The State of the University

Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God

Stanley Hauerwas
Praise for *The State of the University*

“Positioning himself against Yale University President Richard Levin’s defense of Liberal Education as a crucial source for ‘the preservation of individual freedom,’ Stanley Hauerwas asks the obvious but uncomfortable question, freedom for what? If students pass through the courses in the curriculum as consumers and sightseers, they will replicate and extend the modern malaise of a life lived without reference to anything that makes its moments intelligible. If the university is to be more than a reflection of an atomized society, those who live in it, says Hauerwas, must ask two questions academics either avoid (here I am one of his examples) or answer with empty pieties: what is a university for and whom does it serve? It is the great merit of Hauerwas’ book that it refuses to back away from these questions, even as it acknowledges the difficulty of giving a full and satisfying answer to them. A witty, learned, and very human meditation on the relationship between the factories of knowledge and the knowledge of God.”

*Stanley Fish, Florida International University*

“With characteristic conversational energy, Hauerwas asks his readers to take seriously the difference that those who confess the God of the gospel can bring to institutions of learning. The book grows out of the free, generous, and lively wisdom of faith, and deserves to be widely debated.”

*John Webster, King’s College, Aberdeen*

“This book by an eminent Christian theologian is provocative for thinking fruitfully about our troubled times. Hauerwas has a subtle, learned, and compassionate mind, which he brings to bear on the secular state in which we live and on the secular knowledge produced in our universities to serve it. Non-Christians like myself will find reading this book a mind-widening experience.”

*Talal Asad, CUNY*

“Whether one agrees or disagrees with some of the positions Hauerwas stakes out, reading his work is always a bracing intellectual experience – and a deeply Christian one. *The State of the University* proves no exception. With characteristic theological craftsmanship, humor, and passion, Hauerwas turns his sights on the contemporary university, in all its dignity, wrongheadedness, goodness, and confusion. Anyone interested in the fate of theological knowledge in contemporary society, anyone interested in serious education (or lack thereof) in liberal democracies, anyone who cares for the mission of the church in the twenty-first century will profit considerably from reading and rereading this book.”

*Thomas Albert Howard, Gordon College, University of Oxford*
Illuminations: Theory and Religion

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Religion has a growing visibility in the world at large. Throughout the humanities there is a mounting realization that religion and culture lie so closely together that religion is an unavoidable and fundamental human reality. Consequently, the examination of religion and theology now stands at the centre of any questioning of our western identity, including the question of whether there is such a thing as “truth.”

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Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God

Stanley Hauerwas
To

Sylvester Evans
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Greg Jones told me to write a book like this. So he is to be held accountable for whatever is good in the book as well as whatever is not so good. Greg is not only a good friend, but he is also my Dean. The amount of work he must do to sustain the work of the Divinity School I suspect few of us appreciate. It, therefore, gives me great pleasure to include him among those to whom this book is dedicated.

I get up at five every morning and I get to work by six. But Sylvester, Donald, Savannah, Dawn, Adrianne, Paula, and Willie have already long been at work readying the Divinity School for another day. The amount of work they must do to sustain the work of the Divinity School I suspect few of us appreciate. It, therefore, gives me great pleasure to dedicate this book to them.

Joanna Hauerwas, my mother, lived a life that was a life of work. She came from hard-scrabble Mississippi only to marry a Texas bricklayer. Mother died on May 2, 2006 at the age of 92. The amount of work she had to do to sustain my life I suspect I have never fully appreciated. It, therefore, gives me great pleasure to include her among those to whom this book is dedicated.

Carole Baker, my assistant, has done the work necessary to bring this book to print. But more importantly she has read and helped me say better what I have often not said well. Sheila McCarthy read and criticized these essays and in general helped me think about the form this book should take. Without Paula Gilbert my life, and the work necessary for writing books like this, would not be possible. She also works hard, but her love has taught me how to rest.
Introduction

I am a creature of two distinct but interrelated worlds – the university and the church. It is not clear to me which of those worlds has had the most determinative shaping for my life. I have, therefore, often reflected as well as written on the relation between the church and the university no doubt with a view of trying to make sense of my life. This book, however, is my first sustained attempt to explore systematically how Christians might understand our participation in the work of the university as well as the difference Christian practice might make for how the work of the university is understood.¹

But The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God is not another book about the relation of the church and the university. I have read and learned much from George Marsden and James Burtchaell, but this book is not primarily about what has been or should be the relation between the church and the university. Rather this book is my attempt to explore and test the way I have been taught and continue to try to teach myself how to do Christian theology. Accordingly The State of the University develops the suggestions I made in the

last chapter of *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology*. I begin to explore there the difference my Barthian account of “natural theology” might make for the knowledges characteristic of the modern university as well as how those knowledges might be theologically disciplined.

