Who Defines Academic Freedom and How?

By Al Hiebert, executive director, Christian Higher Education Canada

Academic freedom and intellectual pluralism have been debated for many centuries, but particularly in the past two centuries in Europe and North America. Consider varying definitions of “academic freedom.”

1. In 1940 the American Association of University Teachers (AAUP) stated: “Colleges and universities should welcome intellectual pluralism and the free exchange of ideas. Such a commitment will inevitably encourage debate over complex and difficult issues about which individuals will disagree. Such discussions should be held in an environment characterized by openness, tolerance and civility.”

2. George Mardsen (1994) suggested: “To enhance the creativity of a community, academics should be as free as possible within the framework of their higher commitments to explore and communicate even unpopular and unconventional ideas. A presumption of freedom within defined limits is an immensely valuable way of defining academic life.”

Both of these define “academic freedom” so as to make confessional education quite acceptable.

However, some inside and outside the Christian community define “academic freedom” in such a way as to make confessional education in principle impossible. E.g., the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) makes their flagship definition of “academic freedom” as follows:

Academic freedom is the life blood of the modern university. It is the right to teach, learn, study and publish free of orthodoxy or threat of reprisal and discrimination. It includes the right to criticize the university and the right to participate in its governance. Tenure provides a foundation for academic freedom by ensuring that academic staff cannot be dismissed without just cause and rigorous due process.

The UNESCO “Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Personnel,” in its over 7,000-word text, includes:

Higher-education teaching personnel are entitled to the maintaining of academic freedom, that is to say, the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies....

3 Christian nurture missions are one version of confessional education. Among the thousands of scholarly studies on confessional education and its secular critics are: Elmer J. Thiessen (1993) Teaching for Commitment: Liberal Education, Indoctrination and Christian Nurture (McGill-Queen's University Press); Thiessen (2001); and Micheline Milot and Stéphanie Tremblay “Religion in the Quebec Public School System: A Change for Equality and Diversity” available at http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=2009-0008_08 (accessed September 26, 2009). Thiessen (1993) describes “confessional” education as “teaching for commitment” and as “Christian nurture” (26, 27, cf. 2 Peter 3:18) and defends this as “not inevitable or even as probable” a case of “indoctrination” as secularists tend to assume (4). As to the meaning of “indoctrination,” Thiessen cites Callan who equates it with “the intentional inculcation of unshakable beliefs” and Snook who equates it with “the teaching of any subject matter with the intention that it be believed regardless of the evidence” (24), though he later redefines this term as “curtailment of a person’s normal growth towards normal rational autonomy”(233). Thiessen presently serves as a Research Professor of Education at Tyndale University College.
Higher-education teaching personnel have the right to teach without any interference, subject to accepted professional principles including professional responsibility and intellectual rigour with regard to standards and methods of teaching.\(^5\)

Note the recognition of appropriate limitations here. This is not “unqualified academic freedom.”

The CAUT definition is expanded as follows:

1. Post-secondary educational institutions serve the common good of society through searching for, and disseminating, knowledge, truth, and understanding and through fostering independent thinking and expression in academic staff and students. Robust democracies require no less. These ends cannot be achieved without academic freedom.

2. Academic freedom includes the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion; freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof; freedom in producing and performing creative works; freedom to engage in service to the institution and the community; freedom to express freely one’s opinion about the institution, its administration, or the system in which one works; freedom from institutional censorship; freedom to acquire, preserve, and provide access to documentary material in all formats; and freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies.

3. Academic freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual. Academic freedom makes intellectual discourse, critique, and commitment possible. All academic staff must have the right to fulfil their functions without reprisal or repression by the institution, the state, or any other source.

4. All academic staff have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly, and association and the right to liberty and security of the person and freedom of movement. Academic staff must not be hindered or impeded in exercising their civil rights as citizens, including the right to contribute to social change through free expression of opinion on matters of public interest. Academic staff must not suffer any institutional penalties because of the exercise of such rights.

5. Academic freedom requires that academic staff play a major role in the governance of the institution. Academic freedom means that academic staff must play the predominant role in determining curriculum, assessment standards, and other academic matters.

