority of the new science and history, but to emphasize that this authority was limited to certain secular domains. Picking up and vastly accentuating a theme present in the thought of evangelical predecessors they now rested the entire weight of their apologetic on the point that Christianity went far beyond that which mere scientific reason could reach. They differed from most of their predecessors in suggesting that Christianity had to do only with the aspects

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of things wholly immune from scientific or historical inquiry" ("The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, edited by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983], pp. 221-223).

2. For the most penetrating analysis of the different meanings of pluralism in relation to education, see Thomas Green, "Education and Pluralism: Ideal and Reality," *The J. Richard Street Lecture* (Syracuse: Syracuse University School of Education, 1966), p. 10.

3. John Westerhoff, "In Search of a Future: The Church-Related College," in *The Church's Ministry in Higher Education*, edited by John Westerhoff (New York: UMHE Communication Office, 1978), p. 198.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

5. Green, "Education and Pluralism," p. 19.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

7. In a review of recent books on the state of higher education in America, Andrew Hacker reports "A recent survey of liberal arts graduates revealed that over half of them had taken no work at all in economics or philosophy or, for that matter, chemistry. Frederick Rudolph says he encountered 'evidence of decline and devaluation' at virtually every campus he visited. Higher education, he asserts, has become 'a supermarket where students are shoppers and professors are merchants'" ("The Decline of Higher Learning," in *New York Review of Books*, XXXIII [February 13, 1986], p. 35). Hacker notes that this tendency is reinforced as "undergraduate courses now reflect the way disciplines are conceived at the doctoral level. This has been the real academic revolution," and has done more than anything to undercut the liberal arts. "Faculty members, to be true to their callings, feel they must spend much of their time discussing the work of their fellow professors" (p. 37).

8. For an even a stronger critique, however, see Harold McManus, *Community and Governance in the Christian University* (which can be obtained through the Committee of Southern Churchmen, Post Office Box 140215, Nashville, Tennessee 37214). Dr. McManus' paper was written as a challenge to developments at Mercer University. He quotes Professor Ted Nordenhaug's comparison of the modern academy to a tower of Babel, to the effect that "the Babel-academy is characterized by the following depressing conditions: First, there is no common intellectual language in which ideas, ends, purposes, can meaningfully be discussed. No language in which inquiry and its results in the various fields can be shared. Secondly, in the absence of a common language of inquiry and ideas, we have only a shared technical language, the language of means and mechanisms that refers to the organization of the academy. Thirdly, this mechanical language has come to conceal the Babel-academy's inability to talk about its intellectual ends by confounding these with its means. This has resulted in a sophistical transformation of normative standards into descriptions of average practice. Today the academy lacks a common intellectual life, i.e., a common or public language in which its members can share the process of inquiry. Not being able to inquire together, we cannot therefore justify the corporate purpose of the academy" (pp. 4-5). McManus notes that this condition has been the occasion for the rise of administration in the university, for if the university does not have a purpose it at least has purposes. In order to organize the university's many purposes, however, there is the need for bureaucracy to coordinate the university's many activities.

9. Martha Nussbaum, "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom," *Yale Classical Studies*, 26, edited by Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 43-97. Additional references to this article will appear in text.

10. Nussbaum's use of the notion of "expert" in this context seems anachronistic, but I suspect she has in mind MacIntyre's characterization of the expert in his *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 79-87. MacIntyre argues that the rise of the authority of the expert is correlative to developments in epistemology that require a hard distinction between fact and value in the interest of creating predictive sciences. Thus, the modern university is built on the assumption that what is needed is the training of experts rather than people of wisdom. The latter derive their authority from the knowledge

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of the unpredictability of our existence. If, as MacIntyre argues, the world is inherently unpredictable, then students of the modern university are not only being morally corrupted but misled by the reigning epistemological presuppositions of the university. In this respect it is interesting to note how recent work in epistemology increasingly has undermined the foundationalist assumptions that have been used to justify, particularly in the social sciences, the methodologies of academic disciplines. I am not sure if Nussbaum was trying to suggest this critique by her use of the language of expert in reference to Socrates, but I think she is at least correct that Socrates' (and Plato's) attempt to ground ethics in a metaphysics of necessity, while certainly different from modern epistemologies, still shares the desire to avoid unpredictability as an integral aspect of knowledge and morality.

11. For a thoughtful discussion of what it means for Christians to teach at secular institutions, see Kenneth Hermann, "Beyond the Hothouse: Higher Education Outside the Christian College," *The Reformed Journal*, 35, 11 (November, 1985), pp. 19-23. Hermann notes that Christians "must not view the university as merely a convenient place for evangelism or a fate to be endured while resting periodically in the oasis of fellowship meetings. It is certainly not an institution which Christians can justifiably abandon. It must be challenged on its own terms as an academic institution from a Christian perspective" (p. 22). I think he is right about this; for all of its faults the university continues to offer one of the few places in our society for the development of civil discourse about the good. It is less clear, however, what it means to speak to the university "on its own terms," for, as I have tried to suggest, it is by no means clear today what those terms are.

12. Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 21.

13. Nathan Hatch, "Evangelical Colleges and the Challenge of Christian Thinking," *The Reformed Journal*, 35, 9 (September, 1985), p. 15. As Hatch argues, "The battle for the mind cannot be waged mobilizing in the streets or on Capitol Hill; not by denouncing more furiously the secular humanists. If evangelicals are to help preserve even the possibility of Christian thinking for their children and grandchildren, they must begin to nurture first-order Christian scholarship, which means of course freeing Christian scholars to undertake what is a painstakingly slow and arduous task—and one that has almost no immediate return on investment" (p. 11). In order to drive that point home Hatch asks, "How many Christians do you know who would tithe so that a Christian scholar can go about her work?" (p. 12).

14. As Thomas Green suggests, "The educational function of the public schools is in relation to the efforts of public education. It is to assist in developing a sense of self-identity through historical memory and contemporary participational roles. The only difference is that in relation to public education the role of religion is to contribute to the sense of historical identity with the civic community and to prepare for the participation in the polity, economy and the professions. In relation to its own members the educational task of the Church is to develop the sense of historical identity with the worshipping community in such a way that the participational roles in the civic community do not become idolatrous, that is, so that the way society is, is never confused with the only way it can be, so that the establishment in short can never be quite secure. Religious institutions, of course, do not do this now. It is doubtful that it ever could be done except in an advanced secular society in which common education is possible in such a way that people are not religiously and politically illiterate as they are now. That is why religious leaders should encourage the growth of a secular society. But to say that is a bit like asking them to commit suicide. There is, however, an old biblical idea which is germane here. It is that a man may have to lose his life in order to gain it" (op. cit., p. 35).

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