
[大学の神学]

[Theology of the University]

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EVER SINCE RETURNING to Japan in 1959, following graduate studies at Princeton Theological Seminary and Tübingen University, Furuya has taught and served as chaplain at International Christian University in Tokyo. During this time he has continued to study the problem of the absoluteness of Christianity in relation to culture, which was the theme of his doctoral thesis. He has been a productive scholar, whose publications include translations of works by Troeltsch and Tillich and a number of books on Christianity and modern culture. Furuya has a real talent for synthesizing the work of many scholars, clarifying many issues and identifying the key problems that contemporary theology must address. He always takes a historical approach and introduces his readers to the thought of many theologians and thinkers in a concise and coherent manner. Thus, his books give readers a broad overview of the subject. In *Shūkyō no shingaku* [Theology of Religions, 1985], for example, Furuya pointed out how the study of Barthian theology, which has such a strong influence in Japan (particularly at his alma mater, Tokyo Union Theological Seminary), has made the Protestant church very exclusivistic towards the other religious traditions in Japan. In *Nihon no shingaku* [Theology of Japan], which he co-authored with Ohki Hideo in 1989, he emphasized that Japan's theological community must make an "exodus" from German theology. As a theologian, he

possesses a keen insight and ability to anticipate the times. His latest work, *Daigaku no shingaku* [Theology of the University], is a timely book that clarifies many difficult issues and contains a number of suggestions worth serious consideration.

To better appreciate the significance of this book and Furuya's reasons for writing it, I would like to begin this review with several observations regarding higher education in Japan and recent theological trends. First of all, universities (including colleges and junior colleges) in Japan today are in a difficult situation due to fundamental demographic changes. The eighteen-year-old population or number of young people who would normally be entering university is now in a period of drastic decline. Ever since the "baby boom" surge in population after World War II, the number of eighteen-year olds increased each year, reaching a peak in what is called the "second baby boom." Individuals from this group have already reached college age and many schools were founded in recent years to absorb them. In fact, the number of new universities established to accommodate this "second baby boom" was greater than the number of new universities founded after educational reforms were instituted in the early postwar period. Now that the college-age population is declining, universities will have to face the difficult task of student recruitment in order to survive in the years ahead.

Universities in Japan have also entered a difficult period of institutional reform and curriculum revision. In the early postwar period, educational reforms led to the establishment of scores of colleges and universities, contributing to the age of mass education. Over the years, however, the educational content and academic standards of Japanese universities have fallen short of international standards. Several years ago the government, through the Ministry of Education, reformulated university accred-

itation standards in an effort to improve and invigorate teaching and research in universities. At the same time, it required each institution to initiate its own organizational reforms. Universities throughout Japan are responding to the demands of the Ministry of Education and seeking to improve the quality of education. This is not surprising since almost every university in Japan, including most private institutions, would not be able to survive financially were it not for the aid received from the Ministry of Education. In light of this situation, it is no wonder that numerous works are being written on the problems of higher education in Japan.

Furuya's book, written in response to this crisis in higher education, also needs to be placed in the context of recent theological developments. One dominant trend in contemporary theology is sometimes referred to as *mokutekikaku no shingaku* or "genitive case theology." Liberation theology, minjung theology, black theology, feminist theology, and narrative theology would all be included under this umbrella term. What these theologies have in common is their attempt to address a specific set of circumstances faced by a particular group of people. In this sense, we have a new paradigm that surpasses the framework of earlier Western theology. As one who has taught for over thirty years in a Japanese university, Furuya's theological reflections regarding this particular situation can be said to follow the flow of recent contextual theology.

He begins his radical theological analysis with a comparison of American universities and recently established Japanese universities. In the first chapter, Furuya offers a poignant description of the current state of Japanese universities and argues that both students and teachers have changed for the worse. The root of this lies in the "psychology of dependence" found in both teachers and students. "First of all, from the beginning students themselves expect to be indulged.

