

The Calvinistsmeet trouble

Interdenominational conflict

Initial wisdom is God's revelation

By FRED CUPIDO

We wish to take issue with John Green's position as expressed in his article Religion—Interdenominational Universities Kill Academic Freedom.

To begin with, we find Green's article somewhat misleading and ambiguous. This is perhaps because, as indicated by Green himself, nobody seems to know what an interdenominational university would be.

The article gives fairly strong grounds to make us believe he means a university established, operated and controlled by a group of churches.

If this is what an interdenominational university is supposed to be, we wish to turn in wholeheartedly with his criticism. For we feel it is not the business of the churches to establish, operate and control institutions of learning.

The church is essentially a community of worship—other functions which a church may have can only be meaningful insofar as they have a place within this framework of worship.

Academic education is not such a function.

GREEN'S DEFINITION

However, it seems to us, that Mr. Green applies his criticism to religious universities rather than to interdenominational universities.

Apparently a religious university is for him either a denominational—a university established, operated and controlled by one church—or an interdenominational university.

Outside of these two categories it does not seem meaningful for him to speak of a religious university.

This, in turn, would imply that one can only meaningfully speak of a Christian university when one means an interdenominational or denominational one.

And as an interdenominational, as well as a denominational university would "kill academic freedom," this would be equally applicable to a Christian university.

For Green, the only place which religion could have in a university is in the form of a department of religious studies, for the purpose of a theoretical analysis of religion as a cultural phenomenon.

He appears to believe that academic freedom and objectivity in scientific studies can only be safeguarded if religious commitments are wholly excluded from purely academic pursuits, such as physics, biology, history, and economics.

A MISUNDERSTANDING

We feel his position is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of religion.

In order to make ourselves clear, we must make an important distinction with regard to the two meanings which the word religion may have.

On one hand, the word religion may be used to refer to man's ontic status. We use the word in this context when we state that man is a religious—that is God-related—being.

On the other hand, the word religion may refer to man's practice of life.

Religious commitment belongs to the former sense of the word religion. In other words, religious commitment belongs to the essence

of man's nature and must, therefore, not be identified with theological doctrine or ecclesiastical belief.

Both of these belong to man's functional life and are, as such, expressions of religious commitment.

RELIGION UNIVERSAL

Religious commitment qualifies and conditions all man's activities—it integrates these and provides direction for them. Religious commitment is the underlying foundation for the totality of man's cultural life. To divest man of such religious commitment would be to abolish his human nature.

To be unaware of religious commitment or to obscure and conceal it by presumptuous claims to objectivity and neutrality is essentially a lack of self-knowledge.

With regard to academic pursuits these considerations imply that religious commitment is always prior to philosophical and scientific analysis.

No one is wholly objective in theoretical endeavors. It seems to us theoretical knowledge is meaningful precisely because it is based on a preceding religious commitment which directs and integrates academic studies.

Questions such as What is meaning? What is truth? What is freedom? are always already answered religiously before they are dealt with theoretically.

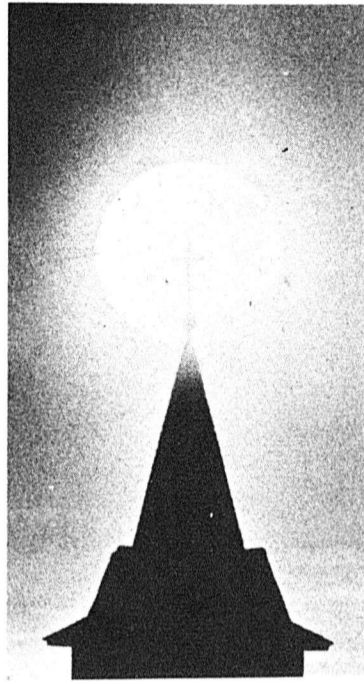
The theoretical answer to these and similar questions is only an articulation of an already meaningful religious (pre-theoretical) answer.

FREEDOM AND SCIENCE

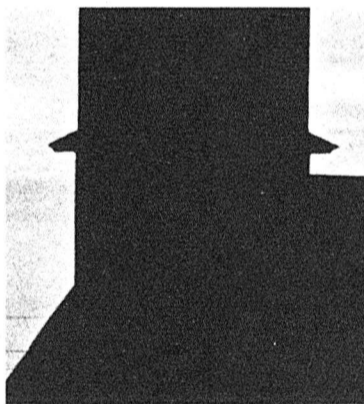
Academic freedom and objectivity in science must be seen in the context of man's subjectivity. His subjectivity implies that he always commits himself religiously in his academic studies—that he occupies, by faith, a fixed standpoint from which he begins his philosophical analysis and scientific investigation.