I ended *With the Grain of the Universe* with a discussion of the university in imitation of Alasdair MacIntyre who tested his argument in the Gifford Lectures, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, by providing an account of the implications for the organization of the modern university. In a similar fashion I thought it useful to provide an analysis of the university’s role in the formation of knowledges that often make it difficult for Christians to make rational sense of what we believe both for ourselves as well as for those who do not share the practices of our faith. Indeed I fear too often university curriculums make it impossible for anyone, Christian and non-Christian alike, to make sense of the world in which we find ourselves.

Of course some think the way I have done theology makes it impossible for Christians to make sense of or participate in the world. I have not written *The State of the University* to counter such judgments, but I hope some of the chapters of this book will at least “puzzle” those who accuse me of recommending that Christians withdraw from the world. Indeed I hope that readers may find a “humanism” represented in this book that challenges those who think anyone with my Christological and ecclesial convictions cannot be in conversation with those who do not share my convictions. Bruce Marshall, in an article on George Lindbeck’s work, says what I take to be the case; that is, if Christian identity is forged by the God who has accepted our flesh and death for the life of the world (and not just of the church), then the church’s engagement with the world will intensify precisely as her concentration on her identity in Christ intensifies, and will diminish as the church loses a sense of her own distinctive identity. In this case the church’s vivid sense of her mission to a world made to receive Christ, and the church’s commitment to her own identity-constituting doctrines, will tend to vary in direct, not inverse, proportion. There is no logical connection between sociological resistance to cultural assimilation and theologically sectarian withdrawal from the world.

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2 Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), pp. 231–41.
Marshall observes, moreover, that Lindbeck’s insistence on the tight connection between practice and belief for understanding what it means for Christians to claim what we believe is true does not mean Lindbeck disavows intrasystematic “truth.” Rather it means, at least in my terms, that the truthfulness of Christian convictions depends on the witness of truthful lives. An appeal to the necessity of such witness may suggest to some that to which the witness witnesses does not involve cognitive claims. The burden of the argument in this book, indeed of everything I have written, is to challenge that presumption by suggesting that theology is a knowledge that should rightly be represented in the curriculums of a secular or church-sponsored university.

In her book, *Revelation and Theopolitics: Barth, Rosenzweig, and the Politics of Praise*, Randi Rashkover argues that Barth and Rosenzweig represent a “theology of testimony.” By a theology of testimony Rashkover means “a theology that is based on the notion that knowledge of God is possible only in the context of the ethical labor of the elect individual who seeks through her moral endeavor to testify to the loving act of the transcendent God.” Rashkover argues such a testimony or witness is an obedient response to a loving and commanding God, but neither Barth nor Rosenzweig reduce the religious life to blind obedience. “Rather, for Rosenzweig, theological witness is expressed and related to the world through a testimony of pragmatic verification. For Barth, witness takes place through the church’s self-critical effort to articulate the Word of God in the world prior to the kingdom of God.” For both Barth and Rosenzweig, therefore, witness is a practical deed.

Rashkover’s account of a “theology of testimony” is similar to my emphasis on “witness” as the necessary condition for any consideration of the truthfulness of Christian convictions. Witness, moreover, is a characteristic exemplified not only in lives but also in the knowledges that such lives exhibit and produce. Universities are one of the locations for the articulation as well as the testing of our knowledges. By focusing on the university, therefore, I hope to explore what it means for Christians to claim that what we believe reveals as well as is in accordance with the grain of the universe.

