The Word of God and Creation

By James H. Olthuis
Insitute for Christian Studies

Unfinished Business

The doctrine of creation remains unfinished business for the Christian church. It is true that Christians of all ages have affirmed their belief in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth--and we are no exception. Moreover, the great majority of dogmaticians, following in the footsteps of Origen, treat creation as the first topic, after God himself. However, the Church has never worked out the richness of this confession in a way comparable to its struggles with the Trinity and Christology, the Church and sacraments, the Scriptures and, in our day, eschatology. An elaboration of a Christian doctrine of creation has become a high priority--even more so in our troubled times as we come face to face with the exploitation and despoilation all around us.

For, in sad fact, the doctrine of creation plays virtually no significant role in popular piety. The fervor of many Christians in defending creation over against evolution does not really change-the picture insofar as such campaigns have a limited, if not negative, focus. They have not, at least to this point, concentrated on demonstrating that a Biblical view of creation should affect our daily work-a-day world in countless ways. For most Christians, I am observing with shame, the fact that God is creator of heaven and earth remains only an article of faith to be rendered lip service, rather than a belief, which takes concrete form in a Christian way of life.

The stakes are high. If the Christian church is to speak relevantly and royally to the world today, we need to struggle toward a deepened understanding of the doctrine of creation. Only then, I am convinced, will we be able to develop a vision of life with sufficient dynamic--may I say, clout--to reshape our lives and our institutions in accord with our Master's demands that we practice justice and mercy, the weightier things of the law.

Not Natural Theology

The Church has developed a natural theology culminating in the official promulgations of the First Vatican Council of 1870. But, the elevation of creation in natural theology, whether in Thomistic, Deistic or the more modern modes of dress characterized by process theology or secular theology, results paradoxically in the neutralizing of its significance for the Christian church. For, to take the case of Thomism, when there is an eternal order of Reason (often identified with God), a rational pattern fixed and unalterable in content, always and everywhere the same holding for creation which can be perceived by natural reason, unillumined by the Spirit of God, creation loses its place as a distinctive Christian doctrine. Creation becomes, in effect, a doctrine of natural religion held by all men of reason and goodwill, irrespective of creed. God becomes "first cause" and the reign of Christ in

creation becomes unintelligible. We have, if you will, a doctrine of nature rather than of creation.

A distinctive Christian pedigree emerges only in the doctrine of grace and redemption, in a supernatural revealed religion, which supplements the natural. There are many variations in thus relating creation and redemption. H. Richard Niebuhr, for instance, talks of the Christ-above-culture and the Christ-and-culture positions. Out of concern that such complementary theories of creation and redemption, nature and grace, law and gospel, give too much autonomy to nature and, in effect, downplay or threaten redemption, another tradition crystallized in the Christian Church, culminating in Karl Barth, which set grace in antithesis to nature; that is, creation was considered fallen and chaotic. This Christ-against-culture stance in its devaluation of creation has been counterbalanced by another stream of thought, which stresses creation at the cost of sin and redemption. Thus, in reaction to Barth, via Bonhoeffer and Tillich, we have current new style natural theologies that, in the final analysis, have no need or place for grace as a gift of God or Christ as redeemer from sin.

Whatever else ought to be said in regard to these various, streams, one matter stands out clearly: creation and redemption have been conceived as two differing realities either set in opposition or complementation. For those who confess that the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the results have been disastrous. The more you emphasize creation, the less you need the Gospel. The more you highlight the Gospel, the less you give room to creation. Christians in daily life are victimized in that a choice for God, grace and redemption brings with it withdrawal from or uneasy compromise with creation. Withdrawal or rejection leads to other-worldly Christianity with all the accoutrements of mysticism and lack of reality. Compromise gives rise to feelings of guilt.

Is that all that can be said? Is there no other way? I suggest there is. It means the revival and development of another stream of thought in the Christian church, what Niebuhr has called the "Christ-transforms-culture position. In the limited scope of this paper, I would like to suggest a direction in which the Christian Church could develop a distinctive doctrine of creation which neither undercuts redemption nor demands rejection of creation.

Cosmic in Scope

Crucial to the whole endeavor is clarity in regard to the nature of the Word of God. Working within the creation-redemption two-realm problematics, Christians, conservatives and liberals alike, have too often been led to talk of the Word of God only in connection with redemption. This, I suggest, myopically limits the Word of God, whether to the Scriptures as the book of redemption or to Jesus Christ as the mediator of redemption. Moreover, it undermines a priori the possibility of understanding the intrinsic relation between the Scriptures and creation. In short, the Scriptures, consigned to the realm of grace as an extra, supplemental word, Christ viewed only as the mediator of redemption and saviour of soul, and God regarded as an absentee landlord who may pay lightning visit to creation, lose their relevance for daily life.

