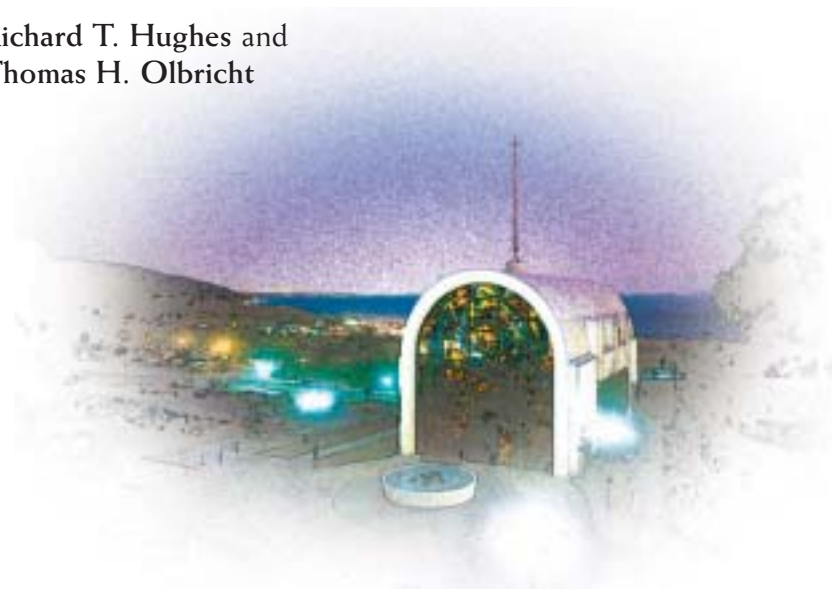


SCHOLARSHIP, PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY, AND THE LEGACY OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST

A primer for faculty, staff, and students

Richard T. Hughes and
Thomas H. Olbricht



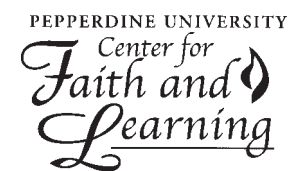
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Center for
Faith and Learning

A publication of the Pepperdine University Center for Faith and Learning

This booklet was made possible by a generous grant from the Salisbury Community Foundation and Foster Stanback, a 2003 M.A. graduate of the Religion Division.

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2004

Preface

We hope that this small book will help Pepperdine faculty and staff members understand more about the specific Christian tradition to which Pepperdine is related—the Churches of Christ—and how that tradition can fruitfully interact with and even sustain the task of Christian higher education in the context of this institution.

Two of the essays in this book have been previously published. “What Can the Church of Christ Tradition Contribute to Christian Higher Education?” and “Faith and Learning at Pepperdine University” both appeared in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997). Both these essays have been slightly edited for use in this book. We are grateful to Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. for permission to reprint them here.

The other two essays—“Who Are the Churches of Christ?” and “Whatever Happened to Alexander Campbell’s Idea of a Christian College?”—appear in print for the first time in this volume. The former piece, however, will appear in 2004 in the revised edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, Samuel S. Hill, ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press), the venue for which it was commissioned.

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Who Are The Churches of Christ?

Richard T. Hughes

Churches of Christ trace their American beginnings to several important leaders on the American frontier in the early nineteenth century, but none were more important to this tradition than Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) and Barton W. Stone (1772-1844). Campbell immigrated to the United States from Ireland in 1809, spent most of his life in Bethany, Virginia (later West Virginia), and exerted a powerful influence throughout the Midwest and as far south as Kentucky and Tennessee until his death in 1866. Stone, a native of Maryland, led a “Christian” movement that attracted sizable followings in the Upper South, especially Tennessee, Kentucky, southern Illinois, and southern Indiana.

Campbell and Stone did much to shape the character of a movement whose congregations soon came to be known as Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, or Disciples of Christ. Any full-blown attempt to describe the character of that early movement would surely include the following.

- First, both Campbell and Stone grieved over the denominational divisions that plagued the Christian faith on the American frontier. Accordingly, both men devoted their lives to healing those divisions. The movement they led, therefore, was essentially an ecumenical movement, seeking to unite all Christians on a common platform.
- Second, Campbell and Stone believed that the only platform on which all Christians could possibly unite was the Bible and the Bible alone. Accordingly, they urged all Christians to dispense with their various creeds and confessions of faith and unite around the simple faith proclaimed in the biblical text. Moreover, Campbell and Stone believed that fidelity to the biblical text demanded a restoration of the faith and practice of the earliest Christian communities. In effect, then, Campbell and Stone argued that the restoration of ancient Christianity was the surest means to the unity of all Christians.
- Third, while Campbell and Stone rejected the authority of creeds and confessions of faith, they also rejected the authority of priests and other clergy. Instead, they argued that every Christian should be free to read and understand the Bible for himself or for herself. To this extent, Campbell and Stone imbibed the spirit of the American Revolution. Not only, therefore, was the movement they led an ecumenical movement and a restoration movement; it was also a freedom movement.

For many years, Campbell and Stone worked independently of one another, oblivious to each other's existence. Stone's "Christian" movement emerged in Kentucky in 1801, following the great Cane Ridge Revival of that year. The movement grew quickly, especially in Tennessee and Kentucky and, more often than not, congregations in that movement were called "Churches of Christ." Alexander Campbell came to the United States only in 1809, two years after his father Thomas (1763-1854) left Ireland and settled in southwest Pennsylvania. Thomas provided the initial leadership for this biblically based ecumenical movement, but Alexander emerged as the movement's dominant leader shortly after his arrival in the United States.

Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone first met in 1823 in Kentucky where Campbell had gone for one of his many debates. They shared so much common ground that Stone, in particular, soon began pushing for a union of the two movements. Accordingly, the Stone and Campbell forces formally united in Lexington, Kentucky in 1832. The coalition thus created grew rapidly and continued to be known by the almost interchangeable labels of Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ. By 1860, this upstart Christian tradition, with a history only a few decades long, had become the fourth largest Christian tradition in the United States, trailing only Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.

The Movement Divides

Ironically, this movement, dedicated to the union of all Christians, began the process of fragmentation as early as the 1840s. By 1906, the United States religious census reported that the once-unified Stone/Campbell movement had now spawned two major denominations, the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. Churches of Christ flourished mainly in the Upper South, especially Tennessee, southern Kentucky, and northern Alabama, the region once dominated by the forces of Barton W. Stone, while Disciples of Christ thrived mainly in the Midwest, the region once dominated by Alexander Campbell. Several factors help account for this division.

First, the three fundamental themes of this movement—restoration of primitive Christianity, union of all Christians, and the individual's freedom to search for truth without constraint or compulsion—were not always compatible. The restoration vision served the other two themes quite well so long as adherents of this movement understood the restoration vision as both goal and process. By the 1840s, however, some in this movement began to understand the restoration vision not as goal and process, but as accomplished fact. They began to argue that the Stone/Campbell movement had restored to the earth the one true church and that all other churches were little more than frauds and impostors. Those who embraced this perspective were increasingly known by the designation, Churches of Christ. On the other hand, many in the Stone/Campbell movement rejected this restrictive understanding of the restoration vision and identified

instead with the movement's other two major objectives, the right of the individual to search for truth and the union of all Christians. In time, those who embraced these latter two perspectives came to be known as Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches.

Second, significant ideological differences emerged between Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. On the one hand, Campbell was the quintessential man of his age. Wealthy, progressive, and optimistic, Campbell fervently believed in the promise of America, the superiority of Anglo-Saxon civilization, and the power of science, education, and the Protestant faith to transform the world into a garden of peace, justice, and righteousness.

On the other hand, Barton W. Stone was in many ways a dissenter from the mainstream of popular culture. Plagued by poverty throughout his life, Stone harbored profoundly pessimistic sentiments about human potential. He counseled his followers to refuse to fight in wars, to hold political office, or even to vote. Instead, Stone believed that God alone would renovate the world in His own good time. While expectantly waiting for the coming Kingdom of God, Stone lived his life *as if* that Kingdom were present in the here and now. This perspective lent his life simplicity, piety, and ethical rigor, characteristics that his followers found enormously attractive.

These fundamental differences between Campbell and Stone played themselves out as Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ grew increasingly alienated from one another. The Disciples of Christ inherited Campbell's spirit of progressivism, optimism, and faith in the broader culture, while Churches of Christ, for the most part, inherited Stone's pessimism, separatism, and his sense of alienation from the surrounding world.

Third, one cannot understand the division that finally divided Churches of Christ from Disciples of Christ apart from several significant social factors, most notably the Civil War. That conflict drew the Mason-Dixon line through the heart of the Stone/Campbell movement just as it did through the nation itself. Churches of Christ, already estranged in many ways from the broader culture of the South, now found themselves estranged from their northern brothers and sisters as well. Further, the war plunged Churches of Christ, along with the rest of the South, into grinding poverty, while Disciples of Christ, along with the rest of the North, reaped the benefits of a booming post-war economy. These gaping economic differences helped to intensify the rift between Churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ, both socially and theologically.

The division between these two emerging denominations took more than half a century to run its course. By the dawn of the twentieth century, it was virtually complete.

The twentieth-century story of Churches of Christ can essentially be told

with reference to three titanic struggles within that communion, each of them related to one of the century's great wars. By virtue of these struggles, Churches of Christ lurched their way, in fits and starts, out of their separatist posture of the nineteenth century and more toward the mainstream of American life.

World War I and the Battle Over Premillennialism and Pacifism

While Churches of Christ retained considerable rural strength following their division from the Disciples, the division severely diminished Churches of Christ in the urban areas of the South, both numerically and financially. In city after city, the Disciples took the church houses and the majority of the members, essentially relegating Churches of Christ to a struggling sect on the "wrong side of the tracks." World War I also contributed to the marginality of this communion, since popular opinion during that period rejected as essentially un-American the pacifist sentiments that many in Churches of Christ still embraced. If Churches of Christ hoped to regain some measure of respectability, therefore, they had to scuttle both pacifism and the entire worldview that sustained it.

The effort to destroy both pacifism and its undergirding theology played itself out in a major battle over premillennial eschatology—the notion that Christ will come again soon and will inaugurate upon the earth a thousand year period of peace, justice, and righteousness. Prior to the World War I era, premillennialism had never been a major component in the theological arsenal of Churches of Christ. Several leaders had embraced a premillennial viewpoint, most notably Barton Stone and the late nineteenth-century patriarch David Lipscomb (1831-1917). Yet, neither Stone nor Lipscomb spoke often of this perspective, and neither sought to bind his premillennial sentiments upon others as a dogmatic article of faith.

Far more important than their premillennialism was a powerful undergirding vision that prompted these leaders—and many of their followers—to lead their lives *as if* the Kingdom of God had triumphed over all the earth, even in the here and now. For want of a better term, we might call this vision "an apocalyptic worldview." This vision had little or nothing to do with theories about when Christ might return, but it had everything to do with highly ethical, counter-cultural living. They reasoned, for example, that if the Kingdom of God were fully present in the here and now, slavery would be inadmissible. So would materialism and greed and war and violence. Accordingly, members of Churches of Christ who held to this perspective—and there were many, especially in Middle Tennessee—placed their faith in the moral framework of the Kingdom of God, paid little or no regard to the values embraced by the popular culture, and counseled one another to free their slaves, to shun war and violence, to reject any kind of political activity, and to give of their goods to feed the needy and care for the poor.

This apocalyptic worldview sustained the pacifist sentiment in the hearts of many members of Churches of Christ, both in the nineteenth century and in the years leading up to World War I. Those who sought to eliminate pacifism from Churches of Christ, therefore, knew they must first destroy the apocalyptic sentiment in which pacifism was so often rooted.

R. H. Boll (1875-1956), the front-page editor of the Nashville-based *Gospel Advocate*—perhaps the most powerful journal among Churches of Christ in the early twentieth century—provided the occasion for the battle that would be fought over this issue. Steeped in the apocalyptic vision of the nineteenth century, Boll increasingly embraced the dispensational premillennial vision that characterized American fundamentalism during that same period. By 1915, his blatantly premillennial sentiments had found their way onto the front page of the *Gospel Advocate*. When his fellow editors objected, Boll resigned from the *Advocate* and became editor of *Word and Work*, a premillennial paper based in Louisville, Kentucky. For the next thirty years, most of the mainstream leaders of Churches of Christ waged war on Boll, his premillennial followers, and his premillennial sentiments. By so doing, they intended to drive not only premillennialism from the theological arsenal of Churches of Christ, but also the apocalyptic vision and the pacifist posture it sustained. In this way, they imagined, they could move the Churches of Christ more toward the mainstream of southern life, and liberate this communion from the socially marginal status it had come to occupy by virtue of its division from the Disciples of Christ and its dissenting role in World War I.

World War II and the Battle Over Institution Building

Churches of Christ fought their second great battle of the twentieth century over the issue of institution building. To understand the significance of this struggle, one must bear in mind that Churches of Christ throughout the nineteenth century had been a radically democratic and congregational fellowship. There was simply no authority above the local congregation.

Then, in the aftermath of World War II, Churches of Christ awoke to the need for European missions. But how could they evangelize an entire continent with no cooperative structures in place beyond the local congregation? A few of the larger congregations responded to this dilemma by proposing that they coordinate a cooperative effort to evangelize Germany and Italy in particular, and that smaller congregations simply channel their financial support through these "sponsoring congregations." To some in Churches of Christ, this plan seemed thoroughly out of sync with the democratic heritage of Churches of Christ and with what they regarded as the biblical model for congregational autonomy to which, they believed, Churches of Christ had always conformed.

A similar dilemma emerged with respect to Church of Christ-related colleges. Members of Churches of Christ established several colleges early in the twentieth century. Because most in Churches of Christ believed that maintenance

of colleges was not a legitimate work of the church, interested individuals—never local congregations—supported these institutions.

In the aftermath of World War II, colleges related to Churches of Christ, like all other colleges in the United States, faced booming enrollments due to the thousands of soldiers who now sought to use their G.I. benefits to get a college education. Church of Christ-related colleges now faced the need to hire additional faculty and build additional facilities that could accommodate their swelling enrollments—and quickly. But how? How could they obtain the funds to support this kind of expansion? For the first time, some of the colleges began to appeal to local congregations for their fiscal support.

That appeal raised two red flags. First, could one find any justification in the New Testament for a local congregation supporting an educational institution with church funds? Many in Churches of Christ thought not. Even more important, many feared that if colleges found their way into the budgets of local congregations, the colleges would soon grow rich and powerful, threatening the autonomy of the local church.

A related concern emerged when several enterprising ministers launched in the early 1950s a national radio program on behalf of Churches of Christ, a program they called the “Herald of Truth.” Once again, the problem emerged: how could they pay the bills for such an expensive enterprise, given the radically congregational autonomy of Churches of Christ? Proponents of the “Herald of Truth” advocated the “sponsoring congregation” arrangement that had worked so well with reference to international missions in the aftermath of World War II. Many traditionalists, however, protested that the “Herald of Truth,” with its “sponsoring congregation” arrangement, represented a centralized institution that might erode the congregational autonomy of this tradition.

All these factors together—support for overseas missions, support for church-related colleges, and support for national radio programming—prompted a major war within the fellowship of Churches of Christ. That war pitted the more progressive mainstream of the church against a small but vocal minority that the mainstream unkindly labeled “antis”—shorthand for “anti-institutional” Churches of Christ. In the end, powerful leaders of the progressive majority virtually expelled the “anti-institutional” congregations from the ranks of “faithful” Churches of Christ.

The real significance of that expulsion lay in the fact that the progressive mainstream was determined to modernize its operations through a variety of cooperative strategies, even if it meant that the radically democratic and congregational nature of Churches of Christ in the nineteenth century would have to be modified, and even if it meant that those conservatives who were most loyal to the nineteenth-century, congregational model would finally have to go. Once again, the broad mainstream of Churches of Christ had taken a major step out of their separatist tendencies of the nineteenth century and into the modern mainstream of American life.

The Vietnam War and the Battle Over Acculturation

The third battle that engulfed Churches of Christ in the twentieth century had little to do with theology and everything to do with ethics and the yawning gap that divided the generations in the decade of the 1960s. The truth is, the Churches of Christ were poorly prepared for the challenges that decade brought. Ever since World War I, Churches of Christ had struggled to gain a foothold in the mainstream of American life. For the most part, the counter-cultural lifestyle that so often marked members of Churches of Christ in the nineteenth century had long since disappeared. Instead, most older members of Churches of Christ had by the 1960s sunk very deep roots into the conservative side of the cultural landscape of America.