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7 Thus my presentation of Barth’s theology in *With the Grain of the Universe* as an exemplification of James’s understanding of verification in *The Will to Believe*, that is, that the truth of much that we believe depends on our having the virtues required in order to know the way things are (*With the Grain of the Universe*, pp. 50–61).
8 Rashkover’s identification of the individual does not, I think, mean she assumes such an individual exists separate from the community that makes them individual. Nor does her appeal to “transcendence” assume that transcendence is a predication of God more determinative than God’s covenant with Israel. I mention these issues only because some may think they suggest that Rashkover’s understanding of testimony is quite different than my understanding of witness. I do not think that to be the case.
That project is the reason several of the essays in this book are not directly about the university. For example, Chapter 2, “Leaving Ruins: The Gospel and Cultural Formations” is my attempt to show that Yoder’s critique of “Constantinianism” does not entail the presumption that Christians have no stake in the production of a material culture. Indeed the exact opposite is the case if, as Yoder also argues, the alternative to Constantinianism is not to be anti-Constantinian, but rather to develop local forms of life that can sustain the necessary visibility of the church as an alternative to the world. “Leaving Ruins,” therefore, is my attempt to show how memory must have material form if the church is to be capable of producing knowledges sufficient to resist those disciplines characteristic of the modern university that would make the church invisible.

This last comment may suggest to some that *The State of the University* continues my alleged “anti-modernist” polemic. I hope, however, that the analysis I provide in this book will suggest I have no idea what it would mean to reject in general something called “modernity.” I am quite well aware that there are many “modernities,” just as there are many “liberalisms” and “secularisms,” but I also think it to be the case that there is a link between the politics that would relegate the church to the private and the knowledges of the university that legitimate the subordination of the church to the state in the name of peace. In several of the chapters in this book, but particularly in “The End of ‘Religious Pluralism,’” I argue that the very descriptions that are assumed as givens in many university subjects, descriptions such as “religions” and/or “pluralism,” legitimate a politics and correlative knowledge that Christians must challenge if we are to serve the “modern” world.9

The arrangement of the chapters in this book might have been different, but I hope the reader will find the way I have ordered the chapters to be helpful. The chapters are not in the order in which I wrote them. The first chapter, “Theological Knowledge and the Knowledges of the University: Beginning Explorations,” I wrote after I had written “How Risky is The Risk of Education,” and “Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana.” I put “Theological Knowledge and the Knowledges of the University” at the beginning, however, because I think that essay provides an overview in which the subsequent chapters can best be read. I hope the reader will take seriously the subtitle, “Beginning Explorations.” I certainly do not think I have answered the question, “What kind of knowledge is theology?” in this book. Nor have I adequately begun to show how the knowledge of God compares with other knowledges.

I hope this book is a good beginning toward addressing those questions, but it is just that – a beginning. Hans Frei’s essay, “The Case of Berlin, 1810” in his *Types of Christian Theology* is the necessary place anyone must begin who wishes to wrestle with the question of theological

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9 Peter Ochs rightly reminds me that our task is never to “reject” but to “repair” the wounds of modernity – wounds too often inflicted by Christian unfaithfulness.
knowledge. Frei focuses on the University of Berlin because he takes it to be as close as one can get in reality to the ideal type of a *Wissenschaft* university. According to Frei the University of Berlin was founded on the presumption that all specific fields should meet the test of being an “inquiry into the universal, rational principles” so that the subjects that constituted the university would be internally and mutually coherent.

Frei observes that this understanding of the university was secular not only in the sense of being religiously neutral, but also because it prohibited any allegiance from inhibiting the free exercise of critical reason. Christian theology, as Kant had argued in his “The Conflict of the Faculties,” was exactly the kind of allegiance that could not pass the test of critical reason. Under such a regime theology could only be a university subject by being transformed into a historical discipline. Theology proper could be included in a university, according to Kant, only if it was understood to be a knowledge necessary for the professional training of ministers who were to be trained as civil servants in service to the state.

Frei’s analysis of the fate of theology as determined by the University of Berlin is the necessary background for the argument of *The State of the University*. For I try to show, that in spite of the quite different presumptions about the nature of the university in America, the implications for theology as a knowledge worthy of inclusion in the modern university have been very similar to those Frei describes in his essay on