6. Academic freedom must not be confused with institutional autonomy. Post-secondary institutions are autonomous to the extent that they can set policies independent of outside influence. That very autonomy can protect academic freedom from a hostile external environment, but it can also facilitate an internal assault on academic freedom. To undermine or suppress academic freedom is a serious abuse of institutional autonomy.\(^6\)

In one sense the CAUT definition merely argues for free speech. In a forthcoming *University Affairs* article John Stackhouse, now at Regent College (previously professor of religion at University of Manitoba), describes this as “unqualified academic freedom.”\(^7\) This definition fails to acknowledge its role in establishing secularist worldviews which have dominated public education at all levels for at least a generation. From those perspectives, evangelical Christian colleges and universities are taboo -- because unqualified academic freedom is, in principle, impossible there.

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\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Private communication November 23, 2009.
On evangelical Christian institutions Stackhouse comments, “...there is something very good about an institution that fosters a community of scholarship in which a range of basic ideas can be taken for granted as incontestable and then other ideas can be explored together on that basis.” These “basic ideas” seem to be acceptable to CAUT only if they are secular. In University Affairs Stackhouse observes, “What CAUT cannot expect, however, is for confessional universities to act exactly like secular universities.”

Philosopher of education, Elmer Thiessen, now research professor of education at Tyndale University College, argues that “All institutions have limited academic freedom.”

The CAUT definition fails to recognize that in no setting in the history of education has academic freedom been practiced without some parameters of responsibility, either explicitly articulated (e.g., in Christian institutions) or implicitly assumed (e.g., in secular institutions).

Some public Canadian university departments still hire evangelical Christian faculty. But most faculty at these schools now hold secular convictions such as:

1. Democracy requires that faith convictions embracing a supreme being, divine revelation, an afterlife, divine moral norms, supernatural events, etc. must be excluded from the public square;
2. Whatever happens must be accounted for by natural causes only – as science/reason requires;
3. The “politically correct” agenda, including a woman’s right to choose abortion and various gay-lesbian agendas.

As Francis Schaeffer argued, a culture can change its values without a conspiracy so long as there is a predominant consensus among its elites and central news media. This is what we have witnessed in Canada in the past century or so.

Historian Don Page, one time faculty member at University of Saskatchewan (later academic vice president at Trinity Western University), reports,

Having taught in both public and Christian universities and having been rejected for an appointment by another public university because my evangelical Christian beliefs informed how I would teach my academic discipline of history, I can confirm that at the departmental level there can be a bias against the hiring of evangelical Christians because being anything but a Christian would be considered an asset in misguided “pluralistic” hiring.

Page observes further:

In fact, there really is no true academic freedom in so many university areas. Every faculty member has his/her beliefs, biases, and perspectives. When taken to its extreme, as soon as an institution prescribes educational

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8 Private communication November 20, 2009.
9 Thiessen (2001), 90.
10 Cf. “The notion of absolute freedom is a myth. Freedom, whether individual, social or political is necessarily limited... Academic freedom brings with it correlative duties.” Thiessen (2001, 85).
11 F. A. Schaeffer (1976), How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture, e.g., “There is no need for collusion or a plot. All that is needed is that the world view of the elite and the world view of the central news media coincide” (242). “Gradually, that which had become the basic thought form of modern people became the almost totally accepted viewpoint, an almost monolithic consensus” (205). “Here is a simple but profound rule: If there are no absolutes by which to judge society, then society is absolute. Society is left with one man or an elite filling the vacuum left by the loss of the Christian consensus which originally gave us form and freedom in northern Europe and the west” (224). “As the memory of the Christian consensus which gave us freedom within the biblical form increasingly is forgotten, a manipulating authoritarianism will fill the vacuum” (245).
12 Private communication November 24, 2009.
goals or learning outcomes, it limits academic freedom. Then there are the professional schools like medicine, dentistry, engineering, nursing, etc., that have a "prescribed" way of looking at their profession which is determined by an outside professional body but strictly adhered to within university departments in what and how they teach and what research is funded.13