Not surprisingly, then, the leadership of Churches of Christ, along with most of the older members, offered little or no support for the Civil Rights Movement but considerable support for America’s war in Vietnam. Further, many in Churches of Christ were moving during this very period into the American middle class and therefore into the suburbs. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that few in Churches of Christ had much interest in the crisis of the cities that received so much attention during the 1960s. These issues—racial equality, the Vietnam War, and the crisis of the cities—helped define the great moral divide of the 1960s, and many younger people in Churches of Christ—especially those who were college-educated—felt that church leaders and most in the older generation simply stood on the wrong side of that divide.

These younger critics of the Church of Christ establishment responded in several ways. First, they joined a few scholars and church leaders who shared their values and, together, launched a devastating critique of the church’s cultural conservatism. They did this mainly in two new publications founded for that purpose, *Mission* and *Integrity*. For the most part, however, their criticism fell on deaf ears. When church leaders resisted change and criticized the younger generation for their “liberalism,” many in that generation simply left Churches of Christ altogether.

Though many in the sixties generation thought they saw in that period little or no change within Churches of Christ, one who takes a longer view of this tradition can see considerable progress on several fronts. In the first place, Churches of Christ changed just as the larger culture changed. Racial attitudes, for example, underwent significant transformation.

But the most important changes that reshaped Churches of Christ were theological. First, from the 1960s into the 1990s, Churches of Christ slowly abandoned the legalism that had defined them since the mid-nineteenth century and began to embrace instead a profoundly evangelical doctrine of the grace of God. And second, from the 1960s and continuing into the 1990s, many in Churches of Christ reassessed the nature and meaning of Scripture. Fewer and fewer still believed that Scripture was intended as a legal blueprint for the restoration of the ancient church. Instead, many in Churches of Christ began to view Scripture as a

theological document, revealing transcendent truths about God and His relation with humankind, and an ethical document, defining the kinds of lives Christians should live in response to God's love and grace.

The truth is, the 1960s began to jolt Churches of Christ out of their cultural and religious isolation and to push them closer and closer toward mainstream evangelical Protestantism. One can find evidence of this transition on many fronts. First, hundreds of congregations of Churches of Christ have essentially abandoned their traditional Sunday morning liturgy for one that is clearly inspired by contemporary evangelical music. Beyond that, the single male song leader has been replaced in many congregations by praise teams, composed of both male and female singers, who together lead the congregation in worship. On another front, a Church of Christ preacher named Max Lucado (1955-) had emerged by the 1990s as one of the best selling authors in evangelical circles in the United States. At the same time, Lucado's profoundly evangelical message only enhanced his popularity among mainstream Churches of Christ. Or again, several Church of Christ-related colleges that for many years had maintained a radically separatist posture and resisted cooperation with other religious traditions had, by the late 1990s, joined the broadly evangelical Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Abilene Christian University, in many respects the flagship institution among Church of Christ-related colleges and universities, had joined the Council in 1995, and by 1998, other colleges in the Church of Christ orbit had applied for membership in the Council as well.

Perhaps no institution among Churches of Christ symbolized more profoundly the extent to which this tradition had abandoned its nineteenth-century separatist roots and moved toward the mainstream of American culture than Pepperdine University, located in Malibu, California, a coastal playground for the rich and famous on the outskirts of Los Angeles. An institution that welcomed students from all over the world and from many faith traditions, Pepperdine by the 1990s was taking its place as one of the best-known academic institutions in the United States. Yet, true to its heritage in Churches of Christ, Pepperdine refused to conform in all respects to the dominant models of American higher education. Indeed, a headline in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, dated May 1, 1998, proclaimed that "Pepperdine Makes No Apologies for Its Contrarian Role in Academe," noting the institution's "goal of building a conservative, Christian university." In fact, Pepperdine has gone to extraordinary lengths to maintain a strong, visible connection with the Churches of Christ, the tradition to which it has continued to look for its spiritual roots and for its connection to the Christian faith.

Conclusions

The Churches of Christ, then, have come a long way since their inception in the early nineteenth century. Through a long, torturous division from their spiritual cousins, the Disciples of Christ, and through a variety of struggles over

doctrinal, administrative, and ethical issues, they have abandoned their radically separatist and counter-cultural posture. But they have retained their allegiance to a biblically based Christian faith.

In fairness it should be acknowledged that the concept of "biblically-based Christian faith" continues to sustain the legalism and exclusivism that has defined this tradition for many years, especially in small towns and rural areas. But in many urban areas and especially in academic centers of Churches of Christ, this tradition is undergoing significant change. For the thousands of members who are part of that change, "biblically-based Christian faith" means, at the very least, a reliance on the love and grace of God and a sacrificial personal response to that gift in terms of committed Christian living. Beyond that, many modern members of Churches of Christ work hard to discern the full meaning of "biblically-based Christian faith" in the context of the modern world in which they live.

Whatever Happened to Alexander Campbell's Idea of a Christian College?

Thomas H. Olbricht

From several perspectives, universities and colleges operated by members of the Churches of Christ maintain a model envisioned by Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), one of two principal founders of the religious tradition out of which Churches of Christ emerged and the founder in 1840 of Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia, the earliest continuing institution of higher education in the Stone-Campbell movement. Born in North Ireland and educated both there and at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, Campbell migrated to America in 1809.

Alexander Campbell's interest in repositioning American education was subordinate only to his interest in restoring the New Testament church. In fact, for Campbell the two were inextricably related. In his thinking Christianity could flourish only when the people were literate.

Campbell's "Baccalaureate Address To the Graduates of Bethany College" on July 4, 1846, was basically a charge to the graduates to support universal education, a matter at that time before many state legislatures. "But especially are you under obligation to advocate just views of education, and to plead for its universal diffusion throughout society."¹ Among his reasons, Campbell advanced the argument that religion is dependent upon people who can read.

Religion is founded upon learning so far as it is founded upon truth and the knowledge of truth. The Bible is a written communication from Heaven to man, and must be read in order to be understood, believed and obeyed.... While it is possible—barely possible—to communicate a saving portion of religious knowledge to those who cannot read, certain it is that it is impossible to make any one, however gifted, master of any book, human or divine, which he cannot read. To withhold from the myriads the means of reading and understanding the Book of God—the volume of human destiny—is the greatest sin of omission of duty to God and man that any community, acknowledging the Divine authority of that volume, can be guilty of.²

Bethany College

The Purpose

As an educator Campbell is best remembered for his role in founding Bethany College in 1840 on his farm in what was then Virginia, but now West Virginia, a college that still exists. During the winter of that year, John C. Campbell, a former member of the state legislature, drew up a charter that was approved in

Richmond.³ As to purpose, the charter stated that Bethany would be ". . . a Seminary of learning for the instruction of youth in the various branches of science and literature, the useful arts, agriculture, and the learned and foreign languages." As to student outcomes, Campbell declared in a prospectus in the 1839 *Millennial Harbinger*,

In one word, the objects of this (may I call it?) liberal and comprehensive institution will be to model families, schools, colleges, and churches according to the divine pattern shown to us in the oracles of reason, of sound philosophy, and of divine truth; and to raise up a host of accomplished fathers, teachers of schools, teachers of colleges, teachers of churches, preachers of the gospel, and good and useful citizens, or whatever the church or the state may afterwards choose to make of them.⁴

In his remarks in the 1837 *Millennial Harbinger* regarding the recently founded Bacon College, Campbell set forth his priorities.

I give my vote for learning and science and for high attainments in all branches of useful knowledge, but I would not give morality for them all; and therefore I have resolved never to speak in favor of any literary institution, from a common school to a University, however superior their literary eminence, that does not first of all, and above all, exercise a sovereign and supreme guardianship over the morals of its students and wards, and endeavor to make good rather than great men. Colleges without this are no blessing to any country. So I think.⁵

Much more can be written about Campbell's interest in all phases of human life and the universe. He obviously was a true child of the Enlightenment, especially the Scottish Enlightenment, in which pursuit of new knowledge was a driving motivation. Campbell believed that Christians and their colleges should find out all they can about the universe and the humans that inhabit the universe since everything is a creation of God.

The universe is a system of systems, not only as respects the seventy-five millions of suns and their attendant planets, which fill up the already-discovered fields of ethereal space, but in reference to the various systems, separate, though united; distinct, though amalgamated; heterogeneous, though homogeneous; which are but component parts of every solar system, of every planet in that system, and of every organic and inorganic mass on each planet. Thus, in the person of a single individual man, we have an animal system, an intellectual system, a moral system, running into each other, and connecting themselves with everything of a kindred nature in the whole

universe of God, just as we have in the human body itself a system of solids, and a system of fluids; and these again forming themselves into a system of bones, a system of nerves, a system of arteries, a system of veins, etc.⁶

Campbell believed—and he affirmed in a traditional formulation—that God had given two books, the Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation (that is, the Scripture). From these all knowledge are derived. The two differ in that many declarations in the Book of Revelation cannot be verified by mere mortals and therefore must be accepted in faith. Study of the specifics is in each case required so as to enter into the knowledge supplied by each book.

The Christian has two sources of original ideas; the unbeliever has but one. The Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation furnish the Christian with all his original simple conceptions. For the Book of Nature he is furnished with five senses:—The sense of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling. His reflections on the objects of sense, and the impressions these objects make on him, furnish him with ideas compound and multiform; but every idea properly original and purely simple is a *discovery*. Its model, or that which excites or originates it, is found in the volume of Nature, or in the volume of Revelation. Sense fits him for the one, and faith for the other. Every supernatural idea found in the world, as well as the proper term which represents it, is directly or indirectly derived from the Bible.⁷

Furthermore, God implanted in humans the desire to know: “...the desire of knowledge is one of the kindest and noblest instincts and impulses of our nature.”⁸ And that knowledge is comprehensive.

Every thing that exists is to be enjoyed by a being who has the power of understanding and admiring it. Now, as the human power to know and to enjoy is naturally cumulative and progressive, the objects to be known and enjoyed must be proportionably vast and illimitable. And here again arises a new proof of design and adaptation in this grand and eloquent universe of God. For it is not only in the infinitude and variety of its parts—in its physical, intellectual and moral dimensions; but in the immeasurable aggregate of its provisions, as respects variety, extent and duration, that it is so adapted to the human constitution—to this unquenchable thirst for knowledge—this eternally increasing intellectual power of knowing and enjoying, bestowed on our rational and moral nature.⁹

It is therefore the responsibility of the Christian College to study both Nature and Revelation. How this is to be done specifically we learn from turning to Campbell’s vision of a college curriculum.

The Curriculum

The curriculum of Bethany changed inappreciably in its first two decades, and therefore the “Course of Instruction and Textbooks” which Campbell published in the *Millennial Harbinger* of 1855 shows us his philosophy of education as fleshed out curricularly.¹⁰ The offerings were divided into schools after the manner of Scottish and European Universities.¹¹ Seven schools are listed including the Preparatory School.

1. *The School of Sacred History and Moral Philosophy*. Included were: evidences, sacred history, Biblical literature, ecclesiastical history, and moral philosophy. Several textbooks were mentioned, chiefly the Bible, but also Paley, Butler, Mosheim and Neander.
2. *The School of Ancient Languages, that is, Latin and Greek*. Various Latin and Greek works were mentioned. These were much the same as texts required at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Cornell, and the University of Michigan.¹²
3. *The School of Mathematics and Astronomy*, the study of which also developed the intellectual powers and habits of the students, including such practical enterprises as surveying and road building.
4. *The School of Natural, Intellectual, and Political Philosophy*. The sciences covered here included mechanics, acoustics, electricity, and optics, while political philosophy stressed the American constitution and law, but also the history and philosophy of political institutions.
5. *The school of Chemistry and Belles Lettres*. Chemistry was to cover heat, light, Galvanism, chemical philosophy, organic chemistry, mineralogy, botany, physiology, zoology, geology, and agricultural chemistry with particular emphasis upon application to engineering and agriculture. Also to be covered were natural theology, English language and literature, rhetoric, elements of criticism, and English classics.
6. *The Preparatory School* was for those who must still qualify to enter college.
7. *The school of Hebrew and Modern Languages*. Languages were not required for graduation, but were available for those interested. The modern languages mentioned were German and French.

What was behind Bethany’s curriculum and how did it differ from the typical program of American colleges and universities of the time? Alexander Campbell avowed in the first issue of the *Millennial Harbinger* (1830) that he was displeased with American education. We can presume then that certain differences would obtain in a college he founded. He favored an education in which people who were interested in labor would also benefit, both by attending college and by taking up a curriculum that would assist them in their labor. So, he declared a

preference for knowledge that was as beneficial to the arts of labor as it was to the learned professions.

May not natural science be as profitably studied and applied on the farm, where nature is constantly presenting new subjects of illustration and application, as in the town or in the closet? Is not chemistry, which instructs in the nature and properties of all bodies, as useful to farmers, in ascertaining the qualities of his soils, and their adaptation to particular crops, and in regulating the multifarious operation of husbandry—and to the artisan, in managing his various processes, as it is to the lawyer, the statesman, or the divine? There is probably no employment in life that embraces so wide a scope of useful study, as that of cultivating the soil. The great use and end of science, is to improve art, to impress us with a sense of our obligations to God, and our duty to man. In truth, science belongs to, and continues an integral portion of the arts, and cannot be divorced from them without throwing us back into a state of semi-barbarianism, such as now debases a great portion of the population of the old continent. Why then teach science exclusively to the few, who have comparatively so little use for it, and withhold it from the many, to whom it would be a help and a guide.¹³

Obviously the Bethany curriculum did not depart entirely from the classical mold of Harvard, Yale and Princeton. Campbell was interested in training teachers and preachers and they needed the classical base. But he was also very concerned about practical agricultural and working class instruction. In 1841, schools like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and the University of Michigan taught—in addition to the classics—history, modern languages, physics and chemistry, natural history, and anatomy, but they did not teach these other disciplines to the detailed extent that they were taught at Bethany. It was not until Charles W. Eliot came to the presidency of Harvard in 1869 and introduced the elective system in 1872, that the sciences and other studies came to be emphasized above the classics.¹⁴ Other colleges and universities founded on the classics followed Harvard at a later date.

In regard to curriculum, Campbell was influenced by Scottish educational philosophy more than the older American colleges. Scottish universities took the lead in the English-speaking world of developing the sciences in the eighteenth century and in applying the investigations of the professors to Scottish agriculture and industry.¹⁵ Princeton closely followed the same pattern, but not as closely as did Bethany. In Campbell's time, medical studies at Scottish universities were admired throughout the world. Students flocked to Scotland from both Europe and America. In the early part of the nineteenth century medical faculties in Scotland trained many of the teachers of science in American colleges.¹⁶

Moral Education

Alexander Campbell came out of a tradition in which moral education lay at the center of the educational enterprise. Other colleges in America, especially Princeton, were also influenced by the perspectives on moral philosophy held by Scottish professors like Dugald Stewart, Thomas Brown, Sir William Hamilton, and James Beattie.¹⁷ Campbell expressed his high regard for Stewart and Brown in his lecture titled, "Introductory Lecture," in *Introductory Addresses Delivered At the Organization of Bethany College November 2d, 1841*.¹⁸ Indeed, Campbell made moral education central.

With us the chief object of education is not the acquisition of knowledge. It consists not in mere literature and science. Many of those greatly learned and scientific men of the most distinguished schools were fit neither for the present world, nor for that which is to come. Their great learning disqualified them for heaven or earth.

With us education has primary regard to the formation of habits, more than to the acquisition of knowledge; more in teaching a person the use of himself than in teaching him to use the labors of others. We define education to be the development and improvement of the physical, intellectual and moral powers of man, with a reference to his whole destiny in the Universe of God.¹⁹

What did Campbell mean by moral education? What Campbell and his contemporaries meant by "moral" was something equivalent to what we mean by religious. In his address titled, "Is Moral Philosophy an Inductive Science?" delivered before the Charlottesville Lyceum in 1840, Campbell argued that moral education treats five points: "the origin, the nature, the relations, the obligations and the destiny of man."²⁰

A second question now arises. What were the resources to be employed in moral education? Campbell was well aware that the standard approaches were either to teach the classics of Greece and Rome, or to treat the matter as an inductive science drawing upon human experience. But he had little confidence in either. In his view, the primary foundation for moral education was the Bible—almost the Bible alone.²¹

In regard to the classics, Campbell was convinced that they tended more to destroy morals than to build them up. In his first major essay on education in the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell decried the effect of the classics on morals.