My thesis in brief is this: only when we come to see that the Word of God is cosmic in scope, as wide as creation, are we able to live the fullest possible lives as Christians. Only then will a biblical doctrine of creation and of creation ordinances flourish; only then will the fact that God created the heavens and the earth be good news with redemptive influence in society.

To say it another way: I am calling into question that tendency in Protestantism which, although insisting on creation as an act of God, in practice, if not always in theory, talks of the Word of God only in connection with redemption. The Word of God is limited to the Scriptures and Jesus Christ as Redeemer. That simply does not line up with the testimony of Scripture. This in no way takes back or minimizes the confession that the Scriptures and Jesus Christ are the Word of God. They are, completely and totally. Indeed, in our day, we must take great pains to make clear that the Bible is for us the final norm by which we must live. Only in Christ, according to the Scriptures, can we know God's will for our lives and experience redemption.

I am questioning whether we have accurately interpreted what the Bible itself says about the Word of God. Although it bears various nuances in the Scriptures, the Word of God in its primary meaning refers to the manifestation, the expression, the revelation, the will of God in respect to the creation. We need to distinguish God, the Word as his manifestation, and the creation. God's Word is his Word for the creation, and the gospel of the Old and New Testaments and Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, are special, redemptive revelations or incarnations of this Word for our salvation.

Since in this setting we will be pursuing at some length the biblical givens concerning the Word of God for creation, a comment is in order about the special incarnations. After the Fall, God's Plan, Will, Word--the Scriptures use a wide variety of designations--for creation is reaffirmed: the Word becomes flesh and becomes the mediator of our redemption as well as being the mediator of creation. Jesus Christ is both the full expression of the Word of God from the beginning and its perfect fulfillment. In order to direct our comings and goings in a creation that is redeemed in Christ but is still under the influence of sin, the Scriptures as the Word inscripturated lay out for mankind the depth meaning, the ground-lines, the over-arching perspective of the Word of God. The special incarnations are truly special: they are indispensable for without them we would be lost in sin. We would not know Christ; we would not know the Word of God for creation; we would know nothing. Their uniqueness is highlighted by the Church's confession that Christ was truly God and truly man, that the Scriptures are the Word of God in the words of men. The Scriptures are the key to God's Word. We believe in Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures.

God's Word for Creation

What, then, is the Word of God for creation according to the Scriptures? "By the Word of Yahweh the heavens were made, their whole array by the breath of his mouth .... He spoke, and it was created, he commanded and there it stood" (Ps. 33:6-9). The Psalmist further testifies that "He gives an order, his word flashes to earth: to spread snow like a blanket, to strew hoarfrost like ashes, to drop ice like breadcrumbs, and when the cold is unbearable, he sends his word to bring thaw and warm wind to melt

the snow. He reveals his word to Jacob, his statutes and rulings to Israel" (Ps. 147: 17-19). "Fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy winds fulfilling his word" (Ps. 148: 8).

In this context, Peter's words in 2 Peter 3 are especially instructive. Scoffers were taunting the church: where is the promise of Christ's coming? Since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued, as they were--nothing changes. Peter can hardly wait to answer, and what an answer! "They are choosing to forget that there were the heavens at the beginning and that the earth was formed by the word of God out of water and between waters...But by the same word, the present sky and earth are destined for fire.... (vs. 5-7).

Is that really an answer? Most certainly. The promise of Christ's return is guaranteed by the fact that the creation continues in existence to this day in all its regularities because it was created by the Word who is Christ. Christ is not dead; he lives. As the Word creates, sustains and renews the universe, he will also come back to judge the present earth and sky. The Word by which creation took place and still stands, the Word which brought the flood, is Christ himself.

Christ: Mediator of Creation

John and Paul, repeatedly, join Peter in proclaiming the same good news. Listen to the Prologue of John. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (before) God and the Word was God." The Word of God, although bearing full divine authority, dignity and capacity, because it is one with God, is to be distinguished from God himself. "All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made." The Word is the means, the agent, the mediator by which creation exists and is sustained. And because his world knew him not, John continues, "the Word was made flesh."

