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Institute for Christian Studies
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 9 Fall, 1988 ©

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Institute for Christian Studies
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 9 Fall, 1988 ©

FOREWORD

Christian preaching founds a community whose self-understanding and organization reflect a radically new and different way of viewing reality.

The continuing existence of the church is dependent upon the church faithfully passing on its central message and its vision of all reality as interpreted through the Christian faith. This task has inevitably brought the church into contact with other truths and into conflict with other visions of reality. In time, post-Constantinian Christianity won victories; and as a result, Christian thought was ascribed a central role in medieval universities.

For good or ill, Christian thought no longer occupies a privileged position in western education, which increasingly is ignorant even of Christianity's historical role in western civilization.

These essays are presented toward the end of promoting reflection on the complex relationship between Christian thought and education--both within and outside the church.

Michael R. Weed, Editor

Institute for Christian Studies
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 9 Fall, 1988 ©

THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS IN I CORINTHIANS*

By Douglas L. Gragg

Sociologist Robert Bellah and a team of associates have recently reminded us in their bestseller, Habits of the Heart,[1] of the radically individualistic orientation of American culture and of the extent to which that orientation has led to the deterioration of many fundamental social institutions. The book is representative of a growing interest in our country (at least among many intellectuals) in searching for ways to rekindle the sense of commitment and acceptance of mutual obligation that stable and constructive social life requires but that radical individualism has eroded. Sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, and many others are making important contributions in this regard from the standpoint of their respective disciplines.

American Christians have every reason to applaud this critical reassessment of radical individualism. Our own capitulation to the individualistic and privatistic forms of self-understanding characteristic of our culture has constituted a betrayal of

*An earlier version of this paper was read at the 1988 Christian Scholars Conference at Pepperdine University.

Institute for Christian Studies
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 9 Fall, 1988 ©

our true identity and has seriously hindered realization of the communal implications of our convictions. In our quest for rehabilitation there is surely much we can learn from studies in the various humanistic disciplines that address the problem. It is essential, however, that our reflection on the meaning of community be above all a critical engagement with biblical theology and not simply a restatement in biblical language of some current trend in philosophy, sociology, or psychology. The latter happens far too often, not only at the level of academic theology but also in our churches, where discourse about community is sometimes informed primarily by popular psychology and group dynamics theory. The fundamental challenge for us as Christians is to rediscover the distinctive foundations of our own common life and to model before the world the kind of community that the gospel--when allowed to do its work--produces.

The task of discovering what the New Testament has to say about community has been made easier by the publication during the last several years of many important articles and books related to the topic.[2] My purpose in this paper, however, is not primarily to enter into conversation with secondary literature but to present briefly and straightforwardly what one New Testament text has to say about the foundations and meaning of Christian community. I have chosen Paul's first letter to the Corinthians because I believe it provides a wider range of relevant material for reflection on the topic than any other single New Testament document.

First Corinthians

It cannot be stressed often enough that the letters of Paul are not systematic doctrinal treatises but ad hoc compositions designed to address specific situations in the life of local churches. Because of this, for the most part, it is possible to discover the nature of Paul's idea of community only indirectly. It seems likely that one place we might find him saying something relevant to the topic would be in those instances where he is addressing the problem of division. The Corinthians' propensity for division (or, to borrow C. K. Barrett's euphemism, their "imperfectly Christianized contentiousness")[3] is surely one reason this letter has so much to say about community. In view of this, I propose to analyze briefly four passages in I Corinthians in which Paul deals specifically with some form of division in the Corinthian church, that is, some set of circumstances in which the realization of community has been jeopardized or blocked. After the series of analyses, I will provide a summary of the most important findings. Before turning to the four passages, though, a few remarks of a general nature about the Corinthian situation are necessary.

The city of Corinth in Paul's day was the capital of the senatorial province Achaia (Greece). Having been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C., it had been refounded by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony in 44 B.C. Situated at the Isthmus and controlling two harbors, the colony grew rapidly and flourished economically, becoming an important commercial city and attracting many socially

ambitious artisans. The earliest settlers, according to Strabo (Geography 8.6.23), were mostly Roman freedmen, but by Paul's time the population of the city was very diverse, both ethnically and socially.

This diversity was reflected in the church at Corinth, which Paul founded in the early fifties. With regard to ethnicity, we know that the church included both Jews and Gentiles, though it is not clear in what proportion. Also, if the names of the Corinthian Christians that we know are any indicator, there were among the members both indigenous Greeks and Roman settlers. Gerd Theissen has demonstrated that the church at Corinth was socially diverse as well.[4] While I Corinthians 1:26 makes it clear that the majority of the members did not enjoy a significant social status (there were "not many wise in a human sense, not many influential, not many of noble birth"), it allows for the presence of a minority who did. Using such criteria as references to offices held, houses owned, financial services rendered, and travel, Theissen has identified as representatives of this latter category Aquila and Priscilla, Crispus, Gaius, Stephanas, Erastus, Phoebe, Titius Justus, and possibly Sosthenes (who may not have been a Corinthian). The nature of the references to these persons in Paul's correspondence suggests that, though a minority, they were very influential in the Corinthian church.

With these general remarks in mind I turn now to four manifestations of division at Corinth, each of which was probably exacerbated to some extent by the diverse character of the

membership that we have noted. These manifestations of division are (1) the so-called "party strife" discussed in chapters 1-4, (2) the disagreement about eating meat dedicated to an idol in chapters 8-10, (3) the problems connected with the Lord's supper in chapter 11, and (4) the strife generated in association with the exercise of spiritual gifts in chapters 12-14. In each case I will identify as concisely as possible the nature of the problem and then analyze briefly Paul's response, noting primarily the theological bases of his appeals for unity. There are other examples of division in I Corinthians (such as the problem of lawsuits in chapter 6) that could also be fruitfully discussed, but these four will be sufficient for our purposes.

"Party Strife" (Chapters 1-4)

In I Corinthians 1:11,12 Paul writes,

> It has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers, by Chloe's people that there are contentions among you. Now I say this because each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Apollos" or "I belong to Cephas" or "I belong to Christ."

It is not clear exactly what these slogans mean. Those involving Cephas and Christ are especially confusing since (1) there is no other evidence that Peter was ever in Corinth and (2) the slogan about Christ is subject to several possible interpretations. In Paul's subsequent discussion of the issue only Apollos is mentioned again, which may suggest that the problem concerned primarily unfavorable comparison by some of the Corinthians of Paul to Apollos, who had worked for some time in Corinth after

Paul's departure (Acts 18:24-19:1). It is easy to imagine, at any rate, that Apollos, who was noted for his eloquence, had cut a more impressive figure in Corinth than had Paul, who testifies to his own deliberate eschewal of the arts of rhetoric (2:1-5). Theissen may be correct when he suggests that the supporters of Apollos were probably some of the more educated and wealthy members, who had perhaps even made some financial contribution to his mission,[5] but it is hard to say. Whatever these slogans may mean, Paul regards the divisive, competitive spirit that they embody as a betrayal of the Corinthians' identity in Christ.

Paul identifies the heart of the problem as forgetfulness. In their disputes about the relative merits of their leaders, the contending parties have forgotten about the foundational story on the basis of which they were originally called together as a community. Paul reminds them that their viability as a church depends not on the wisdom or skills of any human leader but on faithfulness to "the word of the cross" (1:18ff.). Moreover, it is Christ, not Paul or anyone else, who was crucified for them (1:13).

Paul brings this point home by jogging their memory about the origins of their community. In 1:26-31 he reminds them that their original emergence as a church had nothing to do with any sophistication on their part since few of them were educated, influential, or well-placed in society. Clearly, it was only the powerful action of God that had brought them together in Christ. In 2:1-5 Paul reminds them further that the undeniable success of

his own ministry among them at the beginning can only be attributed to the power of the message about Christ crucified since, as they would have been quick to agree, his own manner among them had been decidedly unsophisticated.

On the basis of this kind of argumentation Paul is able to put the whole matter in perspective. In 3:5-7 he writes,

> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you came to believe, each working according to the Lord's assignment: I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So then, it is neither the one who plants nor the one who waters who is important, but only God who gives the growth.

Changing the metaphor, he continues in verses 10,11:

> According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and another man is building on it. But let each be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any other foundation than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

In verses 21-23, then, he concludes,

> So then, let no one boast in human beings. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, whether world or life or death, whether things present or things to come--all are yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

The story of what God accomplished in Christ is the source of the Corinthians' life together as a church. Transcending all other concerns and loyalties, it alone stands as the sufficient foundation of community.

One further point needs to be noted. Paul warns the Corinthians in 3:16,17 that violation of the church's unity is a serious offense:

> Do you not know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's

> temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple is what you are.

The community of believers that is formed on the basis of the word of the cross, Paul says, constitutes the dwelling place of the very Spirit of God (note that the "you" in the passage just cited is plural). The conviction that this is so serves, both positively (as inspiration) and negatively (as warning), to sustain community.

Consecrated Meat (Chapters 8-10)

According to chapters 8-10 another source of contention in the Corinthian church was disagreement about the matter of eating meat that had been dedicated to an idol, that is, meat that had been used in pagan worship. Some members of the church (identified as the "strong") considered this a matter of indifference in view of the knowledge revealed by the gospel that "an idol has no real existence" and that "there is no God but one" (8:4) and so ate such meat in good conscience. Others (identified as the "weak"), unable to disassociate the eating of such meat from its significance in the context of pagan worship, were scandalized by this.

Identifying the makeup of these two groups has long been a source of debate among scholars. Were the so-called "strong," Jews, and the so-called "weak," Gentiles, or was it the other way around? Was the division perhaps not along the lines of ethnic or religious background at all but rather, as Theissen has suggested, attributable to differences in social status?[6]

Answering this difficult question is less important for our purposes than noting how Paul responds to the problem.

First, Paul acknowledges the validity of the reasoning by which the "strong" justify their eating (8:4-6). Yet he admonishes them to temper their knowledge with love for those whose consciences may be compromised. "'Knowledge' puffs up," he warns, "but love builds up" (8:1). The expression of this love, however, is not understood to issue merely from common decency or sympathy for the situation of a fellow human being. Rather, it is rooted specifically in what we called earlier the community's foundational story, that is, the gospel. The "weak man" who is destroyed by the insensitivity of the "strong" is precisely "the brother for whom Christ died" (8:11). Paul does not hesitate to say that to sin against a brother in this way is to sin against Christ (8:12). The bond between Christians, which is based on their common indebtedness to Christ, sometimes calls, he argues, for the surrender of personal "rights" for the sake of a brother or sister. In chapter 9 Paul cites, by way of example, his own decision to surrender his right to receive financial support for his preaching and his desire to accommodate the concerns of others, concluding in verse 23, "I do all of this because of the gospel."