A few years are devoted to the dead languages and mythology of Pagan nations, frequently to the great moral detriment of the student, and seldom much to his literary and intellectual advantage in the acquisition of real knowledge.²²

Campbell continued in this essay to denounce the common preference for the classics charging that “all our literary institutions have been as enslaved to the idolatry of Grecian and Roman models as were the Catholic laity to the See of Rome in the long dark night of papistical supremacy.” He decried the results.

Yet the devotees of what is called the classic literature and science of Greece and Rome, when put to torture, can name no great political, moral, or religious boon, no permanent or essential service to the cause of social order or good government, which the lawgivers and statesmen, the orators, philosophers, and priests of antiquity conferred upon the communities which gave them birth. So deeply convinced are the most learned amongst us of the entire failure of these great masters of Grecian and Roman literature to be authoritative guides to us in politics, philosophy, and morals, that they regard them rather in the light of “beacons to warn us, than as guides to instruct us.” Beyond “the mere accomplishments of education” it is confessed we can derive nothing from them which confers any practical blessings on mankind.²³

Campbell ended the essay by praising those intellectual leaders from the 1500s forward who, in his opinion, were not “inferior to antiquity in power and originality, in variety and felicity of talent.” These included Newton, Leibnitz, Locke, Butler, Bacon, Chatham, Burke, Milton, Shakespeare, Linnaeus, Buffon, Lavoisier, as well as several great inventors.

In regard to the claim that moral philosophy is an inductive science, extrapolating morals from the experience of humanity, Campbell gave a decisive, “no!” In the lecture, “Is Moral Philosophy an Inductive Science?” Campbell discussed the greats of Greece and Rome—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero—as well as the contemporary Scottish moral philosophers, especially Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown. He castigated the ancients for resorting to myths.²⁴ Whatever of merit might be found in their works was stolen from the biblical Abrahamic family, he charged. Campbell set forth in specific detail how the insights were passed down to the descendants of Adam and therefore to all men.²⁵ Campbell was further convinced that if ancient man could not answer the questions raised by moral philosophy, then neither could his great philosophical contemporaries. After discussing the manner through which human beings know, Campbell concluded:

If our mode of examining its pretensions be fair and logical, as we humbly conceive it is, does it not appear, by a liberal induction of witnesses from the best Pagan schools, that it has

never taught, with the clearness and fullness of persuasion, nor with the authority of law or demonstration, the true doctrine of man’s origin, nature, relations, obligations and destiny? And from a careful consideration of all our powers of acquiring knowledge, is it not equally evident that he is not furnished with the power of ascertaining any one of these essential points, without the aid of a light above that of reason and nature?²⁶

For man in the current age the “light above that of reason and nature” was found in the Bible. Moral philosophy was therefore not a science, which human beings discover by a search of history and nature. It came only from reading the Bible, the very word of God.²⁷

The Bible at Bethany

In an 1839 article titled, “A New Institution,” which set the stage for announcing the creation of Bethany College, Campbell made clear the manner in which religion would be taught at this school.

We want no scholastic or traditional theology. We desire, however, a much more intimate, critical, and thorough knowledge of the Bible, the whole Bible as the Book of God—the Book of Life and of human destiny, than is usually, or indeed can be, obtained in what are called Theological Schools. As we make the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible our creed, our standard of religion and of all moral science, we have no hesitation in saying that this institution from the nursery class upward to the church classes, shall make that volume a constant study. All science, all literature, all nature, all art, all attainments shall be made tributary to the Bible and man’s ultimate temporal and eternal destiny.²⁸

Campbell was convinced that the uniqueness of Bethany College lay in the fact that there alone the Bible was taught as an academic course. In a May, 1858, address in regard to the placing of a cornerstone, Campbell contended:

Bethany College—not the edifice so called, but the institution of which it is the domicile—was the first college in the Union, and the first known to any history accessible to us, that was founded upon the Holy Bible, as an every-day lecture and an every-day study—as the only safe and authoritative text-book of humanity, theology and Christology—of all true science upon the problems of Divinity and humanity—of the world or worlds that preceded this, or that shall succeed it. From the origin of Bethany College, on the first Monday of November 1841, till this day, a period of over sixteen years, there has been a Bible study and a Bible lecture for every college day in the college year.²⁹

There is truth in what Campbell stated. The Bible was taught in European universities in the theological curriculum and in American seminaries prior to this time as an academic subject, but it was not required for those who took an undergraduate college degree. The American pattern, with the founding of Harvard in 1636, was for the president to lecture on the Bible at early morning chapel, much like Campbell taught his Bible class, but these were devotionals and the students were not examined on the scriptures as they were for their other courses. In checking the catalogues of the colleges listed above no course in Scripture appears in the curricula of any of these colleges.³⁰

For Campbell the Scriptures were a viable academic discipline since they could be taught as history. In 1860 he set forth a description:

Lectures on the Bible are lectures on antiquities of the world; on creation itself; on language; on man as he was, on man as he is, on man as he will hereafter be; on the foundation of states and fortunes of empires. They are lectures upon sacred geography, chronology, and the ancient policies, manners and customs of primordial society. They must be connected with Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, Roman history, manners, customs and usages.³¹

In regard to specific books studied, he mentioned only “the five books of Moses, with other portions of Jewish history, and the five historical books of the New Testament.”³² This approach is clearly compatible with Campbell’s epistemological and theological propensity to conceptualize Christianity as “primary facts.” M. Eugene Boring may be correct that Hebrews, then Romans, are the centers of Campbell’s theology, but apparently for Campbell these were to be utilized in church discourse, not in teaching the Scriptures as an academic discipline.³³

The early chapel patterns may be seen in Campbell’s own vivid remarks describing his teaching. In describing the college a year after its commencement and especially his own teaching, Campbell commented:

We have already formed more than twenty classes. Of these the first meets at half past 6 in the morning. To form and establish that most healthful and useful habit of rising early, I chose that early hour for my lectures on sacred history, for Bible readings, and worship. My residence being just three-fourths of a mile from the College, gave me, for November and December, a very invigorating exercise of riding or walking that distance every morning before day-light.³⁴

Churches of Christ-Related Colleges

Since the beginning of the twentieth century at least forty colleges have been started by members of the Churches of Christ. Around twenty colleges and

universities exist now. A case can be made for declaring that these colleges have followed the vision of Alexander Campbell. It is likely that the Campbellian source for these commitments has been essentially forgotten. Nevertheless the basic vision has been preserved in the traditions of several major Churches of Christ-related colleges, now universities, more specifically, David Lipscomb University, Harding University, Abilene Christian University, Pepperdine University, Freed-Hardeman University, and Lubbock Christian University, as well as most of the other existing Churches of Christ-related colleges.

There is a good reason for this indebtedness. One of the first colleges to be founded by people who would later be identified as Churches of Christ was Tolbert Fanning’s Franklin College (1845-1866). Tolbert Fanning, educated at the University of Nashville, traveled with Alexander Campbell in the summers of 1832 and 1836. The example of Bethany College no doubt influenced Fanning’s vision for a college.

James A. Harding, an 1869 graduate of Bethany College, helped establish in 1891 the Nashville Bible School, later David Lipscomb University, and subsequently Potter Bible College (1901-1913) in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Associated with Harding at Potter and a succession of other colleges was his son-in-law, J. N. Armstrong, along with several other men, including Armstrong’s son-in-law, L. C. Sears. These professors and administrators were instrumental in the beginnings of Harding College at Searcy, Arkansas. Three of the early key presidents of Abilene Christian College also attended Nashville Bible School: A. B. Barret, Jesse P. Sewell, and Batsell Baxter. Graduates of Lipscomb, Harding and Abilene Christian were involved in the founding of most of the Churches of Christ related-colleges since World War II.³⁵

The academic heirs of Bethany College have to a large extent continued Campbell’s vision in their commitment to a basic liberal arts and sciences curriculum supplemented by certain programs emphasizing skills such as agriculture, education, and business. These auxiliary concerns have varied with time and place. The curriculum at Franklin College included agriculture and mechanical crafts and claimed to be the first college in America to do so.³⁶ Abilene Christian has for some years offered a degree in agriculture along with one in industrial arts. With the rise of business colleges at the turn of the twentieth century several schools related to Churches of Christ included business courses. Particularly notable here are Freed-Hardeman³⁷ and Harding. Currently, many of the universities have colleges of business, including Abilene Christian, Pepperdine, Harding, Lipscomb, and Faulkner. After World War II with the great demand for teachers, the education programs boomed at Abilene Christian, Harding, Freed-Hardeman, and Pepperdine. Since that time several of the universities have added professional colleges or schools in education: Harding, Abilene Christian, Lipscomb, and Oklahoma Christian, for example. Pepperdine has combined education and psychology in a graduate school. Faulkner and Pepperdine have schools of law, and Pepperdine a school of public policy. Harding

and Abilene Christian are involved in schools of nursing. These sorts of interests have expanded over time. Faulkner University, for example, has developed a special program in regard to home schooling.

The question is whether these sorts of offerings are somehow tied to basic religious commitments in the manner of Alexander Campbell. Mission statements of three Churches of Christ-related universities contain sentiments similar to those of Campbell, that is, that God has created everything, and that the search for knowledge involves understanding his ways and work in the world. These schools emphasize Christian values as the most important student outcome.

The Harding University mission statement declares, at least indirectly, the Christian grounding and justification for scholarship.

The board of trustees, the administration and the faculty believe that the freedom to pursue truth and high academic achievement is compatible with the Christian principles to which the University is committed. The faculty is dedicated to excellence in teaching, scholarship and service, and to their role as models of Christian living. . . .³⁸

In its mission statement and vision for the future, Abilene Christian University likewise expresses the desire to train students for service through knowledge of God and his world and through the inculcation of Christian values.

Abilene Christian University's mission since 1906 has been to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world, and this mission continues to guide our daily decisions.

As this university nears its centennial year of 2006, we must set a clear course for the future. We must meet the growing academic, social and spiritual needs of our students while seeking always to transform lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

The world cries out for men and women of character. ACU is in a unique position to answer this call, but to do so we must raise the standard. Merely to stay the course would be to fall behind. . . .

To prepare men and women for the challenges of the 21st century, we must continue to attract outstanding Christian scholars; to recruit talented students who have great potential for Christian service and leadership; to enrich learning opportunities both on campus and abroad; and to produce outstanding graduates capable of taking their places as values-centered leaders in every field of endeavor.

ACU has been and will remain centrally and wholeheartedly Christian. These two key elements—

outstanding academics and bold, Christian faith—have positioned this university to develop the leadership of our nations, communities and churches for the next millennium.³⁹

Pepperdine University was founded in 1937. The first President of Pepperdine was Batsell Baxter (1886-1956) who graduated from Nashville Bible School in 1911. He along with Hugh Tiner, a 1928 graduate of Abilene Christian, and the second president, provided the focus for the college. They clearly embraced the Bible centered search for truth emphasized by Campbell and by later colleges related to Churches of Christ. George Pepperdine (1886-1962) expressed this vision in a 1937 opening address,

Therefore, as my contribution to the well being and happiness of this generation and those who follow, I am endowing this institution to help young men and women to prepare themselves for a life of usefulness in this competitive world and to help them build a foundation of Christian character and faith which will survive the storms of life. Young men and women in this institution are to be given education privileges equal to the best in the liberal arts, business administration, Bible training, and later, we hope, in preparing for various professions. All instruction is to be under conservative, fundamental Christian supervision with stress upon the importance of strict Christian living."⁴⁰

The most distinctive feature of Pepperdine University today is its commitment to academic excellence in the context of Christian values. The current mission statement of Pepperdine University declares that

Pepperdine is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership.⁴¹

The more lengthy Affirmation Statement of Pepperdine declares that students are to be prepared for lives of usefulness through a knowledge of God and the world around them. Notice especially the phrase, "That the educational process may not, with impunity, be divorced from the divine process."

As a Christian University, Pepperdine Affirms:

That God is

That God is revealed uniquely in Christ

That the educational process may not, with impunity, be divorced from the divine process

That the student, as a person of infinite dignity, is the heart of the educational enterprise

That the quality of student life is a valid concern of the University
That truth, having nothing to fear from investigation, should be pursued relentlessly in every discipline
That spiritual commitment, tolerating no excuse for mediocrity, demands the highest standards of academic excellence
That freedom, whether spiritual, intellectual, or economic, is indivisible
That knowledge calls, ultimately, for a life of service.⁴²

Also of importance is the statement “That truth, having nothing to fear from investigation, should be pursued relentlessly in every discipline.”

All Churches of Christ related universities and colleges are committed to conveying Christian values curricularly through the teaching of the Christian Scriptures. Only one of the major schools still follows Alexander Campbell’s commitment that students take a Bible course each semester, and that is Lipscomb University. Lipscomb has modified that requirement to mean that each student takes a class in Bible every day.

The supreme purpose of Lipscomb University is “to teach the Bible as the revealed will of God to man and as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice, and to train those who attend in a pure Bible Christianity.” To help fulfill this purpose, each regular student must be enrolled in a Bible class each school day and also attend daily chapel services.⁴³

At one time Harding and Abilene Christian had the same rule, but neither does any longer. Freed-Hardeman, as far as I can determine, has never required daily Bible and in its founding offered Bible only as an elective.⁴⁴ For some of the other schools, the current requirements in Bible are as follows: Abilene Christian, 15 hours; Freed-Hardeman, 8 hours; Harding, 8 hours; Lubbock Christian, 12 hours; Pepperdine, 9 hours (technically, only six of those hours are in Bible); and York College, 12 hours

Conclusions

My conclusion is that Alexander Campbell’s idea of a Christian university is alive and well as we enter the twenty-first century. Although his vision has been revised in details to relate to specific times and places, the basic commitments are still intact at virtually all Churches of Christ-related institutions of higher learning. Clearly all these schools maintain the Enlightenment ideal, as did Campbell, of the search for truth with a special focus upon Scripture.

¹ Alexander Campbell, “Baccalaureate Address to the Graduates of Bethany College,” *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (Nashville: Harbinger Book Club, n. d.), 507. Additional material in regard to Alexander Campbell on universal education may be found in my essay, Thomas H. Olbricht, “Alexander Campbell as an

Educator,” *Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788-1988*, ed. James M. Seale (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1988), 79-100.

² “Baccalaureate Address,” 512f.

³ “Charter of the Bethany College,” *Millennial Harbinger*, April 1840, 176.

⁴ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1839, 449.

⁵ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837, 571.

⁶ Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (reprint, Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1956), 1.

⁷ Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, 1835, 200.

⁸ Alexander Campbell, “Is Moral Philosophy an Inductive Science?” *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (reprint, Nashville: Harbinger Book Club, n. d.), 96.

⁹ Alexander Campbell, “Is Moral Philosophy...?” 96-97.

¹⁰ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1855, 225-231. For studies on Campbell and education see: Gustave Adolph Ferre, “A Concept of Higher Education and Its Relation to the Christian Faith as Evidenced in the Writings of Alexander Campbell,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966; and Henry K. Shaw, “Alexander Campbell, Educator,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Akron University, 1942.

¹¹ Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Idea* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1971); George Smith Pryde, *The Scottish Universities and the Colleges of Colonial America* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1957); *Scottish Universities: Distinctiveness and Diversity*, ed. Jennifer J. Carter and Donald J. Withrington, (Edinburgh: Donald, 1992).

¹² I checked college catalogues for Harvard: 1841, 1851; Yale: 1841, 1851, 1870; Princeton: 1862-63, 1868-69, 1871-72; Columbia: 1841; Cornell: 1841; and University of Michigan: 1843, 1851, 1856, in Widener Library, Harvard University.

¹³ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1838, 205.

¹⁴ Edward J. Power, *Main Currents in the History of Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), 607. See also Robert V. Bruce, *The Launching of Modern American Science* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 187).

¹⁵ Sloan, *The Enlightenment*, 29ff.

¹⁶ Anand C. Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 124-194.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1977), I, 203-318.

¹⁸ (Bethany: A. Campbell, 1841), 81.

¹⁹ Alexander Campbell, *Introductory Addresses*, 82.

²⁰ Alexander Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses* (reprint, Nashville: Harbinger Book Club, n.d), 99.

²¹ For a study of Campbell’s views on moral education see: John Lowell Morrison, “Alexander Campbell and Moral Education,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1966.

²² *Millennial Harbinger*, 1832, 409.