John's rewriting of Genesis 1 for the new era of the Spirit proclaims to us that the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us is identical with the Word of God by whom all things were created. The mediator of redemption shines in his full glory, grace and truth, with which he is recognized as the mediator of creation.

Finally there is the reconstructionist strategy. The reconstructionist, even more than the transformationist, finds a fundamental tension between the assumptions and claims of the existing, secular disciplines and those of the Christian faith. Indeed, he finds that the existing disciplines are so deeply permeated with anti-Christian assumptions of secularism, rationalism, and naturalism he has no choice but to reject them and to begin at the beginning in a "radical *reconstruction* of the disciplines on...fully biblical foundations."[11] The reconstructed disciplines may still be *called* biology, geology, psychology, or philosophy. But they are all the same *new* disciplines with their own, distinctively Christian foundations, methodologies, and communities of inquirers; they are quite distinct from the biology, geology, psychology, and philosophy practiced by secular scholars and also by Christian scholars of compatibilist or tra nsformationist persuasion.[12]

Comments on the Strategies. Now that we have the three strategies before us, how shall we assess them? One point which should already be clear is that the thoroughgoing reconstructionist stands at a greater distance from both the

compatibilist and the transformationist than they stand from each other. Wolfe, indeed, claims that reconstructionism is not really faith-learning integration, on the grounds that this strategy "collapses the two-sided nature of the integrative process into a one-sided collection of Christian insights without systematic relevance to an academic discipline."[13] But this seems mistaken; the reconstructionist, to be sure, is no longer collaborating with the practitioners of the existing secular academic discipline, but he still must contend with the plurality of *ways of knowing* as well as with the *distinctive **subject-matter*** of his reconstructed discipline.[14] Furthermore, it is hard t o see how one could rule out in principle the possibility that a Christian scholar might find a particular discipline to be so thoroughly unsound and permeated with anti-Christian assumptions that there is no acceptable response other than total rejection. And as we know, some Christian scholars have in fact reached that conclusion. They may be mistaken, and it may be that their own efforts at creating alternative disciplines are not especially successful or impressive. But if this is so, it should be possible to demonstrate it by evidence and argument; there is no need to prejudge the matter by ruling out reconstructionism in advance.

It may prove illuminating to view these three integrative strategies as attempting to respond to different kinds of questions about the relationship between Christianity and scholarship. The compatibilist, for example, is responding to the question, "Why would a Christian want to get involved with *that?"* asked about a particular discipline. Such questions are in fact often asked by Christians who are suspicious of scholarship, and sometimes also by secular scholars who suspect that a Christian practicing their discipline will twist and distort it into something it is not. (One might say they suspect all Christian scholars of being reconstructionists!) To such questions the compatibilist replies by showing that there are excellent reasons for a Christian to practice, and *not* to twist or distort, the discipline, because of inherent commonalities between the discipline and the faith. To quote Wolfe: "*Genuine integration occurs when an assump ion or concern can be shown to be internally shared by (integral to) both the Judaeo-Christian vision and an academic discipline.*"[15]

The transformationist, as we have seen, approaches his discipline with a somewhat different perspective. Committed by choice, training and calling to a particular discipline, he nevertheless finds it seriously lacking in certain ways as viewed from a Christian perspective. His question is, "How can this discipline be *changed* so as to correct what I as a Christian find to be its errors, and to supplement what I find to be lacking in its vision of truth?" He need not deny the compatibilist's contention that there are genuine commonalities between the faith and the discipline, yet he sees the need for a transformation of the discipline in order to correct what he perceives as serious flaws. (The compatibilist, if she admits that there are flaws in her discipline, will typically see them as the product of a "partial viewpoint" on reality taken by the discipline; the need is for this partial viewpoint to be placed into the context of a fuller vision of C hristian truth, not for the discipline itself to be transformed.)

The reconstructionist has yet another agenda. He has, to be sure, asked himself why a Christian would want to be involved with the existing, secular discipline, and his answer is: "For no good reason!" The existing discipline is beyond help. Yet, there is still the subject-matter of the discipline which cannot be ignored—subject-matter of which a Christian account is needed. So he asks himself, "How *can* one think

Christianly about politics (or geology, or economics)?" And the answer is found in the reconstructed discipline.

