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VOLUME 32, NUMBER 1

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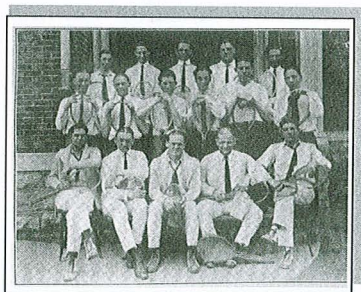
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INTEGRITY

## A Note on this Issue

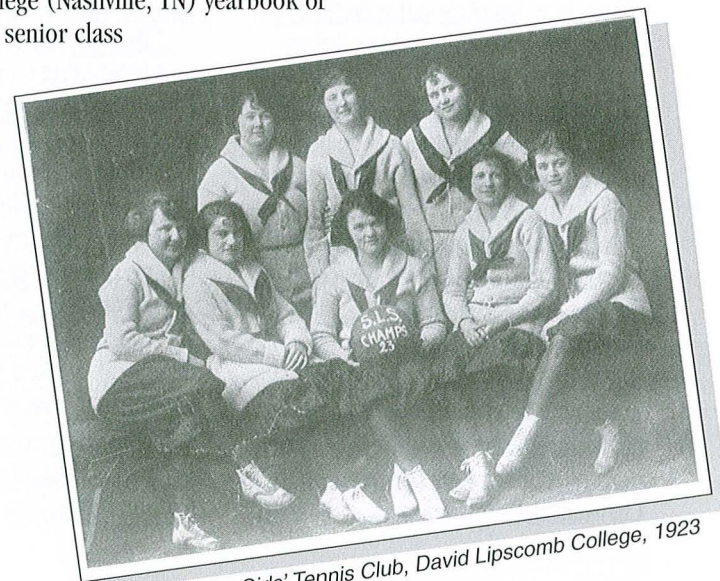
### What do we mean by “Christian College?”

While this issue proposes to look at general issues of higher education at Christian institutions, you may notice that the articles are all about colleges with Restoration Movement (Church of Christ and Christian Church) ties. We did not set out to exclude other Christian colleges; in fact, we strongly believe that the principles, atmosphere, and love of the Lord that make Restoration Movement colleges good, are evident in many Christian colleges of many different denominations. However, it’s best to write about what you know, and we are privileged to enjoy close association with several people who can write with authority about Christian higher education specifically from a Restoration Movement perspective—authority born of many years of participation in and service to both secular and Christian colleges and universities.

We are particularly grateful to Seth Wilson, Dean Emeritus of Ozark Christian College, and Dr. Kenneth Johnson, President of Rochester College, for their contributions to this issue. These two college administrators demonstrate the careful and serious thought that goes into crafting the crucial environment which is what makes Christian colleges and universities stand above their secular counterparts. This environment very deliberately nurtures faith, challenges intellect, and upholds morality as our young people work to discover who they are in the Kingdom.

### Where did those great photos come from?

The photos throughout this issue are taken from the David Lipscomb College (Nashville, TN) yearbook of 1923. David Bryant, senior class president that year, kept this memento of his Christian college education which is now in the possession of his grandson, Integrity Board member Bruce Bryant. Photos are used with the gracious permission of David Lipscomb University.



Girls' Tennis Club, David Lipscomb College, 1923



## What's so Special about Christian Higher Education?

Almost thirty years ago I was introduced to higher education through the avenue of a Christian college. The experiences, knowledge, preparation, and challenges I received from this academic venue shaped and molded my character in significant ways. I know I am biased and have a slanted view toward Christian colleges and universities, but in my life I have witnessed the dire need for such institutions in our chaotic culture.

Not every one of you will have the same views of Christian education that I do. In fact, some readers may strongly object to some of the ideas in this particular issue. But we are putting forth this volume in the hopes that God will bless others who choose to pursue their education (and parents who want to pay for their children's education) in a Christian setting.

I have heard countless arguments through the years as to why parents do not want to send their children to a Christian institution of higher learning. But every one of those objections pale in significance when compared to the atmosphere, setting, support and godly examples that are encountered on a Christian college campus.

As far as academic rigor and well-credentialed teachers, it is a toss-up between state schools and Christian schools. That is not the issue here. Good, quality instruction in specific areas can be found in numerous state institutions all across our nation. And numerous colleges and universities have reputations in certain areas of professional training and preparation for the job market that make them appealing for the young person in their chosen profession.

The issue at stake is this: Do institutions of higher learning prepare young people with an ethical view of life based on biblical values?

I have even attended institutions of higher learning on the Master's and Doctorate level (in a seminary context) where certain professors made it known that their goal was to destroy traditionally based faith and to replace it with a radical activism that had no place for the church.

Are Christian colleges and universities (this includes Bible colleges and institutes) perfect? We all know the answer to this rhetorical question that is ludicrous to even ask! Of course not. I remember the first week of my freshman year how powerfully this

point was driven home to me. I came back to my dorm room one afternoon after a Bible class and next door were two uniformed police officers leading a student away in handcuffs. This student had been trafficking in marijuana and someone tipped off the authorities. My little bubble world of euphoria had been burst.

Students find on a Christian college campus what they are looking for. It is not necessarily the students that are different. It is the teachers and professors.

I remember when I took biology and botany my freshman year that the professor read a chapter of Proverbs every day before lecturing began. I saw modeled in my professors, no matter what their discipline, the bringing together of faith and life. Up to that point in my life "religion" was confined by most adults in my life to the church building and most were embarrassed to talk about their walk with God (which made me conclude in my own youthful immaturity that adults did not have a walk with God).

I have been privileged to teach classes in two Christian colleges. It is out of that experience and the myriad testimonies that youth supply me with that my support and encouragement of Christian colleges and their mission is very strong. It is not the place here for me to articulate what I believe is the purpose, or should be the purpose of a Christian college or university. However, I do believe that it is in order to share what I believe are the advantages if one chooses to attend a Christian college.

It is those characteristics that make a college distinctly "Christian" which provide the cornucopia of blessings overflowing from the hand of God. I see the blessings and advantages as follows.

First, academic preparation is pursued with a different view toward knowledge. Knowledge and information are not pursued with the perspective of power. Rather, what one learns is to make that individual an equipped person with skills in a highly specialized job market, functioning in relationship to others as a servant who cares. Information is not about domination. Information serves as the ground for servanthood.

Second, godly teachers and professors provide a safe environment for young people to question, challenge, disagree and reject tenets of the Christian faith. It is more of how the teacher models wisdom and openness than it is about the students regurgitating memorized formulas.

Thirdly, peer groups of young people seeking support in their spiritual journey make it possible to reach out and ask for prayer. It is easier to find individuals on a Christian campus going the same direction. I have listened to the anguish of many teenagers on state campuses trying to find someone who will assist them as a confidante or partner in their walk with God. It is just more difficult in that setting.

Fourthly, chapel services provide opportunities for students to hear the word of God read, prayed, meditated

on, and sung. There is a daily reinforcement of their faith. Faith is supported, not actively sought out by the professors to be destroyed. Opportunity for construction of values and beliefs produces much different results in character building than does an atmosphere of militant destruction of values and beliefs.

Last of all, life time friendships and relationships are created and maintained. It may be marital (this was certainly true for me!). It may be professional. It may be as a spiritual friend. I have numerous friends across the states and other countries that God has blessed my life with because of my journey with Christian education. Their Christian companionship has richly blessed my life.

I have worked with a number of churches through the years that have had state campuses nearby. It has been a thrill for me to see the Christian campus ministries going on in that setting. I have watched as college classes formed in our church and relationships were forged with God and faith as the very reason for that forging. I am always amazed at how so many youth were able to maintain their faith in an antagonist atmosphere.

My prayers are with our young people who choose to attend an institution of higher learning that is not Christian. Their journey will be difficult. Their faith will be tested, attacked, and ridiculed. The problem as I see it is that our families and churches are not preparing our youth to step out into this new adventure of

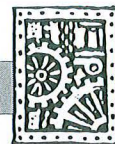
academia. They must be well-prepared to give a witness to God in their life and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ with their intimate knowledge of the Scriptures and being bathed in the Holy Spirit's power.

The blessings of a Christian education are myriad. This editorial is not to be negative against other types of institutions that do not claim to be Christian. But I think we are fooling ourselves if we think that all institutions are going to look favorably upon youth who want to pursue a walk with God that is vital and life-changing. Admittedly, many do not have that in their mission, thus making it even more difficult for Christian values and beliefs to be even tolerated.

The blessings of a Christian education from the perspective of a parent are exciting and overwhelming also. To watch your own children blossom and grow in their spirituality is a blessing indeed. My personal prayer is that you who are parents and grandparents reading this issue will seriously consider encouraging your own youth to attend a Christian college or university. I have heard very few parents express to me regrets that they did. Many have been the agonies expressed by parents who did not. We are dealing with souls, values, beliefs, character and eternity. We dare not take them lightly!



Curtis D. McClane, Co-Editor



## REAL-LIFE APPLICATION

### Why our kids went to a Christian college

Rebekah Pate

Our son was three years old when we entered him into a Montessori school in Bellevue, Washington, where we were living at the time. This was a decision that we made after long and careful deliberation. Our best hopes were realized when his teacher, "Miss Marjorie," proved to be a gifted and loving teacher who nurtured his budding academic and social skills. We naively assumed this meant that we were, indeed, wise and competent parents—young and inexperienced parents that we were!

I have to smile as I look back on this decision now, because it seems such a small step in our parenting life, and yet, we are asked as parents to make endless decisions like this one. At the time, these decisions can loom large, and their effect can sometimes have long lasting effects.

However, there are few decisions that cause as much concern to Christian parents as the decision to send your college student to a Christian school or a secular one. Ultimately, of course, it is the college student's choice, but it is ideally a decision made together, as a part of guiding and directing them as we are charged to do. ("These commandments that I give you are to be upon your hearts.

Impress them on your children. Talk about them . . . when you walk along the road." Deut. 6: 6-7)

My husband, Barry, and I met at a Christian university and have wonderful memories of the friends we made at that time, and of the experience of being challenged spiritually in that environment. Naturally, we were thrilled that our two children chose to follow in our footsteps and attend the same school, but I must confess their decision was part of a lifelong attempt at subtle persuasion from their parents!