- ²³ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1832, 409f.
- ²⁴ *Popular Lectures*, 101-108.
- ²⁵ *Popular Lectures*, 108-112.
- ²⁶ *Popular Lectures*, 121.
- ²⁷ For Campbell on natural religion, see Robert Frederick West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).
- ²⁸ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1839, 448.
- ²⁹ “Address: The Corner-stone of Bethany College,” delivered May 31, 1858, in *Popular Lectures*, 485f.
- ³⁰ On the early morning chapels at Harvard, see Samuel Eliot Morrison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936).
- ³¹ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1860, 512.
- ³² *Millennial Harbinger*, 1860, 510f.
- ³³ Alexander Campbell, “The Primary Facts of Christianity,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 1861, 561-564. M. Eugene Boring, “The Formation of a Tradition: Alexander Campbell and the New Testament,” *The Disciples Theological Journal*, 1987, 6f. See his bibliography for twentieth century discussion of this view.
- ³⁴ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1842, 34.
- ³⁵ Details on the education of all the persons mentioned in this paragraph may be found in R. L. Roberts, “A Biographical Dictionary of Leaders in Churches of Christ” in Richard T. Hughes and R. L. Roberts, *The Churches of Christ* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).
- ³⁶ M. Norvel Young, *A History of Colleges Established and Controlled by Members of the Churches of Christ* (Kansas City: Old Paths Book Club, 1949), 42.
- ³⁷ M. Norvel Young, *A History of Colleges*, 104.
- ³⁸ From the Harding University webpage, July 10, 2001.
- ³⁹ From the ACU webpage, July 10, 2001.
- ⁴⁰ George Pepperdine, “Founders Address,” September 21, 1937, as quoted in *The Graphic*, October 20, 1937, in M. Norvel Young, *A History of Colleges*, 193.
- ⁴¹ Pepperdine University, *Seaver College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, 2000-2001 Academic Catalog*, 2.
- ⁴² From the Pepperdine University webpage, July 10, 2001.
- ⁴³ From the Lipscomb University webpage, July 10, 2001.
- ⁴⁴ Earl Irwin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1900-1918*, 3 (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1979), 260.

What Can the Church of Christ Tradition Contribute To Christian Higher Education?

Richard T. Hughes

If we wish to ask what Churches of Christ can contribute to Christian higher education, we first must ask about the historic and theological identity of this tradition. We will then explore some of the assets—along with some of the liabilities—that Churches of Christ bring to the task of Christian higher education.

Who Were/Are the Churches of Christ

While Churches of Christ trace their lineage to two early nineteenth-century leaders, Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, they owe their greatest debt to Campbell, whose influence on this tradition has persisted for almost two centuries. As an ecumenist, Campbell devoted his entire career to the interests of Christian unity. But Campbell was also a primitivist who argued that Christian union could best be achieved if Christians would abandon the creeds and particular doctrines that divided them and unite on those principles of primitive Christianity clearly taught in the New Testament.

Like many in his day, Campbell was also a rationalist, deeply influenced by the British Enlightenment. He stood indebted especially to John Locke and to Scottish Common Sense Realism, often known as “Baconianism.” While Francis Bacon defined the scientific method as the basis for scientific inquiry, the eighteenth-century Scottish “Baconians” sought to apply that method to the larger world of things and ideas. Alexander Campbell sought to apply it to the Bible.

As a result, Campbell read the Bible through a scientific lens and often portrayed the Bible as a blueprint for the reconstruction of the forms and structures of the ancient Christian faith. Churches of Christ inherited from Campbell this understanding of the Bible, an understanding that has been pervasive in this tradition ever since.

Moreover, Campbell thought the Bible could be understood—at least in its central teachings—with scientific precision. This assumption provided the epistemological foundation for his conviction that the restoration of primitive Christianity would finally unite all Christians. If all could understand the Bible—at least its central teachings—with scientific precision, then all could understand it alike. The restoration of both form and content of first-century Christianity would therefore be the basis for Christian union.

From his base in Bethany, West Virginia, Campbell developed a sizable following throughout the Midwest and the Upper South.

By the mid-nineteenth century, it became clear to many in this movement that Christians neither read the Bible with scientific precision nor understood it alike. When this problem became apparent, Campbell’s movement began to divide, a process aggravated by sectional differences related to the Civil War. Some

took their stand on the unity of all Christians and expressed less and less interest in primitive Christianity. This side of the tradition would eventually become the modern, ecumenically oriented denomination, the Disciples of Christ, centered in the old Campbell heartland of the upper Midwest. Others took their stand on the recovery of primitive Christianity and expressed less and less interest in the unity of all Christians. This side of the tradition would eventually become the Churches of Christ, which centered in the Upper South, especially in a belt running from Middle Tennessee to West Texas.

Campbell's understanding of primitive Christianity formed the basis for what Churches of Christ in time came would call "nondenominational Christianity." They meant by that phrase a Christianity based on allegiance to the Bible, not on allegiance to denominational traditions, even their own.

In the hands of Churches of Christ, the notion of primitive, nondenominational Christianity was a two-edged sword that cut in two very different ways. At its best, this notion meant that members of Churches of Christ aspired to be nothing more and nothing less than Christians, defined by a biblical standard. According to this conception, the nondenominational vision was an ideal that stood in judgment even on Churches of Christ and that summoned them to ever-greater fidelity to the ancient Christian message and tradition. Those who embraced this understanding readily confessed their shortcomings, not only as individuals, but also as a church.

On the other hand, the nondenominational vision at its worst produced an assumption that Churches of Christ were not a denomination like other denominations but, instead, had successfully reproduced primitive Christianity in all its perfections. More often than not, this interpretation of the nondenominational vision prevailed and created a host of illusions that defined this tradition from the mid-nineteenth century until recent years. Churches of Christ, for example, eventually traced their lineage to no history other than the Bible itself, rigorously denied the existence of any human founders (Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, for example), and expressed virtually no interest in their own history in the United States. To recognize such a history and such a tradition, they imagined, would be tantamount to recognizing that they, too, were a denomination with a human founding. Or again, Churches of Christ claimed to have developed no theology except the message of the Bible, defined in the Bible's own terms. In a word, Churches of Christ often imagined themselves immune to the power of history and culture. For this reason, they grounded their tradition in their conviction that they had no tradition at all.

A corollary of all these notions was the conviction that manifested itself among these people from an early date: they were the true church of the apostolic age, grounded exclusively in the Word of God; others were simply denominations, descending from human history and rooted in human opinion and tradition. As much as any other theme Churches of Christ held dear, this conviction became a fundamental support for Christian higher education in this fellowship. After all,

if a college or university community was comprised exclusively of Christians who were members of the one true church, that fact alone was sufficient to validate that institution as a Christian institution. For this reason, colleges and universities related to Churches of Christ seldom developed systematic theological understandings of the qualities and characteristics that ideally might characterize Christian higher education. That exercise seemed irrelevant, since the Christian character of these institutions was simply assumed.

In fairness, it should be said that in recent years, many if not most within the mainstream of Churches of Christ—especially the younger generation—have abandoned these exclusivist assumptions, at least intellectually. For many members of Churches of Christ, however, these assumptions are so thoroughly bred in the bone that, though they may well abandon them intellectually, they have great difficulty abandoning them emotionally. For this reason, exclusivist presuppositions continue to define policy and procedure in a variety of ways, even within the most progressive institutions of higher learning related to Churches of Christ. All of this we must understand if we want seriously to ask what the Church of Christ tradition can contribute to Christian higher education.

What Assets Do Churches of Christ Bring to the Task of Christian Higher Education?

In spite of their denial of history and tradition, Churches of Christ bring to the task of Christian higher education a number of potential assets.

Nondenominational Christianity and the Search for Truth

Chief among those assets is their own historic vision of nondenominational Christianity, if that vision is understood as ideal and process, not as accomplished fact. This vision can provide strong supports for Christian higher education since it summons believers to question their own traditions and presuppositions and to measure them at every step along the way by the biblical standard. The nondenominational ideal of Churches of Christ can thus help sustain the relentless search for truth that characterizes serious higher education.

Commitment to the Biblical Text

A second potential asset that Churches of Christ bring to Christian higher education is their long-standing commitment to the biblical text. It is true that their preoccupation with the biblical text as legal pattern often obscured the Bible's theological core. That preoccupation in turn has prevented Churches of Christ from developing any kind of overarching, theological worldview.

Yet, all that is changing. Over the past quarter century, strategically placed professors in several Church of Christ-related colleges have helped raise up a new generation of preachers who have made the great theological motifs of the biblical text the centerpiece of their proclamation. That kind of preaching has helped create within Churches of Christ a climate in which a theological worldview

can develop and which can help sustain the enterprise of Christian higher education in ways that were not possible for previous generations.

Emphasis on Rational Inquiry

A third asset, which Churches of Christ bring to Christian higher education, is their emphasis on rational inquiry. Many who are only slightly acquainted with Churches of Christ imagine this tradition as fundamentally anti-intellectual. Nothing could be further from the truth. Because of their deep roots in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Churches of Christ have a strong intellectual tradition and have consistently prized reason over emotion and logic over speculation. Indeed, until recent years, Churches of Christ have produced a host of distinguished debaters who learned to use logic with razor-sharp precision. In the mid-nineteenth century, Moses Lard described the hard-nosed, jut-jawed reliance on reason that characterized Churches of Christ in that period:

In no denomination of Christendom, we venture to think, . . . can an equal number of discriminating critics, accomplished logicians, and skillful debaters be found. Indeed, so . . . brilliantly and successfully are these powers displayed when encountering opposition, that those who take part in such discussions are frequently accused of believing in and having only a religion of the head.¹

This emphasis on reason sustained an emphasis on inquiry and learning from an early date, and in 1836 the people of this movement established their first college and appropriately named it Bacon College, after Francis Bacon, the founder of the scientific method. Walter Scott, the college's first president, centered his inaugural address on Bacon's treatise, *Novum Organum*. Alexander Campbell himself established in 1840 the second college in the movement's history: Bethany College in Bethany, Virginia (now West Virginia), still a strong and viable college belonging to the Disciples of Christ. In 1865, the *Baltimore American* ran an editorial extolling this movement for its devotion "to the interests of education," and noted that, even then, these people had "under their control thirteen first-class colleges and . . . a large number of academies and higher seminaries of learning."²

By the twentieth century, colleges spawned by this movement included such institutions as Butler University, Drake University, and Texas Christian University, all connected with the Disciples of Christ; Milligan College, connected with the Independent Christian Church; and Freed-Hardeman University, David Lipscomb University, Abilene Christian University, Harding University, and Pepperdine University, all connected with the Churches of Christ.

Among the most impressive developments in the twentieth century is the number of scholars from Churches of Christ who hold strategic positions in religion departments in some of the most distinguished colleges and universities in the United States. Standing at the fountainhead of this development was

LeMoine G. Lewis, professor of church history at Abilene Christian University from 1949 to 1986. Lewis earned his Ph.D. from Harvard in the 1940s and then fathered a whole multi-generational wave of students who studied religion at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, and elsewhere.

This small army of scholars has made an enormous impact on scholarship in the field of religion—especially biblical studies—in the United States. These people have held and continue to hold positions in a variety of institutions including Yale, Princeton, Brown, Rice, Emory, Miami University of Ohio, Rhodes College, Cleveland State University, Wellesley, Dartmouth, Johns Hopkins, Erskine College, Miami University of Florida, the University of Georgia, the University of Illinois, and the list goes on.

The point of such a list is not to boast of scholars from Churches of Christ in strategic academic positions but to ask why these people pursued scholarship in the first place. The truth is that they were authentic products of Churches of Christ. Many of them inherited the nondenominational understanding of Churches of Christ at its best; that is, they learned that Churches of Christ sought to place themselves under the judgment of the biblical text. That perspective taught them that the search for truth was an important search, and under the influence of mentors like LeMoine G. Lewis, they made that search their life.

The Ecumenical Tradition

The fourth potential asset Churches of Christ bring to the task of Christian higher education is this tradition's historic ecumenical emphasis. As noted earlier in this essay, Alexander Campbell "devoted his entire career to the interests of Christian unity." Indeed, Campbell understood the restoration of primitive Christianity as the best possible means to unite all Christians in one common fold. It is true that Churches of Christ by the mid-nineteenth century had essentially abandoned the ecumenical vision that Campbell had so vigorously promoted. But the fact that Churches of Christ turned their back on this vision in no way diminishes the power of the vision or the role it played in the movement's earliest years.

This ecumenical vision is crucial for Church of Christ-related higher education today. After all, colleges and universities that stand in this tradition increasingly find that in order to stay in business, if for no other reason, they must bring in faculty members and students from Christian traditions other than Churches of Christ.

Institutions on the geographic fringe of the Church of Christ heartland have known this for a very long time. Pepperdine University in Southern California, for example, has always employed faculty and recruited students from other Christian traditions, even as it seeks to maintain a critical mass of faculty members and students from its own denominational heritage. Rochester College in Rochester Hills, Michigan has moved in similar directions for similar reasons. Even Church of Christ-related colleges and universities in the heartland of this

tradition—Texas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Arkansas—are finding that the percentages of students from Churches of Christ are falling every year, forcing these schools to appeal to students from outside the tradition. This turn of events can be an asset, not a liability, if Church of Christ-related institutions can take steps to own the rich ecumenical heritage that is such a crucial part of their own tradition.

The Counter-Cultural Tradition

The fifth potential asset that Churches of Christ can bring to the task of Christian higher education is grounded not in the work of Alexander Campbell but in the work of the other principal founder of this tradition, Barton W. Stone. Stone shared the ecumenical vision of Alexander Campbell and embraced as well the dream of restoring primitive Christianity. But Stone refused to define primitive Christianity in terms of the forms and structures of the ancient church. Instead, he understood primitive Christianity in terms of lifestyle. Indeed, throughout his career, Stone both lived and advocated the radical lifestyle of giving and sharing that characterized the earliest disciples of Jesus. For Stone, such a lifestyle stood at the heart of the primitive Christian vision.

Accordingly, Stone counseled his many followers to refuse luxury and extravagant attire, to care for widows and orphans, to lavish concern on the poor and the hungry, to free their slaves, and to practice non-violence, even in time of war or other national emergency. Indeed, Stone made it clear, time and again, that his first and only allegiance was to the Kingdom of God—and the values associated with the Kingdom of God—and not to the United States or any other nation on earth. From the perspective of the surrounding culture, these commitments marked Stone and his followers as both radical and counter-cultural.

Radical and counter-cultural commitments like these can serve Christian higher education well, for they implicitly question conventional wisdom and the status quo—a quality that has always been central to the very meaning of higher education. For this reason, Churches of Christ, if they have the courage to draw on this strand of their heritage, can raise up colleges and universities that genuinely value academic freedom, that make room for radical dissent, and that embrace the most searching sorts of questions on the part of faculty and students alike.

What Liabilities do Churches of Christ Bring to Christian Higher Education?

If Churches of Christ bring all these assets to the task of Christian higher education, they also bring several liabilities.

The Anti-intellectual Tradition of Churches of Christ

While Churches of Christ have sustained an intellectual tradition, they also have sustained a strongly anti-intellectual tradition at the same time. To say

that Churches of Christ have been anti-intellectual does not mean they have demeaned intellectual activity. Rather, their anti-intellectual bias has manifested itself in the way they often have shielded themselves from the implications of their own intellectual work. While they study history and culture, for example, they often fail to see how they themselves are products of the very history they study.

Already we have seen how little interest they have expressed over the years in their own particular history in the United States. They have imagined, instead, that they have descended directly from the Bible and the first Christian age, bypassing the power of history and culture altogether. This juxtaposition of Bible and culture underscores the extent to which Churches of Christ have defined their entire identity by the biblical text. They have been, indeed, a “people of the Book.” Little else really mattered.

Within the context of Christian higher education, this perspective effectively worked to divide the world into two realms. On the one hand stood the realm of the sacred, defined by the naked and unadorned biblical text. On the other hand stood the realm of secular culture that embraced everything else.

This pattern has prevailed not only with reference to history and culture; it also has prevailed with reference to philosophy, for philosophy inevitably imposed a human (i.e., “secular”) lens through which one might read and interpret the sacred biblical text. As Tolbert Fanning, the founder of Franklin College in Nashville, Tennessee, the first institution of higher learning strictly associated with Churches of Christ in the South, complained, “It is impious beyond expression, for a frail worm of earth, to attempt an interpretation of what God has made so plain” No wonder that Fanning wrote that “all philosophers are, in the true sense, infidels and only infidels.”³

It is therefore not surprising that, for most of their history, most institutions of higher learning related to Churches of Christ have avoided the study of philosophy. None has ever developed a philosophy department; only one or two have employed trained philosophers, and those few that have offered courses in philosophy typically have done so under the aegis of their Bible departments.⁴ Understandably, few among Church of Christ academics have earned their doctorates in philosophy, and most who have, have had to pursue their philosophical studies outside the boundaries of their own religious heritage, once again underscoring the split Churches of Christ have created between the sacred (biblical) realm and the secular.