Paul does not leave the matter here, though. In chapter 10, still agreeing that an idol has no real existence and that there is nothing inherently wrong with eating consecrated meat, Paul nevertheless warns those who are doing so of the seductive power

of the pagan ceremonies in which they believe they are innnocently participating. Arguing that the real objects of pagan worship are demonic forces, Paul warns that uncritical participation in such festive occasions threatens to involve them in a kind of communion with demons and those who are devoted to them (verse 20). He explains what he means by reminding them of what happens in their own observance of the Lord's supper:

> The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion (koinonia) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (10:16,17).

Partaking of the blessed cup and broken bread signifies communion with Christ and with those who are devoted to him. The "enlightened" members of the Corinthian church, who are participating with such indifference in analogous festivities of their pagan neighbors are warned to be careful not to find themselves torn between two loyalties. One cannot eat both from the table of the Lord and from the table of demons (verse 21).

Paul's appeal here to the meaning of the Lord's supper is relevant to our investigation in that it points to the power of this symbolic action, performed regularly by the gathered church, to sustain community (note again verse 17: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."). The symbolic action draws its power from the fact that it involves the community in a sort of corporate reenactment, or re-presentation, of its foundational story, as the reference to the body and blood of Christ suggests. The symbol can lose

its power to unite the community, though, if it becomes divorced from that story. That the latter had in fact occurred already in Corinth is clear from chapter 11, which presents a further case of division.

The Lord's Supper (Chapter 11)

Paul's reference to the problems surrounding observance of the Lord's supper at Corinth are so cryptic that it is difficult to determine exactly what was going on. It seems clear enough, though, that the friction is traceable to a great extent to differences of social status. Wealthy members were behaving without sufficient regard for their poorer brothers and sisters. It is the wealthier members with houses large enough to accommodate all the participants who would have hosted and provided the food for the church's meetings for worship and fellowship (note, e.g., the reference in Romans 16:23 to the fact that Gaius in Corinth was host to Paul "and to the whole church").[7] As Theissen has suggested, it is not unlikely that hosts of these meetings of the church in Corinth, in keeping with established social custom, were exercising some discrimination in the distribution of food, favoring guests who shared their own higher social status. Poorer members may have received very little to eat, perhaps little more that the consecrated bread and wine that was distributed to all at some point during the course of the meal.[8]

No matter how common or widely accepted such discrimination might have been in the general culture, Paul regards it as

completely unacceptable in the community of believers, whose commitments transcend social distinctions. As we have by now come to expect, Paul addresses the problem by invoking again the tradition upon which the community was originally founded. He writes in verses 23-26:

> I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread and, when he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in my memory." In the same way he took also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in my memory." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The Lord's supper was originally intended to reinforce the bond between believers by reminding them of the sacrificial death of Christ to which they shared a common indebtedness. In Corinth it had become instead a source of division because some of the members had turned it into an occasion for the reinforcement of social distinctions. This kind of selfish disregard of others stands in stark contrast to the unselfish action of Christ that, according to the tradition, the celebration of the Lord's supper is supposed to recall. Such behavior amounts to a betrayal of the gospel, or as Paul says it even more strongly in verse 27, a "profanation of the body and blood of the Lord."

The guilty parties are in danger of God's judgment. Paul says in verse 29, "Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." The expression "discerning the body" surely has a double reference, both to the body of Christ himself (i.e., his sacrificial death, the

foundational significance of which the supper is designed to recall), and to the body of Christ, the church (whose common life the supper is designed to reinforce). This threat of judgment upon those who show disdain for their brothers and sisters recalls the passage noted earlier in 3:17--"If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him."

Spiritual Gifts (Chapters 12-14)

The last example of division in the church at Corinth that I want to examine concerns problems associated with the exercise of spiritual gifts in chapters 12-14. Paul describes the Corinthians in 14:12 as "eager for manifestations of the Spirit." It is clear that they were especially enthusiastic about some of the more spectacular manifestations such as ecstatic speech. As far as Paul is concerned, there is nothing wrong with this in itself. The problem in Corinth with regard to spiritual gifts is that some had misconstrued them as a means of self-promotion. This had in turn led to a competitive spirit, with those possessing externally impressive gifts becoming arrogant (12:21) and those without them feeling inferior (12:15,16).

Paul responds to this problem by challenging the Corinthians' individualistic orientation. The gifts distributed by the Spirit are intended to be used not for self-aggrandizement but "for the common good" (12:7), for "the edification of the church" (14:12,26). Measured by this standard, the gift of ecstatic speech, about which many of them were so enthusiastic, becomes

less important than a gift like prophecy, since the latter provides instruction and encouragement for the church (14:1-5).

In spite of his praise for the gift of prophecy in chapter 14, though, it is clear that Paul does not want to assign too much importance to any single gift. By God's own design there are many manifestations of the Spirit. Yet the diversity and variety of gifts is not intended to promote competition. This diversity exists within the framework of a larger unity, which finds expression in the common source of the gifts (God) as well as in their common function (promotion of the common good). As Paul expresses it in 12:4-7,

> There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are various forms of ministry, but the same Lord; there are various tasks to be done, but the same God who supplies the energy for them all. To each has been given some manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

As a means of clarifying the nature of this diversified unity Paul employs the metaphor of the body. He writes in 12:12,

> Just as a body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are still one body, so it is in Christ.

From this analogy Paul is able to draw two points about the church's unity in diversity that are especially relevant to the Corinthians' situation. First, he points out that in a body every member, even the one that seems least significant, plays an indispensible role. So in the body of Christ no person should feel inferior or be treated as such simply because his or her gift seems unspectacular (12:14ff.). What is important is that every gift be exercised for the common good. Second, and equally

important, Paul points out that in a body the members are interdependent. So the body of Christ ought to be characterized not by competitiveness or individualistic disregard for the other but by the kind of mutual concern that says, "If one member suffers, all the members suffer together; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice together" (12:26).

One final point needs to be noted about Paul's discussion of the diversified unity of the body of Christ in chapter 12. It has been noted that for Paul the diversity of spiritual gifts is divinely ordained. The same thing applies in a broader sense to the ethnic and social diversity that characterizes the community. Paul writes in verse 13,

> By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all caused to drink of one Spirit.

The Spirit that distributes within the community diverse gifts to be employed for the common good is the same Spirit that calls diverse people into community in the first place. The reference to baptism here as the means by which each person enters the community is not at all surprising, since baptism, like the Lord's supper, represents a symbolic point of contact with the community's foundational story.

Conclusion

I conclude now with a brief organizing summary of what examination of these four passages from I Corinthians has revealed about some fundamental features of Paul's vision of community.

I will do this in four points.

First, Christian community as understood by Paul is not founded on some universal truth about human nature accessible to philosophical reflection, nor on a common ethnic identity or social status, nor on natural affection or mutual interests. Rather, it is based on what we have called a foundational story. Paul refers to this story in I Corinthians by various names, including "the gospel" (1:17; passim), "the word of the cross" (1:18), "the testimony about God" (2:1), the message about "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2), and "the tradition(s)" (11:2; cf. 15:3). It is the story of how God acted in Christ to save those who believe. The proclamation of this story creates communities of faith, composed of diverse persons who share above all else a common indebtedness and commitment to God in Christ.[9]

Second, it is, according to Paul, the Spirit of God who, by means of the story about Christ, draws people into the community of faith. It is this same Spirit who dwells in the community and contributes to its well-being by distributing to each of its members gifts to be used for the common good. The conviction that the Spirit is present in the community serves both as a positive stimulus to unity and as a deterrent to any inclination to violate that unity on the basis of selfish interests.

Third, baptism and the Lord's supper reinforce community by serving as symbolic points of contact with the foundational story and as means of participating in it. In the waters of baptism, alienating distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free,

are obliterated. The baptized enter the one body in which they all drink of one Spirit. In the Lord's supper, the foundational story about Christ crucified is re-presented, and the unity of believers is both symbolized and reconstituted in the sharing of the one loaf.

Finally, the community of believers is represented by Paul as a unity in diversity. People from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds become one in a fellowship that transcends such distinctions. Members of the community exercise a diversity of gifts distributed by the one Spirit for the common good. Disagreements in the community are addressed in a spirit of love and willingness to relinquish personal freedoms on the basis of a common indebtedness to Christ. The metaphor of the body, which Paul uses to represent this diversified unity, is especially illuminating.

The specific problems and issues with which we wrestle in our own churches today are not the same as those the Corinthians faced. The vision of community that Paul set before them, though, is just as relevant now as it was then and has the potential, if taken seriously, for contributing greatly to the renewal of our life together.

NOTES

1 Robert N. Bellah and others, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

2 Studies in social history have contributed to a better understanding of the larger social milieu within which--and often against which--early Christian forms of community emerged. See

especially Gerd Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity, ed. and trans, John H. Schutz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Abraham J. Malherbe, Social Aspects of Early Christianity, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); and Wayne A. Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul (New Haven: Yale University, 1983). Studies dealing more directly with community in the biblical tradition include Robert Banks, Paul's Idea of Community (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980: reprinted 1988); Gerhard Lohfink, Jesus and Community, trans. John P. Galvin (Philadelphia/New York: Fortress/Paulist, 1984); and Paul Hanson, The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

3 C. K. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 3.

4 Theissen, 69-119.

5 Ibid., 54-57.

6 Ibid., 121-143.

7 Carl R. Holladay, The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (Austin: Sweet, 1979), 144.

8 Theissen, 160ff.

9 The foundational role of narrative in the formation of Jewish and Christian identity has been increasingly recognized and emphasized in contemporary theology. Significant studies in this regard include Hans W. Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven: Yale University, 1974) and The Identity of Jesus Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Gabriel Fackre, The Christian Story (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); George W. Stroup, The Promise of Narrative Theology (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981); Michael Goldberg, Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); and Eberhard Jungel, God as the Mystery of the World, trans. D. L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983). The role of narrative in the formation of community with distinctively Christian moral identity has been explored particularly by Stanley Hauerwas. See especially A Community of Character (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981) and The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1983).

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: CONVENTION OR COMMITMENT?*

BY Michael R. Weed

> God had been shifted gently over the decades . . . increasingly into the background at the school, so that now he was little more than a very distant, remote, patriarchal beneficence, dimly sensed and perhaps somewhere up there among the bells, a sort of abstract force for good, like nutrition.
>
> John Knowles

Western schools and institutions of higher learning were traditionally called "universities" not only because they provided a view of the whole world, but also because they provided a view of the world as a whole. That is, universities offered education in the variety of different subjects and disciplines making up the whole; and they did so within a framework, or universe, which underlay and integrated the various separate subjects taught.

Not surprisingly, as Western schools developed from medieval cathedral schools and monasteries, it was Christian thought infused with large quantities of Greek thought (particularly

*An earlier version of this paper was presented to the faculty of Brentwood Christian School in Austin, Texas, in the fall of 1986 and to the Advisory and Development Board of the Institute for Christian Studies in the spring of 1987.