Would I do this again? Do I recommend this path to other college students? Yes! And Yes! I am an enthusiastic "believer" in the value of Christian education. We have been spiritually strengthened as parents to see God at work in the lives of our children through the professors from whom they have learned, the daily chapel programs, and all the Christian influences by whom they are surrounded there. It has been exciting to listen to them share about their experiences working in Christian endeavors such as Wildcat Kids, Spring Break campaigns, Camp Shiloh, and so forth. As it happens, our son chose his lifetime mate during his college years and she is a lovely and devoted Christian woman whom he met

working on a Christian service project at school. We feel blessed indeed!

And yet, I hasten to add, I have seen many other college students come to own their personal faith in a brand new way when alone for the first time in a secular university, surrounded by non-believers. Also, there is a wide range of Christian schools available and I am only personally familiar with one or two of these. Some would not be a good fit for our family, just as our choice might not be right for your family. There is also the danger when sending a student to a Christian college that a parent will assume that every student there is a Christian and will behave in a predictable way. The truth is that you will find a little of everything at a Christian college, and people can be disappointing at times, since this is still the real world! Sending a child to a Christian school will not guarantee that they will leave with a stronger faith than when they arrived, although this is often the case.

As my children are nearing the end of their college years, I have reflected on what I have observed from watching my children and many of their friends during this era.

### Training our children

Training our children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” is a life long process. Whoever our child is as they prepare to leave the nest is the person they have been “in the process of becoming.” If our children arrive at the age of eighteen with a love for the Lord, it is due to many years of

planting the word, as well as other significant adults and friends who have loved and accepted them even when it was difficult. More than anything else, however, it is a sign of God’s grace

**THERE IS ALSO THE DANGER WHEN SENDING A STUDENT TO A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE THAT A PARENT WILL ASSUME THAT EVERY STUDENT THERE IS A CHRISTIAN AND WILL BEHAVE IN A PREDICTABLE WAY. THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU WILL FIND A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING AT A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE . . .**

through many answered prayers.

The choices they make once they are on their own, regardless of where they are attending school, will depend in part on how they have learned to handle the challenges of living in a worldly culture. Both of our children made a few poor choices while attending a public high school—as my daughter and her friends say, regarding mistakes made in their past “Well, I guess we were building our testimony when we did (thus and thus)!” Had they not confronted these challenges in high school they might have reacted differently in college.

### Christian friends

We all benefit from the support of loving Christian friends—this is what “Christian fellowship,” one of God’s most amazing blessings, is all about. Why would our college students be any different? We are all better people when we surround ourselves with

others who love God and want to serve Him. Regardless of the choice of schools, it seems imprudent to leave our children in an environment where they will not have the benefit of a support system to help them stay strong in their faith, such as a campus ministry, Youth for Christ, or at least good Christian friends with whom they have regular contact. Most secular universities are so intent on multi-cultural diversity and “tolerance” that Christians are often persecuted for their unwillingness to accept all lifestyle choices as well as any form of spirituality. It seems to me that college students who are left without Christian fellowship in that culture are in a very precarious position.

### Making the choice

The choice for a Christian school can involve some sacrifices in terms of opportunities.

While many Christian schools offer a better academic experience than large universities due to the one-on-one contact with professors, many prestigious universities can offer resources, career opportunities, and networking connections that might be harder to come by in a smaller Christian university. Scholarship opportunities based on sports talent or

specialized academic abilities will also be more difficult to match with a Christian school. These are factors that have to be weighed by each family based on their importance and relative value. The secular university may offer the opportunity for more knowledge but very often, the Christian university will provide your college student with the opportunity to gain knowledge and wisdom. (“Blessed is the person who finds wisdom, for she is more profitable than silver” Proverbs 3:13-14).

God has promised to hear our prayers and the parent who prays for wisdom and discernment regarding this important decision can feel much more peace about the choice that is made. In the end, however, this is a time of “letting go” and truly relinquishing our children to God, who loves our children even more than we do! ❀



*Kappa Nu Literary Society, David Lipscomb College, 1923*

*Becki Pate and her husband, Barry, have two children, Gavin and Vanessa. They live in Plano, Texas.*



# Rochester College, Churches of Christ, and Nondenominational Christianity<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Kenneth Johnson, President, Rochester College

There are many different opinions on doctrinal and practical issues, and not all can be right; but of this we are sure: courtesy, kindness, tolerance, humility and fairness are always right. Opinions may be mistaken; love never is.

(Harry Emerson Fosdick, paraphrased.)

*Every church-related college has a mission that reaches beyond its academic focus, a mission to impact the faith of its students. How faith is impacted depends on the religious culture on the campus.*

*In shaping the religious culture of a church-related college, administrators have a moral obligation to be true to the interests of the college's founders. For some colleges, that interest is very specifically defined and controlled by a denominational hierarchy. For others, that interest is debated and concluded within informal denominational structure. For colleges related to the Stone-Campbell movement (i.e., restorationist Churches of Christ and Christian Churches), neither of these methodologies functions to define the desired campus religious culture.*

*When there is a lack of formal process or written material detailing "the interests of college founders," each generation of college leaders must responsibly accept the challenge of shaping and/or maintaining the appropriate religious culture. That task often must be accomplished in a climate of substantial difference of opinion on some religious matters.*

*At Rochester College, we want to be faithful to our "ownership" group, known as Churches of Christ. At the same time, we recognize the overriding obligation, intended by college founders, to be faithful to Christ. In our search for faithfulness, we asked the question, "What should be the religious culture at a college associated with Churches of Christ?" We sought to identify an answer that could be reduced to writing and serve as a guide for future generations of college leaders. What follows is that answer.*

## Introduction

When Rochester College was serving primarily students from Churches of Christ, much about this college's religious roots was automatically understood by prospective students and their families. Consequently, little formal material was written to document who we are, theologically speaking. Today, this lack of written definition creates substantial uncertainty for our non Church of Christ constituents and, in an era of change among Churches of Christ, increases the possibility of being misunderstood or of moving in an unintended direction.

As the college enters a new stage in its development—becoming a larger, stronger and more diverse academic institution—it is imperative that our faculty, administration, and trustees can clearly and responsibly articulate who we are in light of the biblical text, religious tradition, Christian history, and contemporary interest in nondenominational Christianity.

At the outset, we acknowledge the unique differences between a Christian college and the Christian church. The college is not the church. Nevertheless, we do recognize the tremendous potential of a Christian college to be a great blessing to the evangelistic and discipling ministries of the church of God.

Secondly, we acknowledge the dilemma of strongly defending a commitment to nondenominational Christianity while being a member of the Church of Christ. Whether

Churches of Christ *are or are not* a denomination does not impact our passion for nondenominational Christianity. Thus, using capital C to denote our fellowship group and lower case c to denote the universal body of Christ, we shall proceed to call all of us in Churches of Christ back to our roots, praying that our churches will once again become *known in their communities* as independent groups of Christ-following disciples who let nothing divide them from each other but sin, and who individually wear no name but *Christian*.

Thirdly, we believe the message of Jesus recorded in John 3:1-21, the "born again" are in the Kingdom of God, is a reasonable parameter of fellowship by nondenominational Christians.<sup>2, 3</sup>

Finally, at the outset, we recognize that the early years of our movement on the American frontier were dominated by a call to unify all Christians, explicitly recognizing **not** that denominational membership precludes salvation<sup>4, 5</sup> **but** that the creedal requirements of denominationalism hinder the cause of Christ, making a *nondenominational* situation *preferable*.

## Changing Times

Through the years Rochester College has had a religiously diverse student body. The magnitude of that diversity is increasing in two significant ways:

- Churches of Christ students are much less homogeneous, theologically speaking, than a generation ago.
- The number of students coming to us

from other Christian backgrounds is increasing as enrollment increases.

Additionally, the community of believers identified as the Churches of Christ is undergoing change. As a new generation of church leaders picks up the torch of biblical New Testament Christianity, traditions of recent generations are being tested against the biblical text and sometimes found unsupported or no longer expedient. As a result, our fellowship finds itself in conflict between traditionalists and

**OUR YOUNG ADULTS ARE MORE INCLINED TO PURSUE SATISFYING EXPERIENCES OF FAITH THAN TO ARGUE OVER DOCTRINES THAT DIVIDE . . .**

nontraditionalists. When the conflict is serious, both appeal to the biblical text (and/or silence of the text) as their authority.

In the midst of this change is arising a keenly perceptive generation of young adults wanting Christian **unity** who are vocally opposed to argumentative posture, particularly by harsh judgments against others in whose lives they see the fruit of the Spirit. As a result, our young adults are more inclined to pursue satisfying experiences of faith than to argue over doctrines that divide God-fearing, Christ-exalting, Bible-believing, honest, obedient<sup>6</sup> persons.

**Religious heritage of Churches of Christ**

Churches of Christ trace their theological roots to the first-century church. Practically speaking, however, the religious group known today as the Churches of Christ is generally acknowledged to have emerged in frontier America.

Almost simultaneously, from New England to Kentucky, in the late 1700s and early 1800s, a number of preachers and frontier Christians in a variety of denominations became dissatisfied with certain religious teachings bound on them by their denominations or associations. They resolved to leave their denominations and associations to present themselves before God as “Christians only.”

The founders of Rochester College were a part of this movement, often known within as a *restoration* movement. Championed by O’Kelly/Haggard/Stone/Campbell, et al., the movement, at its roots, was strongly opposed to dividing Christians over creeds.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the primary thrust was Christian **unity** based on objective reading of the biblical text.

