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The Theological Foundations of the Christian Liberal Arts in Relation to the Distinctives of the Christian Liberal Arts College/University

By Stephen T. Franklin

For two thousand years, Christianity has given birth to a wide variety of institutions of higher education. Christians in Europe and North America have developed universities, seminaries, colleges, Bible institutes, Bible colleges, and research institutes. In other parts of the world, Christians have created counterparts to these institutions as well as introduced their own forms of higher education. In North America, many educational institutions began as Christian enterprises. Some have long since severed their Christian roots while others remain avowedly Christian. Among institutions which remain Christian, not a few have a commitment to a "Christian liberal arts education."

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In the phrase "Christian liberal arts" does the word "Christian" add anything distinctive? And does the term "liberal arts" comport well with Christian commitments? I am convinced that the answer to both questions is "Yes."

In Part One, I present a brief theology of culture justifying the Christian pursuit of the liberal arts but also present certain cautionary notes lest we Christian academics think too highly of our own enterprises. In Part Two, I define several terms including "trade," "discipline," "profession," and "liberal arts education." Part Two asks what our Christian response should be towards the growing number of liberal arts schools offering programs of professional education designed to equip students with marketable skills. This gives us an opportunity to clarify the meaning of "an education in the liberal arts." In Part Three, I discuss the "integration of faith and learning," which is the professed aim, it seems, of every Christian liberal arts college, though a difficult one to achieve. Part Three focuses on those forms of the integration of faith and learning that are particularly appropriate for the Christian liberal arts college or university. In short, Part One focuses on the content of the Christian faith; Part Two, on education and the liberal arts; and Part Three, on the distinctive integration of Christianity and education in the context of the liberal arts college or university.

Stephen T. Franklin explores the implications of the doctrines of creation, sin, and redemption for the Christian liberal arts and attempts to clarify the distinctive nature of the liberal arts by examining the notions of a trade, discipline, and profession. His conclusion draws these various threads into a suggestion for improving the integration of faith and learning in Christian liberal arts institutions. Dr. Franklin teaches at Tokyo Christian University in Japan.

A personal note about the origin of this paper may be helpful. I teach at an evangelical, Christian university which offers a degree accredited by the government of Japan. We must justify our Christian orientation to the Ministry of Education, which means that we must demonstrate to a non-Christian bureau that we have a defensible Christian perspective that justifies the separate existence of our Christian school. And we must also demonstrate to sometimes skeptical evangelical Christians in Japan that the liberal arts can be pursued on a Christian basis. These congregations are accustomed to Protestants maintaining Bible institutes, Bible colleges, and seminaries, but a Christian school committed to the liberal arts is something unfamiliar for some of them and requires justification. In explaining ourselves to the non-Christian Japanese Ministry of Education as well as to our Christian constituency in Japan, the first step is to explain what it means to study the liberal arts on a Christian basis. The second step, particularly when dealing with evangelical leaders, is to show that the study of liberal arts is an important task for the Christian church to encourage and support.

I. A Christian Theology of the Liberal Arts

From antiquity, reflective Christians have offered statements of the Christian faith intended to be both clear and well-balanced. Nearly all have regarded at least three doctrines as central: creation, sin, and redemption. Each doctrine has a deep impact on a Christian view of education.

Creation

The doctrine that God is the creator of heaven and earth is the *Magna Carta* of Christian liberal arts. God's creation of all things means that all truth comes from God. Therefore, the Christian is free to pursue the truth anywhere and any time. Even more, to be faithful to the doctrine that God is the creator of *all* things, the Christian is under an *obligation* to acknowledge truth wherever it may be found. The confession that God is "the maker of heaven and earth" implies that Christian higher education must include considerable exposure to the range of scholarship in the arts and sciences.

The doctrine of creation is far richer than the mere claim that God "started up" the world a long time ago. God's creative activity continues in the present, and it will continue in the future. It is helpful to distinguish three distinct "aspects" or "moments" within God's act of creation, regardless of whether we are considering God's creative acts in the past, the present, or the future.

The Christian doctrine of creation affirms, first, that God is the origin of all that is. God calls each thing into existence. Second, every major Christian theologian has further affirmed that while each creature depends upon God, the creature is also a different entity from God. A creature is neither God nor a part of God. To be more precise, we may say that each created thing has its own existence and its own capacity to act upon other created things; this

created existence and these created powers, while totally dependent upon God, are distinct realities from God's existence and powers.¹ And third, each created thing is called to serve and to glorify God, and God will judge each creature on the basis of its obedience to that call. Taken together, the three steps in God's creative act, therefore, not only give each thing its existence and its capacity to act and to be acted upon, but also give each thing its purpose. It is the creature's responsibility to decide how to answer God's call, how to fulfill its divinely given purpose. While "personal" agents have the greatest latitude in deciding how to answer God's call, all creation must in its own way respond to the divine word.

The second point in the doctrine of creation is worth some detailed attention. The second point may be called the "secular" moment in Christianity. That is, each created thing has its own identity and can truly interact with other creatures. This "secular" dimension of the Christian doctrine of creation is one (but only one) of the primary causes of the development of physical science in Europe. Christian scholars in late medieval Europe drew an important conclusion from their doctrine of creation: because God created each entity with its own integrity and power (this power being dependent on God while remaining numerically distinct from him) and because these entities can truly interact, a science of "causes between created things" was possible. Thus, when the necessary technological and economic advances had occurred, and when the Greek heritage of mathematics, logic, and dialectic had been recovered, the Christian doctrine of creation, together with these other factors, resulted in the evolution of modern science out of the soil of Christian Europe.

Several important implications for education flow from the existence of this "secular" moment within the Christian doctrine of creation. Christians are free to accept truth about the world no matter what its source—even if that source makes no appeal to religious considerations, as in the case, for example, of physics or sociology. Christians are also free to engage along with non-Christians in political, educational, legal, and health care professions, as well as brick-laying, auto mechanics, and other trades and professions. We may even say that there is nothing in principle to prevent one from learning philosophy from the pagan Greeks, Muslims, Buddhists, or atheists. Christians should also be taught to delight in exercising their own creative powers, whether in music, mathematics, painting, or architecture, for these powers are both truly their own and yet also a gift from God. Thus the classroom in the Christian school—not to mention the Christian head!—must have its windows open to the vastness and diversity of God's entire creation.

The secular moment, however, is neither the first nor the last point in the Christian doctrine of creation. The first point is that creation begins in God, and the third point is that creation's goal is to serve and glorify God. The doctrine

¹Christianity is monotheistic and not pantheistic. One classical definition of pantheism states that every creature's existence and powers are part of, or aspects of, the divine existence and power.

of creation entails that a Christian education should encourage the student not only to study the liberal arts in their secular autonomy but also to investigate their divine source and telos.²

Sin

The Christian faith affirms not only the goodness of creation but also its corruption in sin. Modern notions of sin often trivialize it by making it something strictly personal and private. The classical doctrine of sin, in contrast, asserts that sin has corrupted all of God's creation.

Sin, if taken in its biblical seriousness, implies that even our capacity for knowledge has become distorted.³ We possess no uncorrupted and undistorted

²By using the word "secular" I hardly wish to affirm a rigid dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. Within the total doctrine of creation, all things are sacred, having their source and destiny in God. Thus even a "secular" field such as law can be a sacred activity if done in a spirit of worship and commitment to Jesus Christ.