Platonism and Aristotelianism) that provided the basic framework of the university's "universe."[1] Christian theology provided a comprehensive and coherent view of Truth, of past and future, visible and invisible reality--of the Universe--which served to integrate the separate truths of various disciplines and subjects taught in the university curriculum. Because of this critical integrative role, and not just because it dealt with matters of salvation, theology was highly regarded as "Queen of the Sciences."

From University to Multiversity

The modern university, by contrast, is far removed from its traditional namesake. Through a lengthy and complex series of developments, beginning as early as the development of late medieval nominalism, the university has long since left its Greco-Christian framework and has abandoned Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment successors to the Christian universe which once shaped and integrated Western education. This fact, combined with increasing specialization in an ever-expanding number of fields of study, has meant that the modern university tends to become a fragmenting and only loosely arranged conglomerate of separate departments and disciplines with no underlying vision of the whole. The many truths learned and skills mastered serve no larger Truth and guiding purpose.[2] In short, the modern university becomes a "multiversity."[3]

By and large, the contemporary university, having lost or

broken contact with its founding traditions (Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and Enlightenment), has dealt with its loss of an integrating framework by shifting attention away from the foundational issues traditionally addressed by Western education. In this process the university has become a bureaucratic labyrinth, an intellectual morass, and a moral vacuum.

With its loss of an integrative framework, the modern university has lost any clear sense of purpose or direction, abandoning former aims of education as entailing the stimulation of the intellect and imagination, and above all, imparting a vision of the whole which illuminates the meaning and purpose of human life.

The modern university, no longer capable of substantial reflection on the ends or goals of life, inevitably creates a mental environment in which wisdom is sacrificed for mere information. Life concerns lying outside of areas where skills are mastered and data are accumulated are implicitly and explicitly diminished in importance. In turn, this fosters an attitude of tolerant relativism where every person has a right to his or her own private and subjective values and all value judgments become "merely value judgments." Ironically, this normless tolerance of diverse--even contradictory--values carries the seeds of its own destruction, for without norms its tolerance is only a matter of whim or caprice; it is not a matter of deliberation or conviction. Not surprisingly, such tolerance all too frequently degenerates into an all-pervading skepticism and cynicism.

In this fashion modern education tends to offer vocational

training where energies are increasingly devoted to dexterity in various skills and technologies. It disseminates large amounts of data without providing an underlying and integrating vision of the human; at its best it produces a narrow technical competence with only limited and superficial knowledge of anything else.

Education in such an environment, with no clear unifying vision of the human good, can offer no real guidance for the appreciation and pursuit of the good. Further, to ignore or neglect basic moral, philosophical, and religious questions under the illusion of neutrality can only convey that such matters are negligible and insignificant. In Sir Walter Moberly's words:

> It is a fallacy to suppose that by omitting a subject you teach nothing about it. On the contrary you teach that it is to be omitted, and that it is therefore a matter of secondary importance. And you teach this not openly and explicitly, which would invite criticism; you simply take it for granted and thereby insinuate it silently, insidiously, and all but irresistibly.4

Such an education (if it is such) tends to produce either narrow technical competence or superficial breadth. On the one hand, training in highly technical fields of specialization tends to produce skilled technicians, knowledgeable of their fields but of little else. On the other hand, the proliferation of humanities honors programs tends to substitute breadth for depth and produces the sophisticated dilettantes who constitute sociologist Philip Rieff's "expanding market of educated fools."[5]

Either way, however, modern education is increasingly unable to introduce students to the essentials--human essentials such as honesty, justice, compassion, and loyalty. While such an

education can produce good linguists and perhaps witty talk show hosts, it cannot make good persons.

Against this background it is not surprising to find a growing number of knowledgeable and concerned voices raised in criticism of the present state of education. Philip Rieff, for example, has indicted the academic community for abandoning transmission of the fundamental constraints and interdictions without which we are helpless against ourselves, doomed to an insatiable quest for self-fulfillment in a world where there is no clear or authoritative vision of the human good.[6] Modern education has not only lost an integrating vision of the human and a sense of purpose; it has also abandoned the very quest for such a vision and purpose. The modern multiversity not only fails to dispel the contemporary moral confusion, it actually hastens the cultural suicide of modern society.

Christian School or Private School?

The present plight of Western education must be closely attended by any concerned to found Christian schools, much less Christian universities. While Christianity has played a crucial role in the history of Western education, Christians must abandon any hope of reconstructing the hegemony enjoyed in earlier eras. In the modern public square Christianity may ask for no more--and perhaps expect less--than those privileges enjoyed by any of the confessional communities making up the American pluralism.

On the other hand, as sociologist Peter Berger has capably argued, contemporary American Christians may insist that their pluralistic society recognize the legitimacy of its various communities and abandon the quest for some kind of undergirding Shinto, or state ideology. Quite simply, this means that the secular community must abandon its illusion of "neutrality."[7] That is, it means a frank recognition by the secular community of its own secular commitments as making its status that of one more "denomination" (or a "fourth faith") among the many "denominations" or belief systems constituting American's pluralism.[8]

For Berger, the secular community must

> . . . allow all communities of meaning, including the religious ones, to create their own institutions without interference from an ideologically monopolistic state. This freedom must extend to the creation and maintenance of educational institutions, a practical consequence of the right to pass on a meaningful world to their children, a basic human right if there is any.[9]

For the Christian community, the present situation offers the challenge for Christianity to commend itself by virtue of its ability to provide an integrative vision of the human which both comports with human experience and provides a framework for educating character and intellect.

More specifically, truly Christian education will entail an explicit articulation of the Christian confession and an attempt to draw upon it in constructing and deploying a conceptual framework through which a coherent and comprehensive view of reality is offered. It will require commitment to a

perspective--a set of values, beliefs, and interdictions--which guides and illumines the whole educational enterprise. That is, Christian convictions must not only survive rigorous intellectual scrutiny within institutions of Christian education; Christian convictions must also vindicate themselves by fundamentally informing and guiding the curriculum and various programs of the institution. Only in this fashion may Christian education provide a "universe" on the basis of which the student may live an integrated, fruitful, and responsible Christian life.

It must be explicitly stated, however, that Christian education cannot be merely a sentimental exercise in nostalgia, seeking to reestablish the medieval synthesis. Nor can it be an imperious ideology imposed upon and curtailing intellectual life. Rather, the Christian confession must be related to the contemporary world in a manner that is relevant to but not dictated by the agenda of modern society. The Christian framework must commend itself not because it is ancient--much less because it is orthodox. While it may draw upon numerous sources, the Christian framework must commend itself because of its intellectual fruitfulness for the whole educational process. Christian faith must prove itself capable of illuminating reality, inspiring research, encouraging creativity, and promoting human flourishing.

Unfortunately, this ideal of Christian education is seldom fully realized. No doubt this is so for a variety of reasons. Certainly, Christian educational institutions are subject to

their own versions of most of the same problems besetting their secular counterparts, not to mention financial problems facing institutions so heavily dependent upon private funding.

Too many Christian educational institutions, however, also share their secular counterparts' lack of unifying vision and guiding purpose. That is, for many Christian institutions the "Christian" component embodied in the institutional statement of purpose in actual practice amounts to little more than vague commitments to "well-rounded education," a "Christian atmosphere," "the character of the instructors," or quaint sentiments offering comfort to the supporting constituency. Such schools and institutions are frequently Christian more by convention than by conviction.[10]

Too often "Christian education" simply reflects and reproduces the same intellectual fragmentation found in the surrounding educational systems. Few instructors are educated to view the whole and to relate their particular discipline or subject matter to any larger framework of meaning--Christian or otherwise. Obviously, teachers trained in and primarily familiar with the contemporary "multiversity" (both secular and Christian versions) find themselves far more comfortable with its methods and practices (frankly secular) than those which a truly integrative Christian education would entail (e.g., regular faculty colloquia and interdisciplinary seminars).

An implication here is clearly that it is simply insufficient for Christian schools to employ instructors who

"don't mind the religious atmosphere." Nor is it sufficient for Christian schools to employ teachers who are well-trained in their particular discipline and also attend worship services regularly. Rather, the central task of Christian education, and the critical problem facing every Christian instructor, is precisely the integration of the subject or discipline within an explicitly Christian conceptual framework. In fact, it may be even more crucial for the development of an integrative Christian education that a Christian perspective be offered in the so-called "secular" courses than in requisite Bible and religion courses.

It is paradoxical--and ironic--that the religious aspect of education itself may become problematic within the Christian educational institution in at least two ways. First, the very presence of religion or Bible courses in the curriculum may contribute to the fragmentation problem. Faculty who teach other than Bible or religion are tempted to leave religious instruction and confessional statements to the religious experts or biblical specialists. In this fashion, the very presence of Bible or religion courses may serve to insulate other courses and other faculty members from such matters and thereby to legitimate their functional "secularization." Thus one may find a religion department attached to an otherwise secular educational institution.

Second, in various ways Christian educational institutions may render Christian faith and religious symbols trivial and innocuous. In his novel, Peace Breaks Out, John Knowles

describes the religious component in a New England boys' school:

> Not even the most flaming atheist could really have found anything offensive in these services at Devon. God had been shifted gently over the decades and through the centuries increasingly into the background at the school, so that now He was little more that a very distant, remote, patriarchal beneficence, dimly sensed and perhaps somewhere up among the bells, a sort of abstract force for good, like nutrition. . . . There were still hymns--"God of Our Fathers," "A Mighty Fortress," all the ones that young male voices sounded impressive singing; there were Responsive readings, Gospel excerpts, a prayer or two, and that took care of God.11

One might want to quibble that in some Christian schools it could be argued that God is more of a "chummy presence" than Knowles's "abstract force." Either way, over-familiarity tends to breed, if not contempt, at least indifference. In a climate where religion and religious symbols all too easily become routinized and trivialized, it is difficult to imagine how one would ever come to experience awe or mystery, or to have a sense of the sacred. In such a climate, rather than serving as a force energizing and integrating the whole educational process, Christian education serves in the manner of a vaccine which, using a weak strain of a deadly virus, immunizes one against the virus. That is, some forms of Christian education may innoculate students against any serious engagement with Christian faith.

In the final analysis, the reponsibility for maintaining the integrity of Christian education rests primarily on the institution's administration. The administration, in spite of the necessary but distracting tasks of fund-raising and public relations (and the complications of modern bureaucratization),

must ensure that the school is more concerned with true Christian commitment than merely with public orthodoxy. It is the responsibility of the administration regularly to restate and review the vision and purpose of the school. Further, it is the task of the administration to exemplify and to encourage the implementation of the vision and purpose of the school both in administrative procedures and in curricular matters.