With regard to noncreedalism and unity, Dr. S. Morris Eames, biographer of Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), writes the following:

*Alexander Campbell’s . . . framework for Christian unity allows many differing views . . . One can entertain almost any doctrine he chooses, but he does not impose this favorite doctrine on another mind . . . When a man can read*

*for himself what the scriptures say, when he has learned to read with a critical mind and with the best linguistic tools at his command, then no authoritarian religious body can enslave his intelligence or the operation of his free mind.*<sup>8</sup>

James W. Lowbor, in reviewing the nature of restoration congregations in 1906, commented, “it should not be forgotten that, with them, faith is an intensely personal thing, and . . . every man has [the] right to formulate his own faith.”<sup>9</sup>

This same open position is endorsed by some conservative leaders within the movement today. Cecil May, president of Magnolia Bible College until August 1, 1997, wrote in an article entitled *The Restoration Plea*, “People who are just Christians, and look only to Scripture for direction and authority, are free to believe and do whatever they see Scripture to say”<sup>10</sup> This does not suggest that May endorses all of the varying beliefs held among Christians. Rather, it is to say that he understands our plea to include openness within the framework of community.<sup>11</sup>

The movement, however, did not generally preserve this openness. Instead, Campbell’s followers soon began to reduce theological freedom in favor of an unwritten creed. Eventually, some even proclaimed that Christians should fear—or eliminate<sup>12</sup>—every vestige of theological diversity. Today, after nearly two hundred years of rigorous theological inquiry and

debate, the movement does not look like its primary roots. Profitable and open dialogue known at times in the nineteenth century became lost by the twentieth century as powerful voices assumed control of restorationist publications and ultimately separated from or silenced other voices.<sup>13</sup> The present **public** image of Churches of Christ—“They insist they are the only ones going to heaven”—is quite distinguished from our ancestors’ insistence: “Christians only, but not the only Christians.”<sup>14, 15, 16</sup>

For generations, arguments over theological details have produced division within the movement. Today, there are perhaps thirty different groups under the name Church of Christ or Christian Church. Most of these groups do remain in some measure of fellowship. However, what began with a commitment to congregational autonomy has today in some persons become a crusade for philosophical/theological control over a world-wide network of *restorationist* churches. **That crusade threatens our future as a community of believers.**

**Emphasis on nondenominational Christianity**

In the early years of the movement, the careful and critical reading of the biblical text yielded understandings inconsistent with some creedal positions among the denominations. The “new” understandings were defined as nondenominational, and



believers accepting these teachings then discontinued or avoided membership in the denominations, insisting that they were/are members of only the universal church of God. However, over the course of nearly two hundred years, the nondenominationalists have come to look very much like a new denomination.

Today, persons in other religious groups *do not* acknowledge that Churches of Christ are *nondenominational*. Rather, they believe that restorationism has resulted in the creation of at least three denominations: (1) Christian Churches<sup>17</sup>, (2) a cappella Churches of Christ<sup>18</sup>, and (3) Disciples of Christ. Admittedly, each of the three does have its own name, distinct doctrinal positions, and separate fellowship group. Rochester College was founded by the segment identifiable as a cappella Churches of Christ.

Today, most members in Churches of Christ still do insist that they are nondenominational. Moreover, to emphasize their nondenominational position, some individuals insist their only membership is in the universal church of Christ rather than in a Church of Christ. Some congregations similarly identify themselves with signage such as “the church of Christ meets here” to further avoid any semblance of a denominational-looking name.

On the other hand, some members of Churches of Christ acknowledge that their heart for nondenominational Christianity is increasingly unfulfilled as

dialogue and open discussion are eliminated in many Churches of Christ, replaced by creedal tests of fellowship.

### **Rise of community (nondenominational) churches**

During the final three decades of the twentieth century, a significant change reshaped the American religious scene. Many old-line Protestant churches (Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, etc.) shrank while conservative “independent” churches (Southern Baptist, Assembly of God, Church of God) grew.

However, in an even more dramatic change, a whole new *community church* movement arose. Springing up all over North America, these churches spawned a renewal of the term *nondenominational*. These community churches are characterized by a spirit of firmness on certain core issues, but given the diverse roots of their membership they practice theological accommodation reminiscent of that reported in the early stages of our movement.<sup>19,20</sup> Typically, these community churches reflect conservative characteristics:

- They revere the Bible as the divinely inspired Word of God.
- They seek deeply felt personal experience with God.
- They encourage traditional moral values.
- They regard as Christian anyone who has trusted Jesus to be his/her personal savior.
- They allow a variety of religious

thought and conviction within each congregation.

- Many are immersionist, either as a required mode or as an optional mode for believers' baptism.
- They have no denominational superstructure, but in some cases they do have loose associational ties.

While the new wave of nondenominational churches is similar in many respects to the pioneer years of our movement, significant differences do exist between today's typical nondenominational community church and today's typical Church of Christ.

**MOREOVER, WE SHALL BE COMPELLED TO BE TOLERANT AND HUMBLE TOWARD OTHERS OF DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING SINCE WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT TRUTH DOES NOT ORIGINATE IN ANY PERSON OR INSTITUTION BUT IN THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE.**

### **Renewal of nondenominational commitment among Churches of Christ**

Growing out of the remarkable national interest in the community church movement, we are now seeing a phenomenon among Churches of Christ across the USA in which some congregations are asking whether our “name” carries so much “baggage” that our *nondenominational* commitment is

clouded. This new experience among Churches of Christ is yielding congregational names like Christ's Community Church; Central Community Church; Covenant Fellowship, a church of Christ; Christ's Church; Grace Church; Oak Tree Church; Servants of Christ; Assembly of Christ; New Covenant Christian Fellowship; and Yale Community Church of Christ.

Of these names, Dr. Mac Lynn writes, “These changes represent a fresh effort to be non-denominational and do not necessarily express a desire to disassociate from the body known as the Churches of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> One can no longer assume that all a cappella restorationist congregations will have a standardized name form, and **driving this change is our historical commitment to nondenominational Christianity.**

### **Religious foundation of Rochester College**

Conceptually, the religious foundation of Rochester College is rooted in the *ideals* that shaped the *Restoration* Movement. These ideals call for the **unity** of all believers on the basis of faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Bible as the written Word of God. Objective reading of the biblical text and emphasis on nondenominational Christianity have been cornerstones of college history.

### **Biblical theology**

College personnel have continually called the church to be **biblical**. The

resurging worldwide interest in the biblical text is causing even our own past teachings within Churches of Christ to fall under stronger internal scrutiny. While we value our history, we must recommit our future to the authority of scripture. **We must not fall into the same trap** that led to the 19th century Restoration Movement on the American frontier, namely, that the biblical text had taken second place behind traditional church teachings. Our fundamental assertion was, is, and must remain that **biblical understandings hold sway over traditions.**

With this commitment, that our theology must spring from the biblical text, we shall avoid spiritual stagnation by remaining open to insights which may come from fresh study of the Word under the best scholarship available in any generation. Moreover, we shall be compelled to be tolerant and humble toward others of different understanding since we acknowledge that truth does not originate in any person or institution but in the pages of scripture.

### The Role of Tradition

Church tradition, creeds, and other extra-biblical sources are respected for the wisdom and insight they reveal, but they are not accepted as authoritative. That which a Christian chooses to do or believe which the Bible has not specifically addressed and which is not unfaithful to the spirit of the sacred text is considered to be a matter of opinion and potentially a human tradition. Such opinions and traditions, from whatever

source, must not be held as a condition of Christian fellowship or bound on other believers (Romans 14:22).

Nevertheless, some segments within Churches of Christ do have a more restrictive perspective than others. Because of the breadth of theology and practice within our fellowship, we must ultimately address the question: Which *set* of commonly accepted practices among a cappella Churches of Christ (i.e., which segment) shall be the primary point of reference for administrators and trustees as college decisions are made day after day? Making this choice is an inescapable responsibility of college leadership.

*Without the bonding effect of a commonly accepted authoritative tradition, no community can hold together for long or in good order. And yet, it is precisely such authority which . . . freedom must at times*

*. . . break through, otherwise the conservatism of institutions and traditions becomes progressively more stifling and restrictive . . . Yet again, individual liberty given free reign almost inevitably becomes destructive of society . . . So the key question remains: how to achieve . . . the necessary . . . bonding tradition, while at the same time allowing sufficient . . . freedom for innovation and change . . .*<sup>22</sup>

Choosing to be free from the more restrictive traditions does not move us to ignore our heritage within the Churches of Christ nor to become avant-garde. None of our colleges has

made such a choice. Neither trustees nor administrators of Rochester College desire that result. Yet, we recognize that some, who are fully convicted that their more narrow position is required by God, will be critical should the college choose to identify with a more open (less restrictive) tradition among Churches of Christ.

**THAT RANGE (OF BELIEFS) . . . WILL BE UNSUITABLY BROAD FOR SOME FRIENDS OF THE COLLEGE AND UNSUITABLY NARROW FOR OTHERS. FOR THAT REASON THE COLLEGE WILL ALWAYS BE UNDER PRESSURE TO MODIFY ITS POLICY AND/OR PRACTICE.**

### Tolerance But Not Liberalism

On the other end of the spectrum, away from the restrictive conscience, are modernists and liberals. The liberal treats as fable and myth much of what non-liberals revere as absolute truth. True liberals are rare in Churches of Christ.

However, some who are inclined toward restrictiveness are also inclined to place *into the liberal pigeon hole* those nonconformists and progressives and others who are just independent thinkers among us who question certain traditional practices in the congregational life of Churches of Christ. This bothered Batsell Barrett Baxter who wrote, "Some are quick to brand almost anything that is different from the habits and customs of our

past as liberalism" and when this happens "fight against real liberalism is hindered."<sup>23</sup>

Rochester College must hold firm against genuine theological liberalism. We must declare our *range* of toleration somewhere in the large middle-ground, removed from the unrestrained permissiveness of the liberal and removed from the control efforts and aggressive name calling by those with a restrictive conscience. That *range*, however defined and whether expressed by policy or practice, will be *unsuitably broad* for some friends of the college and *unsuitably narrow* for others. For that reason the college will always be under pressure to modify its policy and/or practice.