Theoretical problems and scientific concepts are always conditioned by such commitment. There are neither universal theoretical problems—what is a theoretical pro-

see page C-2—GOD

**background**

Interdenominational universities have those magic ingredients—religion and politics. Fred Cupido, of the campus Calvin club, and William Nicholls, head of UBC's department of religious studies sound-off this week. Nicholls's letter comes all the way from Oxford, England. The photo is by Jim Griffin.



Religious university "second or third-rate"

Dear Mr. Green:

Your letter of November 7th has been forwarded to me here, where I'm on leave, after going to one or two other places on the way.

I have little doubt that in present circumstances a "religious university" will be, at best, a second-rate, more probably a third-rate institution.

It must choose its faculty from a limited group, instead of from the whole range of talent in a given field, as a secular university can, and though the best men in this limited group are likely to be as good as the best outside it, they will probably be fewer simply because the group is smaller.

NOT CLEAR

Moreover, it is not clear what the academic, or for that matter, the religious advantages of choosing the faculty from Christian believers only.

No one has successfully shown that the Christian faith is a hypothesis which leads to fruitful results in any academic field, except perhaps, and this is highly debatable, in the study of Christianity itself.

In almost all fields, it appears to be totally irrelevant one way or the other. Neither its profession or its denial make any difference to the scholarly results obtained.

All academic subjects tend towards a methodology which can be followed without regard to one's subjective opinions about the world as a whole or ultimate reality.

We do not demand that a professor in our field of religious studies hold any particular religious position. We do, of course, expect him to respect religious phenomena and persons, and thus to take his subject seriously.

But he need not share the beliefs of those whose thought and actions he studies.

All genuine academic work in every field—except systematic and practical theology, which is now regarded as professional training—is secular, in the sense of aiming at an objective methodology com-

mon to persons of various outlooks on the question religion is concerned with.

NO DIFFERENT

If a religious university restricts its faculty to those denominations represented on its governing body, the character of teaching should not properly differ from that given at the University of Alberta or UBC.

If it does differ, it can only be for the worse, either because the faculty will be less competent, for the reasons given above, or because they will feel obliged to introduce considerations into their teaching which are academically irrelevant.

And if they do not try to introduce these considerations, there is no point in having a religious university.

If people say religion receives insufficient attention in universities, I would agree with them.

The subject is enormous, and if attention were paid to it on the scale its inherent intellectual importance warrants, religious studies departments would be very large.

CAN'T SAY

But one cannot say whether this would be a good thing for religion.

Belief in the reality of religion, implies encouragement of the most critical and disinterested study, and this is most likely to happen on a secular campus.

The training of more religious thinkers in secular universities will mean a quicker end to the intellectual isolation of theology.

So I naturally agree with your chaplains in hoping that the sort of money which would be spent on a religious university, will go towards a religious studies department at the University of Alberta.

Such a department is of course being discussed by a committee at the present time.

If you need quotes, here you are.

William Nicholls,
Professor and Head,
Department of Religious Studies,
University of British Columbia

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Interviews for Teaching Appointments Effective September 1967

ATTENTION EDUCATION STUDENTS

Due to increasing numbers of applicants, representatives of the Board will be available on campus through the entire week of Monday, January 23 to Friday, January 27 to interview prospective teachers. The regular Tuesday and Friday interview schedule will resume after January 27.

Positions are available at all grade levels and in all subject specialties.

Already some 150 applicants for September positions have been interviewed at the Student Placement Office and appointments are now being offered. We would like 300 more applications from University of Alberta students.

For application forms and interview appointments, please contact:—

C.M.C., Student Placement Office,
11149 - 91 Avenue. Telephone 433-3737.



HOME ROOM
Liven Up Your APARTMENT with
PAD

Crested U of A Ashtrays (\$1.25)
and Wall Plaques (\$3.20)

THE PLAQUES COME IN MAHOGANY, OAK AND WALNUT.

Available while they last at:

The Bookstore
1st Floor of the Administration Building