The same can be said of theology. Though theology involves systematic thought about God and the way God relates to the world He created, Churches of Christ for the most part have studiously avoided theological inquiry. The reason is clear: one does not think about God in a systematic way, but rather takes what the biblical text says about God at face value. Until recent years, therefore, colleges and universities associated with Churches of Christ seldom offered courses specifically billed as “theology” courses.

Though educators among the Churches of Christ no doubt imagined they were enhancing Christian higher education by focusing their energies entirely on the biblical text to the virtual exclusion of philosophical and theological reflection, in reality this decision undermined the very enterprise they sought to enhance. Without systematic theological reflection, for example, how could those educators bring the study of history, literature, physics, political science, and other “secular” disciplines under the umbrella of a Christian worldview? In the first place, the Bible said nothing about those disciplines. In the second place, by rejecting philosophical and theological reflection, educators among Churches of Christ virtually guaranteed their own inability to construct a Christian worldview that might in some way embrace those otherwise secular disciplines.

Apart from an overarching Christian worldview, Christian higher education in Church of Christ-related institutions typically has meant two things: (1) encouragement and preservation of good moral values and (2) an institutional context in which 100 percent of the faculty and a significant majority of the students were members of Churches of Christ. With a world effectively divided into sacred (biblical) and secular spheres, little else could be done.

So long as most of these institutions maintained student bodies composed largely of members of Churches of Christ, the lack of a systematic, overarching, Christian worldview was seldom noticed. Good and moral behavior, coupled with the institutional allegiance of the vast majority of faculty and students to the Churches of Christ, seemed enough to insure a thoroughgoing Christian institution of higher learning. Clearly, many of these institutions also promoted other dimensions like personal piety and a concern for world missions. But the two baseline factors that virtually defined whether an institution was “Christian” or not were (1) the building of character and morality (2) carried out in the context of an institution dominated by members of the Churches of Christ.

“Barren of Imagination”

The way in which Churches of Christ divided the world into sacred and secular domains is perhaps most striking in the realm of aesthetics.⁵ Stephen Findley, a musician, painter, actor, and M.Div. graduate from Pepperdine University, did a research project on the Reformation and the arts that helped illustrate this point. Part of Findley’s paper focused on Ulrich Zwingli, the noted sixteenth-century reformer, who in many ways stands as the spiritual father of Churches of Christ.⁶ Though an accomplished musician, Zwingli was also an uncompromising biblical primitivist who sought to conform the church to the biblical model in every way his circumstances permitted.⁷ Zwingli therefore banished from the worship of the church on biblical grounds not only instrumental music but also vocal singing. He argued that the New Testament offers no precedent or justification for instruments in worship and that Paul virtually prohibited vocal singing when he wrote, “Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19, NIV). Likewise, Zwingli stripped the great cathedral in Zurich of all works of art and ornamentation and created instead a house of God that was aesthetically barren.

Findley observed that in those acts Zwingli virtually banished aesthetics from the sacred domain. If worship was sacred, artistic creativity of all kinds belonged not to the sacred but to the secular realm. Churches of Christ have to a very great extent perpetuated that dichotomy, and many artists and musicians who belong to Churches of Christ have had to pursue their creative endeavors outside the boundaries of their church relationship.

This does not mean that colleges and universities associated with Churches of Christ have refused to teach and nurture the aesthetic life. Indeed, many of these institutions have boasted outstanding programs in the visual arts, drama, and music. But aesthetics, like theology and philosophy, typically have been pushed outside the bounds of the church and therefore outside the sphere of the sacred. This means that fine arts programs in colleges and universities related to Churches of Christ seldom foster artistic creativity in ways that invite serious theological reflection on the creative enterprise itself, or in ways that allow self-conscious integration of artistic creativity with theological imagination.

This continues to be an intensely practical problem for artists of all kinds—painters, sculptors, thespians, and even musicians—who work in institutions related to Churches of Christ. This is less true of choral music than it is of other artistic disciplines, mainly because Churches of Christ historically have utilized a cappella music as a fundamental part of the worship experience. But in the context of many other artistic disciplines—and in the context of at least some of the institutions related to Churches of Christ—artists often find little support for their concern to integrate their passion for aesthetics with their Christian faith. They nurture both, but they often do so on separate tracks.

Not only has the “traditionless tradition” of Churches of Christ separated aesthetics from religious faith; it has failed to provide an intellectual climate hospitable to aesthetic work. While Churches of Christ have produced a host of scholars who excel in fields requiring technical and logical expertise, therefore, they have produced relatively few scholars or professionals who excel in fields requiring creativity and imagination—literature, art, and music, for example. Indeed, with their concern for a scientifically precise reading of the biblical text and with their disdain for theological and philosophical reflection, Churches of Christ have never had much interest in nurturing the imagination. David Lipscomb, perhaps the most important leader of Churches of Christ in the second half of the nineteenth century, explained why.

[Taking the Bible alone] . . . to many seems narrow. [But] it keeps man on safe ground. It ties him to God and his word in all matters of moral and religious duty and all questions of right and wrong. It clips the wings of imagination and speculation and makes the Bible the only and safest teacher of duty to man.⁸

Accordingly, when H. R. Moore eulogized Tolbert Fanning, Lipscomb’s mentor, he intended only the highest praise when he flatly declared, “He waved no plumes, wreathed no garlands, but struck from the shoulder and at the vitals.

He was destitute of poetry and barren of imagination.”⁹ Accordingly, while some religious traditions have produced an abundance of artists and writers of the highest order, Churches of Christ are simply not among them.

The lack of imagination and theological reflection that has characterized Churches of Christ for most of their history—coupled with the lack of any sense of tradition—have had important consequences for Christian higher education in this fellowship. Most of all, imagination and theological reflection, in the context of a particular tradition, are the crucial ingredients for the creation of a theoretical model that might sustain and give long-term direction to Christian higher education. Because Churches of Christ, for the most part, have lacked these ingredients, higher education in this tradition has evolved with no well-defined theoretical model. Instead, Christian higher education among Churches of Christ has rested, as we have seen, on two supports, one institutional and one moral. The institutional support is the intent that all faculty and a large majority of the students be members of Churches of Christ. Simply put, the moral support demands moral behavior.

Conclusions

It is clear that Christian higher education is rendered lame without a sympathetic and numerically strong base of support at every level of the institution—the board, the administration, the faculty, the staff, and the students. At the same time, authentic Christian higher education cannot finally rest on these kinds of supports alone. There must also be well-conceived theoretical supports, rooted deeply in the core message of the biblical text, lived out in a community of faith, and sustained by imaginative theological reflection. Without those theoretical supports—shared, discussed, and debated within the university community from the board level down—it is idle to imagine that sheer numbers of Christians can possibly sustain an institution in the experiment of Christian higher education.

In the case of Churches of Christ, the good news is the wave of renewal that is currently sweeping that tradition. The traditional understanding of the Bible as a blueprint for reproducing ancient forms and structures is slowly giving way to an understanding of the Bible as a theological treatise. And sectarianism, exclusivism, and legalism are slowly giving way to great biblical themes like creation, redemption, and self-giving love—themes that can provide a foundation for Christian higher education at its best.

Most of all, Churches of Christ have two especially rich resources for sustaining their work in the field of Christian higher education. One is their historic allegiance to the biblical text. The other is their commitment to the vision of non-denominational Christianity, if they can define that vision in terms of ideal and process rather than in terms of accomplished fact.

Whether colleges and universities related to the Churches of Christ will weave all these dimensions into strong theoretical supports for the task of Christian higher education is the story that remains to be told.

¹ Moses Lard, “The Reformation for Which We Are Pleading: What Is It?” *Lard’s Quarterly* 1 (September 1863): 18.

² “The Disciples of Christ,” *Baltimore American* (1865), cited in Jerry Rushford, Forrest F. Reed Lectures of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1984.

³ Tolbert Fanning, “First Principles, Number VI,” *Gospel Advocate* 1 (December 1855): 164; and “Sermon Delivered by T. Fanning at Ebenezer Church, October, 1857,” in James E. Scobey, ed., *Franklin College and Its Influences* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 300.

⁴ Pepperdine University is an exception to this pattern, having employed trained philosophers in its Humanities and Teacher Education Division for many years.

⁵ On Churches of Christ and aesthetics, see Dale A. Jorgenson, *Theological and Aesthetic Roots in the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Kirksville, MO: Thomas University Press, 1989).

⁶ Stephen Findley, “Zwingli, Luther, and the Arts of the Liturgy: Two Theological Views” (unpublished paper, Pepperdine University, 1994).

⁷ Cf. Charles Garside, *Zwingli and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

⁸ David Lipscomb, “Tolbert Fanning’s Teaching and Influence,” in Scobey, ed., *Franklin College and Its Influences*, p. 14.

⁹ H. R. Moore, “Tolbert Fanning,” in Scobey, ed., *Franklin College and Its Influences*, p. 143.

Faith and Learning At Pepperdine University

Richard T. Hughes

[Founded in 1937 in Los Angeles, California, George Pepperdine College was essentially an undergraduate institution, offering limited graduate work in a few fields, until the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time, Pepperdine expanded into four distinct schools: the School of Business and Management, the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, the Law School, and the undergraduate college which in 1972 opened a shining new campus in Malibu, some twenty miles northwest of Los Angeles, and which acquired in 1975 the name, Seaver College. This essay will explore the dynamics at work at George Pepperdine College until the early 1970s. From that point on, it will follow the trajectory of Seaver College only.]

From its founding, Pepperdine University has been one of the most interesting of all the American experiments in Christian higher education. In part, this is because Pepperdine has developed a multi-faceted identity, even with respect to the institution's spiritual commitments, and in turn has created a complex and diverse constituency.

Spiritually, Pepperdine finds its deepest roots in the school's historic relationship to the Churches of Christ, though that relationship has often been an ambiguous one. On the one hand, Pepperdine carefully nurtures its ties to that religious tradition. Over the years, many leaders of this institution have argued that apart from that relationship, Pepperdine would cease to be a Christian institution altogether.

On the other hand, Pepperdine has never defined itself as a typical or traditional Church of Christ-related school. In fact, Pepperdine's relationship to Churches of Christ has occasioned considerable dispute and controversy within the institution itself.

There are several reasons for this awkward partnership. One is the fact that over the years, Churches of Christ have seldom supported Pepperdine to any significant extent, either with dollars or with students. Many in Churches of Christ, whose heartland spans a belt running from middle Tennessee to West Texas, have viewed this southern California school with considerable suspicion, often thinking Pepperdine too "liberal."

Yet, the suspicion ran both ways. Over the years many faculty and administrators have worried that Churches of Christ alone provide an insufficient base to sustain a quality academic institution. Several factors have led them to that conclusion.

First, members of Churches of Christ historically have often defined themselves in highly exclusive terms, contending that they are the only true Christians and comprise the only true church. That position stands in contrast to values intrinsic to the academy, which prizes diversity and fosters exploration of

a plurality of perspectives. Pepperdine's location in the Los Angeles area, one of the most culturally and religiously diverse regions in the world, has only magnified this dilemma.

From the time of its founding, in fact, Pepperdine has valued religious diversity. While it has especially nurtured its relation to the Churches of Christ, it has never sought to appeal only to students of that tradition. From 1976 to 1995, for example, the numbers of students attending Seaver College who were members of Churches of Christ never exceeded fifteen percent of the total student body.¹ At the same time, Pepperdine has always attracted students from a variety of Christian traditions and, especially in more recent years, from non-Christian traditions as well.

The same has been true with respect to faculty. While Pepperdine has sought to maintain a "critical mass" of faculty who are members of Churches of Christ, the institution has regularly employed faculty who belong to other Christian denominations and sometimes faculty who adhere to other world religions.

Over the years, therefore, the question has nagged: how could the school nurture its relation to the Churches of Christ with their history of exclusivism and separatism and at the same time cultivate genuine "spiritual diversity"? This was a very practical problem that produced serious tensions in every decade of the institution's history, as we shall see.

Second, Churches of Christ have seldom nurtured systematic theological reflection or an overarching worldview. Instead, they generally have defined themselves in terms of their zeal to restore the primitive church, focusing especially on external ecclesiastical practices rather than on biblical theology. Further, as an American frontier tradition devoted to the democratic ethos, Churches of Christ have always resisted both creeds and confessions of faith. Instead, they have prized the right of the individual believer to interpret scripture for himself or herself, within certain generally accepted boundaries. As a result, Churches of Christ have never generated a coherent theological perspective that might sustain the enterprise of Christian higher education.

Because the heritage of Churches of Christ provides Pepperdine with its principle model for Christian higher education, Pepperdine differs from Protestant confessional institutions like Wheaton College or Calvin College in at least two ways. First, Pepperdine has never required its faculty or students to assent even to the most minimal statement of faith. Indeed, most members of the faculty continue to view the imposition of any creedal standard as an unwarranted infringement both on individual freedom in Christ and on academic freedom. In a survey administered to Seaver College faculty in the spring of 1995, only 17% of the responding faculty indicated that they would support any kind of faith statement at Seaver College.² And second, if schools like Calvin and Wheaton seek to "integrate faith and learning" around a distinctly "Christian worldview," informed by a deliberate and well-formulated faith perspective, Pepperdine has never defined a theological perspective that might inform such a "Christian worldview."

What, then, does Pepperdine's relation with Churches of Christ finally mean? What of intellectual or spiritual substance do Churches of Christ contribute to the institution? How does that religious tradition nurture critical thinking? Or ethics? Or spiritual formation? Or scholarship? Or diversity? Or academic excellence? Pepperdine's leaders and faculty have seldom explored the possibilities inherent in that relationship beyond the persistent affirmation that apart from its church connection, Pepperdine would lose its Christian identity altogether.

In the absence of a well-articulated theological base, Pepperdine has often defined itself in terms of the ethical and spiritual ideals of the Christian faith. On the one hand, that orientation would sustain morality, character, and Christian behavior. For that reason, Pepperdine has often described itself as a "value centered" institution. On the other, Pepperdine's spiritual orientation would allow for genuine diversity. As the University's 1995 statement describing its religious orientation explained:

Pepperdine University is religiously affiliated with Churches of Christ. It is the purpose of Pepperdine University to pursue the very highest academic standards within a context that celebrates and extends the spiritual and ethical ideals of the Christian faith. Students, faculty, administrators, and members of the Board of Regents represent many religious backgrounds, and people of all races and faiths are welcome to benefit from the University's value centered campus.³

When all was said and done, the values Pepperdine affirmed were multifaceted. The school often affirmed specifically Christian values, but it also affirmed broader spiritual values that resisted the empirical spirit of the modern age. As William S. Banowsky, Pepperdine's president from 1971 to 1978, pointed out, "The liberal arts experience, grounded in spiritual values, offers the student a life with meaning and a faith transcending empirical limitations."⁴

Pepperdine also affirmed values that could hardly be distinguished from conservative American values. In part, the school inherited this emphasis from its founder, George Pepperdine, whose life story reads like a Horatio Alger novel. A Kansas farmboy of limited means, Mr. Pepperdine spent five dollars on 500 postage stamps in 1908, in order to launch a small mail-order business, specializing in automobile parts. From that modest beginning, Mr. Pepperdine developed the Western Auto Supply Company, a multi-million dollar chain that did business from coast to coast.

In later years, he extolled what he called "the miracle of the American way of life." He especially praised the "God-inspired disciplines of the free individual" and the free enterprise system which, he argued, "could be harmonized with basic Christian principles."⁵ Finally, he argued that those who profit from the American system were obligated to use their wealth for the benefit of others.

Accordingly, Mr. Pepperdine adopted as the motto for his school five words in Matthew 10:8: "Freely ye received; freely give."

For the most part, Churches of Christ shared these perspectives. As a Christian tradition born on the American frontier, Churches of Christ have always prized individualism and democracy, along with the virtues of hard work, thrift, and strong moral character. It was therefore almost natural for Pepperdine College to extol traditional American values, even as it claimed a relationship with Churches of Christ.

From its beginning, therefore, this college was different from virtually any other Christian institution. It was church-related, but not church-controlled. It simultaneously affirmed Christian, spiritual, and traditional American values, but resisted any creed, confession of faith, or even a theological definition of its mission. And it sought to combine Christian commitment with openness to genuine diversity.