Page comments on the anomaly over "political correctness" which dominates teaching in secular universities:

The problem is that at the university level, it seldom is stated what that ["political correctness"] entails but is interpreted according to social thinking at the time by academic departments and Faculties. Is it not better to state up front where one comes from rather than sneaking it in through "faculty watch dogs?" When a faculty person voluntarily chooses an offer of employment at TWU, he/she knows what the institution stands for and what is expected of them in their teaching and conduct. In the same way, I know what UBC stands for and can choose to seek or reject employment there under their prescription.14

Another dimension that Page mentions is: “By provincial charter (i.e., in law), TWU is a Christian university. Therefore, it follows that what it teaches and who teaches at it must support the very ethos of the university. To do otherwise, would put our educational mandate in jeopardy and not distinguish us from other institutions.”15 CAUT seems not to respect this.

In a 1975 meeting with Christian educators when a Brandon University religious studies professor objected to confessional higher education, Peter Hordern, his department chair, rebuked him with, “These people are just being Christian, and there is no crime in that.” In a 2002 meeting on the same subject at the University of Saskatchewan, Jene Porter, chair of the hosting committee, concluded this discussion with: “Secular fundamentalism is most to be feared.”

The CAUT prescription also fails to recognize the model “of ‘open secularism’, that is, one that did not rule out recognition of religious realities in relation to respect for the freedom of conscience and religion of both those attending schools and those who teach in them,” as recommended by Quebec’s 1999 Task Force on the Place of Religion in Schools.16

This issue may be better understood by the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC). In 1988 AUCC adopted a Statement on Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy which reads in part:

It is essential that universities have the freedom to set their research and educational priorities. How the members of the universities will teach and impart skills, conduct research and the pursuit of knowledge, and engage in fundamental criticism is best determined within the universities themselves. It is here that academic freedom, in its collective form of institutional autonomy, can ensure freedom of inquiry for individual faculty members and students. Historically there has been a struggle for university autonomy, arising from the conviction that a university can best serve the needs of society when it is free to do so according to the dictates of the intellectual enterprise itself.17

Note that the historical context of this statement was that in 1984 AUCC received Trinity Western University (TWU) into full membership after considerable debate in AUCC over the legitimacy of TWU’s mission as a confessional institution of post-secondary education, in spite of CAUT’s rejections of all such. In the following decades AUCC has received into its

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 http://www.fcpq.qc.ca/docs/docinforeligionecoleeng_001.pdf (accessed September 26, 2009). The concept of “open secularism” affirms the legitimacy of some confessional educational institutions in the mosaic of a liberal democracy. The CAUT statement on academic freedom rejects such openness at the post-secondary level.
membership several other confessional institutions including several members of Christian Higher Education Canada (CHEC).  

18 The UNESCO Recommendation also includes: “Autonomy is the institutional form of academic freedom and a necessary precondition to guarantee the proper fulfilment of the functions entrusted to higher-education teaching personnel and institutions...”  

19 Observe how the CAUT statement above seeks to reject this principle explicitly.

In 1996 AUCC published David Cameron’s summary review of the evolution of academic freedom in Canada, including the emergence of CAUT out of the 1958-59 Crowe Affair at United College (now the University of Winnipeg).  

20 Cameron notes that “From this beginning, academic freedom was perceived as conditional and limited.” This is in contrast to CAUT’s current unqualified academic freedom standard. Cameron also quotes Susan M. Jasper, “One of the primary reasons for the difficulty in protecting academic freedom is that the academic community has agreed upon no single definition of the term.”

In 2006, CAUT adopted “Procedures in Academic Freedom Cases Involving Allegations of Requirement of an Ideological or Faith Test as a Condition of Employment” in which it considered that “academic freedom may be violated at universities in Canada that seek to ensure a homogeneous academic staff.”  

21 Is CAUT as concerned about academic staffs that coalesce around secular convictions as they are about academic staffs that coalesce around religious convictions? To date their actions suggest otherwise.