By the term "secular" I do wish to indicate, however, that the second step of creation teaches that creatures are not identical with God, and thus we can study creatures apart from their divine source and destiny. The resulting knowledge, while radically incomplete and in need of reintegration into the larger picture of divine source and telos, is not necessarily wrong. By the term "secular" I also wish to indicate that our primary source for chemical knowledge, for example, is experimentation and not revelation. The term "secular" also implies that the expression of human creativity is legitimate in art and literature as well as economics, etc. Lastly, when I speak of a "secular" discipline such as physics and a "religious" discipline such as theology, I have in mind that the secular discipline draws its data and methods primarily from this second moment of creation, whereas theology, as part of its own internal organization, explicitly refers to the first and third steps in the doctrine of creation, to other doctrines, and to revelation.

The existence of this "secular" moment of creation in Christian doctrine is one of the primary explanations for why the modern world (with its emphasis on secular activities) arose in Christian cultures and not, for example, in Muslim or Hindu societies. Islamic theology explicitly denies this secular moment in its doctrine of creation (that being the entire point of the "occasionalism" of the great Islamic theologian, al-Ashari). For this reason, Islamic cultures have a particularly difficult time adapting to the modern world without compromising their Islamic identity. Christians, however, can live with the modern world—except when it moves beyond the affirmation that creation has a secular dimension to an imperialistic secularism.

By an "imperialistic" or "militant" secularism, I mean a secularism that denies the reality of creation's origin and destiny in God, denies the implications of the doctrine of sin upon the content of our knowledge and upon our methods for obtaining knowledge, and denies the need for revelation. My general impression is that there is a growing frustration with "secularism" among contemporary Christians. This frustration, I think, should be directed more at the perversions of secularism, at what I have called "imperialistic secularism," than at secularism as such. Since this is an emotional issue for many Christians, I will use emotionally-charged language to articulate their frustration. Imperialistic secularism, in denying the reality of the spiritual world, has given us the shriveled and constricted world of modern materialism and told us that we must live only in its choking confines. In summarily dismissing spiritual experience as subjective and immature, it has atrophied our

knowledge. The bleak, ominous shadow of sin is particularly unwelcome in the context of education, especially in the liberal arts, for it implies that we must look skeptically at all human activity, including the secular sciences as well as philosophy and theology. We must cross-examine our creativity in the arts, divine gift that it is, in light of our propensity for sin. Most dramatically, the existence of sin prevents us from knowing our own identity, from knowing at the deepest level who we are. First, sin corrupts our ability to gain knowledge. It then corrupts the content of such knowledge as we do gain. And lastly, it also corrupts our use of that knowledge.

What are the educational implications of the doctrine of sin? First, all human knowledge both about ourselves and about our world is to be held tentatively and with some skepticism. Only God can provide indefectible and certain knowledge.⁴ Second, it is therefore quite impossible to obey fully the Socratic injunction “to know thyself,” unless God give us such knowledge. Disciplines such as biology, psychology, sociology, and literature offer the student some degree of self-knowledge. But in a Christian context, the student should be encouraged to view the insights of these disciplines as something less than definitive. Because of our sin, we can discover our deepest identity only when God chooses to disclose it to us. Thus, in the foundations of our self knowledge lie in this divine disclosure and not in any academic discipline nor in any human-to-human relationship. Third, even when we turn away from the inner knowledge of the self to the external knowledge of the world, the student must never be encouraged to assume that the methods or the contents of any discipline are beyond criticism. The scientific method itself is not above suspicion,⁵ and the

capacity to perceive, taste, and know our world in its rich, complex wholeness. In short, by denying the first and third moments of creation, and by repudiating the domain of the spirit, imperialistic secularism has imposed its constipated, withered, and strangling world view upon modernity, and that has repulsed many people, Christian and non-Christian alike.

³During the Reformation, John Calvin observed our human propensity to fashion idols. Idolatry presupposes sin’s corruption of every aspect of our humanity, including our capacity for knowledge. While we were created to honor and worship God, we honor and worship creatures in place of God. This allows us to avoid the sovereignty of the living God upon us.

⁴Thus the modern “hermeneutics of suspicion” turns out to be as old as theological reflection on sin.

⁵Several reviewers have asked me to state specifically where we might be suspicious of the scientific method. In footnote 18, I present, quite tentatively, some particular examples of where theological considerations affect the secular content of our knowledge. At this point, however, I wish merely to indicate one methodological issue concerning the defectibility of the scientific method. I hold that data in science are never theory-free—although some data are more theory-laden than others. Thus theoretical presuppositions are always present in any particular scientific endeavor, where these presuppositions are imported into that enterprise and where these presuppositions have molded, in part, the character of the data. It is possible that some of these presuppositions may not be true. It is even possible

master artist, while appropriately delighting in the divinely given powers of creativity, inescapably distorts that creativity. One goal of a Christian liberal arts education is to cultivate a wise skepticism towards one's own achievements, whether academic, artistic, scientific, professional, or even religious.⁶ Fourth, the reality of sin implies that we need some criterion by which to measure our achievements. As Christians, we believe that God has provided such a criterion in Jesus Christ, who *is* the truth. This claim brings us to the doctrine of redemption.

Redemption

The last of Christianity's three main doctrines is redemption. The Christian faith holds that God redeemed his creation from sin through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This doctrine has at least six crucial implications for Christian education.

First, as God's act of self-revelation, Jesus Christ reveals perfect selfhood to us. This perfect selfhood is expressed not only in Christ's divinity but in his humanity as well. For this reason, Christianity asserts that when we look at the life, death, and resurrection of Christ—here I am referring strictly to his humanity—he gives us a model of true human selfhood and that he shows us our own truest and deepest identity. When we look at the life of Christ, we discover the potentiality for growth which God gives to us when he creates us; but when we look at his crucifixion, we discover the depths of degradation into which sin thrusts us. When we look at his resurrection, we see the goodness of our creation restored to us. Anything that biology, psychology, anthropology, or literature claims to teach us about our human identity needs therefore a criterion by which it can be evaluated. The theme of redemption shows that Jesus Christ is the criterion by which to test all claims to self-knowledge. For example, college-age students are often concerned about their adult identities. Christian teachers in disciplines such as literature, history, psychology, economics, etc. will, of course, show the students how their disciplines can contribute to self-knowledge, the doctrine of creation legitimating such secular knowledge. But in the light of the doctrine of sin, these teachers will also express skepticism about any unconditional acceptance of the claims of their disciplines. And finally, such

that some of these presuppositions may be "true" within the framework of the "second moment of creation" but not "true" so as to shape understanding beyond that framework; or the presuppositions, while "true" within the limited framework of the secular moment of creation, may have meanings that are fundamentally altered when reintegrated into considerations beyond the "second moment." Thus we should be alert for sub-Christian and even anti-Christian presuppositions which may not be totally apparent. When we find such presuppositions, it is certainly legitimate to raise the question of their truth.

⁶Perhaps we should be *especially* skeptical of our religious achievements. Scripture argues that salvation is God's gift from beginning to end. Thus we have no basis for boasting in ourselves and not in God our savior.

professors will, in view of the doctrine of redemption, point to Jesus Christ as the true test by which to evaluate all claims to self-knowledge.⁷

Second, Christ not only redeems human beings but also redeems all creation. This entails that Christ is not only our standard for self-knowledge but also our standard for all knowledge of all of creation. It is very difficult to work out in practice just how a commitment to Jesus Christ might affect the content—especially the secular content—of a field such as physics. Moreover, attempts to impose theological consideration on the physical sciences have been extremely controversial and bitterly resisted in Western history. We will return to this issue in Part Three.