The administration must enable and encourage the faculty to implement an integrative vision of education on a day-to-day basis both in the classroom and in the overall climate of the school. Hence, it is vital that an adversary relationship not exist between faculty and administration. This is why it is important that the administration resist authoritarian tendencies and less-than-forthright methods of dealing with personnel in order to maintain a climate of mutual trust and cooperation between faculty and administration.

Unfortunately, students frequently encounter faculty members who, themselves raised in authoritarian, anti-intellectual, and inflexible environments, reflect immaturity, rebelliousness, and embitterment.[12] Students and faculty are often disenchanted by the perception of administrative procedures which run counter both to the intellectual heritage of academia and to the requirements of Christian ethical principles.[13] Unless this problem is courageously and sympathetically addressed, it will continue to frustrate the whole educational enterprise.

Additionally, the administration should resist the temptation

to monitor and evaluate its programs primarily in terms of the values and standards of the surrounding secular society. (Recent examples of private religious schools striving for success in intercollegiate athletics vividly illustrate the risks.) Specifically, the curriculum must not be "market-driven" in an attempt to place graduates in successful jobs. It is not at all certain that it is possible to train people the same way everyone else does and, at the same time, to educate them to maintain Christian identity. In fact, as Alasdair MacIntyre has observed, "the road to success in Philadelphia and the road to heaven may not coincide after all."[14]

Notes

[1] Although Western schools and universities developed from cathedral and monastery schools, the origins of Western education lie in ancient Greece. The unique feature of the Greek mind, philosophy, bequeathed to Greek education a tendency to see reality as a whole. Truth is indivisible: separate truths are not simply unrelated fragments of data but are ultimately reflections of Truth. Consequently, education necessarily is inclusive of intellect and virtue and it benefits the individual and society. Cf. Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture (Oxford: Oxford University, 1945), Vol. 1, xxi, xxii.

[2] Dennis B. Quinn, "Higher Education: The Pluralistic Monopoly," The University Bookman, Vol. 28:1 (1988), 3.

[3] Clark Kerr, The Uses of the University (New York: Harper, 1963), 9-18, 135f.

[4] Sir Walter Moberly, The Crisis in the University (London: SCM, 1949), 56.

[5] Philip Rieff, Fellow Teachers: Of Culture and Its Second Death (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972), 13 n. 7.

[6] Ibid.

7 Peter Berger, "From the Crisis of Religion to the Crisis of Secularity," Religion and America: Spiritual Life in a Secular Age, Mary Douglas and Steven Tipton, eds. (Boston: Beacon, 1982), 22.

8 Ibid. See James Davison Hunter, "America's Fourth Faith: A Sociological Perspective on Secular Humanism," This World: A Journal of Religion and Public Life, Fall 1987, 101-110.

9 Ibid.

10 Cf. Stanley Hauerwas, "How Christian Universities Contribute to the Corruption of Youth: Church and University in a Confused Age," Katallagete, Summer 1986, 21-28.

11 John Knowles, Peace Breaks Out (New York: Bantam, 1981), 62.

12 Douglas Frank, "Consumerism and the Christian College: A Call to Life in an Age of Death," Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America, Joel Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 260.

13 Thomas A. Askew, "The Shaping of Evangelical Higher Education Since World War II," Making Higher Education Christian, ibid., 149.

14 Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue (South Bend: University of Notre Dame, 1981), 185.

COMMUNITY, ETHICS, AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH ON CAMPUS

by James W. Thompson

On the great seal of the University of Tübingen, which has been in use since the founding of the university, is the figure of Jesus Christ standing on two books, the Old and the New Testament. In his left hand is the globe, and with his right hand he makes the gesture of teaching. The inscription on the ribbon surrounding him reads: ego sum via, veritas et vita, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). The seal suggests that all learning is grounded in the authority of Jesus Christ, the true teacher.[1] The Bible is recognized as the foundational document of the university.

The great universities which were established in the Middle Ages were all founded on the conviction that the Christian faith is the foundation for learning. When the university was exported to the new world, no one doubted the Christian character of the institutions of higher learning. Even many of the great public universities of the United States have the inscription, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Institute for Christian Studies
CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 9 Fall, 1988 ©

The Christian motivation for the establishment of universities was expressed in classic form in the charter of the University of Tübingen, and undoubtedly the same understanding was to be found in other universities. According to the charter of the University of Tübingen,

> . . .it is our good intention, in order to help dig the fountain of life, from which the ends of the world may draw inexhaustibly comforting and wholesome wisdom for the liberation from evil, for the protection against human stupidity and blindness, chosen and decided to found in our city of Tübingen a high common school and university.2

A synthesis between the church and the university existed throughout the Middle Ages. Indeed, the university existed for an unambiguously moral purpose: to "draw inexhaustibly comforting and wholesome wisdom for the liberation from evil." In this synthesis the heritage of classical higher education could be made subservient to the Christian faith. The "liberal arts" from classical antiquity could be combined with the truth of revelation to form a Christian tradition of higher education.

In the medieval synthesis the problem of "the Christian and the campus" was not especially acute, for the campus existed to do the work of the church. Indeed, it has been observed that Christians placed their own stamp on the higher education that emerged in the Middle Ages. In these Christian universities, the fundamental needs of human life became priorities: liberation from illness, the battle against injustice, and salvation for eternal life. From these priorities were derived the vocations of the physician, the lawyer, and the clergyman. According to G.

Ebeling, this vocational concept had no predecessor in antiquity.[3] Here education was placed in service to life. Today, however, the tension exists between Christians and institutions of higher learning. The synthesis which united higher education and the church collapsed with the Enlightenment, as the separate disciplines increasingly found their autonomy in methods and results which ignored tradition and revealed truth. The latter part of the twentieth century has resulted in the increasing secularization of learning. The natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities have been liberated from past traditions. Allan Bloom comments that "the humanities took over the whole burden of instructing us about man, especially in morals and esthetics."[4] One might quarrel with Bloom and argue that the social sciences have become our moral instructors, for their research often contains claims about what it means to be human.

Bloom argues that the area of morality in particular has been undermined by the modern university. One of the central theses in Bloom's polemic is his struggle with the students' belief that truth is relative and that the highest moral good is openness. This belief, according to Bloom, is the consequence of the failure of colleges to cultivate among students a sense of shared goals and a common vision of the public good.[5] The preferred term of this new culture, he says, is "lifestyle," a term which "justifies any way of life, just as 'value' justifies any opinion."[6] The loss of moral foundations, he argues, results in universities which, like Heidegger's Freiburg and Cornell in the

1960s, lose all moral high ground and choose to serve the constituency as it wants to be served.

The Christian liberal arts college reflects the attempt to preserve the synthesis between revealed truth and the truth of human wisdom. However, the history of Christian higher education suggests that this synthesis is not easily maintained, for there are forces which result in the tension here also between the academy and the church, between faith and reason. Here also the different disciplines work with the methods and results of the enlightenment. The Christian university cannot be insulated from its culture, for its professors are the products of the same graduate schools which dominate the western cultural heritage, and they teach the same disciplines with the same methods that are recognized in the respective guilds. One is not to assume that the presence of Christian symbols, departments of religion, or daily chapel is adequate to overcome the tension between the Christian and the campus. In both the Christian and the public university, the Christian lives in the tension between Christ and culture, faith and reason. Here the Christian struggles with the old problem of Christ and culture.

An Old Tension

The tension between the church and the university is a very old one indeed. It is present in Paul's apparent disregard for the "wisdom of this world." Here Paul places the wisdom of revelation and the wisdom of the world in sharp opposition to

each other. Paul's discomfort with "worldly wisdom" becomes a major theme among the early church fathers, who experienced the tension between the two worlds of experience. In the late second century Athenagoras contrasted Christian education with that which was offered in the schools, and he argued that Christian education was distinguished by its purpose in building character, a life that corresponded to the Sermon on the Mount.[7]

The most powerful rejection of ancient higher education was given by Tertullian, whose words have often been quoted:

> What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from the 'porch of Solomon,' who had himself taught that 'the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. . . . With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.[8]

The early Christian struggle with the academy is also reflected in Augustine's Confessions, where he indicates his appreciation of elementary learning, but doubts the value of his learning from Homer and other ancient writers. For Augustine, the essential weakness of higher education was that it was not directed to the true and the good, but glorified evil and gave room to the obscene.[9]

Jerome's struggle with classical education is reflected in an incident which he recalls, which occurred during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He recalls that, even after he had become a Christian, he had loved Cicero and Plautus, but that the Bible had remained a strange book. During this pilgrimage he was

overcome with a fever, and he was near death, he believed. During this illness he had a visionary experience. He recalls,

> As I was suddenly carried away in the spirit, I was hauled before the judgment seat of the judge, and a light broke through that was so bright that I dared not open my eyes. When I was asked about myself, I answered that I was a Christian. But the one who sat at the judgment seat said, 'You are lying, you are a Ciceronian and not a Christian; for where your treasure is, there is your heart also.'10

Jerome begged for forgiveness and began a new life. He swore, "O Lord, if I ever take in hand worldly books and read them, I will have denied you." The vision reflected a crisis in Jerome's life, a decision to reject worldly books.

The pagans were aware of the tensions between Christian faith and higher education. We think, for example of Celsus' parody on the Christians:

> Let no one who is instructed, or who is wise or prudent (for such qualifications are deemed evil by us); but if there be any ignorant, or unintelligent, or uninstructed, or foolish persons, let them come with confidence. By these words, acknowledging that such persons are worthy of their God, they manifestly show that they desire and are able to gain over only the silly, the mean, the stupid, with women and children.11

Other ancient writers chided the Christians for their insistence on faith instead of knowledge. Galen equated the Christians' insistence on faith with superstition. Christians are like quacks who warn men against the doctor, "Take care that none of you touches science (episteme); science is a bad thing, knowldge (gnosis) makes men decline from the health of the soul."[12] A common criticism by pagans was that the Christian insistence on belief resulted in the glorification of ignorance.

The tension between Christianity and ancient higher education is also reflected in early Christianity's possession of a totally alternative educational program of its own. Learning was, of course, deeply appreciated in the early church, for Christianity was undoubtedly a "scholastic religion"[13] which required a considerable amount of literacy. However, the learning which is advocated in Scripture is focused entirely in the Scriptures. Indeed, the author of Hebrews employs the technical language of Greek education when he distinguishes between the milk and the solid food, which is to nourish Christian believers. While his contemporaries distinguished the milk of elementary education from the solid food of higher education, for the author of Hebrews this education is rooted exclusively in the Christian tradition. He challenges the readers to train their intellectual faculties, just as the athlete trained himself physically. The final result of this education will be the capability "to distinguish good and evil" (5:14). Similarly 2 Tim 3:16 describes the paideia, or education of the Christian, but it is exclusively rooted in the inspired writings. This conviction that the only necessary education is to be found in Christ is expressed forthrightly in the Didascalia Apostolorum, from the third century. It says bluntly, "Have nothing to do with pagan books," and then gives surprising grounds for the injunction.