Ron Fraser, president of Alberta Bible College, regards this CAUT Procedures statement as “itself a faith/ideological commitment.” Concerning CAUT and CHEC Stackhouse says, “I celebrate them both--and I criticize them both!”

Recently CAUT has challenged several CHEC schools over their “faith test.” In their October 30, 2009 discussion of this CAUT initiative, the CHEC Board expressed its preference for the AUCC perspective. TWU President Jonathan Raymond observed, “CAUT is simply out of step with higher education in North America.”

In the CAUT “Report of an Inquiry on a Possible Faith Test at Trinity Western University,” first released September 2, 2009, William Bruneau and Thomas Friedman conclude “Trinity Western University violates the commitment to academic freedom that is the foundational bedrock of the university community in Canada.”  

22 Understandably, TWU faculty are concerned about how they and their research will be viewed by other scholars in the wider world of academe as a result of this CAUT judgment that TWU faculty do not enjoy academic freedom.

Bruneau and Friedman observe that some Canadian Christian institutions embrace the CAUT academic freedom policy and do not insist on confessional conformity. They suggest that TWU do likewise.  

23 However, in his forthcoming University Affairs article, Stackhouse appropriately points out that this “report does not address such schools’ apparent incoherence: What makes them interestingly and substantially Christian? The two models represented by CAUT and TWU, however, do have coherence, do offer distinct advantages (and disadvantages) and do stand as two legitimate

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18 As of December 2009 these include Canadian Mennonite University, Redeemer University College and The King’s University College, in addition to TWU.


22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.
options in Canadian higher education.” What does CAUT understand or care about “substantially Christian” institutions in a pluralist cultural mosaic?

When CAUT visited Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in early November 2009, an amicable two-hour conversation about compiling a list of faith-based universities led CMU President Gerald Gerbrandt to urge that CMU wants to be on that list and to suggest that CAUT sponsor a conference to dialogue the merits of faith-based universities in a truly pluralist liberal democracy such as Canada aspires to be. Similarly, in a December 10, 2009 letter TWU President Jonathan Raymond invited CAUT to join them in an academic conference that TWU offered to sponsor to debate and dialogue on best practices in Canadian higher education generally, and particularly about academic freedom within faith based universities.

Might the dialogue suggested by CMU and TWU open CAUT to a more truly liberal pluralism such as is embraced in the US? As of December 2009, CAUT seems to prefer not to dialogue with TWU about the Bruneau and Friedman report.

Further, in his 2010 University Affairs article, Stackhouse argues:

Drs. Bruneau and Friedman claim in their report that academic freedom is foundational, not only to secular universities but to “the university community in Canada and internationally.” This is a curious claim in the light of the confessional nature of most Canadian universities before, say, 1950 and the acceptance of Christian universities of this sort in the United States to this day. But it isn’t only a curious claim, it is a hegemonic one, one that insists that there is but a single way of pursuing legitimate university education.

Requiring a Canadian secularist hegemony in higher education puts CAUT out of step with other higher education not only in North America but also in the world.

The September 15, 2009 issue of a University of Western Ontario student paper, The Gazette, carried a story on this report entitled “Trinity Western Won’t Budge.”24 It quotes Jim Turk, executive director of CAUT, as commenting, “We’re not questioning the right of an institution to set up as it wishes. But we are saying that any school has to uphold academic freedom.”25 Is that comment coherent? Published reader comments include:

This report grants zero respect for the academic freedom of faith communities (whether Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Christian or whatever) to establish voluntary private institutions of learning with distinctive missions to serve the needs of their communities. These needs can never be served by universities that are committed to secular worldviews. There is nothing tolerant or liberal about CAUT’s demands that any school bow to its secular demands.

Another reader comments: “Given the narrow manner in which CAUT interprets academic freedom, it may soon become a badge of honour to be placed on its blacklist.”

In December 2009 TWU requested that CAUT publish on its website and in its next Bulletin a letter that includes observations26 such as:

1. TWU applauds CAUT for its commitment to academic freedom in Canada and expresses full agreement with:

   CAUT’s policy statement that educational institutions in Canada “serve the common good of society through searching for, and disseminating knowledge, truth, and understanding and through fostering independent thinking and expression in academic staff and students [and that these] ends cannot be achieved without academic freedom.”