Third, for the Christian, salvation is both *already* completed in Jesus Christ and, at the same time, is *yet* to be completed. But when God's redemption of the world does come to its consummation, it will be totally the result of the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. The implications of this claim for education are enormous. Cultural achievements, even of Christians, are ambiguous. Luther said that throughout our lives we are simultaneously saints and sinners. Since redemption is not yet final, the dialectic between creation and sin has not yet ended. On the one hand, we are not to despair. Christians, and others too, can achieve some success in the sciences and can express a beauty in art that is not merely illusion. The reality of Christ's conquest over death and decay proves that sin cannot ultimately destroy the goodness of God's creation. On the other hand, since Christ's victory over sin, while complete in outline and in principle, is yet to be finished in detail, we must cultivate a vigorous skepticism toward all cultural achievements, especially our own.

Fourth, we participate in this redemption only through faith. Salvation is always God's gift and never our own achievement. Thus our cultural accomplishments are never the means of redemption. Christians do not engage in education in order to bring in the Kingdom of God; that is, Christians must not view education—not even education in the Bible—as a means of salvation. In the United States and, perhaps elsewhere, students are taught subtly or even openly, that their achievements in medicine, engineering, or science might somehow help God in his efforts to redeem creation, or at least help to make the world the kind of place it ought to be. Or we teach our students that expressing artistic creativity

⁷In this paper, I will not develop the abstract statement that Jesus is the criterion for self-knowledge. Primarily I am referring to the claim that Jesus is the model of a fully mature yet sinless human being. I am also referring to the doctrine that the cross shows our sinfulness; but through his death and resurrection, the perfection of Jesus becomes a resource for us now; and in the life to come, we will actually be perfect in the complete sense that Jesus is perfect. I would also point to Jesus' teachings about our relations to God and to our neighbor. Jesus' teachings are set in the Bible's wider teachings on human nature and human community. Lastly, the deepest foundation for self-knowledge is the actual relationship that the Holy Spirit creates between us and Christ such that we are reconciled to the Father. To flesh out all this, however, would require a fully developed theological anthropology.

earns them a share in salvation, perhaps even allowing them to experience the divine. To make education, art, science, psychology or any cultural activity into a means of salvation, however, conflicts with the Christian claims that our salvation is a gift from God, that the foundation of salvation is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that it is the Holy Spirit who makes salvation available to us. In short, to make education salvific conflicts with the Christian claim that salvation cannot be the product of our own efforts.⁸

Fifth, what then is the positive role of human culture and education? My answer is that for the Christian, the successful artifacts of culture—law, business, medicine, management, art, music, marriage, and science at their best—are all parables or expressions of redemption. Let me explain my position by comparing it with the position of certain Marxists. Marxist critics from Western Europe have argued that Tchaikovsky's beautiful and harmonious music, which was written under the numbing cruelty of the Czars, is merely escapist and therefore utopian. They reason that since the harmony of Tchaikovsky's music did not reflect the economic and social disharmony of the objective situation in Russia, and since it did not contribute to the actual realignment of political power, its beauty was misleading, dangerous, and unauthentic. While I don't doubt that for some nineteenth-century Russians, attending a Tchaikovsky ballet was merely escapist, it is also possible that its beauty helped keep alive the hope of God's redemption, where that redemption would include the perfect beauty of economic and social justice. One could also argue that works such as the landscape paintings of Ming dynasty China provide hints of a salvation already partially accomplished and present. And as Christians, we know where that salvation has been accomplished—at the cross and empty tomb of Jesus. An education in the arts ought to climax in a recognition of Jesus Christ as the one towards whom all beauty and harmony ultimately point.

Sixth, God's redemption in Jesus Christ required the Incarnation. Christian salvation is not a purely "spiritual" reality but includes physical presence as well. This physical presence is to be found in the historical ministry of Jesus; it is "there" in the Lord's supper; it is located in the preacher's bodily presence; it can be found in the mutual presence of the worshipping congregation; and this physical presence continues in the ongoing ministry of the ascended Christ. Thus Christian education requires the physical presence of the professor—whether of zoology, art history, or theology. Without the physical presence of the Christian professor, no educational system can adequately model the integration of faith

⁸The tendency to make education into a means of salvation is hardly limited to Christianity. The role of "gnosis" in many of the religions of the ancient Hellenistic and Roman world is well known. One might also point to the role of "jnana" in Hinduism, or the role of "education" in Confucianism. The stress on education as a mode of salvation in North American Protestant circles, however, may be traced to the post-millennialism of the eighteenth century. Post-millennialism taught that the spread of Christian civilization around the world would lead to the return of Christ. On this basis, early missionaries emphasized the three "C's"—Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization. All three were seen as important in preparing the world for the return of Christ.

and learning; that is, the integration of the incarnate salvation of Jesus Christ with an academic discipline. Therefore, one of the highest priorities of a Christian college ought to be the recruiting and retention of Christian faculty who bring a classical understanding of evangelical Christianity and who can embody the integration of the Christian faith with the various disciplines. I might further note that God's physical presence in Jesus Christ always expressed itself in social terms. Christ had a mother, brothers, and sisters; he drew a band of disciples around him; and he considered the Jewish people "his own." Paul, as well as other biblical authors, tells us that the intensely social life of the historical Jesus continues to express itself in the social life of the church, albeit sometimes rather dimly. Someone who chooses to live apart from all Christian communities may be very spiritual, but that person is not living a *Christian* life—that is, a life based on the incarnated presence of God in Christ.⁹ In practical terms, Christian community means a local Christian congregation. Thus a Christian college ought to look for faculty who vigorously participate in a church, in some particular community of Christian faith. This holds true for professors in the secular disciplines such as physics, anthropology, and history as much as it does for professors of theology, biblical studies, and homiletics.

II. Christian Liberal Arts and the Crafts, Disciplines, and Professions

Christians would do well to affirm the liberal arts and yet retain a certain caution about them. In the past, the term "liberal arts" was sometimes applied to those disciplines which were appropriate for free people as opposed to serfs, slaves, craftsmen, and manual laborers. The study of the liberal arts implied sufficient wealth to free one from the need to work for a living.

This view of the liberal arts with its prerequisites of wealth and high social position stands in contrast to Christianity. The traditional claim that the Christian church is catholic (universal) means that the gospel by definition must be offered equally to all classes and conditions of people. Is it not, therefore, a contradiction to speak of a Christian liberal arts? While the elitism of some versions of the liberal arts cannot be defended Christianly, I strongly believe that Christians may and ought to pursue the liberal arts. To retrieve the legitimate Christian value of the liberal arts, I will define three terms: discipline, profession, and craft.

Discipline

For all its importance to the academy, the term "discipline" has no standard definition of which I am aware. My definition will focus on five characteristics

⁹Let me add what I hope would be obvious. I am not speaking of solitary prisoners, shipwrecked people on a desert island, or invalids with no available transportation. Such people have no options but to live alone. Often by intention, longing, and prayer, they are very much aware of, and participants in, the larger Christian community.

that seem to apply to the scholarly disciplines as they are actually practiced in the modern world.

First, there is a significant body of literature on the subject. Second, there exist methods [a] for organizing the data of the discipline and [b] for doing research and thus creating more data. Third, these methods must include a strong theoretical element that allows one to "understand" or to "explain" that data; that is, these methods must be capable of producing knowledge as well as skills. To illustrate this point: the study of surgery will result in the development of a number of important skills in the use of equipment, interpersonal relations, etc.; but surgery as an academic discipline places those skills within a theoretical context that produces knowledge and sustains research in the field of surgery. Fourth, every discipline requires a community of practitioners with procedures to evaluate each other's research. The discipline may also have procedures for educating new practitioners, certifying competence, organizing meetings, financing research, facilitating publication, etc. And fifth, the discipline must be set in the context of other disciplines, either by making use of other disciplines (as astronomy makes use of physics) or by other disciplines making use of it (as mathematics is used by physics). In other words, a discipline must not be isolated from other forms of research and knowledge.