Their dependent attitude is 'It's okay to just have fun at least for four years at university because we've suffered through examination hell.' Second, the faculty are soft on these students: 'They had the aptitude to pass the entrance exams, so we can let them do whatever they think is appropriate and let them graduate.'" (p. 30) Consequently, higher educational institutions in Japan today are difficult to enter but easy to graduate from. Unlike other professions, moreover, faculty with no certified qualifications can enjoy a life of social influence and guaranteed lifelong employment in a system where seniority counts. This system may have worked until now, but with the decrease in the college-age population universities will no longer be able to conduct business as usual. In an increasingly competitive environment, universities will be forced to offer a quality education. In fact, the weeding out process has already begun. According to Furuya, this crisis represents an excellent "opportunity" to work out the original and true purpose of a university.

Furuya considers the problem of what constitutes a true university through an extensive analysis of Princeton University. Beginning with the Presbyterian roots of Princeton, he sketches its development from its beginnings as a log cabin college in the colonial period to a modern university. We sense the author's strong attachment to Princeton across seventy pages of description. He writes about speeches made by various presidents and their contributions to university education. In spite of the many strengths of this institution, Furuya concludes that Princeton, like other ivy league schools, could not avoid the path of secularization.

In the third chapter entitled "The Fundamental Problems of Today's Universities," Furuya considers the crisis universities face today, basing his discussion primarily on Alan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*. He indicates that the intellectual cri-

sis involves both the problem of truth and the problem of ethics. By the 1960s, universities in the United States had accepted the relativism of truth and value, following the intellectual shift that had occurred in German universities in the 1930s (p. 105). This was particularly evident in the humanities, where assertions about truth were no longer allowed (p. 108). Drawing upon Bloom's interpretation, Furuya argues that this shift in consciousness is due to the "German connection," beginning with Nietzsche's nihilism ("God is dead") and carrying on through the work of Weber and Freud. The relativization of truth and value shakes the foundations of a university and gives rise to anarchy in the academic program as well as in faculty and student relationships. "An open relativism," Furuya maintains, "gives rise to an indifference that makes everything acceptable" (p. 114). This is apparent in the rampant dishonesty on many campuses, something previously unthinkable among people working in American universities. For this very reason, Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, concentrated his efforts on reestablishing moral education in American universities. The problem of truth and the problem of ethics are two sides of the same coin.

According to Furuya, the Christian response to the problem of relativism so rampant in our age is to be found in the confessing church in Germany. Christians in the confessing church were thoroughly able to resist the Nazi rule in stark contrast to the universities. Why could individuals in this church, such as Barth, resist Hitler while individuals in the universities could not? Because "they had the foundation of a theology based on faith and reason" (p. 163). For this reason, Furuya expounds the need for Japanese and American universities to construct a "theology of the university" and pursue absolute truth in order to conquer the relativism of the present situation. Fur-

thermore, Furuya explains how keenly he feels his responsibility to make a contribution to this effort because of his position as a faculty member, professor of theology, and chaplain of a Christian university.

In the fourth chapter, he expands on what he means by a "theology of the university." In a word, he attempts to explore the "intrinsic nature of the university" from a theological standpoint. After a brief introduction to John Henry Newman's *The Idea of the University*, he provides an overview of cultural relativism and pluralistic values in the work of Troeltsch and Weber. He then proceeds to discuss the notion of cultural synthesis and Tillich's conception of "divine culture," which is "an attempt at a comprehensive integration and revitalization of the various values that comprise culture, the most central being that of religion" (p. 190). Finally, Furuya argues that H. Richard Niebuhr's understanding of "radical monotheism" provides the foundation for a new way of thinking about truth and values in the university. In other words, it is not a matter of choosing between relative pluralism or absolute monism, but seeking a third way based on radical monotheism. According to Niebuhr, "just as radical monotheistic belief provides the foundation for a democratic society, so theological doctrine does for the university" (p. 209). When universities are grounded upon such a belief, they can 1) operate without political or societal constraints in pursuing truth; 2) maintain high ethical standards; 3) aim towards universal intellectual work; 4) contribute to mutual service; 5) build a base for a thorough understanding of equality; and 6) create the possibility of realizing true "internationalism, globalism, or universalism" with a theology that supports academic pursuits.