Finally, Pepperdine has sought to build a strong academic tradition—a dimension that will be considered later in this chapter.

As the years unfolded, therefore, the saga of this university revolved around five distinct dimensions and the way those dimensions intersected with one another: Pepperdine's relation to the Churches of Christ, its affirmation of a Christian and spiritual identity that transcended the bounds of its Church of Christ constituency, its affirmation of traditional American values, its quest for diversity, and its quest for academic excellence. How these five themes intersected with one another over the years is the story we now seek to tell.

The Founding Years

Deeply committed to the Churches of Christ, George Pepperdine embraced the basic doctrinal outlook of that tradition as enthusiastically as anyone of his era.⁶ However, he did not grow up in the mainstream of that heritage. Instead, he identified for many years with the Sommerite wing of the Churches of Christ, a group of churches noted for their opposition to church-related colleges. Radically democratic in sentiment, the Sommerites claimed that church-related colleges eventually tend to grow rich and powerful and finally threaten the autonomy of the local church or congregation.⁷

This dimension of Mr. Pepperdine's background is perhaps most responsible for the way he envisioned the religious dimensions of the college he established. In his "Founding Statement," he stipulated that the college "shall be a private enterprise, not connected with any church, and shall not solicit contributions from the churches."

In truth, because George Pepperdine endowed his college so generously in its earliest years, the college was not dependent on any church relationship for financial support. The level of that funding granted Pepperdine a measure of

fiscal and spiritual independence that has not characterized any other college or university related to Churches of Christ.

Further, when Mr. Pepperdine defined the religious mission of his college, he avoided any mention of the Church of Christ. He also avoided theological or confessional categories, but spoke instead in very practical terms. This school, he said, would place “special emphasis on Christian living and fundamental Christian faith.” He hoped his college would help students build “a foundation of Christian character and faith.” He wanted his college to provide a “wholesome Christian atmosphere.” And he wanted the faculty and trustees to be “devout Christian men and women, who will give careful attention to safeguarding and deepening the faith of the students, increasing their loyalty to Jesus and their zeal for saving souls.”⁸

The college instituted from the beginning a tradition of daily chapel in which the entire community shared in worship together. In addition, beginning in 1943, the college reached out to the Churches of Christ through an annual Bible lectureship that brought to Pepperdine’s campus leaders and members of Churches of Christ from far and near. Still, the college jealously guarded its independence from any church controls.⁹

Because Mr. Pepperdine defined his school in terms of character and piety, not in terms of theology or orthodox belief—and certainly not in terms of church control—he created a sizeable pocket of ambiguity surrounding the church relationship. In a sense, George Pepperdine College was no different from any other college or university related to Churches of Christ in this regard. But most of the other institutions—Abilene Christian College in Texas, Harding College in Arkansas, and David Lipscomb College in Tennessee, for example—existed in parts of the nation where Churches of Christ were strong. In those cases, the active presence of a strong church constituency helped to assure a strong church relationship. Historically, however, Churches of Christ on the west coast have been few, small, and weak.

From the time of Pepperdine’s founding, ambiguity over the church relationship has invited tension. Some have sought to enhance that relationship and to turn the institution into a more traditional Church of Christ college. Others have sought to weaken the tie with Churches of Christ, arguing that Pepperdine could fulfill its religious and academic missions apart from a strong relation with that religious tradition. Moreover, the fortunes of the university in this regard have often correlated with the leadership of key administrators.

A case in point was Batsell Baxter, the first president of George Pepperdine College. Mr. Pepperdine’s rather broadly worded “Founder’s Statement” appeared in the college bulletin in June of 1937. The very next month, a curious letter from Mr. Pepperdine to President Baxter appeared in the minutes of the Board of Trustees, a letter that sought to qualify the “Founder’s Statement” in terms far more specific with respect to the doctrinal positions of Churches of Christ. Because Baxter stood squarely in the heart of the mainline Churches of

Christ, having served previously as president of two other Church of Christ-related colleges—David Lipscomb College in Nashville and Abilene Christian College in Texas—it is perhaps safe to assume that Baxter encouraged Mr. Pepperdine to write this letter or that Baxter wrote it over Mr. Pepperdine’s name.

In any event, the letter stipulated that members of the faculty and the board should adhere to themes like the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, Jesus’ miracles, the atonement, and the inspiration and authority of the Bible. While these themes comprised standard fundamentalist fare for that period, the letter went on to specify other doctrines specific to Churches of Christ. All faculty and board members, for example, should uphold the “plan of salvation” which Churches of Christ commonly taught: belief, repentance, confession, and baptism. Further, all faculty and board members should be “members in good standing” of the Church of Christ. To tighten things down even more, the letter noted that “the New Testament plan of church organization and worship which includes the regular observance of the Lord’s Supper and which excludes instrumental music in the worship, shall be the definition of the Church of Christ.”¹⁰

On the other hand, some felt that Pepperdine College could best achieve academic distinction apart from a strong tie to the Churches of Christ. No one better exemplified this tendency in the early years than Earl V. Pullias, the academic dean for seventeen years beginning in 1940. Ironically, Batsell Baxter was responsible for Pullias’ association with the institution.

Baxter served as Pepperdine’s president for only two years. While he provided strategic academic leadership, securing accreditation for the institution during its first year of operation, E. V. Pullias was the first to bring to the school an unyielding commitment to academic excellence. Further, Pullias was the principal driving force for the institution for most of the years that he served as dean.

Pullias insisted on a first-class faculty, and because Mr. Pepperdine funded the institution so well, Pullias was able to pay handsome salaries—\$3,000 per year for at least some professors¹¹—and thereby sought to attract some of the best and the brightest. At the same time, Pullias favored a broader religious vision for Pepperdine than he felt an exclusive relation with Churches of Christ could provide. Accordingly, he hired faculty who represented an array of religious traditions. He hired some members of Churches of Christ, but he also hired many who were not. And he hired as well a number of faculty whose roots were in Churches of Christ but who believed—along with Pullias—that the Church of Christ heritage provided a base too narrow to sustain a first-rate institution of higher learning.¹²

Steven Lemley, Pepperdine provost from 1993 to 2000, concluded that Pullias helped create “much of the ambiguity with regard to church relationship and Christian dimension that has occupied us for nearly sixty years.”¹³ It might be more accurate to say that George Pepperdine created the ambiguity which Batsell Baxter exploited on behalf of an exclusive relationship with the Churches

of Christ, and which Earl Pullias exploited on behalf of diversity and strong academics.

In this way, Batsell Baxter and Earl V. Pullias served as metaphors for the entire future history of the institution. Their commitments relative to the Churches of Christ defined the tension between faith and learning that has characterized Pepperdine University, for the most part, ever since.

Though Pullias was able to assemble an outstanding faculty, his efforts finally proved abortive, mainly because Mr. Pepperdine lost much of his fortune through some unfortunate investments. The college fell on hard times, faculty salaries were cut, and the glory days were over—at least for now.

The Norvel Young Era

By the mid-1950s, the board of trustees, composed entirely of members of Churches of Christ, had become alarmed over what they perceived as Pepperdine's continual drift away from a strong church connection. When Hugh Tiner, who had served as president since 1939, resigned in 1957, the board seized the opportunity to hire a man who they believed would bind Pepperdine College closer to the Churches of Christ. That man was M. Norvel Young, a Ph.D. in history from George Peabody College and the preacher for the Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. At the same time, the board requested and received Earl V. Pullias's resignation from his post as dean. The following year, Pullias accepted a position as professor of education at the University of Southern California.

When Young arrived as Pepperdine's new president in 1957, he faced a mass resignation on the part of the faculty. Some felt that Pullias' departure and Young's arrival signaled a betrayal of academic values for the sake of a church relationship that had little to do with serious intellectual life. Many others left because the institution's fiscal future seemed so shaky. In all, twenty-seven faculty and staff persons left during Young's first year in office, including the business manager, the director of publicity, the director of admissions, the head librarian, the dean of students, and heads of the social science, speech, and education departments.¹⁴

As Pepperdine's new president, Young faced three daunting challenges. He had to rebuild the faculty. He had to bind Pepperdine more closely to its heritage in the Churches of Christ. And he had to place the school on a firm financial footing. He integrated the first two challenges and addressed them simultaneously. That is, he sought to achieve for Pepperdine a closer relationship with Churches of Christ in part by hiring administrators and faculty who were faithful to that tradition. He also reached out to Churches of Christ by enhancing Pepperdine's Bible lectureship, an annual program designed specifically for members of that communion.¹⁵

Ideally, Young would integrate his fund raising efforts into his attempt to build bridges to Churches of Christ. By 1957, however, Young found very little

support in the churches for Pepperdine College. Pepperdine was far away from the heartland of Churches of Christ and, perhaps even more important, had earned during the Pullias years a reputation for "liberalism." Few in Churches of Christ in those days had great wealth, and the few who did chose to invest their contributions in "safer" institutions like Abilene Christian College, Harding College, and David Lipscomb College.

Young therefore did what he felt he had to do. He continued to build bridges to the Churches of Christ, but in his search for funding, he turned to conservative leaders in the civic and business communities of southern California. In this effort, he followed the lead of President Hugh Tiner who had already built strong relations with those communities. The civic and business constituency, however, cared little about Pepperdine's relation with Churches of Christ. They cared instead about traditional American values: patriotism, Americanism, hard work, basic morality, and faith in God. Because those themes were deeply rooted both in Pepperdine's founding and even in the ethos of Churches of Christ, Young was able to exploit that dimension of the college to great effect.

Young's efforts to cultivate a civic and business constituency subtly but inevitably redefined the mission of the institution in terms that had little to do with the historic Christian faith. For example, in a speech delivered to the Newcomen Society in 1982, Young described Pepperdine as "a liberal arts college of academic excellence, founded upon the principles of private enterprise and loyalty to God and country." Fourteen years into his presidency, Young explained that Pepperdine's "relationship with the business community has been a great factor in our success. While many businessmen are not concerned with our theology, they do like the fact that we turn out students with a sense of moral responsibility and faith in God."¹⁶

While Young nurtured a constituency in the business and civic community of Southern California, he did not seek to cultivate a broader Christian constituency that transcended the bounds of Churches of Christ. Because of the entrenched exclusivism in Churches of Christ at that time, had Young turned to a broader Christian community, he would have risked cutting the tie with Churches of Christ altogether.

This point is crucial, for it suggests that Pepperdine had two options at that time. It could define its religious mission in terms of the Churches of Christ, an option that virtually eliminated ties to a broader Christian world; or it could define its mission in the broader, more inclusive terms of morality, patriotism, and traditional values, an option that appealed far beyond the confines of an explicitly Christian constituency and even to a variety of secular constituencies.

As time went on, Pepperdine gradually cultivated two well-defined external constituencies. On the one hand stood a church constituency whose chief concern was that Pepperdine remain faithful to the heritage of that tradition, but this constituency did not pay the bills. On the other hand stood a donor base chiefly interested in traditional American values.

Because of this dual constituency, Pepperdine gradually began to wear two different public faces. To its church constituency, the college portrayed itself as a Christian institution, loyal to the ideals of the Churches of Christ. To the business and civic community, it projected traditional American values and seldom invoked either its particular church relationship or its explicitly Christian dimensions.¹⁷

At one level, these two persona were not incompatible, especially since the college had embraced both these visions from its founding. So long as the college directed these two images to a single, church constituency, they remained in sync. Yet, once the two images began to serve two different constituencies, neither of which knew about the other and neither of which was in touch with the other, the two images began to drift slowly apart.

Impact of the 1960s

From its founding in 1937, George Pepperdine College sat on a thirty-four acre tract of land, seventy-eight blocks due south of downtown Los Angeles. By the 1960s, middle-class African Americans occupied most of the homes surrounding the campus for many miles to the north, south, and west. Less than one mile to the east, however, lay an economically depressed African American neighborhood known as Watts. That area exploded into the news when rioting erupted there in August of 1965. From temporary headquarters on the Pepperdine campus, the National Guard now patrolled the streets of south central Los Angeles.

The riots raised questions about Pepperdine's prospects for continuing to attract students from conservative, Church of Christ homes in places like Texas and Tennessee. Further, donors were reluctant to fund buildings that might be constructed on that campus.¹⁸ Those concerns, coupled with the fact that Pepperdine was land-locked and perpetually confined to a thirty-four acre campus, prompted the administration and board of trustees to launch a search for a new location for the institution.

In the fall of 1968, the college announced a gift of land, a magnificent, 138-acre property in Malibu, situated in the Santa Monica Mountains and overlooking the Pacific Ocean. That site eventually would expand to 830 acres. There, Pepperdine built an entirely new campus that opened in the fall of 1972 and that accommodated most of the undergraduate instruction.

It is impossible to overestimate the impact of the Malibu location both on the academic development and on the religious mission of the institution. The Malibu site contributed more perhaps than any other single factor to the academic enhancement of the institution, as we shall see. But Malibu, California—a spectacularly beautiful playground for the rich and the famous—also stood light-years removed from the mainstream values of the traditional, heartland heritage of Churches of Christ.

As Pepperdine laid the groundwork for its new Malibu campus, it also developed three new professional schools to complement its traditional

undergraduate programs. In 1969, Pepperdine acquired an Orange County-based law school and created that same year a graduate school of education and a graduate school of business. For the next several years, Pepperdine maintained on the Los Angeles campus a small undergraduate program, a small graduate program in the liberal arts, a school of continuing education, a school of education, and a school of business. In 1971, George Pepperdine College declared itself Pepperdine University, and on April 20, 1975, thanks to historic gifts from Mrs. Frank R. Seaver, Pepperdine named its undergraduate school at Malibu, Seaver College.

With its new professional schools, Pepperdine to a great extent institutionalized the dichotomy between the two constituencies it now had cultivated for several years. The schools of business and education provided substantial revenue that helped underwrite the new Malibu campus,¹⁹ but functioned almost independently of any effort to relate to Churches of Christ. At the same time, the University hoped that the new undergraduate college at Malibu would help the school renew its ties with its Church of Christ constituency. Pepperdine therefore launched a vigorous effort to recruit both faculty and students from this tradition for the Malibu operation, awarding unprecedented amounts of scholarship money to qualified students from that heritage. When the Malibu campus opened in the fall of 1972, twenty-eight percent of the student body and well over three-fourths of the faculty belonged to the Churches of Christ.²⁰

Yet, it would be easy to exaggerate both the influence and the importance of Pepperdine's relation to the Churches of Christ on the Malibu campus. The school's simultaneous emphasis on its church relation, on the one hand, and on traditional values, on the other, continued to allow for considerable ambiguity in the mission of the institution.

The William S. Banowsky Era and the Birth of the Malibu Campus

Since 1963, members of the Pepperdine faculty on the Los Angeles campus, most of whom belonged to Churches of Christ, had taught fourteen credit hours per trimester, three trimesters a year, for a total of forty-two units annually. Salaries were so low that most faculty members had to supplement their incomes by various forms of moonlighting. There was little opportunity for these individuals to develop into outstanding scholars, in spite of the fact that several had received first-class doctoral training.²¹ Still, these faculty members accepted these limitations since they had come to Pepperdine, as they often said, to "sacrifice for Christian higher education"—a phrase that often meant higher education in the service of the Church of Christ.

Initially, the administration viewed the birth of the Malibu campus as an opportunity to move into a whole new league academically. The Malibu program would be small, experimental, rigorous, and interdisciplinary. The administration therefore sought to build that program around a small core of scholars imported

from the Los Angeles campus but also around new faculty members who were young and only recently out of graduate school, and who could invigorate that program with fresh ideas, creative energy, sound scholarship, and academic leadership. The balance of faculty members on the Los Angeles campus would remain where they were.

With so much money required for development of the new campus, however, the administration soon decided to expand the Malibu program into a larger enterprise than had initially been envisioned, a decision that seriously diluted the original vision for a small, experimental, and academically upgraded college. Faculty members originally scheduled to remain on the Los Angeles campus now made the trek to Malibu, virtually assuring more continuity with the Los Angeles program than had originally been intended.²²

The initial decision to build the Malibu program around new and younger faculty created a whole new set of problems for the religious identity of the institution. Many of these faculty, after all, were children of the 1960s. They were deeply committed to the Christian faith, but their understanding of Christianity was often quite different from that of the previous generation. They had learned the values of social justice and of ecumenical cooperation to make a difference in the world. Accordingly, many of these faculty had little interest in “sacrificing for Christian higher education” if that meant Church-of-Christ higher education, defined in narrow, sectarian terms.