> What concern does the Christian have with the errors they contain? He has the word of God. What else does he want? The Bible not only provides for the

> super-natural life but for all cultural needs too. . . . Is it history that he wants? There are the Books of Kings. Eloquence, poetry? The prophets! Lyrics? The Psalms! Cosmology? Genesis! Laws, morality? The glorious law of God! But all these outlandish books that come from the devil--they must be hurled away.14

The Emerging Synthesis

As deep as the tension might be between Christian education and the higher education of antiquity, a synthesis finally emerged, for Christianity, as a scholastic religion, could not ultimately reject higher education. Indeed, those who questioned its value were deeply indebted to its traditions. We are well aware of the parallels between Paul himself and classical literature. His rejection of worldly wisdom in 1 Corinthians did not prevent him from drawing on an old story about the dispute among members of a body with each other, which Livy once told the plebeians when they no longer wanted to live among the patricians.[15] The author of Hebrews may assume a body of knowledge which alone teaches one to distinguish good and evil, but he writes with the skills which were derived from the higher education of his time. Clement of Rome may hold up the paideia en Christo, the education in Christ, as the alternative to worldly wisdom, but he too demonstrates his deep indebtedness to worldly learning in chapter 20 of his letter to the Corinthians, when he describes the cosmic harmony which should serve as a model for a divided church.[16] When the synthesis is complete, universities founded by the church have become the repositories of both kinds of education--the classical and the Christian. For

a period there is no problem of the Christian and the university. Christ and culture lived alongside one another.

The justification that was commonly given for the comfortable relationship of Christian paideia and pagan wisdom was that worldly learning could be placed in the service of Christ. Rich treasures could be obtained from classical education to assist the Christian in understanding the biblical revelation. The ancient fathers recognized also that much in human wisdom was in agreement with the word of God. Clement of Alexandria led the way for the adoption of worldly wisdom by the church with his insistence that mathematics and astronomy could serve the Christian in his search of the Scriptures, which has the ultimate goal of teaching one how he should live.[17] For Clement and for his successors, there is much in ancient learning which agrees with the Scripture. The Bible remained the source of authority, but he tested all knowledge against the truth of Scripture.

In the synthesis which followed, there was much in pagan learning which was appropriate for Christian teachers, who attempted, with Clement, to maintain the primacy of revelation while examining all knowledge and assuming the unity of revelation and reason. The university thus had a point of orientation which appeared to offer the Christian a consistent world view.

The synthesis was never a simple matter for the Christians, for there was always an uneasy relationship between the Christian

and education. In view of Paul's comments about worldly wisdom, Christians frequently had to defend themselves for their involvement in worldly learning. Undoubtedly, some were more "Ciceronian than Christian." We have many examples in the first few centuries of those whose primary commitment was to knowledge rather than faith. Moreover, education in antiquity had a divided soul. The Christians could be comfortable with Socrates and his argument that the purpose of education was to discover the good and noble, but very uncomfortable with those who advocated a purely instrumental view of education. One side of the ancient conversation argued that education should build character, and the other side argued that education serves primarily to develop competence and skill. The Christians could adopt the Socratic view of education, with its claim that education leads to morality, and reject those who argued for the instrumentalist view of education.

The Decline of the Synthesis and the Place of the Christian

The synthesis between faith and reason--Athens and Jerusalem--was never an easy one. Today it is nonexistent. Revelation lost to reason in the Enlightenment, and the Socratic tradition has disappeared in the twentieth century, according to Allan Bloom. In the absence of the Socratic tradition, the university becomes, in Robert Bellah's words, "like a universal filling station where students go to get the knowledge they 'need.'"[18] Until very recently, says Bellah, the public universities spoke of education as the process in which the

individual is transformed and becomes a human being. The state university spoke of religion and morality,[19] perpetuating the old synthesis between classical learning and the Christian faith. In the place of the old synthesis, the university struggles to rediscover its goals and any center of value.

In this new situation, the struggle in the ancient church between Athens and Jerusalem offers important models for the Christian on campus, for we still experience the tension between Athens and Jerusalem. If Jerome struggled with the question of whether he was more "Ciceronian than Christian," the Christian today lives with disciplines which require that he ask about his central allegiance. One easily lives within the world of his own discipline. It frames the questions that are asked and provides values. Deep in the Christian heritage is an uneasiness with the worldly wisdom which omits the knowledge of the divine mysteries. This uneasiness should extend to our own time, placing Christians in tension with the university's world.

The church will not abandon higher education and the questions it raises. With his belief in creation and the unity of all knowledge, the Christian will actively push the frontiers of knowledge and share in the preserving of traditions from the past alongside his intellectual peers. At the same time, this conviction about the unity of knowledge will preclude the Christian's compartmentalizing his learning from the Christian faith. One may argue over the success of Clement of Alexandria's commitment to placing human wisdom in the service of revelation,

but his fundamental intent was sound. Human wisdom is to be placed in the service of the Christian faith.

If early Christians lived in tension with classical higher education, it was because they were a minority group within a culture which did not take their claims seriously. Nevertheless, they maintained their own identity with a well-defined vision of their own. As a community of worship, learning, prayer, and proclamation, they were committed to the truth that would enrich human life and, in the words of the author of Hebrews, "distinguish between good and evil." For them, all education contained a distinctively moral purpose. Where they borrowed from their culture, they borrowed those elements that were consistent with their moral purpose. When they rejected the higher education of their time, one of their chief reasons was that this higher education did not "distinguish between good and evil."

George Williams has suggested that Christians in higher education should be distinguished by a "sectarian ideal of the gathered church" where committed believers come together for fellowship, mutual correction, and support. I am impressed by the potential of this suggestion, for it allows an interdisciplinary dialogue between Christians over the implications of their research. Christian scholars can reflect together on their response to the gods of higher education, and they will probably see goals beyond those which reign in higher education. The gods of academic freedom and pure research will be subservient to the

larger issues of the building of character and the public good. Natural scientists, social scientists, theologians and professors from the liberal arts can reflect together on the moral implications of their work. Christian professors of literature can ask John Gardner's question about moral fiction. In a period when the university has little ethical and moral discourse associated with research, Christians can pursue truth together and continue to relate their professions to the aim of "distinguishing between good and evil." Where the disciplines of the university have little conversation with each other, Christians from various disciplines can continue to ask important questions about the moral meaning of their work.

This interdisciplinary research is possible among committed Christians in both the Christian and the public university. The Christian university, of course, has the structures in place and the statement of purpose to encourage this meaningful dialogue between the disciplines. However, more is needed than this Christian character in order for the Christian university to fulfill its moral purpose, for it too is caught between Athens and Jerusalem--the ideals of the academy and of the Christian tradition. The Christian university will be tempted, like other universities, to serve its constituency the way it wants to be served without taking seriously the larger public good. Therefore the Christian university exists to do more than function as the "filling station" for skills in the marketplace. Indeed, the Christian university could exist to restore the concept of

"universitas" to higher education and to place knowledge in the service of a moral purpose.

The public university also offers possibilities for Christian professors and students to exist as a sectarian subculture living in tension with the university's goals. Here a community not only asks the difficult moral questions, but is also distinguished by its common life, moral commitments, and the moral questions it asks in its research. Its god is not openness or autonomy without a higher purpose. With these moral commitments, which are largely unacceptable to the wider university community, the Christian community will be a minority group within the academic community, a sectarian movement.

With the close of the Constantinian era, the church today struggles with Tertullian's question about Athens and Jerusalem in a more profound way than it has for centuries. Tertullian's question is to be taken seriously, especially today, for the models of higher education have left their Christian roots. The task of Christians on campus is to recall their most fundamental commitments, recalling that they are more "Christian than Ciceronian."

NOTES

1 G. Ebeling, "The Bible as a Document of the University," in H. D. Betz, ed. The Bible as a Document of the University (Chicago, Cal.: Scholars, 1979) 5.

2 Cited in Ebeling, 10.

3 Ebeling, 9.

4 Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 301.

5 Myron Marty, "Saving the Soul of Higher Education," Christian Century 104 (1987) 660.

6 Bloom, 235.

7 Cited in R. Scholl, "Das Bildungsproblem in der Alten Kirche," Erziehung und Bildung in der heidnischen und christlichen Antike, ed. H.-T. Johann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976) 507.

8 Presc. Her. 7.

9 Confessions I. 15-16.

10 Quoted in Scholl, 523.

11 P. Stockmeier, "Glaube und Paideia," in Johann, 533.

12 Cited in R. Walzer, Galen on Jews and Christians (Oxford: University, 1949) 53.

13 Cf. E. A. Judge, "The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community," Journal of Religious History 1 (1960).

14 Cited in J. Moreau, A History of Education in Antiquity (Madison: University of Wisconsin, repr. 1982) 320.

15 Cf. W. Jaeger, "Paideia Christi," in Johann, 489.

16 Jaeger, 489.

17 Scholl, 516-518.

18 Robert Bellah, "The New Religious Consciousness and the Secular University," in Religion and the Academic Scene, ed. D. Freedman and T. Kachel (Waterloo, Ontario: Council on the Study of Religion, 1975) 5.

19 Bellah, 5.

DISMANTLING THE BIBLE CHAIRS IN TEXAS: A CHURCH-STATE STRUGGLE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

By Allan McNicol

A Local Crisis

On the morning of July 22, 1987, the faculty of the Institute for Christian Studies had cause to take more than a perfunctory look at the local newspaper over their morning cups of coffee. In an extensive story the local newspaper announced that the University of Texas System would no longer grant academic credit for elective courses in Biblical Studies taught by off-campus instructors. In the past the faculty for these courses was approved by the University on the basis of academic credentials and competence, but were nominated and paid by private religious agencies. This procedure had gone on for eighty years. It was known as the Bible Chair arrangement. Tens of thousands of students had taken these courses over the years. Now this opportunity for study of the origins of the historic Christian tradition had come to an end. Thus there was little wonder that Institute faculty members took a second look at the paper on that mid-summer morning; for they were teaching many of

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CHRISTIAN STUDIES
Number 9 Fall, 1988 ©

these courses. Unwittingly they had landed directly in the middle of a nasty church-state conflict.

Among the many ironies of the announcement of the end of the Bible Chairs was the claim by the University that granting the right for privately funded courses to be listed in University publications to count for elective credit was, according to a ruling of the Attorney-General of Texas, a violation of the U.S. Constitution. Yet it was the same University, acting under explicit regulations set up by the Board of Regents on July 7, 1919, which mandated this arrangement for the express purpose of avoiding a problem involving a violation of the Texas Constitution.