### Open Dialogue

For a Christian liberal arts college to develop and preserve its reputation as an institution of academic integrity, it must defend the freedom of open dialogue. Allowing open dialogue can be painful to some who are convicted that only their understanding of truth should be communicated. Yet open dialogue facilitates the search for and the finding of truth.<sup>24</sup>

Religious people outside Churches of Christ do expect us to hold to our convictions in everything we do. God has the same expectation. To violate one's personal conscience by one's own action is wrong for us *and for others*. However, that does not require us to isolate ourselves from the Christ-affirming religious community around us nor to prevent them from ever

contributing to issues and events in which we share common interest. Furthermore, greater interaction will heighten community awareness of our historical appeal for and present interest in Christian **unity**.

Furthermore, the value others receive from our Bible-based theology is virtually eliminated when our views are couched in a context that claims a corner on truth, and when we are unwilling or unprepared to engage in effective, open dialogue. Conversely, we have a valuable opportunity to strengthen our faith and broaden our relationship with God when we learn from those who conclude differently than we do. This value, too, however, is virtually eliminated if we close our minds and determine never to dignify their logic and experience with a fair and open-minded hearing.<sup>25</sup>

This is not to say that our traditional "Church of Christ" practices must change should we in our study and discussion find a more open theology. Rather, we may simply need to discontinue proclaiming or implying that our traditional way to practice is the *only* perspective on that practice that is acceptable to God. Likewise, we should discontinue using vocabulary which implies that the Lord's church is exclusively one and the same as the group of persons who worship in the set of congregations generally known in their communities as the Church of

Christ. *Such exclusivism is neither practically nor morally acceptable.*

### Conclusion

In articulating our position we should emphasize that ***our primary commitment is biblical theology***. Flowing out of that commitment are some understandings that distinguish us, including (1) our emphasis on open dialogue/open attitude, (2) our encouragement of nondenominational Christianity, and (3) our convictions about practices in a cappella Churches of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

These commitments and understandings, formally expressed, should keep Rochester College true to the most noble aspirations of her founders, as well as her present Church of Christ constituency, and should allow adequate freedom to interact with others who do not share all of our convictions and doctrinal positions.

As we encourage the biblical text to be openly discussed in the noncreedal, nondenominational atmosphere of our ancestors, sensitive Churches of Christ in the region will benefit *because* the same open spirit that builds strong Christian liberal arts colleges also builds strong congregations of Christians. Additionally, many churches other than Churches of Christ will be positively impacted by our biblical focus when their students come our way for a degree and then return to their own family churches. ❁

### Notes

- 1 Revised. A substantially identical monograph of the same title was released December 15, 1998.
- 2 Jimmy Jividend: "The scope of fellowship must be broad enough to encompass all people who are in fellowship with Christ . . . must include all stages of maturity . . . must include even people of differing opinions . . . even extends to people with doctrinal misunderstandings . . ." "Ins and Outs of Fellowship," *Gospel Advocate*, 140 (February 1998), 19-20.
- 3 In the model of F. LaGard Smith, this is no less than the "extended family" as distinguished from the "close family" (conscience fellowship) and the "immediate family" (congregational fellowship). F. LaGard Smith, *Who is My Brother* (Malibu, CA: Cotswold Publishing, 1997)
- 4 Alexander Campbell: "I address all denominations of Christians . . . it is high time that the Christians in these United States consider the occasions of their division and strife." *The Christian Baptist* (Volume II, Number 12, 1824), 162.
- 5 F. D. Srygley humorously, yet wisely, observed that there are Christians "in saloons, on the race track, at the theater, in the ballroom, around the gaming tables, in the calaboose, behind the jail doors, in the penitentiary, and on the gallows." Why then, asks Srygley, should it be surprising if some of them should be found "in the most respectable and pious religious denominations . . .?" Srygley adds, "If there are no Christians in any denomination, it is the only place except hell they have all kept out of." ["Are Christians in All Denominations?" in *The New Testament Church*, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1910, page 65ff.)]
- 6 Obedient to the extent of their knowledge, as James A. Harding reckoned the woman whom he immersed in 1884 as she continued in her childhood church: "All that I want you to do is walk in the light as it shines along your way. I don't ask you to come out of the \_\_\_\_\_ church till your understanding of the word of God requires you to do it. You should follow God, not man, in religion; hence I do not ask you to do as I say but to do what you understand God to say." Lloyd Cline Sears, *The Eyes of Jehovah*, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1970), 225.
- 7 Creedal expressions of faith are essential in formulating and stabilizing faith, and in communicating the essence of what one believes. Creeds are objectionable when they become tests for Christian communion, dividing the church over tenets not expressly taught in scripture. Thomas Campbell (1763 to 1854), *Declaration and Address*, reprinted (St. Louis: *Mission Messenger*, 1975), 46.
- 8 S. Morris Eames, *The Philosophy of Alexander Campbell* (New Jersey: Standard Press, 1966) 94 and 80, respectively.
- 9 James William Lowbor, *The Who and the What of the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1906), v.
- 10 *Preacher Talk*, Magnolia Bible College, October 1997, 3.
- 11 The emphasis on individual liberty of interpretation assured that diligent persons in the movement were free, and supposedly capable, to interpret the Bible *for* themselves, but not necessarily *by* themselves. This tension between corporate responsibility and

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- individual freedom within the bounds of “common sense” was inherent in the movement’s theology from the beginning. [M. Eugene Boring, *Disciples and the Bible*, (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1997) 25-26.]
- 12 “to suspect and to disfellowship” Gary Holloway, *Christian Studies*, Number 15/1995-96, 53.
  - 13 For a historical look at some of these voices, see C. Leonard Allen, *Distant Voices*, (Abilene: ACU Press, 1993).
  - 14 G. C. Brewer, “More Criticism,” *Gospel Advocate*, 71 (March 14, 1929), The big idea of being “Christians only” entered the little minds of a later generation and was perverted into “we are the only Christians.”
  - 15 Barton Stone, Alexander Campbell, David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, G. C. Brewer, and Jimmy Allen are among the many church leaders who have written on this issue. N. B. Hardeman, namesake of Freed-Hardeman University, stated it well when he said: “I do not claim, and have never done so, that those who have taken no stand with denominations are the only Christians upon the earth; but here is the contention: Having simply believed and obeyed the gospel, we propose to be Christians only. Now there is a wonderful difference between saying that we claim to be Christians only and we claim to be the only Christians. The Bible clearly predicts that the Lord’s people, some of them, will be engaged in a state of confusion; and the Lord bids his people to come out of that state and just stand, if you please, as humble Christians only.” [*Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons*, vol 2 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1923), 252-253.]
  - 16 As early as 1929, G.C. Brewer, highly respected leader among Churches of Christ in the first half of the twentieth century, saw a trend among some emerging leaders in Churches of Christ to eliminate the openness in the church. The emerging leaders were insisting on conformity on a whole list of “issues” in order to be reckoned a Christian. Brewer blamed the change on “big preachers” who lacked the education and balance of earlier leaders in the movement, and who enforced their sectarian view by leading their followers to “suspect and disfellowship” those with whom they disagreed. Ultimately, these “big preachers” **repositioned virtually the entire a cappella restoration movement from “not the only Christians” to “the only Christians.”** By 1958, when Rochester College was founded, this narrow view was dominant among a cappella Churches of Christ. In the late twentieth century and since, many voices within Churches of Christ worked to eliminate the narrow view, but changing the public image will be difficult as long as a vocal and combative group perpetuates the view.
  - 17 A very large number of congregations in this group are known as Churches of Christ. Thus, the annual directory of these churches is entitled *Directory of the Ministry: A Yearbook of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ*.
  - 18 The preface to the directory of these churches has the following comment: “This edition . . . represents a continuing effort to bring to the user a compilation of current information relative to those congregations aligned with the “Restoration Movement” which are known for their *a cappella* music.” Mac Lynn, *Churches of Christ in the United States*, (Nashville: 21st Century Christian, 2000), vii.
  - 19 Joseph Thomas observed that followers of Barton W. Stone in Kentucky in 1810-1811 “do not divide and contend . . . but they continue upon the plan they set out upon—to let nothing divide them but Sin, and all search the scriptures for themselves, and act according to their understanding in the fear of God.” *The Travels and Gospel Labors of Joseph Thomas* (Winchester, VA: J. Foster, 1812), 88.
  - 20 A reading of comprehensive histories of Churches of Christ in America reveals much variation in the breadth of theological accommodation in the late 1700s and early 1800s, ranging from quite broad to quite narrow. Specific insights can be gained from works like these: Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Stephen D. Eckstein, *History of the Churches of Christ in Texas 1824-1950* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1963); C. Leonard Allen, *Distant Voices* (Abilene: ACU Press, 1993).
  - 21 Mac Lynn, *Churches of Christ in the United States* (Nashville: 21st Century Christian, 2000), ix.
  - 22 James D. G. Dunn, *Christian Liberty: A New Testament Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 78-79.
  - 23 Batsell Barrett Baxter, *Gospel Advocate*, 42 (October 17, 1968), 657. Baxter identified real liberalism as the denial of the inspiration and authority of the Bible, the denial of the divinity and messiahship of Christ, and a minimizing of the importance of any of the clear-cut commandments of God.
  - 24 At the Nashville Bible School, founded by David Lipscomb and James A. Harding, “every student or teacher could present his views openly and without prejudice.” They “invited speakers on different sides of the [issues of unusual controversy] so that students could learn every side of a question.” After one such series, Lipscomb commented, “We have done our best to help you. You will have to study your Bibles and make up your own minds.” Lloyd Cline Sears, *The Eyes of Jehovah* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1970), 146-147.
  - 25 “We must be bold enough to acknowledge Christ-centered faith wherever we find it . . . Without giving anything away we can honor their faith, learn from their faith, be rebuked by their faith, be prompted by their faith, read the words of their faith, and sing the feelings of their faith.” F. LaGard Smith, *Who is My Brother*, (Malibu, CA: Cotswold Publishing, 1997), 112.
  - 26 Among the practices that distinguish a cappella Churches of Christ are congregational autonomy, elders and deacons in fully organized churches, weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, a cappella singing in worship services, and immersion of believers (Mt 28:18-20, Mk 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, Gal 3:26-27, Rom 6:4).