In addition, several of these faculty members were still in Churches of Christ, but barely. During the 1960s, some had taught at other Church of Christ-related institutions where they had not fit well. Some had been terminated from those positions. Others resigned because of dissatisfaction or discomfort. Still others had been fired from positions with local congregations of Churches of Christ at some point in their careers. Needless to say, for many of these people, Pepperdine was a last stop in the Churches of Christ.²³

But they *were* in the Church of Christ and still cared deeply about that tradition, and they were all Ph.D.s with promising academic careers. That combination recommended them strongly for employment in Pepperdine’s new undergraduate program at Malibu.

These younger faculty related in complex and interesting ways to the double image that Pepperdine had developed since Norvel Young had become president in 1957. On the one hand, since they cared about Churches of Christ, they supported efforts to relate to that tradition. At the same time, most also supported a broader, value-centered education, rooted in an ecumenical approach to the Christian faith. Most hoped that Pepperdine might integrate these two dimensions so that, on this campus at least, the Church of Christ heritage might stand for a Christian-based education, centering on values and ethics. As children of the 1960s, however, few of these younger faculty members shared the institution’s commitment to conservative political and economic values.

The presence of two distinct groups on the faculty created a struggle for the soul of the institution that engulfed the Malibu campus in the 1970s. Many of the older faculty thought their younger colleagues uncommitted either to Churches of Christ or to a vision of Christian higher education. On the other hand, most younger faculty viewed at least some of their older colleagues as academically deficient, narrow, and sectarian.²⁴

Very quickly, however, it became clear which side would prevail in this struggle. The senior University administration moved several of the younger, more progressive faculty into strategic positions of leadership, both in the larger University and on the Malibu campus. One served as the University’s academic vice-president, another as provost for the Malibu campus, another as dean of Seaver College, and others as chairpersons of their academic divisions.

These developments cannot be understood apart from the leadership of William S. Banowsky, fourth president of Pepperdine University from 1971 to 1978. And one cannot understand Banowsky apart from his upbringing in Churches of Christ.

Unlike Norvel Young who grew up in Tennessee congregations often marked by tolerance and grace, Banowsky grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, where Churches of Christ often were known for their legalism and their claims to be the one true church. In time, Banowsky found such claims repugnant and came to resist any form of sectarianism.

Still, at an early age, he was a golden boy in the Churches of Christ. He was only 22 years old, fresh out of school with his B.A. from David Lipscomb College and an M.A. from the University of New Mexico, when Norvel Young recruited him to serve as assistant to the president at Pepperdine. Five years later, the influential Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas, where Young had preached for thirteen years, invited Banowsky to become its minister. He accepted. Then, in 1968, Young invited Banowsky to return to Pepperdine as his executive vice-president. That was the same year Pepperdine acquired the Malibu property, and between them, Banowsky and Young raised \$40 million to develop that campus. Then, in 1970, Banowsky was named founding chancellor of the Malibu campus.

Not only was Banowsky a darling of Churches of Christ. He soon became a darling of the Republican Party in Southern California. Winsome and charismatic, he was so highly regarded in those circles that, in 1972, he was appointed Republican National Committeeman from California. That same year, he coordinated Richard Nixon’s California campaign for re-election to the presidency. By 1975, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that many California Republicans had urged Banowsky to run for governor.

All these characteristics made Banowsky especially attractive to the University’s trustees who installed him as the University’s fourth president in 1971. Norvel Young became at that time the institution’s chancellor and chairman of the Board of Regents. Even before he became president, Banowsky provided

critical guidance for the institution, and it is perhaps fair to say that his vision, more than any other, defined the institution for the all-critical ten-year period, beginning in 1968. His role, therefore, is crucial for understanding the faith/learning nexus as that relationship evolved at Seaver College.

Banowsky was convinced that twentieth-century Churches of Christ—and for that matter, institutional Christianity at large—provided a foundation far too narrow to under gird the major university he hoped to build. Instead, he articulated a vision of “spiritual values,” capable of embracing a diversity of religious and philosophical traditions. With that focus, he sought to broaden the university’s base at three strategic points.

First, he broadened the religious identity of the institution. In May of 1970, at the dedication ceremonies for Pepperdine’s new Malibu campus, Banowsky delivered his inaugural address as the founding chancellor of Pepperdine College at Malibu. He called his address, “A Spirit of Place,” and the very next month, Pepperdine published his speech “as a statement of the philosophy of the college.” There, Banowsky spoke of Churches of Christ as the college’s “closest constituency,” and affirmed the school’s determination “to strengthen, not loosen” the ties with that community of faith. At the same time, he issued a warning: “We will resist any sectarian spirit.”

While Banowsky located Pepperdine in the context of “Christian education,” he never in that speech defined Pepperdine as an institution shaped by the Churches of Christ. Instead, in the most crucial paragraph of that address, he argued that “since its founding in 1937, Pepperdine College’s deepest convictions have always centered upon spiritual realities.” Based on that broad, spiritual foundation, Banowsky argued that Pepperdine was a “person-centered college” offering a “value-centered education.”²⁵

Though Banowsky was the first president to define Pepperdine explicitly in terms of “value-centeredness,”²⁶ he would not be the last. Banowsky understood “Christian,” “spiritual realities,” and “value-centered” as virtually equivalent terms. Yet, his understanding of the university as “Christian,” on the one hand, and “spiritual” and “value-centered,” on the other, served well the University’s dual constituency. The “Christian” descriptor allowed the institution to pursue its church relationship, while the “value-centered” and “spiritual” descriptors allowed the institution to broaden its base of constituents among potential friends who cared little about the Churches of Christ but a great deal about American ideals and institutions and traditional, conservative values.

Second, in addition to his attempt to broaden the religious identity of Pepperdine, Banowsky also restructured the board of trustees. Banowsky felt that a board composed exclusively of members of Churches of Christ could not provide the financial underpinnings or the breadth of intellectual support for the kind of institution he envisioned.

Banowsky and Norvel Young had vigorously debated this issue for a number of years. Then, in 1975, Young was involved in a serious automobile

accident that, for a time, removed him from any significant decision-making role in the University. At that point, Banowsky exerted the leadership that resulted in a major change to Pepperdine’s “Articles and By-Laws.”

During the previous year, Banowsky had retained a Los Angeles law firm “to assist in the total revision of the University’s ‘Articles and By-Laws’” which provided for twelve trustees, all of whom had to be members of Churches of Christ.²⁷ The revised “Articles and By-Laws” provided for a forty-person Board of Regents, a bare majority of whom had to be members of Churches of Christ. This centerpiece of Banowsky’s administration enabled him to invite onto the board nineteen people whom he regarded as some “of the most distinguished men and women in western America.” With this move, he recalled, “we reestablished the institution on a strong non-sectarian foundation.”²⁸ Indeed, this move would have critical implications for every phase of the institution’s life, including its religious identity.

Jack Scott, a member of Pepperdine’s Board of Regents who served as provost and dean of the Los Angeles campus from 1970 to 1973, suggested that while the new, non-Church of Christ regents likely were not offended by the school’s Church of Christ connection, they “were attracted to Pepperdine on the basis of . . . the political and economic conservatism of Pepperdine’s leadership.”²⁹

Third, the leadership in the Banowsky administration sought to secure faculty who belonged to Churches of Christ, but they placed an even higher premium on securing academically qualified faculty, regardless of denominational affiliation.

Reflecting on his administration some twenty years later, Banowsky recalled, “In a very real sense, I sought to nourish and expand the larger Christian vision which Earl Pullias had built into the soul of the school, but which had been systematically resisted by his opponents.”³⁰

If Banowsky identified the traditional sectarianism of Churches of Christ as a fundamental problem at Pepperdine during those years, others thought the problem was a drift toward secularism, fostered by the president himself. In 1975, for example, thirty members of the faculty addressed to President Banowsky a letter that complained, “We are apprehensive about the possibility that Pepperdine may ultimately become so secularized that all Christian impact will be lost.” It called on the president to launch “a full scale effort to relate meaningfully and as servants to our constituency in churches of Christ,” and concluded, “We feel that it might be preferable for the institution not to operate at all, than to function in such a way that Christian convictions are compromised or even denied.”³¹

In any event, Banowsky’s agenda prompted far-reaching change within Seaver College. From the fall of 1977 through the fall of 1980, the college hired approximately 40 new faculty, most of whom identified themselves as Christian but many of whom did not share the heritage of Churches of Christ.³² In fairness, it must be acknowledged that because of the unusually rapid growth of the faculty during those years, it was often impossible to hire academically qualified people

who were also members of Churches of Christ. While the Seaver College faculty almost doubled in size during those years, the percentage affiliated with Churches of Christ dropped from over 75 percent in 1972 to 44 percent in 1981-82. By 1994-95, that percentage had climbed to only 55 percent, still some 20 percent less than it had been twenty years before.³³

At the same time, in spite of a major effort to recruit students who belonged to Churches of Christ, that percentage fell as well. When the Malibu campus opened in the fall of 1972, the undergraduate enrollment included 28 percent members of Churches of Christ. By 1982, that figure had dropped to only 8 percent. While that decline reflected the continued estrangement between Pepperdine and Churches of Christ in spite of massive efforts on the part of the institution to improve that relationship, it also reflected the fact that Pepperdine's rising tuition made it increasingly difficult to attract students from Churches of Christ, most of whom came from middle-class homes, at best.

During those same years, the academic quality of the Malibu undergraduate program increased dramatically. While that improvement owed much to academic leadership within the faculty and especially to the new generation of scholars and academic leaders the administration had recruited for the Malibu program, it also was a function of the Malibu location, itself. One could argue that the Malibu campus was to Seaver College what football had been to Notre Dame: it created enormous visibility for the institution, and its location and extraordinary beauty attracted students who might never have considered Pepperdine otherwise.

The student body that enrolled at Pepperdine in the fall of 1972, the year the Malibu campus opened, posted the highest scholastic aptitude scores of any student body in the history of the institution. Twenty percent of the freshman class scored at or above the 93rd percentile nationwide. That same class brought with them an average high school GPA of 3.08, with 20 percent having earned 3.50.³⁴

Since that time, the quality of students enrolling in Seaver College has systematically improved. For example, the average GPA for domestic, enrolling freshmen was 3.26 in 1990, 3.33 in 1993, and 3.50 in 1995. Interestingly, the statistics reflect no appreciable difference in academic quality between students who are members of Churches of Christ and those who are not.³⁵

During those years, Seaver College also enhanced academic quality in the faculty through several teaching load reductions and a corresponding emphasis on faculty scholarship. From late 1963 until 1973, the teaching load for the undergraduate faculty remained unchanged: 14 units per trimester, three trimesters a year, for a total of 42 units annually. The load was reduced to 14-14-8 in 1973-74 and to 12-12-8, based on four-unit courses across the board, in 1974-75. In the mid-1980s, the load was reduced to 12-12-4, and in the fall of 1996, to 12-12-0.

By the time Banowsky resigned his presidency in 1978, Seaver College had significantly improved its academic quality. The explicitly Christian

dimensions of the institution, on the other hand, lagged behind. There are several reasons for this. First, throughout the Banowsky years, the institution portrayed itself to the general public more as an institution informed by "spiritual values" than as an explicitly Christian university. The conventional wisdom later suggested that fiscal uncertainty was so severe during those years that if Pepperdine's administration had portrayed the school in explicitly Christian terms, the institution might never have survived.³⁶ Second, the glamorous Malibu campus increasingly attracted students who had little or no interest in Pepperdine's historic Christian commitment. And third, in the ranks of the faculty, the question of the religious dimensions of the institution had become a bone of contention, not a matter for constructive discussion and planning. Some faculty passionately pled for a stronger relation with Churches of Christ. Others had little or no interest in that option or, in any event, supported a broader base for the institution. In the course of the acrimonious debates that ensued, the explicitly Christian supports for Seaver College fell on hard times.

In that context, few in those years explored the integration of faith and learning at all. Instead, most assumed that faith and learning were inherently juxtaposed and polarized, and that the best one could do was to strike a balance between them. President Banowsky expressed this point of view as well as anyone:

What we are attempting, then, is to achieve a delicate balance between spiritual intensity and genuine academic distinction. It will not be easy. It would be simpler, philosophically, to be either a Bible college, on the one hand, or an utterly secular university on the other. To combine spiritual commitment with academic openness is to tread the narrow edge of unrelieved intellectual tension. But it is a more exciting path than either the emptiness of mere secularity or the sterility of fundamentalistic simplicity.³⁷

The Recent Past

In 1978, Banowsky left Pepperdine to become president of the University of Oklahoma. At that time, the Board of Regents appointed Howard A. White (1978-1985), a former history professor and Banowsky's executive vice-president, to a one-year interim presidency that was renewed for a second year in 1979. In 1980, the Board asked White to serve as president for an extended term.

Rooted in the academic tradition, White sought to enhance the academic stature of the University. With the campus infrastructure well in place and with greater funding at his disposal, he achieved much. For example, under his presidency, Seaver College erected a new music building which significantly enhanced the fine arts, expanded and equipped science laboratories, equipped many faculty offices with computers, provided more academic scholarships in order to attract better students, approved an expansion of the faculty relative to

the size of the student body, and increased faculty salaries, thereby enabling Seaver College to retain more of its best professors.

White also articulated for the institution a Mission Statement which the Board of Regents approved in 1982 and which emphasized both “spiritual matters” and “Christian values.” It affirmed that “the most distinctive feature of Pepperdine University is the fact that it maintains a serious commitment to a rigorous academic program in concert with concern for spiritual matters” and that “Pepperdine University’s mission is to provide education of excellent academic quality within the context of its Christian heritage and with particular attention to Christian values.” Within a few years, Seaver College required that all candidates for faculty positions, for promotion, or for tenure express in writing their response to the mission of the university, defined in that statement.

From the perspective of Pepperdine’s relation to Churches of Christ, White’s presidency was in many respects a reaction against developments over the previous decade. Indeed, White felt that the previous ten years had witnessed considerable secularization of the University, and he determined to reverse those trends. Once appointed to a three-year term as president in 1980, he took decisive steps to shore up Pepperdine’s Christian mission as he understood it and to create stronger ties between the University and the Churches of Christ.

From the executive vice-president to the vice-president for academic affairs to the dean of Seaver College, he assembled a whole new administrative team, composed of people especially known for their commitment to that heritage. With those strategic positions filled, White insisted on greater attention to hiring faculty who not only belonged to Churches of Christ but who were loyal to that tradition.³⁸ Faculty who were not members of Churches of Christ and who had been hired during the Banowsky years felt that White’s hiring policies created tension between what amounted to two different faculties: those who belonged to Churches of Christ and those who did not.³⁹ Yet, if one understands Howard White in terms of Pepperdine’s larger history, one is forced to view White as part of a long-standing struggle between these two forces, reaching all the way back to Batsell Baxter and E. V. Pullias.

When the Board of Regents selected David Davenport (1985-2000) as Pepperdine’s sixth president in 1985, they sought to perpetuate the emphases of Howard A. White, both academically and religiously.⁴⁰ Academically, Davenport inherited an institution on the upswing, a fact noted by the annual college and university rankings published in *U.S. News & World Report*. In the very year that Davenport became president, for example, Pepperdine ranked in first place among “comprehensive universities” in the Midwest and far west. *U.S. News & World Report* subsequently reclassified Pepperdine as a research institution. Even there, however, Pepperdine has done well.

Several factors have contributed to the enhanced academic quality of Seaver College. William Adrian, university provost from 1985 to 1993, sent an important memo to all University faculties in 1987, noting that “the most significant

academic challenge facing the University at the present time is to gain the same respect among our academic and professional colleagues that we have among the general public.” He therefore noted that while “care and concern for students” and “stimulating classroom teaching” would continue as “tangible expressions of the Christian mission of the University,” one could not progress through the academic ranks without “scholarly activity in support of [one’s] teaching functions.”⁴¹ While some Seaver College faculty resisted the research implications of this statement,⁴² most responded favorably, and Seaver College has made significant academic strides since that time.