It is not a part of my definition of a discipline that it be pursued with disregard for the need to earn a living. Some disciplines are quite capable of producing a living for the practitioner: business, law, and architecture come easily to mind. But other academic disciplines will not perform this function in modern society: for example, the study of Roman literature and archaeology. In so far as we attend only to their capacity to produce income, we can say neither that classical literature is more truly an academic discipline than architecture nor the reverse.

Profession

An academic discipline—or, in some cases, a set of academic disciplines—used to earn a living, we will call a "profession." A profession, therefore, has all the characteristics of any other academic discipline: a significant body of literature, its own methodology, ability to conduct research and produce knowledge, a community of practitioners, and relations to other academic disciplines. In addition, the community of practitioners is likely to possess an explicit code of professional ethics, with the capacity to enforce it, in order to regulate the pursuit of wealth and to prevent fraud.¹⁰

¹⁰The word "professional" can be used in a variety of inconsistent ways. Recently I received advertisements from two North American seminaries. One seminary insisted that they would *never become* a "professional" school, meaning that they would emphasize the education of clergy for pastoral ministry rather than research-oriented doctoral programs in biblical studies or theology. The other seminary advertised, in equally strong terms, that they would *always remain* a "professional" school, meaning that they educated people

Trade

In contrast to a profession, a "trade" is a method of earning a living that, while often requiring considerable intelligence and well-honed skills, lacks one or more of the characteristics of an academic discipline. Carpentry, Jesus' own mode of earning a living, is a trade but not a profession. It lacks an adequate theoretical basis for the production of new knowledge and of the maintenance of ongoing research. When carpentry does acquire these characteristics, it becomes a form of engineering or architecture losing its distinct identity as carpentry. While the mastery of a trade does not require the mastery of a discipline as a part of the trade itself, training for the trades can often benefit from the study of various academic disciplines including the sciences, mathematics, the humanities, and even philosophy.¹¹ In fact, the newer trades often require substantial mathematical skills as well as extensive acquaintance with the results of modern science. Thus a course of study in, for example, computer repair may well demand a fairly extensive knowledge of mathematics and physics. The point, however, is that computer repair is not itself an academic discipline and that the study of computer repair needs only the *results* of mathematics and physics. The trades must be distinguished from the professions.

Perhaps it is worth noting that many fields, such as nursing, can be pursued either as trades or as professions. Even the field of law, commonly regarded as a paradigm of a profession, can be a trade if a lawyer's practice consists only of a series of oft-repeated tasks.¹²

Liberal Arts Education: A Definition

These definitions make it possible to define a liberal arts education. An education in the liberal arts consists [a] in the study of a variety of academic

for the practice or profession of ministry rather than producing research scholars. These two seminaries had virtually identical commitments, one calling that commitment "a non-professional orientation," the other calling that same commitment "a professional orientation." Given these many variations in the use of the term "professional," my paper will have to be understood in the light of the specific definition of "professional" offered in the main text.

¹¹I defend this claim in my paper "Philosophy in Career Education," *Teaching Philosophy* 2 (1977-78): 299-308.

¹²It is quite possible for some trades, over time, to become genuine academic disciplines. The point of transition may be quite fuzzy and is almost always controversial, even within the trade/profession itself. One group within the trade/discipline may insist on remaining "practical" and thus to function strictly as a trade, while another group may opt to establish a presence in the universities, develop research skills, create a theoretical foundation, and, in sum, to become a true academic discipline. The history of nursing in the United States in the last fifty years illustrates precisely this struggle. The development of nursing also demonstrates how other professions (in this case, medicine) may resist the establishment of an independent new profession in order to maintain its own position (in this case, direct supervisory authority over nurses).

disciplines such that the student has some acquaintance with the general contours of the landscape of human knowledge [b] combined with the study of a particular discipline in sufficient depth that the student views that discipline from the standpoint of a practitioner. In a few disciplines, such as elementary education, a full practitioner needs only a bachelor's degree. In many others, such as philosophy, a bachelor's degree rarely suffices for a mature practitioner, although the student must master the discipline sufficiently well that he or she begins to see the discipline through the eyes of the practitioner.

Liberal Arts and Professionalization

The professionalization of education in American liberal arts colleges has accelerated since World War II and especially in the last ten years. This is part of a world wide trend. In 1991, the Japanese ministry of education promulgated a new set of guidelines designed to make Japanese universities more competitive with each other. Among other changes, the ministry apparently has allowed the universities to hire more full-time professors in each area of specialization, while new teachers in "general education" may, at the university's discretion, be only part-timers. The schools are also much freer than in the past to eliminate requirements in general education.

In the United States, we can see this professionalization in three areas. First, there is the traditional route from an undergraduate liberal arts degree to a graduate professional school in fields such as law, medicine, or divinity. This pattern, now well into its second century in the United States, is broadly understood and accepted. Second, even in the non-professional disciplines such as history, philosophy, or astrophysics, the typical student pursues a graduate education expecting to earn a living through teaching that discipline or conducting research. Graduate students, even in the humanities, view the mastery of their discipline as something more than an expensively acquired hobby. Third, and most recent, is the inclusion of job-oriented studies in the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum. Today we have baccalaureate programs in nursing, business, education, computer science, and many others. In recent decades, the proliferation of these undergraduate professions, combined with their dramatic popularity, has given American undergraduate colleges a distinctively new flavor, which has been appreciated by some but not all academics.

Reasons for Retaining the Professions in Undergraduate Education

How should we as Christian scholars evaluate the growing presence of the new undergraduate professional fields? Some "purists" may wish to reject them entirely. Such rejection, however, seems inappropriate for two reasons. First, if we wish our colleges to continue to attract students and to exist in a

market economy, it is not possible to eliminate the undergraduate professional fields. They attract students. Modern students are probably little different in their concerns for employment than many of their predecessors.¹³

The second reason for retaining the professional fields is theological. There is no Christian basis for creating a sharp division between professional and non-professional disciplines, as if the job-orientation of the professional disciplines were somehow unworthy or inappropriate in a liberal arts context. Such a division would be more suitable in the pre-Christian Greek culture than to Christianity which asserts that God himself took on flesh and social involvement in Jesus Christ. Jesus did not reject Joseph's trade of carpentry as beneath his dignity. If Jesus did not despise the need to earn a living, why should we Christians look down on it? It is instructive to note that the earliest Christian monks were required to farm and work manually despite their cultural environment which considered such activities as low-class, whereas non-Christian monastics are often forbidden to farm or to engage in those forms of manual labor which produce an income for the monastery, such being the rule, for example, in Buddhist monasteries which must survive on donations alone.

*Reasons for Retaining the Non-Professional
Academic Disciplines in Undergraduate Education*

If we cannot eliminate professionalization and if we hold that Christians should share in the world's work, should we insist that our liberal arts colleges offer only those majors that can serve as professions? To this question also, the answer must be "No." There are three responses to such favoritism towards the professions. First, even if the intrinsic value of the non-professional academic disciplines be discounted, the professions themselves still require education in a variety of non-professional disciplines. Second, the elimination of the non-professional academic disciplines represents a truncated understanding of the doctrine of creation. Third, God created us as whole persons, and a Christian education in the liberal arts should reflect that wholeness.