It may further be pointed out that the various strategies, while distinct in their basic assumptions, need not be sharply separated in practice. One might, for instance, undertake to "reform" certain assumptions or procedures in one's discipline which one takes to be disharmonious with Christian truth, without going as far in this direction as a thorough going transformationism would require. Or, one might conclude that a particular school or movement within one's discipline is to be thoroughly rejected (thus in effect agreeing with the reconstructionist about that school or movement), while regarding other schools either as compatible with one's faith or at least as affording insights which should be incorporated into a transformed discipline. (One might be a reconstructionist about behaviorism but a transformationist about cognitive psychology.) And even reconstructionists seldom manage to free themselves from dependence on all aspects of the secular dis ciplines they have rejected. (Creation Science advocates are still dependent on many aspects of standard biology, for example.) So the three strategies may better be viewed as three points on a continuum, than as three mutually exclusive alternatives. Nevertheless, these strategies can provide a valuable framework for the Christian scholar approaching a specific discipline with the objective of faith-learning integration.

It may be helpful to consider an example which illustrates these considerations. In recent issues of the Christian *Scholar's Review* several scholars have addressed the deconstructionist movement in literary criticism and philosophy. This is a movement which in its principal representatives (e.g., Foucault, Derrida) is clearly non-Christian and even anti-Christian, yet it has drawn a considerable range of responses. The stance of David Lyle Jeffrey and Roger Lundin is one of almost complete rejection.[16] Patricia A. Ward, on the other hand, sees more possibilities for constructive dialogue between Christians and deconstructionists,[17] and more recently James H. Olthuis, Merold Westphal, Gary J. Percesepe, and John D. Caputo all view deconstruction as affording important resources for Christian scholars, including insights which elsewhere are either unavailable or suppressed.[18] I shall not presume to pronounce as to w hich is the "best" or "most correct" Christian response to this movement; that question is still unresolved. But the range of response does illustrate different "strategies" for approaching this important contemporary movement.[19]

Dimensions of Faith-Learning Integration

Suppose that a Christian scholar is convinced of the necessity of faith-learning integration, and of the need to devote significant resources of time and energy to this aspect of the scholarly task. Suppose, also, that she has formed at least a general idea concerning the relationship between the Christian faith and her discipline as it presently exists, and along with this a conception of the integrative strategy to be followed. How then shall she proceed? What exactly is to be done, in order to make faith-learning integration a reality? In this section we chart some *dimensions of integration*—that is, some basic *kinds of questions* which the scholar concerned with faith-learning integration may need to address.[20]

Theoretical and Applied Disciplines. At this point I believe it is important to affirm an explicit acceptance of *integrative pluralism*—of the view that there is not one

mandatory pattern for integration but rather a variety of approaches each of which may yield valuable results when properly applied. As Wolfe says:

Perhaps some disciplines lend themselves to one approach better than another. Perhaps the personality of the investigator is an important factor in the particular insights that are generated. In any case it must not be thought that one and only one approach is possible.[21]

As Wolfe suggests, there may be a number of factors which are relevant to determining: the best approach for a particular scholar to use at a particular time. One quite significant factor would seem to be the *distinction between theoretical and applied disciplines.* Clearly there is such a distinction, though it is not absolutely clear-cut: Even the most "theoretical" disciplines typically claim that there is something of a practical nature (above and beyond the "doing" (e.g., of history or philosophy) involved in the discipline itself) that one can do better as a result of having studied the discipline. And on the other hand, if the "applied" subject does not have a body of theory on which practice is based it can hardly justify itself as a discipline within the college curriculum. But the distinction is clearly seen in the *criteria by which students* are *evaluated.* A history major, for example, is better able to do all manner of things as a result of having studied history—practice law, for example, or serve in government, or administer a college. (If you doubt this, just ask your favorite historian!) But a graduating history major is not evaluated by her ability to do any of these things, but rather by her knowledge of history. The voice performance major, on the other hand, is expected to know a good deal of theory and music history, but his program has been a failure if he knows all this but just can't sing at all well. One discipline aims primarily at teaching its students to *know* something, the other at teaching them to *do* something.

The reason this distinction is relevant here is that the typical issues for faith discipline integration tend to be different for theoretical and applied disciplines. The probing questions concerning epistemological and metaphysical "foundations" are less likely to seem pressing for the applied disciplines—and on the other hand, as we shall see, these disciplines typically raise questions of their own which are not present, or not as pressing, for the theoretical disciplines. Let us see how this is so.