Much of the impetus for original, creative scholarship came from within the faculty itself and especially from the faculty’s Rank, Tenure, and Promotions (RTP) Committee. Organized in the early 1970s on the Los Angeles campus,⁴³ that committee chiefly sought to bring equity to the promotion and tenure process. However, because high teaching loads at that time virtually prohibited serious scholarly research and publication, the RTP committee based tenure and promotion decisions on two factors: length of time with the institution and the quality of one’s teaching.⁴⁴

By the late 1970s, with teaching loads reduced, evidence of scholarly activity became more and more important for promotion and/or tenure. Even then, however, a professor whose publications were minimal or non-existent could still win promotion and/or tenure by virtue of outstanding teaching and service to the institution. By the 1990s, however, the RTP Committee, in concert with the administration, tightened requirements even further. It would now be impossible to earn either tenure or promotion without some evidence of serious scholarship, resulting in publications and/or presentations at professional meetings.⁴⁵

At the same time, Seaver College continues to identify itself primarily as a teaching institution. In the faculty survey mentioned earlier in this essay, only 16% of the faculty placed “maximum possible emphasis” on the proposition that Seaver College should “advance knowledge through research.” At the same time, 84% placed “maximum possible emphasis” on the proposal that the college should “extend knowledge through teaching.”

While many members of the Seaver College faculty are active scholars, seriously involved in research and publication, some argue that original, creative scholarship is seldom promoted or publicized either among the students or among the university’s external constituencies. One senior faculty member, for example, pointed to the various publications the university produces for alumni, parents, friends, and donors. “For our size university,” he suggested, “we probably produce more quality publications than any school in the country. But none of these publications focuses on scholarship, and the message sent to the clientele has almost nothing to do with the academic dimensions of the university.”⁴⁶

Not only did President Davenport inherit an institution on the upswing academically, but under his watch, some of the religious polarization that characterized the institution for so long began to recede, at least at certain levels.

In the first place, Davenport and William Adrian, Pepperdine's provost from 1986 to 1993, sought to strengthen Pepperdine's broad Christian base and, at the same time, to improve the relationship between the University and the Churches of Christ. They did this especially through strategic hiring policies aimed at securing faculty primarily from Churches of Christ but also from other Christian traditions. They also fostered conversation about the meaning of Christian higher education in a variety of settings, especially the annual faculty retreats.⁴⁷

Second, Davenport attempted to tie the language of "value-centeredness" more closely to Pepperdine's Christian mission. In a strategic vision speech delivered to the Seaver College faculty in 1990, he argued that "we need to become more broadly, more fully known as a Christian university." He acknowledged that "Pepperdine has for one reason or another stepped back a bit from just saying we're a Christian university." For that reason, he noted, "I hear a lot of people who are surprised to find that we are a Christian university I think one of the reasons is [that] we don't say it . . . a lot."⁴⁸

In more recent years, Pepperdine has been more explicit on this point. The *1995 Annual Report*, for example, points out that "the University is unashamedly Christian in its values orientation."⁴⁹ And in March of 1999, under the leadership of President Davenport, the University's Board of Regents adopted a new University mission statement that candidly affirmed, "Pepperdine is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership."⁵⁰

Seaver College, especially, began to take its Christian mission with greater seriousness during the 1990s. During the 1994-95 academic year, for example, John F. Wilson, dean of the college since 1983, led the faculty in revising the Seaver College Strategic Plan. One of the most striking characteristics of the new document was its forthright and deliberate emphasis on the Christian character of the institution. For example, the previous Strategic Plan, drafted in 1988, described the faculty's religious commitments in terms of their "devotion to Christian moral and ethical values based upon a personal spiritual commitment."⁵¹ The new Plan added that "the majority of faculty base their commitment to such values, and their daily lives, on a personal faith in Jesus Christ, and live out that faith in their churches and communities."⁵²

Wilson also pressed the questions, What does it mean that Seaver College is a Christian institution and related to the Churches of Christ? What difference should that make for recruiting policies, admissions, the awarding of scholarships, and faculty hiring? What difference should it make in one's teaching or one's scholarship? Wilson recalled that when he first came to Pepperdine, few were asking these questions. By 1995, however, he had come to feel that these sorts of questions increasingly characterized the college.⁵³

By the mid-1990s, Wilson could count on significant faculty support for the ideal of Christian higher education. For example, in the survey mentioned

above, 82 percent of the faculty agreed that Seaver College should encourage "students to develop a Christian worldview."

Because of Pepperdine's Christian orientation, President Davenport encouraged faculty throughout the University to focus their scholarship on moral, ethical, and service-oriented issues to every extent possible. He also argued that at the very least, Pepperdine should emphasize service to others, with service learning and volunteerism playing a significant role in the life of the institution. The Volunteer Center, established in 1988, gave tangible expression to those ideals. Davenport also urged the Pepperdine community to place the student at the heart of the educational enterprise as a natural expression of the service motif.⁵⁴

For faculty, staff, and administration, the emphasis on student-centeredness provided an obvious opportunity to carry out the service motif. Yet, Pepperdine had seldom articulated in any overarching way how the Christian faith might empower this dimension of academic life. How, for example, would the ideal of service, in the context of a Christian university, differ from the ideal of service in the context of corporate America? D'Esta Love, dean of students from 1989 to 2001, pioneered work on this question at Pepperdine as she routinely explored with her colleagues in the Student Affairs division the biblical understanding of servanthood. In 2001, Love left the position of Dean of Students at Seaver College to become the first University Chaplain. In that capacity, she has continued to foster conversations on the biblical ideal of service and how that ideal might play itself out in the context of a Christian university.

In addition, Pepperdine had not fostered much conversation on how the commitment to Christian higher education might work itself out in the classroom and in an individual faculty member's scholarship. To help address that question, Seaver College faculty members Richard Hughes and Stephen Monsma offered faculty seminars in the summers of 1992 and 1993 on the theme, "A Christian Worldview in the Classroom: What Does It Mean?" Though these seminars grew from a faculty initiative, they enjoyed presidential funding. That funding enabled Hughes and Monsma to invite George Marsden and Nathan Hatch from Notre Dame, Nicholas Wolterstorff from Yale, and Ron Wells from Calvin College—leaders in the national conversation on faith and learning—to help direct the seminars and thereby help launch Pepperdine on a course of prolonged conversation about these issues.

Those seminars ultimately led to the creation in 1999 of the Pepperdine University Center for Faith and Learning. Although authorized by Provost Steven Lemley and President David Davenport, the Center—like the seminars of 1992 and 1993—grew from a faculty initiative. Directed by Richard Hughes, the Center served the entire University with seminars on faith and learning offered throughout the year but especially in the summer months.

In addition to these initiatives, Seaver College has maintained three curricular and extra-curricular vehicles that especially lend themselves to the enhancement of the Christian dimensions of the institution. One is convocation

that began in 1937 as required daily chapel. During the Pullias years, the chapel requirement dropped to one day a week. Norvel Young increased that requirement to three days a week in 1957.⁵⁵ When the Malibu campus opened in 1972, the requirement dropped again to two days a week, and in 1977, the college scaled the requirement back once again to one day a week.⁵⁶ Since 1995, however, students have been able to earn convocation credit by participating in a variety of experiences including worship, Bible study, and special lectures and discussions.

The second vehicle that especially lends itself to the enhancement of the Christian dimensions of the institution is the three-course “Christianity and Culture” requirement in the general education curriculum. The first two courses focus on Scripture while the third explores the intersection of Christianity and culture in a contemporary context. Academically, the religion faculty is one of the strongest in Seaver College and is committed to providing academically serious courses. At the same time, members of this faculty routinely search for ways that enable questions of faith, ethics, and a Christian perspective on reality to surface, both in their lectures and in their interactions with students.

The third explicitly religious vehicle is the annual lectureship that attracts to the campus each year several thousand members of Churches of Christ for lectures and classes dealing with biblical and related themes. While all colleges and universities related to the Churches of Christ sponsor comparable lectureship programs, Pepperdine’s stands on the cutting edge of thought and reflection among Churches of Christ. It surely is among the most popular of all the lecture programs, and draws church members from all over the United States and abroad. Because of its extraordinary success, it is safe to say that the Pepperdine Bible Lectureship has been the single most important vehicle by which Pepperdine has built strong ties with Churches of Christ in recent years. The success of the lectureship program is surely a tribute to the visionary leadership of Jerry Rushford, religion professor and lectureship director since 1983.

Because the University can accommodate such large numbers of visitors only when school is not in session, lectureship is held each year immediately following the spring term when virtually all the students and many faculty members are away from campus. This means that while the lectureship affords the University an opportunity to extend goodwill to the church, it does not provide an occasion for any sort of serious interaction between the church and the regular life of the University.

Because its tie with Churches of Christ is the University’s only tangible link to the Christian heritage and tradition, Pepperdine carefully nurtures that relationship. In keeping with that objective, the University announced in 1997 that it would seek to maintain a faculty at Seaver College made up of at least 50 percent members of Churches of Christ. In addition, the University works hard to attract students from Churches of Christ. In the 2003-04 academic year, 21 percent of Seaver College students belonged to that tradition. At the same time, Pepperdine continues to enjoy a significant level of religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

Conclusions

When all is said and done, Pepperdine University preserves a remarkable continuity with the kind of school it was from the beginning. It is still a Christian institution. If anything, that commitment is stronger today than ever before. And Pepperdine is still related to the Churches of Christ. One could argue that *that* commitment is stronger than ever before as well. Yet, the tension that existed over this relationship in the days of Batsell Baxter and Earl Pullias has never fully disappeared.

Moreover, Pepperdine is stronger academically than at any other time in its history. The challenge today is to find constructive ways to relate the life of the mind to the Christian faith, and to do so in a way that respects—and even builds upon—the heritage of Churches of Christ, but that also respects the diversity of faith expressions that abounds on Pepperdine’s campuses.

¹ “Seaver College Undergraduate Church of Christ Fall Enrollment,” Report of the Office of Institutional Research, January 23, 1995.

² This survey generated a 65 percent Seaver College faculty response.

³ “Long Statement of Church Affiliation,” distributed June 27, 1995.

⁴ William S. Banowsky, “The Spiritual Mission of Pepperdine University,” *Mission* 10 (September 1976): 6.

⁵ George Pepperdine, “The Miracle of the American Way of Life” in Richard L. Clark and Jack W. Bates, *Faith Is My Fortune: A Life Story of George Pepperdine* (Los Angeles: Pepperdine College Bookstore, 1962), pp. 241-244.

⁶ See George Pepperdine’s tract, “More Than Life,” reprinted in Clark and Bates, *Faith Is My Fortune*, pp. 206-228.

⁷ The Sommerite congregations centered in the Midwest in the late nineteenth century and followed the leadership of Daniel Sommer. On this tradition, see Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 228-231.

⁸ George Pepperdine, *Founding Statement*, reproduced in “Minutes of Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the George Pepperdine College,” June 6, 1938, Board Minutes Book, vol. 1, pp. 24-25.

⁹ With their congregational polity, Churches of Christ have no centralized bureaucracy that is capable of exercising control over any of the colleges. Church control over colleges or other church-related institutions is therefore informal, based on power-factions or consensus within the larger denomination.

¹⁰ Letter from George Pepperdine to Batsell Baxter, July 21, 1937, Board Minutes Book, vol. 1, pp. 22-23.

¹¹ “Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees,” Board Minutes Book, vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

¹² Interview with M. Norvel Young, Pepperdine Chancellor Emeritus, April 18, 1995.

¹³ Steven Lemley, "Remarks to Seaver Faculty," August 23, 1994, p. 2.

¹⁴ Interviews with M. Norvel Young, April 18 and 19, 1995. See also Pepperdine College Bulletins for 1956-58 and 1958-59.

¹⁵ M. Novel Young, "Pepperdine University: A Place, A People, A Purpose," (Princeton: The Newcomen Society, 1982), p. 13.

¹⁶ Young, "Pepperdine University: A Place, A People, A Purpose," p. 15; and Jerry Rushford, ed., *Crest of a Golden Wave: A 50th Anniversary Pictorial History* (Malibu: Pepperdine University Press, 1987), p. 118.

¹⁷ According to Fred Casmir, communication professor at Pepperdine since 1956, "this double image became very clear perhaps by the early 1960s." Interview with Fred Casmir, November 8, 1994.

¹⁸ "Pepperdine University Torn by Tragedy, Internal Dissent," *Los Angeles Times* (April 18, 1976), CCIII.

¹⁹ Interview with M. Norvel Young, April 19, 1995. Young estimates that these programs generated the equivalent of a \$50 million endowment.

²⁰ Information regarding scholarship money came from a telephone interview with Robert Fraley, May 23, 1995. Fraley was Dean of Admissions from 1972-1989. In 1974, 83 percent of the faculty teaching at Pepperdine's Malibu campus belonged to Churches of Christ. See memorandum from Provost Jerry E. Hudson to President William S. Banowsky, December 9, 1974.

²¹ Interview with James Smythe, November 8, 1994. Smythe chaired the Humanities Division from 1971 to 1994.

²² Telephone interview with Jerry E. Hudson, provost for Malibu campus, 1972-1975, July 31, 1995.

²³ According to retired faculty member and dean of students Jennings Davis, Pepperdine had always been a last stop in Churches of Christ for many of its faculty and staff. These comments were offered in response to an early draft of this chapter, June 15, 1995.

²⁴ Interview with John Nicks, March 31, 1995. Nicks served as vice-president for academic affairs, 1976-81.

²⁵ Banowsky, "A Spirit of Place," pp. 4-6.

²⁶ Interview with M. Norvel Young, May 2, 1995.

²⁷ Telephone interview with William S. Banowsky, May 23, 1995.

²⁸ Interviews with William S. Banowsky, May 19 and 23, 1995.

²⁹ Interview with Jack Scott, April 17, 1995.

³⁰ Telephone interview with William S. Banowsky, May 23, 1995.

³¹ Letter to William S. Banowsky from thirty Seaver College faculty, February 28, 1975. Copy of letter in possession of Richard T. Hughes.

³² Interview with Jere Yates, chairperson of Business Division, April 16, 1995; and John Nicks, March 31, 1995.

³³ In 1976-77, the percentage of Seaver College faculty affiliated with Churches of Christ stood at 65 percent. For this data, see memorandum from Provost Jerry E. Hudson to President William S. Banowsky, December 9, 1974, and "Pepperdine University Full-Time Instructional Headcount, Percentage of Church of Christ," from Office of Institutional Research.

³⁴ Rushford, ed., *Crest of a Golden Wave*, p. 163.

³⁵ Statistics supplied by Dean of Admission Paul Long. See especially "Domestic Admission Decision Summary" and "Regularly Admitted/Enrolled Statistics—Comparison: Domestic Only."

³⁶ Interviews with David Davenport, April 4, 1995; Steven Lemley, April 16, 1995; and Jere Yates, April 16, 1995.

³⁷ Banowsky, "The Spiritual Mission of Pepperdine University," p. 6.

³⁸ Interviews with Loyd Frashier, chairperson of Natural Science Division, 1970-78, March 16, 1995; Mike O'Neal, vice chancellor, April 18, 1995; and John Watson, vice president for student affairs, 1984-92, April 16, 1995.

³⁹ Telephone interview with Lydia Reineck, professor of English, July 17, 1995.

⁴⁰ Telephone interview with Jerry E. Hudson, July 31, 1995.

⁴¹ "Teaching and Scholarly Activity," a memo from Provost William Adrian to all Pepperdine University faculty, January 12, 1987.

⁴² Interview with Thomas H. Olbricht, chairperson of Religion Division, May 15, 1995; and William Adrian, May 4, 1995.

⁴³ Telephone interview with Ken Perrin, May 4, 1995. Perrin chaired the Natural Science Division from 1978 to 1991.

⁴⁴ Telephone interview with Ken Perrin, May 4, 1995.

⁴⁵ Interviews with W. Royce Clark, religion professor, April 24, 1995; and Randall Chesnutt, religion professor, May 15, 1995.

⁴⁶ Interview with Thomas H. Olbricht, April 20, 1995.

⁴⁷ Written statement by William Adrian, May 18, 1995.

⁴⁸ David Davenport, "Strategic Vision Address to Seaver College Faculty," October 16, 1990, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁹ *Challenge of a New World: 1995 Annual Report of Pepperdine University*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ *The Mission of Pepperdine University*, adopted by the Board of Regents, March 26, 1999.

⁵¹ Seaver College Strategic Plan, 1988, section II.E.

⁵² Integrated Strategic Plan: Seaver College, 1995, p. 6.

⁵³ Interview with John F. Wilson, April 20, 1995.

⁵⁴ Interview with David Davenport, April 4, 1995; and Davenport, "Strategic Vision Address to Seaver College Faculty," October 16, 1990, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Telephone interview with M. Norvel Young, June 8, 1995.

⁵⁶ Telephone interview with Steven Lemley, June 8, 1995.