The professions, to be successful as professions, require education in a variety of other disciplines. Some disciplines are more autonomous than others. Mathematics, for example, needs few if any data or methods drawn from other

¹³Alfred North Whitehead observed that "at no time have universities been restricted to pure abstract learning. The University of Salerno in Italy, the earliest of European universities, was devoted to medicine. In England, at Cambridge, in the year 1316, a college was founded for the special purpose of providing 'clerks for the King's service.' Universities have trained clergy, medical men, lawyers, engineers." *The Aims of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, The Free Press Division, 1967), 92. A rather extensive discussion of the practical orientation of many of Europe's oldest and most prestigious universities may be found in Arnold S. Nash, *The University and the Modern World* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1944), 119-49.

disciplines (in contrast to the many scientific disciplines that require mathematics). On the other hand, the modern study of history is impossible without some grasp of trends in sociology, political science, or a similar field. When we turn to the professions, we will note that most professions seem to be quite like history and unlike mathematics in their dependence on a wide variety of other disciplines. The modern businessman without a knowledge of economics faces an impossible task, and a professional nurse without some proficiency in physiology and chemistry is a positive threat to the patients. A college's elimination of its non-professional disciplines would make it impossible to offer a valid professional education.

At another and, to me, more important level, the doctrine of creation requires the pursuit of the non-professional academic disciplines quite apart from the needs of the professions. The Christian view of creation teaches that God is the creator of all things in heaven and on earth. Nothing that God has made is to be dismissed as trivial or unimportant. The ecologist knows that to gain a true picture of the balance of nature it is necessary to study the lowly slugs and fungi as well as the magnificent eagles and lions. Just so, if we are to honor God through the study of his creation (which study, it will be recalled, is made possible through the second, secular moment of creation), then we must maintain a wide variety of disciplines, from musicology to classical languages, and from ancient history to physics. To restrict a college-level education to professional fields is to put an unwarranted limitation on the rich variety of God's act of creation. Jesus not only earned a living, but he also warned us that we shall not live by bread alone. One central goal of a Christian education is a breadth of vision that, in a very pale way, corresponds to and celebrates the extraordinary variety of God's creative acts. In modern education, it is the distinctive function of the liberal arts to promote that synoptic vision. The pursuit of the liberal arts, thus, ought to be an act of piety for the Christian, a celebration of God's overflowing bounty in creation. And it also follows that the liberal arts must include representatives of the entire range of disciplines, professional and non-professional. The content of the liberal arts curriculum must not be determined solely by the practical demands of preparing to earn a living; rather the curriculum must also reflect the theological commitments of the Christian faith.

The doctrine of creation also provides the third reason for retaining a broad, synoptic range of disciplines in the liberal arts. God created each human being to be a whole person. Thus, while it may be necessary for practical purposes to separate our job-related responsibilities from our obligations in the pew, in the ballot booth, and at PTA, Christians should not accept being smart in the work place and dumb everywhere else. The non-professional disciplines often bear directly on our responsibilities as church members, citizens, and parents, which is another justification for Christian institutions encompassing the full range of the liberal arts.

III. The Distinctives of a Christian Liberal Arts College or University

What makes a liberal arts college "Christian" is the effort to integrate faith and learning. The interface between Christian community and the academy should mark the Christian liberal arts college, and most Christian liberal arts institutions do formally acknowledge its importance in, for example, their statement of purpose. Nonetheless, Christian colleges report, with depressing consistency, that they achieve, at best, only limited success in implementing this integration.

There are many levels of integration. A Christian professor may try to be more humane in relations with students or take an appropriate moment to point a student to Jesus Christ. A Christian commitment may incline a scholar towards a greater concern with the social implications of the discipline. These are desirable and important dimensions of the integration of faith and learning. They do not, however, require one to work in the context of a Christian college. Indeed they may sometimes be done **better** outside, in secular schools, where the issues are more sharply defined.

Is there a dimension of faith-learning integration which is the special province of the Christian college? I think there is. An explicit recognition of this distinctive dimension might help to improve our integration of faith and learning. Before moving to that special form of integration, however, let me acknowledge that Christianity is *not* in its essence, an academic enterprise. Christianity does *not* offer salvation through some form of insight, wisdom, or meditation. Rather, Christianity proclaims salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Having stressed, however, that faith and not scholarship lies at the heart of Christianity, we are free to emphasize that in proclaiming, accepting, and following Christ, the Christian church has produced an extraordinary variety of cultural artifacts: church music and architecture, dramas and novels, ethical reforms and missionary societies. Among these are several academic disciplines in the sense defined previously.

The Theological Disciplines

Christian scholars have created many academic disciplines such as biblical studies, theology, Church history, homiletics, missiology, Christian education, sacred music, pastoral counseling, and many more. Each is an academic discipline in the sense defined above. To study them as academic disciplines, one must also study a variety of other disciplines. The academic study of the Bible depends on a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, of ancient history and culture, and of literary criticism. Theology (as a specific discipline within the larger curriculum of divinity) is the statement of the Christian faith into our contemporary world. Some tool is required for analyzing modern culture at its deepest level. For its entire history, Christian thought has turned to philosophy to fulfill this need. One cannot study theology, therefore, without also studying philosophy and

perhaps some other disciplines as well (at least one's own language). It is worth noting that the academic pursuit of the theological disciplines cries out for the context of the liberal arts college or university where practitioners from many disciplines are gathered. There is no place for "disciplinolatry" when the study of divinity depends on access to the broad reaches of scholarship, and when, as I would hold, even the secular disciplines cannot be fully understood apart from the Bible and theology.

It is important to place these theological disciplines within the context of our general theology of education—that is, in the light of the doctrines of creation, sin, and redemption. We begin with creation. Each of the three aspects of the doctrine of creation sheds some additional light on biblical studies and theology. The first and last steps in the doctrine of creation may be considered together. The first step is that God is the source of the existence of each creature, and the third step is that God is the goal or telos of each creature and will judge its achievements. These two steps may be applied to each theological discipline, including the study of the Bible.

There remains, however, the second stage of creation, the secular step. The Bible as God's creation has its own identity and integrity. This may have some surprising implications for people who do not specialize in biblical studies or theology. The Bible may, and indeed must, be studied on a strictly secular basis. The same rules for interpreting any other document in ancient history apply to the study of the Bible as well. Departments of biblical studies in secular universities pursue their study of the Bible on this secular basis. The study of the Bible in a Christian liberal arts college must also include this secular level of biblical studies if it is to be true to its own Christian doctrine of creation. The Christian liberal arts context, however, is broader than in a secular university. Just as scholars in a Christian liberal arts institution must study physics and economics in relation to their divine source and their divine telos, so scholars must also study the Bible in relation to its divine source and telos. In sum, the secular study of the Bible, while legitimated by the secular moment of creation, is incomplete; and one role the Christian liberal arts college is to provide a setting where the larger meaning of the Bible (and of any discipline) can be explored.¹⁴

A similar argument can be developed for theology. We must, of course, investigate its divine source and telos. But certain aspects of theology can be studied on a strictly secular basis. For example, there is a logical structure to the Christian faith which can be investigated by Christian and non-Christian alike. Sometimes non-Christians can uncover dimensions of Christian doctrines which Christians have overlooked. These insights may need to be modified by Christian

¹⁴Church leaders and parents often support Christian liberal arts colleges because they hope that they will produce Christian laity and pastors who love the Bible and who are committed to theological reflection on their faith. This is a legitimate and important goal to assign to the Christian college. I would add, however, that it is also important for Christian colleges to produce laity and pastors who understand the secular side of these disciplines.

thinkers, and yet the general validity of the non-Christian insight may be beyond dispute.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it must also be stated that Christian theology, perhaps even more than the other disciplines in the larger curriculum of divinity, requires the integration of its secular dimension with the study of its divine source and telos before that secular dimension has much value or significance.¹⁶

Our understanding of the theological disciplines must account for the doctrines of sin and redemption as well as creation. At one level, sin and redemption have the same implications for biblical studies and theology as they do for any other discipline, whether biology, nursing, or art history. Even theological knowledge is to be held somewhat tentatively. The Bible may be perfect; our knowledge of the Bible is not! And while the Bible provides essential information for our self-understanding, the deepest form of self-knowledge comes not through information of any kind but through an actual relation with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Moreover, because the theological disciplines deal

¹⁵Let me offer a concrete example. The Japanese Buddhist philosopher and theologian, Masao Abe, starting from the notion of "dynamic emptiness," sheds considerable light on the Pauline notion of kenosis (Philippians 2:5-8). His views may be found in *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, eds. John B. Cobb, Jr. and Christopher Ives (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990). None of the six Christian partners in this conversation are wholly content with Abe's presentation of the kenotic theme in Christianity, but none can deny the genuineness of his insight into this traditional, albeit controversial, Christian doctrine.