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11 Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, p. 98. *The State of the University* was written before Thomas Albert Howard’s book, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), was published. Howard’s book confirms Frei’s account of the transformation of theology necessary for theology to become a university subject. Howard notes, however, that Schleiermacher, while conceding the state’s interest in the university and theology, feared the state “would ‘gradually appropriate and absorb them into itself so that subsequently one can no longer decide whether they have arisen freely and for their own purposes or by administrative fiat.’ ” (p. 170) Yet Howard’s account makes clear that is exactly what happened in the name of developing a “theological science” exemplified most fully in Harnack. Howard ends his book with an account of the Harnack/Barth exchange from 1923 suggesting that their “debate’s polarizing points and counterpoints, its echoes of past and anticipation of future conflicts, and the far reaching institutional, intellectual, and deeply personal stakes involved, remains today a rich and relevant heritage, and a profoundly conflicted one. We remain, perhaps, between the times.” (p. 418) A lovely conclusion if I am right that the knowledges constitutive of the modern university are designed to deny that we live “between the times.” I recommend Howard’s book as crucial for anyone interested in the issues raised in *The State of the University*.

the University of Berlin. The American universities were, of course, anything but the exemplification of one ideal type. American universities were, and often still are, strange combinations of the German research university, joined to the English university tradition in which the university is assumed to be the place where the moral character of students is determined, yet trying, as French universities do, to train “young, middle-class men to be officials of the state and servants of society.”

Given the complex character of American universities, particularly given the support of many American universities by various churches, one would think theology might have been recognized as a knowledge crucial to the work of the university. But in fact theology as a knowledge in general has fared no better in American universities than it did at the University of Berlin.

The title, The State of the University, is not meant, therefore, to suggest that I am trying to provide an assessment of the current state of the university though there is some of that kind of work done in this book. Rather the title is meant to indicate that universities as we know them, public or private, secular or religious, produce and reproduce knowledges that both reflect and serve the state. The university is the great institution of legitimation in modernity whose task is to convince us that the way things are is the way things have to be. The specialization, what some would describe as fragmentation, of the knowledges that constitute the curriculums of the modern university is crucial for the formation of people to be faithful servants of the status quo and, in particular, the modern nation state.

It is tempting to justify the inclusion of theology in the university as one more specialized form of knowledge. But the attempt to make theology a subject among other subjects cannot help but make theology something it is not. Theology properly understood as knowledge of

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13 Steven Marcus, “Humanities from Classics to Cultural Studies: Notes Toward the History of an Idea,” Daedalus, 135, 2 (Spring, 2006), p. 15. Marcus’s account of the various influences on the development of American higher education is an oversimplification, but such generalizations are quite helpful. The argument of The State of the University turns Kant on his head. Kant argued medicine, law, and theology could be included in the university because they served the state. The “lower” faculty was to be independent of government because it is concerned only with truth discovered by reason. I argue that most subjects in the contemporary university Kant associated with “reason” now primarily serve the state and that theology is one of the few disciplines that has a chance to be free and rational.

14 Paul Griffiths makes this point in his reply to James Stoner’s, “Theology as Knowledge: A Symposium” in First Things, 163 (May, 2006), pp. 24–6. Griffiths quite rightly argues that the object of theology is God, making theology a quite different discipline than those that deal with politics, birds, or the cosmos. Griffiths observes God, properly considered, cannot be part of the metaphysical furniture of the universe. Accordingly Griffiths argues that God’s essence cannot be known by reason because this would make God not God. Which means that theology is different from any other university subject. I am not convinced, however, that this means, as Griffiths argues, that theology is a knowledge that has no place in the Wissenschaft university. Griffiths does observe that the philosophical presuppositions of the modern university may themselves be deeply confused.
God means theology cannot be restricted to one “field.” Therefore in *The State of the University* I try to suggest the difference theology might make for the production of knowledges in universities who owe their existence to the church. Of course I am happily not alone in this endeavor. Many Christian academics are beginning to explore the difference their faith might make for how they pursue their subject. The kind of questions that need to be explored, however, goes well beyond questions about what difference it might make for how someone understands their work in a field as a Christian. I think if we are to have our knowledges shaped by the radical character of the Gospel, Christians may well find that the disciplines they represent may be quite different than those shaped in universities that do not serve the church.

Please note I am not trying to argue for something called the Christian University. Sam Wells has pointed out to me when “Christian” is used as an adjective you can be confident that you are reproducing the habits of Constantinianism. Rather I am pressing the question of the difference church practices might make for the very shape of knowledges in the university. Given, for example, the Gospel imperative that we are to forgive enemies; what difference might that make for the practice of the law? Given that we believe that all creation glorifies God, how should we think about the attempt to reduce creation to “nature” in the name of mechanistic explanations? These are not questions I think should or could only be asked at universities shaped by the church, but hopefully such questions should be on the agenda of any university that deserves the name university.

