

## IS THERE ONE CRITERION OF TRUTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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Most North American universities were established with a strong sense that their purpose was to integrate scientific and moral education. Often Christians were influential in establishing these institutions, and, in these cases, the integrating principles taught were explicitly based on Christian truth, as revealed in the Scriptures. It was common for the President to teach a course in 'moral philosophy' (or similar), intended to highlight this integration. This paper first traces briefly the shift away from this position (largely following the Civil War), and the rise of the perspective that the scientific method is the sole criterion of truth.

Others have noted that this shift was accompanied by both an emphasis on disciplinary studies (and the growing importance of professional guilds), and the weakening of the ties between institutions of higher education and the churches associated with their establishment. As individual disciplines exercised their independence, they each found different issues which required development of ethical standards. However, if the integrating potential of Christian truth is still valid (as the university founders assumed), then we should, by reference to specific disciplinary concerns, be able to demonstrate:

- (a) that ethical standards based on the principles of reason alone are inadequate and changeable, and
- (b) that the only enduring standards for ethical behavior are found in Scriptural truth.

This paper validates these hypotheses by reference to the historical development of ethical standards in specific academic and professional disciplines, including medicine, business, and engineering. It also highlights some contemporary issues within higher education, and demonstrates that a respect for Christian truth has potential for re-establishing institutional unity, even in an age of increasing specialization.

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