The Bible Chairs thus found themselves in a Catch-22 situation. The fact that their instructors were approved by the University and their courses listed in University publications led, in the view of some, to their perceived appearance as University faculty; and this was not constitutionally allowable under current judicial opinion. Yet, if it were claimed that the Bible Chairs were offering courses taught by instructors who were not University faculty (as in fact was the case), the courses were non-credit offerings and probably should not be accepted for academic credit by a University of the first class. Over several months a protracted struggle took place between the Chairs and the University of Texas. But in the end the State was adamant that the Bible Chairs should be dismantled--and they were. What happened in Austin was repeated in most of the public

universities throughout the state of Texas.

One of the most contested aspects of the overall conflict in Austin centered on the issue of what would replace the Bible Chair offerings within the University of Texas. The Bible Chairs were well aware that throughout this century the University of Texas had an abysmal record in giving adequate offerings on the Bible and related Christian Studies in its curriculum. This conscious pattern of neglect of courses in Christian Studies is often traced back to an influential statement made by Senator Wigfall during the debate, in 1858, in the Texas Senate on the founding of a state university.

> The committee deems it expedient to establish one university, and but one. They do not use the term university in its largest, and probably, generally accepted signification--an universal school, in which are taught all the various branches of learning, arts and sciences. It is deemed expedient to dispense with the faculty of theology, for the obvious reason that its establishment would involve the necessity of deciding upon the orthodoxy of the different sects into which the religious community is divided. All are tolerated and protected. None can be encouraged, or established by law.1

This statement has had long term implications in Texas. It has served to underwrite a policy that no courses in the Christian Bible or Christian Theology be taught in the state universities in Texas.

It was in this context that the Bible Chair arrangement was first established in Texas. Seeing the lack of scholarly teaching of the Bible in Texas higher education in 1905 the Disciples of Christ founded the Texas Bible Chair in Austin.[2] Other Chairs

established by different religious bodies, including the Churches of Christ (1917) soon followed. But in 1987 these Chairs were abolished. What would take their place?

Several semesters have now passed since the Chairs were discontinued. We have our answer. Absolutely nothing within the University has taken their place. A charge by the author of this essay that this was the real intention of the University in abolishing the Chairs[3] was met with ridicule and denials by University of Texas officials.[4] But the fact remains that the University has no course on Jesus of Nazareth, Paul, the New Testament, or Christianity and its impact on the West (apart from grammatical courses in the Greek text) to replace the twenty-four courses offered each semester by the Bible Chairs. Nevertheless, analogous courses in Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism are offered regularly in various departments of the University.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Senator Wigfall's shadow still falls heavily over the University of Texas. Courses on the Christian Bible and the contributions of the great Christian thinkers are still given minimal attention in the classroom. In a state where overwhelmingly the public claim to be Christian, and the words of John 8:32 are placed over the doorway of the largest public university's Main Building, no course is offered on the life and impact of the one who said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Friends of the University of Texas have paid millions of dollars to obtain a Gutenberg Bible; but this University will hire no one to teach

its contents. Clearly, as the Marxists say, we have come to a set of inner contradictions that cries out for further explanation.

Preliminary Summary and Thesis

The current practice (if not policy) of disregard of the Christian tradition, characteristic of public higher education in Texas, calls for a response from the Christian community.

One often hears students, and some parents, say that they are content with the state university teaching a few skills to equip graduates to get a job. The impression left is that "higher education" is a neutral activity and has no more moral or religious implications than buying an automobile or choosing a place to live. Certainly, this is all some students want--and receive. But surely this is not the total intent of the legislature and educators who annually spend hundreds of millions of tax dollars on educational institutions. A great university exists to do more than certify students for the job force. True education should introduce the student to the high culture of our civilization that undergirds and legitimates those who rule.[5] Through a process of socialization in the classroom and across campus, by guest lecturers, and through mixing with the power elite, the intent is to get the student to adopt the core values of the culture and enable the student eventually to take his or her place as one of the future stalwarts of the society. What should disturb the Christian community is that this process of initiation into the circles of industry, commerce, government, and

science, is done completely without the perspective of the fundamental and foundational contribution of the Bible and Christian thought to our cultural legacy.

This brings us to the central concern and thesis of this essay. In this essay our major concern will be to explain that the present hostility between church and state, as illustrated by the Bible Chair demise, is the end-product of a long-standing history. We intend to trace the major contours of this history as a contribution to placing in proper perspective certain fundamental issues that need to be kept in mind in the constant interactions between the Christian community and the state.

The thesis of this essay is that the Bible Chair demise is a prime example of the case that can be made that the intention of the Founding Fathers of the United States Constitution to protect the free exercise of religion has been replaced by a state bias in the public domain against the traditional role of religion in society; and the time has come for some new directions to be taken.

Procedurally, our essay will follow in four parts and a conclusion. First, we deal with principles underlying the relationship between church and state in Early Christianity. Second, we will treat major developments that came as a result of the Constantinian Settlement. Third, we will underscore the intent of the Bill of Rights to protect the free exercise of religion from the power and interference of the state. And finally we will assess what has gone wrong in the contemporary

period. Our conclusion takes the form of a restatement of our findings as to what should be the attitude of the Christian community toward the state and some suggestions as to a way forward out of the present crisis.

Early Tensions between Church and State

After the fall of the Theocracy in Israel in 588 B.C. and the ensuing exile, the Jewish people for many centuries had the experience of existing under the political rule of a gentile sovereign. For an ethnic people, marked out by circumcision as God's elect nation, and in possession of a revealed law that was supposed to give direction in all aspects of their lives, this was a bitter pill to swallow. For it was clearly their belief that <u>their</u> God was universal Sovereign. Yet they had to submit daily to the political authority of one who was not their own.

Since they could not deny the political reality under which they lived, nor renounce monotheism, the Jews developed an interesting response to their situation. God has all authority; but he has freely given the power to rule over earthly kingdoms and territories to certain rulers (Dan. 2:21;37-38; Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-3; Sirach 10:4; 17:14). This had a certain saluatary effect for the Jew. For he could reason that the gentile Sovereign was ultimately responsible to the one God; and if the earthly king got too far out of line inevitably he would fall under wrath and judgment.[6] Or positively, since the ruler was placed in power by God for beneficent purposes he could claim obedience-as obedience

to God-even if he were a gentile.[7]

This is exactly what Paul tells the Christians at Rome in the famous passage of Romans 13:1-7. They were exhorted to be subject to rulers who ultimately draw their authority from God (Romans 13:1,2).[8] Christians should recognize this reality, pay their taxes, and make the best of living under the present administration (Romans 13:3-7). This attitude was so widespread in the early church that it may be termed normative for the early Christians (1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:2; Titus 3:1).[9] Theologically, the point seems to be that Christians were simply to acknowledge the state exists and to develop strategies to live in light of that reality. No attempt was made to develop a philosophical or theological rationale for the state in the total scheme of things.

Nevertheless, there remained at least one important qualification in the Christian's allegiance towards the state in the early centuries and may be drawn from the teaching of Jesus himself. In one of his debates with the Pharisees (Matt. 22:15-22) Jesus makes the point that an object belongs to the one whose image it bears (Matt. 22:20). His point is that Roman coins belong to Caesar, who mints them, and thus has the right to regulate daily commerce. But, by implication the human being, made in the likeness or image of the Creator (Gen. 1:26), is ultimately claimed by God. Thus the saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's," does not mean that there are certain sacrosanct zones in

life that may be marked off and labelled "God's and Caesar's." God's claim on the human is infinitely superior to Caesar's regulation of commerce.

This suggests that God's claim always transcends and places limitations on the state; not vice versa. Theologically, this must entail two things. First, the state must recognize that, for some, its claims are always to be qualified by the preaching of the good news of Jesus and the freedom to form communities to develop a lifestyle based on that preaching; and, second, that in the course of living according to the precepts of the Gospel these communities certainly have the right to say that the state has limits.[10]

In the early Christian centuries two different attitudes toward the state were derived from these theological axioms. Normally, the view that the state exists and we should do our best to co-operate with it, prevailed. This view, based on Romans 13, explains the fact that Christians could be found in public service,[11] and even, on certain occasions, may have served in the Roman army.[12] On the other hand, following the axiom of Jesus, based on Matthew 22, that allegiance to God sets clear limits on the state's claim we find very soon those who were prepared to assert that the Roman imperial system had overstepped the boundaries of legitimate authority with its claims of ultimacy (Rev. 13:1-18). The experience of the martyrs in the second and third centuries culminating in the Great Persecution of Diocletian in 303 A.D. indicates a resolute attitude by

considerable segments of the Christian community to contest any claim by the state to ultimacy.

The Constantinian Settlement and the Establishment of Christendom

In 313 A.D. the emperor Constantine ended the persecutions against Christians in the western part of the Roman empire. In addition he embraced Christianity as a Weltanschauung to serve as the basis of unification in the Empire. Despite some bumpy episodes the effort proved successful and by 383 Theodosius I had established Christianity as the official religion of the Empire.

In the East, upon establishment, there developed the Byzantine Theocracy. This political-religious order was to last for more that a thousand years until 1453 when the last emperor was killed in a battle with the Turks and Constantinople fell. Here the old Greek ideas of the polis (Greek city-state) as the be-all and end-all of one's social world were extended to the establishment of a series of nation states.[13] The emperor, somewhat as envisioned in Hellenistic Judaism and Paul, ruled by the authority of God. But as a Christian he now stood as the earthly ruler over both church and state. The idea of church and state in a modern sense was non-existent. They were inseparable. But the view of church and state in the East was not to be the wave of the future in the Western world.

Developments in the Western part of the Empire after Constantine were much more significant. In 410 Rome fell to Alaric the Goth. This event sent shock waves throughout the Empire. In

North Africa the great bishop Augustine almost immediatley commenced his classic The City of God in which he attempts to set the fall of Rome in context in both secular and Christian history. Augustine's point was that earthly states (i.e.,cities) rise and fall. Even the greatest, Rome, like everything else in this world, is temporal. As humans, the Christians must live in earthly cities and be subject both to their glories and their defeats. But there is one eternal heavenly city that is not subject to the ravages of time. This city is not visible like an earthly city. But through our life in the church (co-mingled with the earthly city-but partly also an image of the heavenly city) one can have a window through the walls of time whereby one can, as it were, look out on the heavenly city and see it as the ultimate goal of the soul.[14]

The net effect of The City of God was that it served as a metaphor for future discussions about church and state in the West for the next thousand years. Theologically, it placed great stress on the authority and sovereignty of God over both church and state. In the Middle Ages the focus shifted from interest in the fate of the earthly city to the City of God which served as a kind of Platonic archetype for Christendom. In some cases interest in building a Christian civilization practically subsumed the state so that the state became an appendage of Christendom.[15] During these times the church claimed to wield the power of the sword in both the spiritual and secular realm. Needless to say this was a fundamental misrepresentation of the Gospel of the

Prince of Peace.