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15 See, for example, the recent anthologies: *Christianity and the Soul of the University: Faith as a Foundation for Intellectual Community*, edited by Douglas Henry and Michael Beaty (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) and *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*, edited by Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

16 I certainly admire, however, those that press questions about the methodological constraints of a field that prevent strong religious convictions from being considered. See, for example, Scott Thomas’s recent challenge to the field of international relations in his *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2005). I am also quite impressed by efforts to do the kind of interdisciplinary work represented by Wentzel van Huyssteen in his *Alone in the World: Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). I am sure he is right to suggest that given the multidimensional nature of human rationality we theologians should be able to, indeed we must, enter into “a pluralist interdisciplinary conversation” (p. 17). I confess I am less sure than van Huyssteen that we know what we are talking about when we talk of human uniqueness, but I take the question of human uniqueness to be a fruitful agenda. Like van Huyssteen I too am critical of speculative accounts of the Imago Dei, but my concerns are shaped more by Christological issues than his – i.e., I believe the main reason we have to think the human plays a particular role in the economy of salvation is that the Second Person of the Trinity was conceived in Mary. Finally, van Huyssteen is admirably clear that his account cannot “prove” God but rather at the most suggests that intrinsic to the human is a religious dimension and experience. That may be so, but even if it is I am not clear what theological significance such a dimension does or should have.
I cannot nor do I wish to deny that the position I develop in this book is ambiguous. For example, some may wonder, given my critique of the secular university, whether I want Christians to continue to support as well as teach at those universities. Or do I want Christians to establish new universities determined by curriculums shaped by Christian practices? I do not know how to answer these questions. I certainly do not want Christians to abandon the secular university. Those universities are not secular through and through any more than universities that claim to be Christian are Christian through and through. I am not even sure I think any university is a university through and through. I assume, therefore, if a “secular” university is open to the challenge Christians should represent then no Christian should turn down that opportunity. Indeed I assume we are in an in-between time in which secular universities may be more hospitable to Christian knowledges than many universities that are allegedly Christian.

Of course, as I suggest in *The State of the University*, the question is not whether a university might be open to a knowledge shaped by the practice of the church, but rather whether a church exists to produce a knowledge that is formed by the Gospel. In this book I try to identify some of the pathologies that have stilled the Christian imagination and intellect. In particular I argue that Wendell Berry has rightly challenged the penchant for abstraction so characteristic of the contemporary university. Nothing is more abstract or abstractive than money and money unfortunately too often makes it unnecessary for universities to articulate about why the knowledges they legitimate should be university subjects or whom such knowledges serve. The modernist presumption that knowledge is an end in itself is just the kind of justification one would expect to be given by universities in a capitalist market. Unfortunately that presumption has been one that has tempted Christians to confuse what it means to be catholic with the abstractions that characterize the false universalisms of modernity.

Interestingly enough if locality is the alternative to Constantinianism it is also the alternative to the abstractions created by as well as to justify the knowledges that legitimate the liberal state. The chapters in the second half of *The State of the University* are attempts to provide exemplifications of how locality and the liturgical time of the church has the potential to provide some resistance to the abstractions that dominate the discourse of the allegedly “global” universities. In particular “Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana” challenges the presumption that the teaching of ethics is sufficient to insure that graduates are virtuous.

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17 For the development of this understanding of liturgy, time, and politics see *Liturgy, Time and the Politics of Redemption*, edited by C.C. Pecknold and Randi Rashkover (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

18 I wrote “Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana” before the publication of Harry R. Lewis’s *Excellence Without a Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006). I think, however, his book not only confirms my analysis of the contemporary university but also exemplifies why there is no constructive response
I believe, for example, that the US invasion of Iraq is a crucial test case for the work of the university. Even though many people associated with universities in America are critics of the war in Iraq, that war was conceived, prosecuted, and continues to be justified by those whose understanding of the world was shaped by the university. I have included the chapter on “Christians and the So-Called State (We Are In)” to suggest the difference a Christian perspective should make if we are to attain a critical distance from the rhetoric of war after September 11, 2001, but also because in that essay I suggest how abstraction can lead to war. If the universities of America had been training graduates to exercise the word care, which should be a characteristic of an educated person, at least some doubt might have been raised in response to the claim after September 11, 2001 that “We are at war.”