¹⁶Langdon Gilkey, for many years a distinguished professor of theology at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, tells an interesting story about a faculty retreat held in the 1960's. This retreat was for the Divinity School faculty only. The question for discussion concerned their role as faculty in the Divinity School as opposed to working elsewhere in the university. Did their location make any difference in their professional activities? For most faculty, a location in the Divinity School meant an obligation to focus on religion, but it did not affect their methods or professional standards. While the church historians, for example, felt obligated to take the history of the church as their topic, they used the same secular methods as their colleagues in the history department, and they were content to have their work evaluated on the same standards. The same held true for the other areas in the Divinity School. Even the Bible scholars felt that they would function no differently in a Department of Ancient Near Eastern Studies or a Department of Classical Studies. The theologians disagreed. Their nearest academic relatives, so to speak, were the philosophers, but none of the theologians saw themselves simply as philosophers who focused on religion. The theologian's task, while obviously having a secular dimension, inherently involved articulating religious realities from a religious perspective. They required the existence of the Divinity School or at least the existence of a separate department of theology whose methods were more than simply the application of the methods of a secular discipline to the phenomena of religion.

I suspect that Gilkey's anecdote would apply to most of the divinity schools and theological departments in North America. In Asia, where the distinction between Christian and non-Christian is much sharper, the situation may be a little, but probably not much, different. I know of no comprehensive collection of data on this issue. For an anecdotal discussion of the impact of Asian culture on theological education, see my article, "Theological Education from Singapore to Kathmandu," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 44 (Fall 1983): 132-40.

explicitly with the sacred and ultimate in human existence, humility about one's own academic achievements may be especially important for the Bible scholar and theologian.

At another level, however, we must recognize that there is something special and different about both biblical studies and theology. Among its many deleterious effects, sin has distorted our capacity to gain knowledge, it has distorted the content of our knowledge, and it has distorted our use of that knowledge. This is especially but not exclusively true of our knowledge of God and of ourselves. The Bible, Christians confess, is God's revelation to the world which rectifies, at least in part, the noetic consequences of sin. We cannot, therefore, have an adequate understanding of the doctrines of creation, sin, and redemption apart from the Bible. In so far as this applies to the theological disciplines, it is non-controversial. But I would argue that this also applies to the secular disciplines. It is only through the study of God's word that we can properly discern the source and the telos of creation. Thus, apart from theological reflection on the specific biblical revelation concerning sin and redemption, even secular disciplines cannot fully comprehend their own significance. To build on an analogy offered by John Calvin, we may say that sin has distorted our spiritual vision so that we can no longer clearly discern the proper nature of creation, and the Bible is like a pair of eye glasses that allow us to read the Books of Nature and History clearly again.

Evangelicals and conservative Protestants have traditionally stressed the importance of knowing the contents of scripture. Our children live through Bible-knowledge contests; we carefully foster numerous Bible study groups in our congregations; and we teach each other that "a dirty Bible means a clean Christian." Yet this stress on information can be misleading, particularly when it leads to an unstated and unexamined connection between salvation and Biblical knowledge—a connection that we academics, with our focus on knowledge, sometimes do little to dispel. Before continuing, therefore, I wish to restate as vigorously as I can a point already made. No amount of biblical or theological knowledge about Jesus can save us; only faith in him brings salvation. The true medicine for sin, even for its noetic effects, is the actual presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, uniting us to Jesus Christ, allowing us to live "out of" the riches of Christ, and reconciling us to the Father.

Yet faith is never totally without knowledge, and we have no normative knowledge of Jesus except through the scriptures. We mentioned previously that Jesus Christ is our norm for understanding our humanity—which fact is particularly relevant in the social sciences and the humanities. In addition, Jesus Christ reveals to us the true nature of created existence as such—which fact has implications for the natural sciences as well. It follows, therefore, that the particular conceptual content of the Bible is relevant for the entire range of the disciplines in the liberal arts. Lastly, because Christian scholars need to know not just what the Bible meant in the cultures in which it was revealed but also what the gospel means for us in our cultures, we need not just the Bible but also serious theological reflection on the gospel, it being the central definition of

theology to provide the translation of the gospel into other cultural, historical, and personal situations.

The Distinctives of the Christian Liberal Arts College

The implications of this Christian view of biblical revelation for the liberal arts are vast indeed. I have argued that a discipline, whether secular or theological, is incomplete until its practitioners understand it in the light of the divine source and telos. If so, then the significance of any discipline can be grasped only after its practitioners have become theologically aware—that is, only after they have reflected upon the discipline, upon biblical revelation, and upon the relation between the two.

It is also important, however, for each discipline to reflect theologically upon its secular content. Christian practitioners of a discipline must remember that God is still the creator, even in the second, secular step of creation. God's Lordship over *all* creation means the teachings of scripture may also impact the secular content of the non-theological disciplines. This claim, however, has been extremely contentious in Christian history. Every schoolboy has heard the story of how the Roman Catholic Church (always the villain) persecuted the great Galileo (always the hero) for holding that the earth moved around the sun and that the sun was the center of the universe. The church justified its acceptance of Ptolemaic geocentrism partly by reference to the book of Joshua.

Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the men of Israel, "Sun, stand thou still at Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Aijalon." And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the midst of heaven and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel (Joshua 10:12-14).

This use of the Bible has, to say the least, provoked a negative reaction among academics. Nearly all non-Christian and many Christian scientists have the same negative reaction when the Bible is used as a weapon to attack contemporary scientific developments.

Paul Tillich used the term "heteronomy" to articulate modernity's frustration with the use of Christian (or other religious) doctrine to regulate the secular content of a discipline. Tillich held that each discipline is autonomous, governed solely by its own norms. If any passion has characterized Western culture for the last several hundred years, it is the drive towards a society of mature and autonomous individuals. Not only Galileo and Darwin, but Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud argued that man must take control of his knowledge (i.e., apart from religious foundations) and take control of his personal and corporate development (i.e., the abandonment of religious support for our personal mental health and for social justice and for the rational organization of society).

