



The Half-Life of Truth¹

Ted Ward

Here they come again! Three seminal articles from the first issue of *Faculty Dialogue* are re-published in this issue, accompanied by a new set of responses. Our motives in organizing this issue deserve explanation.

The increasing traffic of responses to *Faculty Dialogue* is encouraging. There is substantial indication that people from faculties and administrations of institutions of Christian higher education are following the journal with interest and critical reflection. As the circulation and readership increase, the editors are receiving an increasing flow of contributions in the form of article manuscripts and thoughtfully written short commentaries which respond to ideas from previous issues of the journal. Thus the original intention, stimulating “faculty dialogue” around the important ideas and reflections is being fulfilled.

In Issue Number One, a carefully selected collection of seminal articles was presented, setting a high tone for the journal at its beginning. The fact that several of these articles had appeared elsewhere in previous publications did not disqualify them for inclusion. Our view of *Faculty Dialogue* then, as now, is much less concerned with stubborn insistence on originality and arbitrary stylistic criteria than with service to those who do the work of Christian higher education. Whatever will help faculty members and administrators see themselves and the value of their callings in terms of transcendent importance and practical quality is within the scope of the journal. Thus, our readers have learned to expect that some of our material is less “fresh” than it is important. By bringing to this readership dialogue-worthy writings that would otherwise be unlikely to come to their attention, we are fulfilling part of our mission.

The circulation of *Faculty Dialogue* has grown from 2,000 to nearly 12,000. Many of the readers who have joined us recently have had no access to the important materials in the early issues. The three articles featured in the following pages are the most commonly requested and widely discussed of the materials from the first volume. They are offered once again in the hope that the current readers of the journal will find there something of value that will draw them into reflective consideration of implications for their work.

Several common themes cut across these three articles: the personal reality of God, revelation as the foundation, the presupposition of design in an apparently disordered world, and the centrality of Jesus Christ in any adequate intellectual system. None of these themes are new. They are grounded in truth. Their implications are forever new and vibrant with hope whenever a person or an institution will submit to truth in a quest that is humble in its heuristics, but nonetheless bold in its belief.

It should come as no surprise to Christians that these three articles are essentially theological discourses. Their unity comes less from shared pedagogical propositions than from a common base of commitment to the Word of God. The possibilities for drawing educational implications are diverse. Thus, the educator’s tendency toward excitement about creativity and inventiveness in educational strategy and procedure is encouraged rather than discouraged.

In the voice of a prophet among us, Carl F.H. Henry, brings a transcendent challenge to contemporary scholarship:

¹ Ted Ward. The Half-Life of Truth. *Faculty Dialogue*. Winter-Spring, 1988 (10): 1-3

Secular man vetoes God's claim intellectually and by his own theoretical postulations renders that claim personally powerless. But he does not thereby cancel or destroy that claim, nor can he wholly escape it. His very compromise of the naturalistic worldview shows that theoretical atheism is inadequate to explain the totality of existence.

Further, the contributions of each of the three, Henry, Trueblood, and Wolterstorff, help the reader to judge higher education in reference to its impact on faith and on the social consciousness of the Christian. In the warm style of a vital sermon, Trueblood, the pastor of scholars, declares the personal quality of faith:

If God is, indeed, truly personal, as so much of experience indicates, we should expect that His most vivid revelation would necessarily be a personal one. . . . He revealed the truth of God and man, not merely by what He taught, but far more by what He did, and above all, by what He was.

Henry's challenge centers on the inadequate moral basis of secularized higher education:

Naturalism provides no objective basis for moral obligation, no basis for expecting that the cosmos will specially cater to man. The governing principles of comprehensive contingency, total transiency, and radical relativity can accommodate no special meaning and worth for human existence.

Wolterstorff, with measured reason of the philosopher coupled to impassioned motivations of the reformer, drives home the implications of all of these vital concerns:

The goal is not just to understand the world, but to change it. The goal is not just to impart to the student a Christian world-and-life view—it is to equip and motivate students for a Christian way of being and acting in the world Such talk tends to make us nervous.

Indeed, making thoughtful people nervous is the predictable effect of encounters with truth. These articles and the responses which have been prepared for this issue of *Faculty Dialogue* are offered in the expectation that those who value that encounter will search out further implications for Christian higher education. The half-life of truth is eternity; the half-life of three articles disciplined by truth is somewhat shorter—but surely they are worthy of second hearing!