Dimensions of Integration in the Theoretical Disciplines. In the theoretical disciplines four major dimensions of integration can be identified, as follows:

1. World-view Foundations: Here the question to be asked is, What fundamental insights and convictions, derivable from the Christian world-view, are relevant to the discipline? The "insights and convictions" which are pertinent here may be found in the Scriptures, in commentaries and books of theology, in books written specifically about the Christian world-view, and in other sources. The conviction that the earth, the heavens, and everything in them were created by God and pronounced good by him is surely relevant to the Christian's study of the natural sciences. The doctrine that man is created in the image of God, and the insight that humans are fallen, sinful creatures are both highly relevant to the human sciences. And so on.

2. Disciplinary Foundations: Here the scholar considers the foundational assumptions—methodological, epistemological, and ontological—which are stated or

presupposed as the basis of his discipline, and asks whether any of them are particularly significant or problematic from the standpoint of the Christian faith. This significance may be either harmonious with the faith, as is the natural scientist's assumption that the physical world has an orderly structure which is mind-independent yet accessible to investigation, or in conflict with the faith, like the assumption made by some psychologists that human behavior is entirely the product of environmental conditioning. In either case, the scholar's task is first to identify the foundational belief, then to subject it to scrutiny and determine its relationship to the Christian world-view. If it turns out that a particular assumption is both fundamental to the discipline and inimical to Christian belief , the scholar may find himself impelled in the direction of disciplinary transformation. One difficulty in this dimension of the integrative task is that all disciplines are not equally explicit about their fundamental assumptions; sometimes a good deal of digging is required. Help in this task may be found in discussions of the methodology and the philosophy of the various disciplines, as well as in work done by other Christian scholars on faith-discipline integration.

3. Disciplinary Practice: Here we are concerned with issues which arise in the day-to-day practice of one's discipline—of "doing one's job" as an historian, physicist, philosopher, etc. The historian may ask himself what aspects of history are of special interest to Christians, and also whether those aspects have been treated adequately by others, or whether valuable knowledge and insights may emerge from his own fresh study of those topics. The philosopher considers which questions in his field are of concern specifically to Christians, and how the existing, available answers to those questions comport with his Christian faith. The physicist might reflect concerning the relationship between various cosmological theories and the doctrine of creation. And so on. Resources for this dimension of integration are found primarily within the discipline itself, as well as in one's own understanding of the Christian world-view and in the writings of o ther Christian scholars.

4. World-view Contribution: In this dimension of integration we ask, what specific contribution does this discipline make to the Christian vision of reality? How does it enable us to understand God, and his world, and our fellow human beings differently than if the insights of the discipline were not available? What insights, projects, and activities does the discipline make possible? In short, what difference does the discipline make for Christians who are not its students and practitioners? The resources for this dimension of integration are found in the discipline itself, as refined through the examination called for in the other three dimensions, as well as in the scholar's grasp on the overall scheme of things to which the discipline is asked to contribute.

This last dimension, world-view contribution, is the one which has been least emphasized in the literature on faith-learning integration, so it may be worthwhile saying a few things in defense of its inclusion. First of all, this dimension emphasizes that *the ultimate aim of faith-learning integration is not merely to complete the integrative task within each separate discipline, but to enhance our overall vision of reality in the light of Christ. It is not enough* if the sociologist, the biologist, the literary scholar and the economist each has worked out how things stand in relation to the faith with respect to her own discipline, but there is no broader integration of the results of these labors. Our aim must be integral Christian scholarship, not only within

each discipline but reaching across disciplinary boundaries. The unity of God's truth demands no less. Second, this emphasizes that *elaborating the overall Christian worldview is a common responsibility of the entire faculty.* If this world-view is to play a significant role in the educational process, it must be *communicated* to students, and if it is to be communicated it must be *shared* among faculty as a common possession. For each of us simply to do her own thing" in her own classroom with her own discipline, and leave the students to put the pieces together, will not get the job done. Thirdly, this dimension helps to *demonstrate the relevance of integration* even to disciplines which sometimes tend to be only minimally involved in other dimensions of integrative activities. Consider, for example, mathematics. One will probably have some difficulty finding in the Scriptures principles which are specifically relevant to mathematical research. The mathematician can deny, with some plausibility, that his Christian faith makes or ought to make a substantive difference to the way he conducts his study of the field: there is no "Christian ma thematics"; the problems and methodologies of mathematics are the same for believer and non-believer. There may be dispute as to whether or not Christians have a stake in some particular position on the foundations of mathematics. But the foundations of mathematics is a primary concern for only a rather small percentage of mathematicians and for virtually no undergraduate students, so that the topic would seem to have at best limited relevance. But when we turn to the theme of world-view contribution, the picture changes dramatically. What contribution does the discipline of mathematics make to our understanding of the nature of the world God has created? What is the significance of the fact that so many processes in the world can be given precise mathematical description? (Consider the differences in the way nature is viewed by those who have absorbed the lessons of the mathematical natural sciences, from the purely poetic and mystical view sometimes taken by those who are ignorant o f those sciences.) What, on the other hand, is the significance of the fact that some events and processes seem to defy mathematical analysis? It is hard to believe that there is nothing to be said on these topics, or that Christian mathematicians will be unable to say it. These questions do not, to be sure, belong to the discipline of mathematics as narrowly defined. But that is just the point of the question of world-view contribution: not to remain confined within a narrow definition of the discipline, but to explore and exhibit its relevance to the broader understanding to which it contributes. This indeed would seem to be an inescapable concern for Christian liberal arts education, and indicates once again the close connection between the ideal of a comprehensive, unifying perspective on "the way things are" and the vision of reality which derives from faith.[22]