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25 Ibid.
26 Private communication December 11, 2009.
2. TWU’s strong disagreement with the fairness of the process by which the Report was created and its conclusions.

3. Apparently CAUT’s visit to TWU was not prompted by any TWU faculty complaint or allegation of a violation of academic freedom at TWU, nor did it recognize that TWU was established as a “Christian” institution by a 1969 Act of the B.C. Legislature, nor did it recognize that TWU was accepted into AUCC as a full member. TWU’s repeated requests over the year prior to the CAUT visit as to its purpose and timing drew no clear CAUT reasons for this inquiry, “after TWU has been an accepted and respected member of the higher education community in B.C. for forty years.”

4. “…information obtained from TWU with respect to faculty’s enjoyment of academic freedom appears to have been ignored in the Report.”

5. “In a meeting in August of 2009 CAUT promised to dialogue with us further before publishing the Report. However, without any further notice or dialogue an initial version of the Report was posted on the CAUT website and TWU was placed on the formal list (the ‘List’) of institutions allegedly violating academic freedom because of their faith perspective.”

6. CAUT has to date refused TWU’s requests to remove the Report from its website and continue collegial discussions.

7. During TWU’s forty year history, reportedly there has not been a single allegation of a lack of academic freedom from its faculty, who have researched and published on a wide variety of topics. The CAUT Report ignores this.

8. “…TWU’s faculty attested to the academic freedom they enjoy in their teaching and scholarship. This was also ignored in the Report.”

9. “The Report ignores the fact that TWU has been a member of the AUCC for twenty-five years and fully complies with the AUCC’s Statement of Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy.” CAUT should not ignore academic freedom “definitions of the government or other major academic bodies in Canada” with which its own definition disagrees.

10. “The Report’s conclusion that TWU is trying to ‘create a religiously homogeneous community’ demonstrates a lack of understanding of the TWU community...created by law to be a Christian university...within that legal mandate TWU welcomes a broad diversity of viewpoints...it is also a richly diverse community and certainly not narrowly ‘homogeneous.’”

11. The CAUT Report on TWU ignores the values of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the BC Human Rights Code which both place high value on religious freedom and conscience and ensure that people are not disadvantaged because of their faith.

Dare we hope that CAUT will join in an academic conference that TWU has offered to sponsor to debate and dialogue on best practices in Canadian higher education generally, and particularly about academic freedom within faith based universities?

In the United States, “A statement on academic freedom and intellectual diversity on American campuses” was released June 23, 2005, by 27 higher education organizations, including the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. That statement includes:

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America’s colleges and universities vary enormously, making it impossible to create a single definition or set of standards that will work equally well for all fields of academic study and all institutions in all circumstances. Individual campuses must give meaning and definition to these concepts within the context of disciplinary standards and institutional mission.\(^{28}\)

In 1940 The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities -- AACU) agreed on a restatement of principles set forth in the 1925 Conference Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure. This 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure reads in part as follows:

> The purpose of this statement is to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom and tenure and agreement upon procedures to ensure them in colleges and universities. Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition. Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights.\(^{29}\)

In this 1940 AUPP/AACU statement the reference to “duties correlative with rights” clearly signals a tension and balance between “academic freedom” and “responsibility,” a tension and balance that can never be defined to everyone’s satisfaction. Part of the difficulty is that these “duties correlative with rights” tend not to be made explicit in secular institutions as they are in confessional institutions, to the disparagement of the latter.

In 1989 when my Providence College colleagues and I were in dialogue with the University of Manitoba about possibly becoming an “Approved Teaching Centre” there, several U of M administrators urged us to sign their academic freedom policy, with the understanding that if any faculty changed their beliefs or behaviours so as to be dissonant with our institutional mission, statement of faith and code of conduct, then they could be assigned courses, offices, etc. which they did not prefer, so that they would leave voluntarily. Religious Studies chair, Larry Hurtado and his VP Academic assured me that this was standard practice on many public university campuses without violating academic freedom. We declined this arrangement, with its attendant chilling of our campus Christian community culture.