A theology of the university, Furuya maintains, must include both "theology as criticism" and "theology as formation." The first is a theology that can continually critique science so that knowledge will not be abso-

lutized (here, Furuya illustrates his point with reference to Einstein's conscientiousness as a scientist). Simultaneously, such a theology must be thoroughly self-critical. On the other hand, the role of theology as formation is to integrate the various academic disciplines and make possible the development of a true or real *universitas*. Using the doctrine of the trinity as a framework, Furuya attempts to integrate the natural, human, and social sciences with creativity (father), reconciliation (son) and salvation (holy spirit). "If theology concerns knowledge about God, then the various sciences that study nature, human beings and society which are God's creation cannot be separated" (p. 241). Moreover, "to inquire into God's ultimate and total reality" will help us overcome the specialization and fragmentation of modern research methods. Worship must also have a central place in a Christian university.

In the final chapter, Furuya draws on George M. Marsden's, *The Secularization of the Academy*, and reviews the current state of American universities, noting that most have already been swallowed up by the wave of secularization. He writes that "Universities still publicly stating that they are Christian are in non-Christian Asian countries, including Korea, Thailand and Japan" (p. 282). Furuya suggests that Christian universities in Asia with a history of more recent Christian activity provide some hope for the future. He concludes with a challenge to Christian universities in Japan, which have so many more academic and financial resources, to work with institutions in other Asian countries in an effort to create truly Christian universities.

Furuya's timely book has drawn a variety of comments from reviewers. I would like to make several critical observations. First, the author has attempted to objectify the university and comprehensively address the problems of high education in Japan. From his writing and analysis, however, I cannot

help but sense that he is thinking primarily about International Christian University in Japan and Princeton University in the United States. Both are certainly excellent schools and fulfill leadership roles in their respective cultures. In Japan, however, there are many other Christian universities and colleges, the majority of which are junior colleges. Furthermore, most of these Christian institutions are for women. These women's colleges and junior colleges are declining in quality due to the ill effects of *hensachi* or scholastic ranking and placement according to a deviation scale. While this book provides a helpful analysis of the issues facing one particular university (ICU), Furuya's treatment can hardly be regarded as complete or comprehensive since he does not address the problems of these many other institutions.

Second, readers can learn a great deal regarding the theological issues surrounding higher education through Furuya's discussion of the views held by Weber, Heidegger, Tillich, Troeltsch, Niebuhr and Pannenberg. These thinkers, however, must be understood in terms of their own historic time and place. I find it problematic to generalize and abstract their different approaches. In particular, it seems to me impossible to theorize about the postwar American university in the same terms as early twentieth-century German universities. The same sort of abstraction occurs in Furuya's attempt to use a Trinitarian framework to integrate the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences in the university. I must point out that the doctrine of the Trinity is not rendered in the Bible; it is a later conceptualization of the celebratory act that became widespread in the worship services of the early church. The form or expression of the believers' faith came before this conceptualization. It seems rather artificial to employ such a doctrine as an integrating principle for the various sciences, if at the same time there is not an

effort to integrate these various sciences in the actual teaching that goes on in the university. This is simply not happening yet. In introductory courses across all departments, instructors simply attempt to teach the common principles of various sciences from their own intellectual understanding of that area of knowledge.

Third, quoting Kondō Katsuhiko, the author writes that "faculty and administrators should participate in the 'worship' at the college" (p. 285), but does not provide a concrete description of what sort of worship service is meant. There is always a danger that such worship services will simply become dogmatic in content. The more fundamental problem facing Christian uni-

versities is the fact that Christian faith is fading. Without the revitalization of Christian faith on campus, it is unrealistic to expect worship to have a central place in the university.

The university is a cultural institution created in the West that has penetrated the entire world. Born in the Middle Ages, long before the establishment of the modern educational system, universities today are in need of integration and a balance between education and research. All those involved in higher education, whether students or faculty, will find Furuya's book a significant contribution that clarifies many issues and offers many practical suggestions for solving the problems faced by higher education today.