I have included “Democratic Time” not only because it sets the stage for the argument of “The State of the Secular,” but also because by responding to Stout’s challenge in Democracy and Tradition I indicate that a recovery of theological knowledge will also entail a distinct politics. I am not anti-democratic, but I fear too often appeals to democracy underwrite accounts of time that seduce Christians to forget that we believe we live in a quite different time constituted by the worship of God. The knowledges characteristic of the modern university, allegedly produced to serve democratic processes, betray the presumption we do not have the time to do the hard, slow work of peace. I believe, as I argue in “The State of the Secular,” that universities shaped by prayer at least have the possibility to produce knowledges that embody the patience that is an alternative to the world’s impatience. Moreover I am convinced that any on strictly secular grounds. Lewis quite rightly argues that “the university has lost, indeed has willingly surrendered, its moral authority to shape the soul of its students” (p. 159–60), but he fails to see that his appeal to “the Enlightenment ideal of human liberty” (p. 62) is the reason no such authority can exist. Lewis sees quite clearly that moral education has withered in the face of the market, but he fails to see how the knowledges represented in the curriculum have created the world he now thinks problematic.

Andrew Bacevich has written the definitive study that documents the intellectual developments that have shaped American foreign policy, which has seemed to make war and, in particular, the war in Iraq inevitable. See his The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For an analysis that supports Bacevich’s claims see Donald Kennedy, “The Wages of a Mercenary Army: Issues of Civilian and Military Relations,” Bulletin of the American Academy, LIX, 3 (Spring, 2006), pp. 12–16.

The kind of radical rethinking I am trying to suggest required for the production of knowledges that should be characteristic of universities is exemplified in Enda McDonagh’s and my “Appeal to Abolish War”. See, for example, my essay “Reflections on the ‘Appeal to Abolish War’,” in Between Poetry and Politics: Essays in Honor of Enda McDonagh, edited by Linda Hogan and Barbara Fitzgerald (Dublin: Columba Press, 2003), pp. 135–47 and Stanley Hauerwas, Linda Hogan, Enda McDonagh, “The Case for the Abolition of War in the Twenty-First Century,” Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics, 25, 2 (Fall/Winter, 2005), pp. 17–36.
democracy worthy of that name requires that people exist who have been shaped by such patience-determined knowledge.\footnote{I hope soon to explore this understanding of democracy with my colleague and friend Romand Coles. He is already well ahead of me in thinking through what such a democratic practice might look like. See his *Beyond Gated Politics: Reflections for the Possibility of Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). Coles argues that the future of democracy depends on moving beyond dominant forms of liberal democracy by “focusing on cultivating specific traditions; communities of deliberation; social, economic, and political practice; virtues; visions of the good or of God” (p. xviii). In doing so Coles thinks local politics provides the crucial training ground for developing the habits necessary for generously listening to one another that is the only alternative we have to avoid bureaucratic professionalization (p. xxviii).}

Universities are elite institutions, but I do not think that necessarily makes them anti-democratic particularly if democracy is understood as the politics that refuses to silence the voice of the poor. Christianity is the faith of the poor. The chapter, “To Love God, the Poor, and Learning,” is my attempt to suggest what it might look like for the educative task of the church to be disciplined by the love of the poor. The work of the university to produce through research new knowledge is often justified by claiming that such knowledge will give us the power to eradicate poverty and/or eliminate disease. Christians in contrast, at least according to Gregory of Nazianzus, must learn to love the poor. Such a love does not mean we should not work to lessen the plight of the poor, but it does mean such work cannot help but be destructive if we have not learned first to love the poor. Such a love surely must make a difference in the university, for what and how we know what we know as well as how we learn and teach.