If Jesus Christ is truly our norm, however, it is difficult to see how we can in principle avoid all interaction between the content of the secular disciplines

and the content of the scriptures. It is easy to trace a line of influence from the secular disciplines to biblical interpretation. We have mentioned the conflict between the Roman church and Galileo. For the first fifteen centuries of church history, the Christian consensus taught, at least partially on biblical grounds, that the sun circled the earth. Today, even in the most conservative of Christian circles, any such affirmation would be dismissed out of hand. Science has forced all Christians to reinterpret Joshua 10:12–14.¹⁷ The question, however, is whether there can be a legitimate influence that travels the opposite direction—from the Bible to the secular disciplines. As long as we grant (and this is a central tenet of orthodox Christianity) that revelation extends to the content of scripture, there is nothing in principle to prevent the influence of Christian doctrine on the secular content of the disciplines. This is most obvious in any discipline that deals with human beings in a normative way. If Jesus Christ reveals true humanity to us, then a normative view of human health in any social or medical science cannot be derived solely from empirical experiments or surveys. There is, moreover, at least a possible influence on the physical sciences as well. That is, as long as we hold that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the Logos who created the world, and as long as we say the Christ redeems all creation, then a biblical influence upon the content of even the physical sciences, while probably not as extensive as on the social sciences and the humanities, cannot be excluded a priori.

How to relate the content of Scripture to the content of the various disciplines moves from a discussion of the need for the integration of faith and learning to the actual integration itself. I would suggest, however, three principles. First, the secular dimension of the doctrine of creation requires us to acknowledge that each discipline has its own methods and contents which must be respected. The chemists derive their empirical data from experimentation and not from the Bible. And even the study of the Bible itself is, in part, no different from the study of any other ancient book. Second, the doctrine of sin should lead all scholars, Christian and non-Christian, in secular and in Christian disciplines, to a health humility concerning the finality of their insights, even their insights into the secular contents of their disciplines. After all, neither the Roman Catholic clerics nor Galileo turned out to be completely correct. According to current astronomical theory, neither the sun nor the earth is the center of the universe nor even of our galaxy. And the one thing more certain than both death and taxes is that future generations will find flaws in our current claims to knowledge. Third, and most controversially, Christians have the obligation to holdup the secular

¹⁷If it is not obvious to the ordinary Christian that the development of astronomy forced a reinterpretation of Joshua 10, it is only because the Copernican system took several generations to work its influence into the "common sense" of the general populations of Europe and North America. The glacial pace of such change is not rare. Some countries waited several centuries to adopt the Gregorian reform of the Western calendar (1582), Russia not accepting the new calendar until after the Bolshevik revolution.

contents of the various disciplines to the light of Jesus Christ, who is the norm of our knowledge.¹⁸

The secular classroom can do many things with religion in general and Christianity in particular. Secular disciplines can use their own methods to examine religion, and courses in the psychology or sociology of religion, in the Bible as literature, in the history of church music, and even in comparative religion are routinely offered. Scholars in Christian liberal arts institutions can also do these things. A scholar may use his or her discipline to investigate the Christian religion. Or a scholar may be particularly sensitive to anti-Christian prejudice in a discipline. Or a scholar may investigate the Christian influence on the origins of a discipline. All these are important aspects of the integration

¹⁸Reviewers have asked for specific examples. Specific examples will be debatable, and I do not want them to detract from my main point that even the secular content of the disciplines stands under the Lordship of Christ and the authority of scripture. Nonetheless, I will give three examples.

As an example in psychology, there is something wrong, it seems to me, with the widespread acceptance in Christian circles of the "I'm ok and you're ok" school of thought. Somewhere I came across a cartoon of a confused Jesus hanging on the cross and muttering to himself, "If I'm ok and you're ok, what am I doing here?" The central point of the doctrine of sin, the key presupposition of the atonement, and the fundamental implication of the demand for repentance is that I'm not ok, you're not ok, and that only God can do anything about it. If we insist that Christ's death and resurrection makes us ok—and I am not certain that the Bible or the orthodox tradition would ever express it that way, preferring terms such as forgiven, ransomed, and redeemed—then we must say that "being ok" applies to me only in virtue of my relationship with God, through my union with Jesus Christ, as created by the Holy Spirit. The characteristic of "being ok," to the extent that we accept the term at all, does not apply to *me in myself*; rather it applies to *me in my relation* to God. "Being ok" applies only indirectly to me as such.

As an example in the biological sciences, there is something wrong with the claim that man is only a naked ape. It is undoubtedly true that as a species we have hair in certain places but not fur over our entire bodies. But being an ape, naked or otherwise, does not define what it means to be human. In other words, while it is doubtless true that human beings are a biological species, the Bible teaches that we are more than just another kind of animal. We are "persons" created in the image of God, and as persons we have both responsibilities and privileges which other species do not have. Ecological concerns must, therefore, be placed within the context of God's appointment of man to be the steward over the rest of the earth. We are, in short, primarily responsible not to the earth, nor to other species, nor to ourselves, but to God.

The last example comes from astronomy. My study of the history of Western thought leaves me convinced that there is a deep tendency in philosophy and science to see the universe as infinitely old. This tendency comes from the need of the theoretical thought to define things in terms of their relations. And, obviously, an absolute beginning of the universe can have no relation to any prior reality which is available to science or natural philosophy. I strongly suspect, thus, that the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe will prove to be just a temporary deviation from the larger history of cosmological science/philosophy. If this happens, the Christian astronomer will have to deal with a resurgent conflict between science and religion. The astronomer and other Christians might

of faith and scholarship. All need to be pursued on Christian campuses. But all of them can be done equally well (and often with more impact) on secular campuses.

What secular colleges and universities cannot do is to provide for specifically Christian study of the Bible as the Word of God (as opposed to its study as a document of ancient literature) nor provide for the theological expression of the faith for the modern world (as opposed to merely studying Christianity as an empirical fact). And it is not the role of the secular university to encourage the professors or students to place their disciplines within the context of the divine source and telos. In the secular classroom, such an activity may be expressly prohibited. Most of all there is no secular university where the authorities would even consider evaluating the content of a discipline according to the norm revealed to us in Jesus Christ.¹⁹

In relation to the integration of faith and learning, therefore, the distinctive role of the Christian liberal arts university is threefold. The first is to offer academic courses in biblical studies (as the study of God's word) and in theology (as the statement of the Christian faith in and for the contemporary world). It may also offer courses in the other Christian disciplines, such as homiletics (the oral proclamation of the Word of God in human words as distinguished from secular rhetoric), missiology, and church music. Second is to encourage the faculty and students in all disciplines to explore the relation of their disciplines (physics, philosophy, business, literature, etc.) to the theological disciplines. Third, to the extent that a discipline or profession, as a part of its identity as a discipline or profession, requires one to *do* something, to be engaged in some activity, the Christian liberal arts institution will encourage students and faculty to examine those practical activities in light of the Christian faith and especially in the light of the results of the disciplines of biblical studies and theology.

be wise to return to Thomas Aquinas' position that philosophy (that is, science) simply is not capable of dealing with the question of whether the age of the universe is finite or infinite. My own suggestion, therefore, is that now, while the Big Bang theory is still regnant and before we have to "eat crow," Christians should refrain from using that theory as confirmation of the biblical teaching of a creation in time.

¹⁹An education at a secular university is, therefore, while not wrong, inherently incomplete. The danger emerges when the professors and/or the students and/or the larger society consider the narrow and partial perspective of the secular university to be "the whole story," complete in and by itself. This "confusion of the part for the whole" is the trademark of imperialistic secularism, of secularism in the negative sense. When I speak of *imperialistic* secularism, I have in mind the insistence of many people in the secular world that its partial perspective is complete, or at least adequate, for organizing human affairs in politics, education, medicine, mental health, the law, the media, the arts, and the rest of life. An imperialistic secularism will feel threatened by the application of the first and third steps in the doctrine of creation, of the doctrine of sin, and the doctrine of redemption to any area of public life. Imperialistic secularism demands that religious and therefore Christian commitments be strictly quarantined to the area of private and subjective opinion.