## Challenging the Norm

Emilie Shepberd

I have a fear that if students who attend Christian colleges are not careful, they will fall into a lifetime of surface Christianity. When I stand in the presence of God on the last day my surface will be laid bare and what will matter is that which has sunk in and become a part of me, good or bad. What matters is whether or not that part of me has or hasn't become fused with Christ. All the rest is vanity (Stanley Shipp once told me that if I didn't have Christ, all the rest was "worms, baby, worms"). We must, therefore, commit ourselves to asking the hard questions, challenging our beliefs and allowing Christ to sink in.

As a recent Christian college graduate, an unwilling member of generation X and a missionary in Europe, I am plagued by questions and controversies regarding my faith and church, and I am searching for leadership and guidance from my elders regarding all of it. I don't presume to know what everyone in my generation is asking themselves or even what they are thinking, but I know I am not alone in searching for more profound answers to questions of faith.

I grew up in a Christian home full of lively discussion on every subject from Narnia to grace. Being used to a situation like this, I am often disappointed and even more often disgruntled by the lack of depth of thought that I find in many churches and Christian universities. I would like to see Christians more focused on equipping young people to address the questions that they are likely to confront daily or when asked to defend their faith. Such as:

### The Questions

How do I reconcile my belief in one truth with my belief that I don't know all the answers?

How do I know that the interpretation of the Bible using the apostolic example as a guide for Christian life and worship is right?

How can I have confidence in approaching the throne of grace (Heb. 4:15) when I want also to be humble in the sight of God and other people?

What do I say to someone (with kindness) to render him or her aware of the need for the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

How can I confront a thoughtful, intelligent, Christian person that believes to be in the right and is doing something that I believe to be contrary to the commands of God?

How do I stand up and say that the "I'm O.K. you're O.K." mentality is faulty?

How do I confront a post-modernistic world with an unwavering God?

### Examine your faith!

I don't want to criticize the institution of Christian colleges. I only want to encourage those that make up Christian college communities to examine their faith and after doing that, to challenge those around them to do the same. In my years at Harding University I was fortunate to be surrounded by men and women of profound faith and from them I learned a great deal. In view of this, I surprised myself with how often I was led into the trap of conformity. In seeking to please or simply not offend I often allowed my faith to become a mere façade—and I know I was not alone. On the Last Day no one will be able to say "I have enough faith for this other person, too." No one (except Christ) will be able to take the blame for my own failings. This, though, does not make us exempt from being accountable to one another for our faith. Although I was surrounded by men and women of faith, I can remember only one person coming to me personally in my four and a half years at Harding and asking; "Emilie, how's your relationship with God?" I will also admit to

rarely challenging others about their faith. I was comfortable in my clothing of "faithishness" and was not driven to re-clothe myself (Col 3:12) with the fruit of a true faith.

**SO MANY OF US WALKED THE WALK AND TALKED THE TALK AND CONFORMED OUR LIVES TO APPEAR TO BE CHRISTIANS WITHOUT ACTUALLY TRYING VERY HARD TO BE CHRISTIANS.**

### Missing: transformation

It is just this faithishness that is the killer. It is exactly this façade that is so easy to use while at a Christian university. I always had the sense that so many students were left to go along, unchallenged and insincere in their faith. What I observed the missing element to be was transformation. So many of us walked the walk and talked the talk and conformed our lives to appear to be Christians without actually trying very hard to *be* Christians. I now understand that to be the exact opposite of the command of God that is found in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Often, as students at Christian universities, we allow ourselves to be passively conformed to the pattern of a Christian university instead of being actively transformed by the power of Christ.

This ailment, I believe, is aided in a way by professors and preachers telling us *what* to think as opposed to teaching us *how* to think. So, how do we learn how to think? I see this process as containing four components: prayer, reading, observation and discussion.

### Prayer

Prayer, the open communication that we can have with God, will guide us in our search for truth. We must be willing to communicate with God, ask him for guidance and in turn, listen for his response. Without prayer that which we learn will be in vain.

### Reading

Reading: The Bible is a required text. If we begin by reading the Bible as if we had never read it before we will uncover a plethora of thoughts and

ideas that we had never seen. Being totally familiar with that which God has already told us will insure that we do not stray far from Him. We must also compare our ideas with others, by reading books written by Christian and non-Christian authors, challenging ourselves to ask why we believe a certain way, all in view of the Bible.

### Discussion

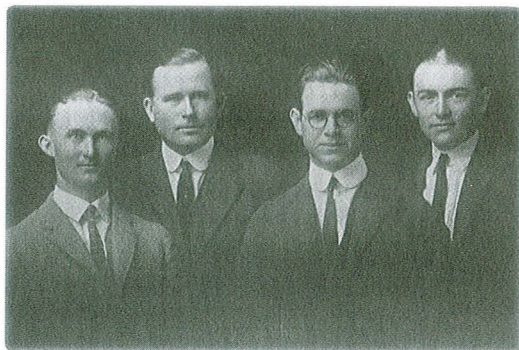
Discussion: the advice and debate with older, more experienced Christians helps us to re-think and revise. Our elders are an important source of information that we cannot risk losing by failing to consult. We must ask why. The questions that go along with any good investigation are "who, what, where, when, and why." It is fairly easy to get the first four; it is the last that we need to exercise in learning to think.

### Observation

Observation: we must watch and learn and we must be faithful in conserving the knowledge of the mistakes that were made in the past so that we do not make the same mistakes in the future, becoming like the "stiff-necked Israelites."

### Thinking develops faith

These four components I have just listed must be developed in order to be able to maintain a strong faith. We must have the capacity to think in order to be transformed by the Word of God.



School "Quartette," David Lipscomb College, 1923 (l to r: Robert M. Willbanks, E. Gaston Collins, David F. Bryant, M. Clarke Mercer)

Without training, the runner will never finish the race. We must be transformed from being "faithish" to being faithful. All too often, we allow the appearance of Christianity (having the right answers, dressing the right way, being in the right club, attending the right church, sitting on the right side when



The Bobbed Hair Club, David Lipscomb College, 1923

**ALL TOO OFTEN, WE ALLOW THE APPEARANCE OF CHRISTIANITY (HAVING THE RIGHT ANSWERS, DRESSING THE RIGHT WAY, BEING IN THE RIGHT CLUB, ATTENDING THE RIGHT CHURCH, SITTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE WHEN POLEMIC ISSUES ARE DISCUSSED) TO BE THE GOAL OF CHRISTIANITY AND SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY WE FORGOT HOW TO BE CHRISTIANS.**

polemic issues are discussed) to be the goal of Christianity and somewhere along the way we forgot how to be Christians.

This, however, is not the end of it. I cannot pass the blame for my own failings. I can only pray to the Most

High to give me and others diligence in searching the scriptures, profoundness of thought, gentleness in dealing with others, endurance in sharing the gospel and the consistent desire to be transformed into His image, all the while anchored to the rock that is Jesus Christ.

Be we members of generation X, Y or Z, I hope that we will all hold firmly to the Word of God in word, thought, and action. Indeed, I recall to mind the words of Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and obey his commandments, for this is the whole of humanity." Without God we are nothing. Let us be something, let us be Christians. ✿

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## Frailty and Fruitfulness in Communion

Elton D. Higgs

A grain of wheat and a grape are fragile fruits. By themselves they will neither greatly nourish nor produce fruit, but if either one is combined with others of its kind, the aggregate of them can be transformed into food and drink that will sustain us and make our hearts glad. And if either one is planted as a seed, it will be fruitful and produce more of its kind.

Jesus spoke explicitly about the spiritual implications of a grain of wheat being planted: in order to bear fruit, it must die to what it is and be transformed into something else—must die in order to achieve its full potential of life. Even if it is joined with others and made into bread, it must endure the transmutation into flour. The grape also finds its larger purpose in being crushed into juice to make a drink or to flavor some food. Either the grain of wheat or the grape loses its potential if it is consumed by itself.

As we partake of these products of wheat and grapes which have been changed in a natural way, we do well to remember that we as individual “grains and grapes” must be ready to be transformed spiritually into what God can make of us together, as well as being acutely aware of what that requires of us as individuals. Jesus Himself did not pull back from going through death in order to become our Redeemer, knowing that there was no way to be what God needed Him to be except to lose all that He was. When we share these symbols of His body and blood, we are renewing our consent to be continually transformed from puny “grains and grapes” into the Body of Christ, not as that body walked the earth, nor even as it hung on the cross and was buried, but as it was raised to perfect and nourishing Life, filling all of us with divine power: that which brings us together in Him. ✿

*Here is another in our regular series of meditations on the Lord's Supper by Elton Higgs. A prolific writer, our friend Elton wears many hats. He is an Integrity Board Member; Elder at the Trenton, MI, Church of Christ; husband to Laquita; and Papa to Rachel. He has recently retired after many years as a Professor of English at the University of Michigan. We hope you are blessed by his thoughts.*



## The Greatest Blessing of a Christian Education

Wade Osburn

What leads a parent to say to his or her high school child, “You’re free to go to any college you like, but we’ll only pay for you to attend a Christian school”? Perhaps Christian parents are sold on a Christian education because they realize that there’s something special about a Christian school. After all, the kids have to go somewhere to college, so it might as well be a place that will be a blessing to them and their future. When it comes to the blessings of a Christian education, it’s hard to single out just one. I’ve attended two Christian colleges and one state school and can testify to the benefits of life on a Christian campus. The list of blessings may be small, but it’s impressive.

If you’ve attended a Christian college, you’re likely familiar with their reputation for Christian match-making. This is certainly a blessing, especially for students looking for a Christian mate. Right on the tail of this blessing is the benefit of Christian friends—not just a few, but a whole assortment from which to choose. The abundance of Christian friends and potential Christian mates for their kids are two

blessings that convince many parents that a Christian school is “the place” for their children.

### Professors praying

The Christian college student is also less likely than their secular school counterpart to be viewed as a “number.” The size of the school is of course a factor. But even professors at the larger Christian schools tend to view their students in a more meaningful manner. Very rarely will a professor at a secular school make an extra effort to foster a relationship with his or her students outside of class. It does happen, but only with a select number of students, commonly referred to as “teacher’s pets.” On the Christian campus, however, the odds are greater that professors will invite entire classes to their homes for dinner, lend an ear to a struggling student, or pray with someone after class. This is a blessing to students away from home and family.