I have included the pieces in the Appendices because I like them and they have some relevance to the subject of this book. The first, “The Good of This Place,” was written for a panel that was organized as part of the celebration surrounding the inauguration of Richard Brodhead in 2004. I hope this “little speech” suggests I have tried to be a good servant of the university that has graciously given me a place to work and teach for many years. I hope it also expresses my admiration for Richard Brodhead. Universities are obligated to develop elegant speech. Duke is fortunate to have as our president someone who believes in and exemplifies such speech.\footnote{Duke, of course, has recently become famous for the horrific behavior of one of our athletic teams. I am often asked why I have not said more about the event. My answer is this book. What happened is not peculiar to Duke, of course, but I worry that the placelessness that threatens Duke is part of the problem. How such an event could happen in the South suggests a forgetfulness indicating that something is deeply problematic about the intellectual formation we give students – and note, the intellectual formation is not nor should it be distinguished from their moral formation.} “Seminaries are in Trouble” at least suggests I am not “picking on” universities unfairly. Seminaries, institutions directly responsible to the church, manifest all the problems I associate with the universities. Therefore I found it fitting to end the book with a
commencement address I gave at Virginia Theological Seminary that
deals with time and involves questions concerning seminary training.
Moreover ending this book with a tribute to Rowan Williams I thought
particularly appropriate. For one of the ways to ask what universities
should be about is to ask: What do universities need to do to in order to
produce as well as sustain people like Rowan Williams?

Calling attention to Rowan Williams, moreover, makes explicit the
character of the essays that make up this book. I have made no attempt
to hide from the reader that these essays were written for particular
contexts and tasks. Ireland, Australia, Waco, Texas, and even a country
called America, matter for the argument I am making. Bruce Kaye, Luigi
Giussani, David Burrell, Stanley Fish, Wendell Berry, Fred Norris, Greg-
ory of Nazianzus, and John Howard Yoder must exist – or at least have
existed – to make sense of the argument I have tried to develop. I realize
readers may not know these people as I do, but I nonetheless hope
something of their life and work is exhibited in the chapters their lives
have made possible.

I do not want, however, to give the impression that this is just a
random series of essays put together to look like a book. I am aware
that some may think that describes all my books. It is true that most of
what I write I do so because I have been asked to address this or that
subject or audience. But I almost always have in mind the next subject I
need to take up if I am to develop arguments that I hope are destined to
be a book. To be sure I had no idea when I was asked to write on
Gregory of Nazianzus to honor Fred Norris I would discover the argu-
ment I developed in that essay. Contingency is everything creating con-
nections otherwise not discoverable. I hope the reader will enjoy being
surprised as much as I have been.

Anticipating surprise, however, makes me wonder whether I should
have written this “Introduction.” I hope that readers will not think by
reading the “Introduction” they have a summary of the book. Indeed I
hope after having read The State of the University readers will find the
“Introduction” failed to adequately prepare them for the complex inter-
relation of the chapters in the book. Of course it is finally not for me to
tell those kind enough to read The State of the University what they are
reading, rather I simply hope they will enjoy the book as much as I have
enjoyed writing it. Even more I hope what I have tried to do in this book
will be an invitation for others to join in the work of theology.
Theological Knowledge and the Knowledges of the University: Beginning Explorations

1. BEGINNING EXPLORATIONS

It is no secret that theology is no longer considered a necessary subject in the modern university. I am getting old, but I have given myself the task before I die to understand better why this is the case and what, if anything, might be said that could help those that assume that theology is not to be part of modern university curriculums to think again. Yet I have to admit that I am unsure how to pursue this subject, beset as it is by historical, political, and intellectual developments not easily separated. So the subtitle of this chapter, “Beginning Explorations,” not only is an attempt to be truthful about the status of the claims I make in this chapter, but also is a call for help. I would and will welcome those who can help me ask the right questions or even know where to begin thinking about where to begin.

That it is assumed that theology is not a proper subject in the modern university is a given. But it is not clear why it is assumed that the kind of knowledge theology represents is in some fashion deficient when compared to other academic subjects. Of course some may object that theology can be taught in the modern university as long as you assume that theology names no more than a report on what was once believed or is still believed by Christians. Such a view, however, makes the issue far too easy. Theology proper may involve such reports, but theology as a discipline is a constructive and normative mode of reflection on how and what Christians believe about the way things are in the light of our conviction that the way things are has been created by God.1

1 I do not think theology is an activity peculiar to Christians. It is quite clear that many Jewish thinkers are theologians. I am sure Islamic thinkers often “do” theology. I identify theology with Christianity, because that is the theology I know. My hunch, however, is that the need for theology may be different for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. That is clearly a topic for another day and for someone far more learned than myself. David Burrell, C.S.C., has done the best work so far on this subject. See his Freedom and Creation (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).