Dimensions of Integration in the Applied Disciplines. As we turn from the "theoretical" to the "applied" disciplines, it is well to remind ourselves once again that the various disciplines in the curriculum do not all fit neatly into one category or the other. Most disciplines have both theoretical and applied aspects, and so also with the integrative dimensions: A discipline which would be classified as "theoretical" may have practical applications which require the Christian scholar to give consideration to one or more of the integrative dimensions associated with the applied disciplines, or vice versa. But with this caution in mind, we now consider the dimensions of integration for the applied disciplines, of which again there are four:

1. Theory Applied to Practice: As has been noted already, each applied discipline has a basis of theory on which practice is based, whether that theory is internal to the

discipline (such as music theory) or "borrowed" from one of the theoretical disciplines (as education uses psychology). In principle, then, all of the same sorts of questions can arise concerning the theoretical components of applied disciplines, as arise concerning the theoretical disciplines. These questions may, however, seem less urgent for the applied disciplines, in view of their primarily practical orientation. But there is another kind of question about theory which is specific to the applied disciplines: What are the implications and results when this theory is put into practice? Consider for example the behavioristic school in psychology. From a theoretical standpoint, questions are often raised about the foundational assumptions of this approach—its mechanistic view of m an, its determinism, its implicit materialism, its denial of human freedom and dignity, and so on. The educator and applied psychologist, however, may feel that they can use behaviorism as a practical tool without getting into such questions; their concern is not with behaviorism as the "ultimate truth" about human beings, but simply with whether or not it works. But for them, a quite different question arises: What are the effects in practice of using behavior modification, for example, as one's primary method of discipline in the elementary classroom? And how do those effects coincide or conflict with one's ultimate objectives as a Christian educator? Whatever the answer to this is (and no answer is prejudged here), the question places the theory of behaviorism in a light which would be unavailable apart from its practical use in education.

2. Ethics and Values: Whenever one is concerned with practice, with action, then ethics and values must play a role. And so the Christian educator, the "trainer" in an applied discipline, must ask himself, What am I offering to my students by way of ethical guidance concerning the practice into which I am initiating them? The assumption, common in secular education, that one simply equips students with neutral tools or skills which are to be used purely according to their personal whims and desires, is just not acceptable in a Christian education. One can't guarantee that guidance will be accepted and followed, but it is irresponsible not to offer it. Such guidance will include "professional ethics," where relevant, but it will go well beyond these often rather narrowly defined codes of professional conduct to include consideration of the ultimate objectives for which certain things are done, as well as of the implications of various ways of meeting those objectives. In economics, for example, it is necessary to reflect on what the purposes of the economic system ought to be, and on various ways of fulfilling those purposes - are the human needs of the poor, for instance, better met by encouraging private enterprise, or by creating public welfare programs, or by some mix of these strategies?

3. *Attitudes:* Whenever service is performed, especially service done directly for human beings, it makes a tremendous difference in what spirit or *attitude* the service is done. We have all experienced that one physician leaves us feeling calm and hopeful while another, perhaps equally skillful on a technical level, leaves us uneasy and anxious. Perhaps the two doctors are equally dedicated to providing the very best care for the patient's welfare. But one of them succeeded, as the other did not, in communicating that dedication to us through a manner and an attitude which assured us that our needs were understood and that everything was being done to restore us to health. We know, too, the difference which our own attitude and treatment of students makes to how things go in our classes. In applied subjects, then, we need to lead students to reflect on the attitudes with which they will serve; this is a concrete

application of our concern with ethics and values. Of course we also need to instill in them, by example and precept, the best Christian attitudes and spirit of service.[23]