All university faculty candidates come to their prospective new appointments convinced that they have already found some truth – they are not merely neutral *tabula rasae* who will now begin an open-minded search for truth. Some candidates agree with Gospel writer John when he records Jesus’ sayings: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (8:31-32), and “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (14:6). Those who agree with these convictions were more common in Canadian university faculties before about 1950 than more recently.

In Canada today faculty candidates who agree with these convictions are likely to experience more academic freedom in CHEC schools, because they too confess Jesus as Lord. Today most leaders and students in Canadian higher education disagree with these convictions and wish that others in Canadian higher education would do likewise. This need not surprise anyone, because some embrace the lordship of Jesus Christ and some reject it. The matter may really be that simple. However, public universities that are serious about diversity of faculty likely should seek to appoint both types of faculty on this dimension, not just one homogenous type.

Hence, the following principles are offered for consideration by both confessional and open secularist institutions:


1. All educational institutions (religious or secular) need to pursue truth openly and honestly in an equally open and honest recognition of the parameters of their contexts.\(^\text{30}\)

2. Faith communities have corporate academic freedom (institutional autonomy) to establish and maintain voluntary confessional educational institutions to help fulfill their missions.

3. In a pluralist liberal democracy mosaic such as Canada, Christ-centred Bible-believing institutions of post-secondary education should be free to pursue their educational missions free from the demands of orthodox secularism.\(^\text{31}\) These institutions should be free from threat of reprisal and discrimination due to the pursuit of their educational missions.

4. All education is value-laden, and in that sense perspectival (non-neutral). Hence, CHEC institutions are free and responsible to provide Christ-centred education. This includes “Obeying the authority of Scripture: All teaching, learning, thinking, and scholarship take place under the direction of the Bible, the wholly authoritative and truthful Word of God. Scripture is the ultimate standard of truth and the lens by which we evaluate our lives and the world.”\(^\text{32}\)

5. A commitment to Christ as Lord implies mandates for evangelism and Christian nurture, including voluntary confessional Christian post-secondary education to facilitate such.

So how do consistently Christian institutions define academic freedom? The following sample statements illustrate:

1. Institute for Christian Studies: “That scholarly pursuits are to be undertaken in the God-given freedom of complete and voluntary submission to the Word of God and the divine laws that govern human life. The responsible freedom of the scholar must be protected against any constraint or domination of the church, state, industry, or other societal structure.”\(^\text{33}\)

2. Ambrose University College and Seminary: “We are a community dedicated to discovering Christian perspective – it is the purpose for which we were created. People voluntarily join this community expressly for this purpose. Those wishing to teach and work with other assumptions should respect the right of scholars in this community to remain true to the institution’s mission, values, and identity and choose to work elsewhere.”\(^\text{34}\)

3. “Briercrest College and Seminary endorses the pursuit of truth in research, study, and communication by its faculty and students. In their pursuit and dissemination of truth, faculty members are expected to offer fair presentations of competing viewpoints. A quality education requires that students be introduced to a wide range of available material pertinent to their fields of study. Faculty members are expected to encourage students in their honest inquiry and evaluation of ideas. Dogmatic or simplistic answers to complex questions are discouraged. Faculty members shall enjoy the freedom to discuss subjects in which they have competence without interference both in the classroom and on the campus.”

\(\text{30}\) Thiessen (2001), 91.
\(\text{32}\) This is the first of TWU’s six core values as reported in Bruneau and Friedman, 2009.
\(\text{33}\) Thiessen (2001), 277.
\(\text{34}\) http://www.ambrose.edu/employment/policies (accessed October 5, 2009).
“Academic freedom is the freedom of professionally qualified persons to inquire, teach, present, and publish the truth as they see it within their field of competence without extrinsic compulsion or control. In our context, limitations to this freedom may arise either from a community of qualified scholars or in the interests of a voluntarily chosen confessional statement.”