### The Bible

A fourth blessing involves the Bible. What I’m talking about is not the Bible’s prevalence on Christian campuses; that goes without saying.

I'm talking about the way the Bible is viewed and how it's taught. The Bible in a Christian classroom is typically treated with some level of respect, as though the professor and students are both subject to its direction. The Bible in a secular classroom, however, stands on equal footing with the Qur'an, the Tao Te Ching, and other religious texts. The Christian scriptures in a secular setting are examined coldly, as if under a microscope, with the professor striving to maintain distance from the text to avoid the appearance of subjectivity. In a word, it's "lifeless."

That's not true on a Christian campus. You might not agree with the professor's view on a biblical topic or passage, but you can be fairly certain

that he or she shares the view that the scriptures are not only helpful, but in some way authoritative as well.

### The greatest blessing

As beneficial as these blessings are, they all fall short of perhaps the greatest blessing that a Christian college has to offer our children, and that is role models. Role models are plentiful on a Christian campus. The importance of role models in a teenager's life is immediately evident when you consider the question: How do young people learn how to live? It's not from reading about it in a book—that's for sure. They learn how to live by watching other people live. They watch their parents. They watch their

youth minister. Unfortunately, they keep an eye on celebrities too.

The group they especially like to watch is their peers, particularly those they "look up" to—literally and figuratively.

It starts in high school when the pre-teens begin idolizing their senior-high peers in the church youth group. If the senior high boys enjoy singing songs during the devotional, then, in the minds of the freshmen boys, singing during devotionals is suddenly "cool." If the junior girls are committed to sexual abstinence in their dating relationships, then, all of a sudden, abstinence is popular with the freshmen girls too. The importance of singing songs of praise to God and staying sexually pure may be weekly topics in the youth group Bible studies, but if there aren't models for the younger kids to follow, then it becomes an uphill battle for them.

This process seems to start all over again when college life begins. Young men and women who were leaders in their youth group back home suddenly begin watching their older college classmates. They watch and they learn.

They seem to subconsciously wonder, "Is it possible to enjoy college to the fullest and yet remain a deeply committed Christian?" Typically, they'll see a few members of the junior or senior class who are out having a good time and leaving their Christian beliefs in their dorm room. But what they'll also see is a number of others who have chosen not to sacrifice their faith for college fun. They'll see young men

and women who are well-liked, fun to be around, nice-looking, interesting, and intelligent, who are at the same time dedicated, chaste, generous, compassionate, and prayerful. All of which will convey the message that you don't have to be dull and boring to be a Christian man or woman.

This is a point which shouldn't be taken lightly, because many non-believers would like your son or daughter to think that their faith in Jesus will prevent them from enjoying life, laughing, and having a good time.

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### THEY MAY SEE THE CAPTAIN OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM IN TEARS WHEN ONE OF HIS TEAMMATES IS BAPTIZED . . .

Some of you may be thinking, "Well, I don't necessarily want my son or daughter to think that the Christian life is only fun and games." From my experience, I think they'll see a nice balance. Not only will they see senior leaders enjoying themselves, they may also witness a student body President who quietly helps out each Saturday morning at a nearby soup kitchen. Or they may see the captain of the football team in tears when one of his teammates is baptized at a campus-wide devotional.

I could give you the names of at least six men who I watched for two years in college. They were juniors and seniors while I was a freshman and a sophomore. The guys were right in the middle of the "in crowd." They excelled in sports, were excellent speakers, great entertainers, and great



Girls' Basketball Team, David Lipscomb College, 1923





Laquita M. Higgs

**H**ave you ever trained a horse or a mule? I certainly haven't, but I understand that it can be done, so long as one has patient perservance and some knowledge of how to go about it. The Amish, with their old-world ways, including the avoidance of automobiles, have had plenty of experience in the art of training horses. They also have large families, and an Amish couple, Michael and Debi Pearl, believe that "the same principles the Amish use to train their stubborn mules" can be used to train children, as it is "the same technique God uses to train His children."

The Pearls' books, *To Train up a Child* and *No Greater Joy*, vols. 1 and 2, were sent to me recently by Cathy Murdy, a friend in Round Rock, Texas. After reading the books, Cathy and Matt decided to homeschool their seven-year-old daughter, Rachel, so that they could give her more training to equip her, in Cathy's words, "with right attitudes and morals" before sending her to public school. Cathy notes that the training technique advocated by the Pearls "has certainly eliminated a lot of fussing and bad attitudes around here, mine included. While we still have areas needing improvement, the change is noticeable to all our friends and family."

I was curious about a book with such a high recommendation. In the "Introduction" to their first book, Michael Pearl writes, "The emphasis [of this book] is on the training of a child before the need to discipline arises. It is apparent that, though they expect obedience, most parents never attempt to train their child to obey. They wait until his behavior becomes unbearable and then explode. With proper training, discipline can be reduced to 5% of what many now practice."

### Training vs. discipline

The Pearls give many examples of the way to train a child. They advocate setting up training sessions in obedience as early as possible in a child's life, rather than waiting until unacceptable behavior is manifested. They emphasize that "training is not discipline. Discipline is a part of training but is insufficient in itself to effect proper behavior. Training is the conditioning of the child's mind before the crisis arises. It is preparation for future, instant, unquestioning obedience" (*Train*, 4).

Training is to be given calmly and in a gentle tone of voice, though it is reinforced with "the rod," which for the smallest child would be only a thump on the hand, a pat with a small

leaders. They were always in the limelight, always making others laugh, and always living like Jesus. I knew each of the guys personally, but never spent much time with any of them. Mostly, I just watched and learned. Four of the six have served as overseas missionaries since graduating from college. Another is involved in full-time ministry. These are the kind of role models you'll find on a Christian campus.

What about the professors? Students watch them as well. At a Christian school, especially a small one, a student may be in class with a teacher on Monday and on the softball field with him the following Saturday. All the while, the students watch. They may wonder, "How's my professor going to react when he's thrown out at home plate?" or "What's my teacher going to say when I tell her that my mother just died?" If you ask a student whether they care how their professors act in the classroom or on the ballfield, they'll probably say no. But deep down inside they do care. Of course, not every teacher will stand out in their mind. But a few will, and they will unknowingly serve as models for the students they teach. The students carefully watch their professors

because they want to know how one might live as a Christian adult in the "real world," which is where they'll be in a few short years.

### Secular schools

Some who are reading this attended secular schools and are probably thinking, "Where do secular schools fit into the discussion? Can't Christian role models be found there, too?" Of course they can. Some of the greatest role models can be found at state schools; they're just not as plentiful. They're not as visible either, particularly at the larger schools. The blessing of a Christian college is that an incoming student can't help but notice the role models; they're everywhere you turn.

As much as I loved my Christian education, I don't think about my alma mater very often. Some of my friends may wonder why I still haven't made it for Homecoming and why my car isn't decorated with a school decal. It's probably because when I left my alma mater, I took the greatest blessing with me. For me, it's the vivid memory of a few older students who showed me how the Christian life can be lived—at a time in my life when I didn't have a clue. ❀

*Wade Osburn is an alumnus of Harding University, Searcy, AK, and Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX. He is the Theological Librarian for the Institute for Christian Studies in Austin, TX. He and his wife have a 3-year-old daughter who will undoubtedly be seen at one Christian college or another sometime around 2015.*

“switch” for the toddler, or a little more for the older child. Of course, this raises the question of what to do if your child is already older. It’s never too late to begin, write the Pearls, at least up to the age of twelve or so.

Elton and I realized that we had developed the habit of telling our Rachel three or four times to do something before expecting her to obey. We’ve trained her to do that, say the Pearls. Of course, such a situation quickly turns into nagging and then frustration and anger. We’ve made some “mid-course corrections” toward prompt obedience, and it certainly does make life easier. Rachel’s happier and more pleasant, too.

## **BUT IN DEALING WITH YOUR TEENAGER’S SOUL, YOU ARE LIMITED TO PERSUASION AND COUNSEL BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT.**

### **What about “the rod”?**

A concern for some parents today is the use of “the rod.” The Pearls firmly believe in the truth of all those verses in Proverbs that talk about using “the rod of discipline” on a child in order to “deliver his or her soul from hell” (Prov. 23:14), but they also put a lot of restrictions on the use of the rod. For example, the rod should never be applied in anger, nor should the hand be used. Instead, suggest the Pearls, use a wooden spoon or a thin willow “switch.”

If a child is properly trained and the close chords of love have been maintained, the rod will seldom have to be used, but those strings of love can be badly damaged when a parent tramples on a child’s feelings and does not treat him with respect. Then, there is “no longer a bond, but . . . a cloud between them” (*Train* 26), but it is never too late for the parent to apologize and work hard at trying to reestablish trust.

The Pearls deal with a lot of specific problems, especially in the two volumes of *No Greater Joy*. An example is whining. “There is nothing cute or lovable about a whining ‘brat.’ To allow a child to whine and disobey is to mold a personality and character that you will eventually find hard to like” (*Train* 23). Never reward whining, advise the Pearls.

### **Advice about teens**

They have some very practical, sensible advice about teens. Of course, the ties of love and respect and the training in obedience should have occurred much earlier, so for the disobedient teen, “It is too late to train him. . . . You must change your approach from hot demands to respectful persuasion. . . . Understand your limitations and your authority. You have the authority to rule the home. . . . But, in dealing with your teenager’s soul, you are limited to persuasion and counsel based on mutual respect” (Joy, I, 51,53).

You won’t always agree with the Pearls, but their practical advice will

most certainly help you be a better parent. Take the time to get their books, or at least the first one, *To Train up a Child*. The books may be obtained from The Church at Cane Creek, 1000 Pearl Road, Pleasantville, TN 37033 for \$4.00 each, or \$2.50 if 8 or more books of the same title are ordered. They also have a web site: <<http://NoGreaterJoy.org>>.