4. Contribution to the Kingdom of God. If the ultimate goal of Christian study and theorizing is the elaboration of the Christian world-view, the ultimate goal of Christian practice is to build the Kingdom of God, in order that "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." How does our "doing" in the applied disciplines contribute to this? In a sense this also is a continuation of the concern with ethics and values, but it places those questions in a larger arena, the arena of God's total purposes for us his creatures. We may ask, with Nicholas Wolterstorff, how a particular form of activity contributes to *shalom,* to the good and satisfying human life under God's rule which he intends and desires for us.[24] And the answer to this question is of vital concern as we seek to integrate these activities, and the disciplines which instruct us in them, with the faith and the love we know in Christ.

Conclusion

This then is the challenge and the task of faith-learning integration. It is a challenge to which we as Christian scholars and teachers have committed ourselves in virtue of our calling. It is an area in which we do not have prepackaged answers waiting to be taken up and proclaimed; rather we must find our own answers in collaboration with Christian scholars everywhere."

[1] Representative works along this line include Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1978); Arthur F. Holmes, *Contours of a World View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1984); and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

[2] I use "scholars" as a general term to include practitioners of all the academic disciplines, while recognizing that some Christian academics prefer to designate themselves as scientists or artists or in some other way.

[3] Cited by David L. Wolfe, "The Line of Demarcation Between Integration and PseudoIntegration" (hereafter cited as "Demarcation"), in Harold Heie and David L. Wolfe, eds., *The Reality of Christian Learning: Strategies for Faith-Discipline Integration* (hereafter, *Reality),* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1987), p. 4.

[4] "Demarcation." p. 4.

[5] My remarks in this section suggested to one referee the image of "a small band of faithful Christians holding off the united hordes of heathen." Clearly such an image is a caricature; for one thing, neither among Christians nor among non-Christians is there the kind of unity it suggests. And some disciplines and subdisciplines are fairly open to Christian insights, or at least to insights reflecting Christian concerns. (In philosophy, for instance, this is true of the philosophy of religion and, to a lesser extent, of ethics; the philosophy of mind, on the other hand, tends to be dominated by a doctrinaire materialism.) But this caricature, like all caricatures, does contain a grain

of truth: as Nathan Hatch has remarked, "Among contemporary intellectuals, the sway of secularism reigns virtually unchallenged, and its attack against the Christian faith remains heavy and sustained" (Evangelical Colleges and the Challenge of Christian Thinking" i n Joel Carpenter and Kenneth Shipps, eds., *Making Higher Education Christian* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1987), p. 158).

[6] "When a youngster like Lincoln sought to educate himself, the immediately available obvious things for him to learn were the Bible, Shakespeare and Euclid. Was he really worse off than those who try to find their way through the technical smorgasbord of the current school system, with its utter inability to distinguish between important and unimportant in any way other than by the demands of the market?" (Allen Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind.* New York: Simon and Schuster. 1987. D. 59.)

[7] cf. Allan Bloom: "[R]elativism has extinguished the real motive of education, the search for a good life." (*The Closing of the American Mind*, p. 34.)

[8] In this section we are heavily indebted to Wolfe, "Demarcation," and to Ronald R Nelson, "Faith-Discipline Integration: Compatibilist, Reconstructionalist and Transformationalist Strategies" (hereafter, "Strategies"), both in *Reality.* It would seem that Nelson originated this classification of integrative strategies.

[9] "Strategies," p. 320.

[10] Wolfe, "Demarcation," p. 7 (emphasis in original).

[11] Nelson, "Strategies," p. 325 (emphasis added).

[12] I am indebted to Arthur Holmes for raising the question of how the strategies for integration elaborated here correlate with H. Richard Niebuhr's typology of stances on the relationship of Christ and culture (see his *Christ and Culture* [New York Harper, 1951]). It is clear that our transformationist" strategy is a straightforward application to the academic arena of Niebuhr's category of "Christ the Transformer of Culture." And on the other hand, if the adherents of the "Christ Against Culture" stance apply themselves to academic pursuits at all, this could be expected to take the form of a ''reconstructionist', approach to faith-learning integration.

"Compatibilism" seems to correlate with two of Niebuhr's types: "Christ Above Culture," and "the Christ of Culture." Upon reflection, this fact highlights two distinct ways in which one can be a compatibilist: One can maintain Christ and the Gospel as genuinely transcendent above the domain of the academic discipline, or on the other hand one can assimilate the Christian message to the content of the existing discipline (e.g., by equating salvation to psychosocial maturation).