One thousand years after The City of God, the Augustinian monk Martin Luther was heavily influenced by its terminology and ideas. Like Augustine, Luther also developed a theology of the two kingdoms and also stressed God's total sovereignty over both. The church, the visible representative of the spriritual kingdom, should be about the business of preaching the Gospel. The state, the earthly kingdom, was God's indirect vehicle for ruling the fallen creation and maintaining order in society.

Certainly Luther had no problem in stressing the absolute sovereignty of God over the state. He also stressed that it was the role of the state to allow the free and unhindered preaching of the Gospel. Largely in reaction to papal involvement in political affairs, however, Luther was weak in placing any limitation on the power of the state to exercise power through the sword. He thought that the state had nothing to do with the process of redemption; so, the process of redemption should have nothing to do with the state--an order of creation. Eventually, for the state, this was interpreted to mean it had the right to exercise violence even against other Christian groups--especially the Anabaptists.

By contrast, Calvin also presupposed the Augustinian ideas of the total sovereignty of God over both church and state. But his understanding of the inter-relationship between church and state differed from Luther's view. Calvin viewed church and state as two different spheres of the one rule of God that

complemented each other. The ideal state, under the sovereignty of God, ought to be organized so that church leaders and the police and magistrates worked hand in glove to bring the whole community totally under the captivity of Christ. Thus, for Calvin, the state may have a salvific effect in the sense that Christian rulers were expected to promote in every way the spiritual growth of the citizenry.[16] The reality of the state serving to promote the cause of Christian religion carried over as an influential factor wherever Calvinism had influence in Europe. It also was of immense significance in the Puritanism of the New England colonies in the New World.[17] From time to time it also demonstrated triumphalist tendencies.

On balance, even though many spiritual giants were raised during this era, it can be truthfully said that the period from the Constantinian Settlement to Luther and Calvin resulted in a corruption of the church. The reason for this is simple. The state was seen as the patron and sponsor of the church rather than the church being the community which, through the power of its obedience to transcendent norms, set limits on the state. The former attitude promoted triumphalism; the latter a servant lifestyle. Four centuries have elapsed since the Reformation. Pitifully, some of Christendom still attempts to be the moral voice of the state rather than the people of God in humble service on behalf of God's Kingdom.

The American Scene

When the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791 a very lively

debate had been in progress in America as to what extent the state (ie. the National Government) should take responsibility for providing a climate for the nourishment of religious faith.

Historians are generally agreed that the two dominant partners in the debate were the diverse but influential Puritans who were well entrenched throughout the old English colonies and a certain group of rationalists, many of whom came from comfortable circles in Virginia. The latter definitely were children of the European Enlightenment.

It should be remembered that at the time of the American Revolution at least seventy-five percent of Americans had grown up as Puritans.[18] In its Calvinist form Puritanism clearly called for a "holy community" with the teachers, clergy, and magistrates all totally committed to building a moral society based on the teaching of Jesus. For these people the church was the center of the holy commonwealth or city set upon a hill; it definitely should be established--and was. Indeed the Congregational Church remained so in Massachusetts until 1833; almost forty years after the Bill of Rights! In the discussions leading up to the adoption of the Bill of Rights, Puritan views carried considerable weight and there was no doubt they believed that religion had a very prominent role to play in public life.

On the other hand the rationalists, such as Jefferson and Madison, who were producing an American Enlightenment, sought to protect the integrity of the private conscience to practice religion freely. They believed that when religion operated under

the banner of the state, as in the previous centuries in Europe, it became corrupt and oppressive and the source of endless wars.[19] The best way to preserve Christianity as a fountainhead of piety and morality (which they certainly agreed it was) would be to separate it from corrupt influences and politics of the state. Religion itself could then prosper among the citizenry for it was clearly necessary to undergird the society.[20] Even Thomas Jefferson, when he devised his plan for the University of Virginia replete with his attempt to replace the teaching of theology with anthropology, proposed that the religious sects be invited "to establish within, or adjacent to, the precincts of the university, schools for instruction in the religion of their own sect."[21] Thus the rationalists, although more nuanced in their views than the Puritans, thought that there was an important role for religion in American public life. The modern idea that theistic religion should have no impact upon the conduct of American public policy did not exist in the late eighteenth century. It was taken for granted that religious convictions were and ought to be foundational for the operation of the new constitutional democracy.[22]

It was in the context of this ethos that the first Amendment was worded: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." in part as a compromise between those two competing views of how best to preserve the value of religion in our society. That is, the National Government was forbidden to

establish a religion (viz., the Anglican or Congregational Church) but at the same time, in keeping with the compromise, and out of concern for the rights of the states, it could not disestablish a religion that had been established in a particular state. And, in fact, the compromise served well. The states continued to promote a favorable environment for the growth of religion (especially Protestantism) although, after a while, establishment of state supported churches ceased. But throughout the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century the various states allowed Bible readings and prayer in the schools. It was under this interpretation of the First Amendment and in this ethos that the Bible Chairs were established in Texas and other states. In the words of Justice Joseph Story who served on the Supreme Court from 1811 to 1845:

> Probably at the time of the adoption of the constitution and of the first amendment to it . . . the general if not the universal sentiment in America was, that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state as long as it was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience and the freedom of religious worship. An attempt to level all religions, and to make it a matter of state policy to hold all in utter indifference would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation. The real object of the amendment was not to countenance, much less to advance Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity; but to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects, and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which should give to a hierarchy the exclusive patronage of national government.23

Thus the Founding Fathers of constitutional democracy in America considered the contribution of religious groups to the ethos of society so important that they placed at the forefront

of the Bill of Rights protections from the intrusion of the state into these matters. Yet, in retrospect, it would probably be fair to say that the Founding Fathers only dimly perceived the coercive power of the state to set the agenda for our society in terms of its capacity to define the role of religion in public life and education. Was it too romantic to think that any nation-state would ever freely yield to certain religious communities the right to found and organize churches which promoted actions occasionally perceived to be in express opposition to the interests of the state?

The Contemporary Challenge

Two centuries have passed since the Bill of Rights was ratified and America is now a much more complicated place. The influence of the National Government has grown enormously; and on the grounds of the need for civil harmony the goal of the Founding Fathers to preserve religion has shifted to a policy of simply removing religion from the public square and institutions. This shift in policy seems to be informed by the idea that religion is purely a private preference.[24] Thus, in education, the intention of the Founding Fathers has become completely reversed. The right to exercise religion and the encouragement to teach about it in the schools on the assumption that it has ultimacy has, in effect, been removed from much of the public arena.[25]

Americans, by and large, are a religious people. Many ask

how can it be that in such vital areas of life as business, the media, and especially education, the relatively few people who openly prefer the total secularism of society are in full control?[26] What has happened in the past two centuries?

To answer this question fully would take us too far afield. But in addition to our charge that the state has exercised coercive power in ruling religion out of the government schools[27] we also assert that it has been able to do this with the help of a very compliant legal system. Some observations about the latter point may take us well along the way in explaining our present situation.

In the first instance it should be remembered that originally the Bill of Rights was considered to limit the activities of the National Government and it was not until 1940 that the Supreme Court extended the religion clauses to the states by "incorporating" them into the Fourteenth Amendment which forbids any person to be deprived of "life, liberty, or property without due process of law."[28] This direct linkage between the First and Fourteenth Amendments has had significant implications with respect to the interpretation of the clause, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion . . ." Previously this clause had been interpreted to mean that the National Government could not establish a religion or move to supplant or disestablish a religion established by the states. In other words this clause (known in legal parlance as the establishment clause) was primarily concerned with the issue of state's

rights.[29] But after 1940 it came, in the courts, to be understood in the sense that the American people were guaranteed a right to liberty, and that entailed (within certain limits) a right to a religiously neutral government.[30] No unit of American Government can establish religious belief. One has a right to be free of religion.

In and of itself, the idea of a religiously neutral government initially has appeal. The problem, however, is to maintain neutrality and not tilt toward a position of hostility against religion so that the free exercise clause of the First Amendment becomes meaningless.[31]

Predictably the current interpretation of the First Amendment by the courts has satisfied no one. Secularists continue to champion the cause of total separation between church and state based on modern judicial interpretation of the establishment clause. The religious community points to the original intent behind the free exercise clause.[32] Caught in the middle of this hostile debate the Supreme Court waffles back and forth pleasing no one. In the meanwhile the Court risks losing respect among the public as a supposedly neutral place where legislative intent is subjected to scrutiny, under the restriction of the Constitution, if it cannot create a consensus as to what the religion clauses in the First Amendment really mean.

It was in the context of this debate that in July, 1987, the Bible Chairs were closed upon the direct instigation of the state. It was argued that, according to certain tests, the Bible

Chair arrangement violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment. Their tenuous connections with the government universities made them a victim in this current judicial-political-religious conflict.

Some see these developments as positive. They argue that this is just another chapter in the American break from the dominance of the Constantinian Settlement over Western civilization, and its model of triumphalist Christendom.[33] From this perspective the tension between secular government and religious liberty has been a healthy one and has resulted in curbing the totalitarianism of the state as well as producing the most dynamic and thriving churches on the face of the earth. Our analysis points in another direction.

We have argued that during the past two hundred years, due to a combination of instrumental reasons and judicial interpretation, the coercive power of the state has become so dominant in education that the faith communities have reached the point that they have difficulty finding resources and capacities to pass on their own tradition to the next generation. This is a total reversal of the situation in education that prevailed two hundred years ago. Then the state aided; now it hinders.

In particular, the current judicial interpretation of the Bill of Rights has not created neutrality toward religion in the government schools but a climate of hostility toward the claims of the God of Abraham, Jacob, and Jesus Christ. We charge that few students in either the public schools or government sponsored

higher education are presented with a fair chance to examine objectively in a neutral setting the philosophical and theological claims of the historic Christian tradition. To use the language of rights, a student must know a certain amount about a subject to have the right to an opinion on the matter. On the matter of Christianity it is doubtful whether this is the case today.

Some thoughtful observers believe that our society cannot hold together merely on the basis of law;[34] something else must undergird it.[35] To be sure, the Augustinian sense of a government that stands under the Sovereignty of God has about gone in the West. It remains to be seen whether civic republicanism or some version of civil religion can be revitalized in our society.

But that is not our question. Our point is that for the church to remain credible as the vanguard of the ultimate triumph of God in history it must not only have the freedom to preach the gospel, organize, and discipline in keeping with its Story but it also, at times, must speak prophetically to the state. Thus we say that by its establishment of an educational system that has no room for religion the state has overstepped its bounds. Whether, on our part our analysis is empty rhetoric, or it really does carry weight, will depend ultimately on the degree of integrity and persistence we show as an alternative community in being faithful to the Story which claims our ultimate allegiance.

A Strategy for the Future

The thrust of this essay has been to put into a wider historical context the current tensions between church and state especially in the area of public education.