4. Emmanuel Bible College: “As an institution of higher education, Emmanuel Bible College has the important goal of pursuing and disseminating knowledge. Various propositions may be deemed to be true or false in the course of such academic activity, especially as assumptions are examined and alternative explanations are considered. Faculty and students are free to engage in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and truth.

“At the same time, Emmanuel holds the Christian Scriptures to be inspired by God and therefore the foundational norm against which accumulated knowledge and assertions of truth and falsity are to be measured.

“The academic freedom recognized in paragraph one is therefore to be exercised along with the responsibilities arising from the assertions of paragraph two, and with the additional concept of responsible advocacy, all in the context of Emmanuel’s Tenets of Faith.

“Responsible advocacy allows an instructor or student to advocate a particular view or position provided the major alternate view(s) or position(s) is (are) presented with competence and fairness.”

5. “Trinity Western University recognizes that academic freedom, though varyingly defined, is an essential ingredient in an effective university program. Jesus Christ himself taught the importance of a high regard for integrity, truth, and freedom. Indeed, he saw his role as in part setting people free from bondage to ignorance, fear, evil, and material things while providing the ultimate definition of truth.

“Accordingly, Trinity Western University maintains that arbitrary indoctrination and simplistic, prefabricated answers to questions are incompatible with a Christian respect for truth, a Christian understanding of human dignity and freedom, and quality Christian educational techniques and objectives.

“On the other hand, Trinity Western University rejects as incompatible with human nature and revelational theism a definition of academic freedom which arbitrarily and exclusively requires pluralism without commitment, denies the existence of any fixed points of reference, maximizes the quest for truth to the extent of assuming it is never knowable, and implies an absolute freedom from moral and religious responsibility to its community.

“Rather, for itself, Trinity Western University is committed to academic freedom in teaching and investigation from a stated perspective, i.e., within parameters consistent with the confessional basis of the constituency to which the University is responsible, but practiced in an environment of free inquiry and discussion and of encouragement to integrity in research.

“Students also have freedom to inquire, right of access to the broad spectrum of representative information in each discipline, and assurance of a reasonable attempt at a fair and balanced presentation and evaluation of all material by their instructors. Truth does not fear honest investigation.”

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36 http://www.ebcollege.on.ca/students/procedures.php (accessed October 6, 2009).
37 TWU Academic Calendar as quoted in Bruneau and Friedman, 2009.
These representative academic freedom statements from CHEC institutions clearly demonstrate how they are consistent with AUCC and AAUP positions, but not with CAUT standards of unqualified academic freedom.

Hopefully the amicable CAUT conversation at CMU can model future helpful dialogue. Hopefully CAUT will accept the TWU invitation to an academic conference to discuss what needs to happen on these issues to make Canada a more truly pluralist liberal-democratic mosaic.

These discussions imply serious consequences for the future of Canada’s Christian community. In Steve Hendersen’s study of some 16,000 students in 133 colleges and universities, of those who self-defined as “born again” Christians upon entry to public institutions, from 54-70% upon graduation no longer self-defined as “born again” Christians and had not attended church for over a year. For Christian institutions this rate was 1-3%. Many Canadian Christians have shared my own higher education encounters with professors who earnestly seek to replace a Christian worldview with a more secular one. Too often they have been successful.

CAUT seeks to define academic freedom for all Canadian higher education and to reject the right of faith communities freely to band together “to teach, learn, study and publish free of [its] orthodoxy or threat of reprisal and discrimination.” CHEC prefers a more truly pluralist liberal democracy as does AUCC.

Annually over 17,000 Canadians freely prefer to sharpen their minds with those who confess Jesus as Lord, though they may freely disagree on other matters. Christian students choose between higher education with a Christian bias or with a secular bias. Higher education free of bias is impossible, both in principle and in practice.

Al Hiebert, PhD, is executive director of Christian Higher Education Canada, an association of 35 evangelical Christian universities, seminaries and colleges with a mission to advance the efficiency and effectiveness of Christian higher education at member schools, including fostering institutional cooperation, and to raise public awareness of the value of Christian higher education in Canada.