This leaves the last, and perhaps the most problematic, of Niebuhr's types, namely, "Christ and Culture in Paradox." Niebuhr's description of this type is hardly crystal clear. But it would be safe to say that this type involves an *unresolved tension* between Christ and culture—a tension in which the claims of Christ and the culture are perceived as somewhat conflicting, yet both possessing validity, so that neither can be rejected outright. In principle, it would seem that such a tension could be

resolved in several different ways: the tension could be dissolved by the discovery of deeper, underlying agreements (compatibilism); the culture could be transformed so as to be more closely conformed to the demands of Christ (transformationism); or it could become apparent that the conflict between the two is so deep and fundamental that mutual rejection is the only possible outcome (reconstructionism). Perhaps, then, "Christ and culture in paradox" can b est be taken as a portrayal of the state of mind of the perplexed Christian scholar as she first sets out on the path of faith-learning integration!

[13] Wolfe, "Demarcation," p. 8.

[14] If the reconstructionist were to draw the content of his discipline exclusively from biblical and theological sources, Wolfe's comment would be justified. But this they typically do not do.

[15] Wolfe, "Demarcation," p. 5 (emphasis in original). This is Wolfe's *general* definition of faith-learning integration; it obviously has a strong compatibilist flavor, though Wolfe does count transformationism as genuine integration.

[16] David Lyle Jeffrey, *"Caveat Lector:* Structuralism, Deconstruction, and Ideology," *CSR* XV11:4, pp. 436-448; Roger Lundin, "The Cult and Culture of Interpretation," *CSR* XIX:4, pp. 363-387. It should perhaps be said that neither of these scholars simply repudiates deconstruction because it is "un-Christian" or "un-Biblical"; rather, they criticize deconstruction in the light of what they take to be an older, and deeper, hermeneutical tradition.

[17] Patricia A. Ward, "Worldly Readers and Writerly Texts," *CSR* XV11:4, pp. 425-435.

[18] James H. Olthuis, "A Cold and Comfortless Hermeneutic or a Warm and Trembling Hermeneutic: A Conversation with John D. Caputo," CSR XIX:4, pp. 345-362; Merold Westphal, "The Ostrich and the Boogeyman: Placing Postmodernism," *CSR* XX:2, pp. 114-117; Gary J. Percesepe, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being Postmodern," *CSR XX:2,* pp. 118-135; John D. Caputo, "Hermeneutics and Faith: A Response to Professor Olthuis," *CSR XX:2,* pp. 164-170; James H. Olthuis, "Undecidability and the Im/Possibility of Faith: Continuing the Conversation with Professor Caputo," *CSR XX:2,* pp. 171-173.

[19] Additional examples may be found in more recent issues of the *CSR.* Thus, the symposium on Central American Development in XX:3 contrasts the compatibilism of Howard Wiarda, who finds that he can carry out his Christian values and commitments through "mainstream" political science, with the transformationism of Roland Hoksbergen and (especially) James C. Dekker, both of whom wish for more specifically and overtly Christian solutions to the problems of Central America. And the symposium on evolution in XXI:1 pits Alvin Plantinga's (and Pattle Pun's) strongly transformationist views against the compatibilist or mildly transformationist approaches of Howard Van Til and Ernan McMullin. In the light of these and other examples, it may not be too much to say that the question of compatibilism vs. transformationism is one of the most important general issues confronting Christian scholarship at the present time.

[20] Although we have included reconstructionism as a possible strategy for integration, it will be evident that these questions are more suitable to the compatibilist and transformationist strategies. A reconstructionist would say that if we as Christian scholars ask these questions about the existing disciplines, the conclusion we should reach is that we should abandon those disciplines and join him in his project of radical reconstruction.

[21] Wolfe, "Demarcation," p. 10.

[22] According to Allan Bloom, the very idea of a comprehensive world-view is in American culture dependent on the idea of the Bible as a total book": "[W]ithout the book, even the idea of the order of the whole is lost" (*The Closing of the American Mind*, p. 58).

[23] One referee questioned whether attitudes are really an instance of integration as here defined. I would concede that the general definition of integration is slanted towards the theoretical disciplines. But if one considers integration in relation to applied disciplines, one must also consider the relationship between the Christian faith and the *way* in which the application is carried out, and this surely includes attitudes.

See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982).