We have seen that any Christian doctrine of the church and its views of the state that deserves that name must proceed from three fundamental axioms: (1) the state is a reality and exists under the sovereignty of God; (2) the Christian community will not recognize that the state has authority to hinder the preaching of the Gospel and the formation of communities based on its Story; (3) and by the way it lives in faithfulness to the Story, from time to time, the church will indicate that the state recognize that there are limits to its coercive power over its citizens and face up to the implications of that fact.

With reference to education, the time has come to speak out in respect to the current anti-religious bias that permeates the educational process in the government schools in America today. So, we conclude by setting forth the general outline for a strategy that may be developed by the Christian community to meet this situation.

First, in keeping with our understanding of the intent of the religion clauses in the First Amendment, Christians may expect and even demand that the state schools exercise considerable sensitivity and take greater responsibility for recognizing the impact and the importance of the contributions of Christianity to our culture.

With respect to primary and secondary education the Christian community ought to insist on co-operation from the state for release time for students for purposes of prayer, Bible studies, and catechetical instruction. Also the curriculum as it impinges upon the role of Christianity in the West, should be totally reevaluated. Under the guise of neutrality, teaching stories of the Bible and about the contribution of Christianity to our civilization has all but been erased in the government schools of America. In the name of objectively telling the Story of our culture this situation must be rectified. Such dubious educational practices as discussing Puritans in a history class, but bracketing any mention of their religious beliefs, should be halted forthwith.

In higher education there should be much greater attention given in the public universities to seeing that students know the content of the Bible, the great classic of our civilization, and that they know enough about the foundational ideas of Christianity that they can intelligently have an opinion on them. Furthermore, government institutions of higher education should accept academic credits from comparable privately accredited institutions which may teach from a perspective of ultimacy. Thus true cultural diversity could again flourish in the Academy.

Second, the Christian community should realize that it has, as always, the primary responsibility to pass on the faith to the next generation. Christian parents should raise their children with the expectation that a knowledge of the Christian faith is

every bit as important for them as obtaining the skills to get a job in the market place.

Minimally, this means that Christians must take very seriously what happens in the church educational programs and youth groups. It means that when Christian students attend government universities that there will be an expectation that they should seek a comparable level of intellectual and spiritual effort in growing in the Christian faith.

Above all, if the present non-neutrality toward religion in government education continues, an obvious solution may be the establishment of pluralistic schools perhaps using tax dollars to support truly public education that represents a variety of religious and ideological positions.[36]

In the total scheme of things the life of the Bible Chairs in Texas was not very long. The issues that led to their demise, however, will remain with us for a considerably longer period of time.

Notes

1 The quote from Senator Wigfall is found on p. 8 in the legal Request for Ruling in Support of Existing Programs and to Reconsider and Modify Opinion No. JM-352 submitted by William B. Hilgers before the Honorable Jim Mattox, Attorney General of Texas, in 1987.

2 The first Bible Chair, as far as I can tell, was established by the Disciples of Christ at the University of Michigan in 1893.

3 "Churches ask new Bible course ruling," Dallas Times Herald, November 18, 1985.

4 Joe Horn, Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin is quoted as responding to such charges with the comment, "baloney, the Bible will be a serious and major part of our studies program," Judith Horton, "UT Schools to Suspend Use of Bible Chairs," TFA Bulletin, 3/1 September (1987) 6; see also Monty Jones, "UT to replace Bible courses called illegal; regular faculty to teach classes on Christianity," Austin American Statesman, November 18, 1987.

5 Stanley Hauerwas, "How Christian Universities Contribute to the Corruption of Youth: Church and University in a Confused Age," Katallegete 9/3 (Summer, 1986) 23.

6 J.D.G. Dunn, "Romans 13:1-7 - A Charter for Political Quietism?" Ex Auditu 2 (1986) 64.

7 Ibid.

8 I do not accept the classic position of Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (London: SCM Press, Revised Edition 1963) 43-56 that the Greek word exousiais "political authorities," in Rom. 12:1 has a double reference. That is it is said to refer not only to the government but to angelic powers who stand behind and even manipulate earthly governments. Cullmann's exegesis is very important and has spawned some influential theories about the state. For a fair analysis of Cullmann's position see C.E.B. Cranfield, Romans: Volume 2: IX-XVI (ICC: Edinburgh; T and T Clark 1979) 656-663.

9 Dunn, "Romans 13," 65 says that for Paul and the early Christians this view of government is simply a prudential recognition that this is the way society always has operated and always will. Thus Paul's view of the situation is primarily theological and not Christological. Even though Christians belong to a heavenly city (Heb. 13:14; Philipp. 3:20) they still have to live in this not entirely redeemed world and make the best of it.

10 Stanley Hauerwas, "On Learning Simplicity in an Ambiguous Age," Katallagete 10 (Fall, 1987) 45; J.H. Yoder, The Christian Witness to the State (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1977 third printing) 5 puts it well, "The reign of Christ means for the state the obligation to serve God by encouraging the good and restraining evil, i.e. to serve peace, to preserve the social cohesion in which the leaven of the Gospel can build the church, and also render the old aeon more tolerable." The point is that the Christian should view the state as functioning as a leaven in society for the good of the Church and not vice versa (cf. Yoder, 36).

11
Christians belonging to "the household of Caesar," Philipp. 4:22. cf. Wayne Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 63,73.

12
Robert Grant, Greek Apologists of the Second Century (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988) 83-85.

13
T.M. Parker, Christianity and the State in the Light of History (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1955) 70.

14
C. Villa-Vicencio, Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 21-23; M. Muggeridge, A Third Testament (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1976) 51.

15
This happened especially in the papacies of Innocent II to Boniface VIII (the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries).

16
Thomas G. Sanders, Protestant Concepts of Church and State: Historical Backgrounds and Approaches for the Future (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) 226-228.

17
Space does not allow us to discuss another significant view of the relationship between church and state that developed in the sixteenth century: that of the evangelical Anabaptists in Europe and the Independents in England. This view stressed a radical disjunction between church and state and was to provide both the terminology and seeds for the later influential American idea of the wall between church and state.

18
A. James Reichley, Religion in American Public Life (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985) 53.

19
Merrill D. Peterson, "Jefferson, Madison, and Church-State Separation," Conceived in Conscience, Richard A. Rutyna and John W. Kuehl, eds., (Norfolk, Virginia: Donning Company, 1983) 37.

20
As is well known this view is clearly a presupposition behind many of the public documents that were functional in America after the Declaration of Independence.

21
Reichley, "Religion," 95.

22
Ronald F. Thiemann, "Toward an American Public Theology," Harvard Divinity Bulletin (October-November 1987) 4.

23
Charles E. Rice, "The First Amendment: Religious Neutrality or an Establishment of Secularism," Conceived in Conscience, 45.

24 Hauerwas, "Christian Universities," 23.

25 Ibid., 23-26. The modern state is very strong on the notion of cultural pluralism. By this, however, it appears to mean no barriers on the basis of race, class, or religion should be set up so as to deny access to the key institutions and structures of our society. Pluralism is certainly not defined as the freedom to teach and advocate different positions such as a transcendent perspective that may call into question or threaten a policy of the state. As a particular example, if a teacher would say in her classroom that a certain understanding of life found in the Christian faith is "the answer" to the problem of abortion she would be out of bounds in the public schools. In this setting one is supposed to present to the students the various points of view on the subject and allow them to choose what they perceive to be the correct answer. But, as Hauerwas points out, this kind of exercise is not very fruitful ethically because it fails to take into account the key function of habituation in the development of virtue. This attitude has contributed greatly to the widespread and lamented triumph of cultural relativism in the schools the fruit of which we are only beginning to reap.

26 Such a situation provides fertile ground for the spawning of conspiracy theories. The New Right has found a cadre of "secular-humanists" who are held to be reponsible. But this view is scarcely plausible. It seems closer to the mark to say that secularism has become acceptable because it provides a means of discourse to set aside the deep cultural divisions within our society by providing some common ground for discussion and, above all, for getting things done. Thus, even for the Christian businessman, (George Marsden, "Are Secularists the Threat? Is Religion the Solution," Unsecular America, Richard Neuhaus ed., [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986] 33-35) if talk of religion gets in the way of maximizing profits it will usually go; similarly, in the media and sports; and as everyone knows, public school administrators have enough to worry about without adding potential arguments over religion to their problems. So their way of handling these issues is to avoid them as much as possible.

27 We use the term government schools because that is what they are. The "public", aside from contributing its tax dollars, has precious little say in the educational process of these schools. The curriculum, policies and procedures, are all set by a professional bureaucracy which operates in an environment that views itself as having the capacity to discern and carry out absolutely the will of the state.

28 Myles C. Stenshoel, "The Supreme Court, Supreme Law, and Supreme Being: A Current Constitutional Perspective," Dialog 24/4 (1985) 252. It is interesting to note that before 1940 the

Supreme Court heard relatively few cases on the matters of church and state. Since 1940 it has been swamped with cases and there is no prospect that these will diminish in the near future.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 253.

31 Some argue that religion is a set of individual private opinions about the world and not much else. No one would have any problem with free exercise under this definition. It is when it is claimed that free exercise entails allowing religious communities to advocate their views on an equitable basis in the public square with those who speak from the standpoint of no religious faith that we find the current judicial interpretation of the "establishment" clause stridently invoked.

32 As we have argued both the establishment and free exercise clauses are compatible with a unitary reading of the state protecting and enhancing the role of religion in public life.

33 Franklin H. Littell, "The Churches and the Body Politic," Daedalus (Winter, 1967) 29-33; also compatible with this view is the large body of literature on church and state that comes out of the J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. This includes the Journal Church and State and the important book Ecumenical Perspectives on Church and State: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish, James E. Wood Jr. ed., (Waco: J.M. Dawson Institute, 1988).

34 Thiemann, "American Public Theology," 6 tells of a case where researchers in the biological sciences have urged publicly that the state, since no religion is established, ought to make it a matter of policy that future bio-medical research proceed on the basis that "all human life is not of equal worth." Without some common underlying view of morality, Thiemann asks, how can the law deal with such an issue as this?

35 The point is that in a civilized society the function of law is not to be a harsh, mechanical, impersonal restraint of personal freedom but a delicate fabric designed to protect the operative underlying values of the society. As pointed out by prominent legal authorities noted by Michael Weed, "The Twilight of the Gods: Pluralism, Morality, and the Church," ICS Faculty Bulletin 3, (November, 1982) 9,16 divorced from its philosophical and religious foundation in the Story-line of Western civilization the law itself seems in danger of being perceived as totally capricious and becomes ineffective. The question arises, "Can the law function adequately in our fragmented Western pluralistic society divorced from a common Story-line that normally, in the past, has been provided by Christianity?"

36 This proposal may startle some but it has already been set forth as a serious option in the evangelical community. cf. Marsden, "Are Secularists the Threat?" 45.

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