The third distinctive role should not come as a surprise. It is inherent in our understanding of an academic discipline. By definition, a discipline contains methods for carrying out research and creating new knowledge. Thus, to master a discipline one must *do* certain things. In philosophy one creates reasoned arguments, and in astronomy one conducts experiments or analyzes data. Every discipline has some form of "hands on" activity. This is particularly true of a profession which, by its very nature, uses one or more discipline to provide some service to society and to earn an income for the practitioner. No discipline or profession is purely theory.

The entire range of Christian theology—the doctrine of creation in all three aspects, the doctrine of sin, and the doctrine of redemption—applies to our activities as well as to our theories. Because each discipline has its own set of activities, we may expect each discipline to have its own issues in the integration of the Christian faith with its practical side. The Christian faith will affect both the physicist's experiments in the laboratory as well as the humanist's writing of literary criticism, but it may affect them quite differently. In addition, the Christian faith poses some particularly sticky issues for the professions. That is, in the professions, in addition to lab courses and doing research we typically ask the student to engage in an internship, practicum, or supervised work. Professional associations will often govern the content of such activities quite closely in their efforts to preserve or enhance the competency of their new members. Here especially students and teachers need to be encouraged to explore what in their activities is legitimately secular and what is the result of an imperialistic secularism. This requires hard work and may well bring conflict with the prejudices of those members of the profession whose outlook not only contains a (legitimate) secular dimension but which also contains a more imperialistic form of secularism as well. (And some of the more imperialistic secularists may well be church members who have never seriously confronted the issues of integrating their faith with their professional lives.) Integration of faith and learning is just as crucial for a discipline's hands-on activities as it is for its theoretical and conceptual side.²⁰

²⁰It is possible to push the integration of faith with the practical side of a discipline or profession in directions that may be inappropriate for an academic institution. My hesitation emerges when, in the name of "praxis," we require our students and faculty to engage in specified political, economic, or social-action causes. The question is: *whose* politics, *whose* economics, and *whose* social orientation will prevail? No Christian consensus has emerged on most of these issues, and there is no reason to expect consensus. There are Christian left-wingers, right-wingers, and middle-of-the roaders; Christian socialists and capitalists; Christian feminists and Christian traditionalists. Lacking a consensus, shall we require adherence to socialist or capitalist beliefs? And if a consensus should emerge in one of these areas, then I would be especially fearful for the freedom of the true prophet who objects to that consensus.

We must make a distinction between requiring the student to reflect upon political, economic, and social issues and requiring the student to espouse, confess, or practice

The integration of disciplines is hard intellectual labor. I can well understand that it should raise wary resistance from many faculty members. "Are you saying that I must master—or at least gain familiarity with—a second discipline? I have a hard enough time keeping up with my own discipline. The pursuit of a second or third discipline is wholly out of the question." While I fully understand such a reaction, it must be stressed in reply that the interaction between each discipline in the liberal arts curriculum and the theological disciplines remains the irreplaceable keystone in any serious attempt to integrate faith and learning in the liberal arts curriculum. On the one hand, the other dimensions of the integration of faith and learning can take place in secular academic settings as well as—and often more effectively than—they can in a Christian liberal arts setting. On the other hand, any "integration" less than the engagement with

particular political, economic, or social points of view. Long and hard reflection on each of these issues, particularly from a Christian point of view, should be a part of the education for any profession or discipline. But that is a very different issue from requiring the student to come to any particular "approved" conclusion about these issues or to engage in any particular "approved" political or social activity. To change the illustration, a college, whether Christian or secular, has the right and perhaps even the obligation to require every business student to observe first hand the concrete effects of different economic policies; and to require a student of comparative religions to witness a variety of religious options beyond his or her own. But to require work for a particular economic system, or actual participation in (as opposed to observation of) alternative religious traditions, would be to violate the student's conscience.

In addition to my concern for the academic and personal freedom of students and faculty, there are two other reasons why I would hesitate to impose politically correct standards upon the students and faculty of a Christian liberal arts college. First, historic and evangelical Christianity has always insisted that Christian truth stems primarily from revelation and not from piety, religious experience, worship, economics, politics, or social action. Piety, worship, social action, etc. may be ways of appropriating and concretizing Christian truth, but they are not the source, norm, or judge of Christian doctrine. I mention this because it is currently fashionable to *define* Christian doctrine by its capacity to promote the cause of the poor, or by its role in liturgical worship, or by its capacity to effect national integration, or by its success in fostering a personal sense of well being and power. This tendency to define Christian truth by its use seems particularly liable to abuse by those who would insist on a particular economic, political, or social cause as the normative context for a required orientation to "praxis." Second, if the connection between Christian truth and praxis were granted, then some academics would allow, either quickly or gradually, engagement in praxis to become a substitute for the hard work of integrating disciplines.

Lastly, there is one issue with which I have not dealt in this paper. How do we handle non-Christian students who choose to attend a Christian school? Or, if we admit only Christians, how do we handle the student who loses his or her faith in Christ while attending a Christian school? (The loss of faith is an inherent risk of any liberal arts education that encourages students to explore new ways of thinking.) On the one hand, to allow the non-Christian student to avoid entirely the integration of the discipline with the Bible and theology would be to reduce the college or university to the level of a secular institution, at least for that student. On the other hand, to require the student to profess a non-existent personal faith would be to foster hypocrisy and, in the long run, even contempt for Christianity. My best solution—which is quite inadequate, but I know

the theological disciplines is not true to the genius of the liberal arts college. The cultivation of the scholarly disciplines lies at the very heart of the liberal arts. To pursue a discipline, therefore, without relating that discipline to the theological disciplines is to fail in the central task that gives a Christian liberal arts college its identity and its justification as both "Christian" and as a "liberal arts" institution.²¹

I will venture the opinion that the integration of faith and learning at most Christian liberal arts institutions is so unsatisfying precisely because it often does not extend to the integration of the secular and theological disciplines. This integration must extend both to the conceptual content of those disciplines as well as to their hands-on methods of doing research, creating new knowledge, and especially in the case of the professions, applying its methods to the solution of real-life problems and earning a living.

The distinctive role of the Christian college should supplement and not eliminate the other dimensions of the integration of faith and learning. And, most of all, this academic role must not be allowed to stand in the place of a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as lord and savior; rather it is to supplement and build upon such a personal faith. In the context of the liberal arts, integration of disciplines without the piety of persons is empty; piety without the integration of disciplines is blind.

of none better—would be to ask the student to explore how the integration *would* look on the *assumption* that the Christian faith is true, without requiring the student to confess a personal faith or to engage in activities which violate conscience. The presence of the secular dimensions in both biblical studies and theology should allow any student at least to begin that exploration, even if the breadth of that exploration would be quite inadequate until it included the non-secular dimensions of biblical study and theology as well. Nevertheless, on this basis it would at least be possible to start the process of integration, which if the student should later espouse/return to the Christian faith, would be useful without violating the student's integrity during his or her stage of unbelief or doubt.

²¹A Christian institution, especially if it maintained publicly visible symbols of its Christian commitment such as required chapel, a spiritual emphasis week, prayers at the beginning and end of each class, etc., would be a clear and present danger to the Christian church if it failed to rise to the level of integrating the various disciplines with the theological disciplines. While one might excuse an avowedly secular institution for confusing its own limited perspective with the "whole story," one would expect a Christian institution to commit itself unreservedly to defending and maintaining that larger perspective. Thus a Christian liberal arts institution's contenting itself with a partial perspective would in fact be to confess that there is no larger perspective, that the Christian doctrine of creation is false, that the Christian faith has no content to add to our understanding of the world and of self, and that Christ is not Lord over all creation and over our intellectual life.