### **Suggestions**

Some missionary friends in Brazil, Dan and Hope Owsley, recommend a listing of the thousand best books for preschoolers and children in grades 1 through 6. It is called a “Reading List from Classical Christian Education Support Loop Web Site” ([www.classicalhomeschooling.org/celoop](http://www.classicalhomeschooling.org/celoop); find the link to the list from this site). The list is very thorough, even listing good children’s Bibles.

Leroy and Ouida Garrett, in their newsletter, “Once More with Love,” highly recommend two books by Bill Bennett, *The Book of Virtues* and *The Moral Compass*. “They are companion volumes that bring together some of the best moral stories in all English literature. Ideal for family reading or for a gift.”

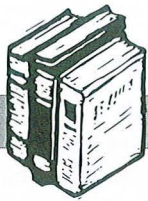
Fran Birdwell of Troy, Michigan, suggests Bill Cosby’s series of books on moral issues for children. Each has a story illustrating a moral lesson. One of her grandchildren found especially useful the one entitled *So What!*, which gives help in dealing with bullies.

The popular Harry Potter books have elicited so many strong feelings, both adoring and derogatory, that I read the first one out of curiosity. J.K. Rowling, a marvelous storyteller who easily commands the reader’s attention, taps into the current interest in magic with her main character being in a school to learn the art of magic. I would not forbid a child to read the books, but I strongly suggest that a parent read them also and discuss with the child the nature of magic as shown in the Bible (e.g., Deut. 18:9-12), where it is either diabolical or turned around to demonstrate the power of God. I was a bit uncomfortable with the playful approach to magic in the story, resulting in the morality of it all being a bit too fuzzy. But that’s the very thing that should generate a good discussion with your child. Is it being used for good or for evil? Was that made clear in the story?

Remember to e-mail us with your suggestions at <[ehiggs@umich.edu](mailto:ehiggs@umich.edu)>. ❁

*Laquita Higgs, a graduate of Abilene Christian University, has generously offered time, talent, and spiritual direction to the Integrity ministry for more than 20 years. She is occupied as a professor at the University of Michigan, and as parent to seven-year-old Rachel.*

*Says Laquita, “Alexander Pope, the 18th century English poet, said, ‘Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined.’ Accordingly, we call this regular feature of parenting advice ‘Bending the Twig.’ All of us as Christian parents should be committed to a great deal of unashamed ‘twig bending’ for the Lord, and we need each other’s help to do it.”*



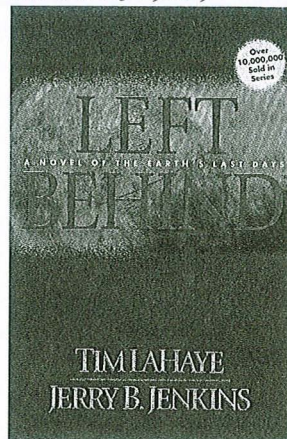
## The "Left Behind" Series

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins  
Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995. ISBN 0-8423-2912-9

Reviewed by Bruce Bryant

I'm on a plane right now, on my way to Japan for a business trip. The couple across the aisle from me is reading them. The flight attendant has just finished the seventh book and is about to buy the eighth. I've just finished the seventh book. My wife, Noreen, is in the fifth book and is on pace to pass me soon. Our next-door neighbor has read the first three and is borrowing the fourth book from us. I've been reading them as they appear in paperback but I'm going to pay a few extra bucks to get the latest one in hardcover.

The #1 best-selling "Left Behind" series of novels is making a big splash. Surely you've heard of them, but in case you haven't, here's a little background: Timothy LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins are collaborating on a series of books dramatizing end time prophecy, playing out an interpretation of events depicted in Revelation and other books of prophecy. The story starts by detailing the "Rapture," where all the true followers of Jesus Christ plus all children instantly disappear. It continues with the rise to power of the



Antichrist, plagues and judgments, and the spread of Christianity among those who were, for one reason or another, "left behind" to face the period of tribulation. The story unfolds through the lives of Rayford Steele, an airline pilot, about one third of whose passengers disappear on a transatlantic flight, his chief flight attendant Hattie Durham, Rayford's daughter Chloe Steele, Cameron "Buck" Williams, a brilliant young photojournalist, Tsion Ben-Judah, a prominent Jewish scholar, and numerous others whose paths they cross in the perilous post-rapture world.

There are currently eight books in the series, each about 400 pages long, but with their generous margins and

spacing, and relatively straightforward delivery, they are a fairly easy read. Four more are planned for a total of twelve. Here are the titles so far:

Book #1: *Left Behind*: shock and devastation as the nonbelievers cope with and try to explain the disappearances.

Book #2: *Tribulation Force*: assembly of a core of believers, ascent of the future antichrist to power.

Book #3: *Nicolae*: consolidation of antichrist's power, continued judgment on the Earth.

Book #4: *Soul Harvest*: growth of the underground Church.

Book #5: *Appolyon*: gathering of the saints in Jerusalem and a plague of demon locusts on nonbelievers.

Book #6: *The Assassins*: a plan to assassinate the antichrist.

Book #7: *The Indwelling*: resurrection of the antichrist, investigations of his murder.

Book #8: *The Mark*: a new world religion, and the mark of the beast.

Book #9, *The Desecration*, is scheduled for release on October 30th, 2001.

A parallel "children's" series is also in progress; 14 of a planned 36 brief

paperbacks have been published. In addition, the first five books of the main series are available on CD and cassette. For more information, you may consult their website at [www.leftbehind.com](http://www.leftbehind.com).

### Not terrific literature . . .

Experienced readers would agree that the literary style is a bit campy, and that the situations and events are at times unlikely as Jenkins and LaHaye attempt to capture all of the end-time events portrayed in scripture in a plausible way, along a reasonable timeline, as they play out in the experiences of real people. You'll often find yourself rolling your eyes or saying, "that's a bit of a stretch," but you'll also find yourself looking at your bedside clock at 3:00 a.m. and thinking, "just a few more pages . . ." With their fast pace and loveable, if somewhat contrived, characters, I have a hard time putting them down.

### . . . But terrific witness?

Let me shift gears for a moment now and tell you about my friend Bill, who turned me on to the "Left Behind" series about a year and a half ago.

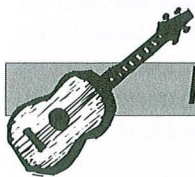
Bill is a fellow believer whom I've known for many years, both before and after our having, by separate paths, found Christ. Bill and I hung around together as youngsters, and stayed in touch during college and throughout his successful career in the US Navy. Despite having already read the "Left Behind" series, he brought them along to re-read during a recent 6-month

tour in the Mediterranean Sea. He didn't get a chance to reread them, however—instead, he became the “Left Behind” librarian. Bill devoted a whiteboard in his quarters to keeping track of the waiting list for his “Left Behind” series. About half of the seafaring members of the “Left Behind” book club were already believers, and were entertained and strengthened by them. Of those who were not believers, two were genuinely converted as a result of discussions that followed their reading, and most of the other nonbelievers started asking questions, a clear indication that seeds were

planted and starting to germinate.

Unmistakably, the “Left Behind” series is an entertaining read, but their real impact is much larger: while most popular Christian literature edifies believers but stays generally within the confines of the Kingdom, I share this anecdote of my friend Bill to demonstrate the crossover effect of the “Left Behind” series. Jenkins and LaHaye, by compiling a set of gripping novels, are actually reaching beyond its gates and even drawing some outsiders in. And *The Mark's* 17 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list is evidence that Bill's story is probably not unique. ✿

*Bruce Bryant, a member of Integrity's Board, maintains the journal's website when he's not lending his “Left Behind” books to various neighbors and relatives. He and his wife, Noreen, have two children.*



## MUSIC REVIEW

### Departing at Gate J-33-3: Merlin, U2, and Christian Worship

Ron Cox

In the last volume of his space trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, C. S. Lewis reintroduces into a modern setting the character of Merlin the Magician. As I recall, Merlin's role is something akin to Harvey Keitel's character in *Point of No Return*: he is The Cleaner who comes to clean up a seemingly

irreparable mess. (For you parents of young children, a related yet perhaps better analogy is Geri, the older man whom Al calls to repair Woody the Cowboy's severed arm in *Toy Story 2*.) What stands out for me about Lewis' Merlin is how the wizard is presented as pagan Christian, a person who is generally faithful to Christ yet still pagan in daily life, especially his use of

magic. Indeed, it is precisely because he straddles these two worlds (faith and magic), not being fully converted to one from the other, that he is awakened in the present time. His incomplete conversion makes him the ideal henchman for the battle against the hyper-rationalistic antagonists in the novel, villains who promote a scientifically culled master race (à la contemporary concerns about eugenics). He can meet the enemy's manipulation of reality (via science) with his own manipulative powers (magic) and thereby resort to strengths to which his fully converted comrades lack access.

#### Modern-day Merlins

Recently, it seems the rock group U2 has assumed a similar position as Lewis' Merlin, straddling the two worlds of faith and modern paganism. In the case of U2, the term “pagan” refers to their status as a rock and roll band. Standing in line of people waiting to enter into an arena where U2 was to perform, I witnessed the stereotypical behaviors that make “pagan” and “rock and roll” belong in the same sentence: people intoxicated by various substances, empty beer bottles strewn along the line, guys ogling, and occasionally calling out to female passers by, profanity, etc. Perusing the concert program while standing, I found that the quotations from band members highlighted therein were congruous with the atmosphere of the line. This was a rock concert I was entering into, with all the raucous

partying thereto appertaining.

#### The concert begins

Once inside, the concert began. The music was nearly deafening, the crowd was pulsating, the lead singer was strutting about the heart-shaped catwalk. Yep, this is rock ‘n’ roll. There even seemed to be the typical platitudes sung to the beat of bass and drums and the melody of an electric guitar:

*Love, lift me out of these blues  
Won't you tell me something true  
I believe in you*

And I must confess at this point that while not a party to any of the vices listed above, I nonetheless thoroughly enjoyed myself in this deafening, pulsating, raucous setting.

#### Worship? Here?

I must also confess that it was in this environment I found myself worshipping. And no, I don't mean worshipping the devil; I was worshipping the same person the band appeared to be worshipping, namely God.

Worship at a rock concert? How in the world can one worship while amidst the sound of deafening musical instruments, pulsating crowds (I think even I—with my notorious lack of rhythm—pulsated), and a rock singer with long hair and sunglasses (at night, inside) running around on the stage?

Where is the possibility for worship in a rock concert? In this concert, it was perhaps when at the beginning of

one song the singer yelled out (as if on the telephone): “Jesus, this is Judas.” He proceeded to sing:

*Haven't seen you in quite a while  
I was down the hold, just passing time  
Last time we met it was a low-lit room  
We were as close together as a bride and groom  
We ate the bread, we drank the wine  
Everybody having a good time except you  
You were talking about the end of the world*

*I took the money, I spiked your drink  
You miss too much these days if you stop to think  
You led me on with those innocent eyes  
And you know I love the element of surprise  
In the garden I was playing the tart  
I kissed your lips and broke your heart  
You, you were acting like it was the end of the world*

*In my dream I was drowning my sorrows  
But my sorrows they learned to swim  
Surrounding me, going down on me  
Spilling over the brim  
In waves of regret, waves of joy*

*I reached out for the one I tried to destroy  
You, you said you'd wait until the end of the world.*

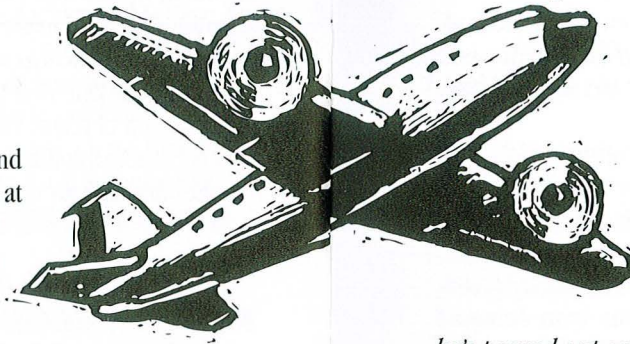
A song about betrayal—the ultimate betrayal—and the possibility of forgiveness—surely, this is just about a man and a woman. Not Judas and Jesus. (If it's about Judas and Jesus meeting at the end of the world, it is an interesting if controversial idea about radical forgiveness.)

A little further into the concert, the singer spoke of a fellow rock and roller (Joey Ramone of the Ramones) who died of cancer recently. He spoke of how Ramone listened to one of the songs from U2's latest album (*All That You Can't Leave Behind*) on the day he died. Here, the two worlds openly collide: “He took a song about a hangover and made it into a gospel song.” The singer continues by singing:

*In a little while  
Surely you'll be mine  
In a little while . . . I'll be there  
In a little while  
This hurt will hurt no more  
I'll be home, love—  
In a little while*

*I won't be blown by every breeze  
Friday night running to Sunday  
on my knees—*

Shortly after that the singer kneels down and in prayer speaks quietly (for a rock concert) the words of Psalm 116:



*What can I give back to God  
for the blessings*

*he's poured out on me*

*I'll lift high the cup of salvation  
A toast to God  
I'll pray in the name of God  
I'll complete what I promised  
God I'll do  
And I'll do it together with his people  
And then the music intensifies and he sings out loudly (for a rock concert):*

*I want to run  
I want to hide  
I want to tear down the walls  
That hold me inside  
I want to reach out and touch the flame  
Where the streets have no name*

In the vast arena, surrounded by

thousands of people and witness to strobe lights and flashing video screens, I related well to a song called “The Fly” (a song that has shades of a Jonathan Edwards sermon):

*A man will beg  
A man will crawl  
On the sheer face of love  
Like a fly on the wall  
It's no secret at all*

And when the singer yelled out “God is in the house” I wasn't surprised. As he later sang, the Spirit moves in “mysterious ways:”

*Johnny take a dive  
With your sister in the rain  
Let her talk about the things  
You can't explain  
To touch is to heal  
To hurt is to still  
If you want to kiss the sky  
Better learn how to kneel . . . (on your knees boy!)—*

*One day you'll look back  
And you'll see  
Where  
You were held how  
By this Love  
While  
You could stand  
There  
And not move on this moment  
Follow this feeling*

*It's alright—It's alright—it's alright  
She moves in mysterious ways  
It's alright—it's alright—it's*

*alright  
We move through miracle days  
Spirit moves in mysterious  
ways—*

And there was even exhortation to follow Jesus. The singer called us to not forget those poor who cannot provide for themselves, especially those in the two-thirds world whose governments are indebted to first world banks. He called for imploring the government to encourage the first world banks to forgive the debt, and



encouraged us with the examples of others who cared for the downtrodden and dispossessed:

*One man come in the name of  
love  
One man come and go  
One man come to justify  
One man to overthrow*

*In the name of love  
What more in the name of love*

*One man caught on a barbed  
wire fence  
One man he resist  
One man washed up  
on an empty beach  
One man betrayed  
with a kiss*

*What more in the  
name of love*

*Early morning April  
four  
A shot rings out in  
the Memphis sky  
Free at last  
They took your life  
They could not take  
your pride*

*What more in the  
name of love*

Finally, after the second encore, the concert was coming to an end. But the singer gave one last word of

exhortation in the form of a new ballad dedicated to a Burmese woman in house arrest for advocating democracy. (Could it be a rock concert without an appeal for Amnesty International?) The song is called “Walk On” and takes its cue from the Letter to the Hebrews (especially chapter 11):

*And love is not the easy thing  
The only baggage you can bring  
Is all that you can't leave behind*

*And if the darkness is to keep us  
apart  
And if the daylight feels like it's  
a long way off  
And if your glass heart should  
crack  
And for a second you turn back  
Oh no, be strong . . .*

*You're packing a suitcase for a  
place none of us has been  
A place that has to be believed to  
be seen  
You could have flown away  
A signing bird in an open cage  
Who will only fly, only fly for  
freedom*

*Walk on, walk on  
What you've got they can't deny  
it  
Can't sell it or buy it  
Walk on, walk on  
Stay safe tonight*

*Home . . . hard to know what it  
is if you've never had one  
Home . . . I can't say where it is  
but I know I'm going home*

And he closes out this song with a benediction, partly spoken, partly sung:

*To the almighty  
Thank you  
Hallelujah  
Hallelujah  
Hallelujah*

And they walk off stage. In the aftermath, I can barely hear, my head throbs, I have been standing for 2+ hours. I cannot deny it was a rock concert (and that I am in my mid-thirties). But I also cannot deny that I experienced joyful worship. I hope others were surprised by this joy as well.

## Appendix

The question of the extent and nature of U2's (all or part of the band) faith is complex and one about which the band has not been explicit. It is even more complicated to analyze their songs from a religious perspective. As with all contemporary art, U2 songs are intentionally polyvalent; “Mysterious Ways” may refer to the Holy Spirit (another U2 song explicitly refers to the Holy Spirit in the feminine—not unheard of in the history of Christian thought) or it may refer to the moon as a deceitful vixen (cf. Dame Folly in Proverbs) or simply to a woman

dancing. The band embraces this polyvalence, even in terms of religious meaning. Bono, the lead singer, states: "Maybe we just have to sort of draw our fish in the sand. It's there for people who are interested. It shouldn't be there for people who aren't."

I think more germane to the above essay is the question of whether U2 can straddle both worlds and, if so, why should they? Christian musicians generally fly their colors clearly and so serve believers by encouraging their faith. U2 clearly has access to a much larger audience and one arguably in need of hearing the gospel. Yet, to garner this audience U2 has (especially in the 1990s) assumed the stereotypical form of rock 'n' roll performers, with reputations for wild antics and wild lifestyles. While they did intentionally assume this image, they in fact lived it (and likely still do). They are a rock band, with all the characteristics thereto appertaining. But still, they

## Notes

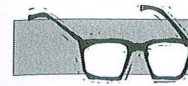
Bill Flanagan, *U2 at the End of the World* (New York: Delacorte, 1995), 480. This is a curious twist on Isaiah 6:9 and its interpretation in the Gospels (Mark 4:12 and parallels); are the songs parables for those who have ears to hear or something less intentional?

The ideas expressed in this essay stem from my attending the U2 concert at the Palace in Auburn Hills, May 30, 2001 as well as a more involved comparison (I am currently working on) of C. S. Lewis' Merlin from *That Hideous Strength* and the rock group U2.

*Ron Cox is an Associate Professor of New Testament at Rochester College in Rochester, MI. He and his wife, Shelly, have three sons: Samuel, Paul, and Joel. Ron is completing his Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Notre Dame.*

continue to sing "hallelujahs" in one form or another. Lewis' Merlin straddling his two worlds (and not just pretending to be in either) may be an appropriate metaphor. That this Merlin didn't receive salvation until his very end suggests that he could have always slipped back into the pagan. U2 may very well someday slip back into the rock world, fully disconnecting from their faith. Or they may actually—and for God's grace—manage to resort to strengths many of us are incapable of accessing. It remains to be seen.

One last note: the title of this essay ("Departing at Gate J33-3") stems from the jacket of U2's album *All that You Can't Leave Behind*. Here, the band are pictured at the DeGaulle airport in France. Above them is a gate sign which, reportedly, they had doctored to read "J33-3"—an allusion to Jeremiah 33:3: "Call to me and I will answer you." Bono calls this "God's phone number." ❁



## A CLOSER LOOK

# Let Not Many Become Teachers

Joyce Hardin, Ed. D.

The first time someone told me that I would be a teacher, I was in the fifth grade. I had just answered a question when the teacher pointed her finger at me and said, "You are going to be a teacher!" I felt completely insulted. To me, teachers were old, they led dreary lives, and their impact on the world was limited to a classroom of students. I planned to do something exciting with my life, such as becoming a nurse or an airline stewardess or a movie star. Certainly I was capable of being more than "just a teacher."

I was told that same thing many more times during the next several years, but it was my high school principal who helped me see that teaching was to be my calling. He asked me to help him organize a future teacher group, and when I told him that I did not plan to be a teacher, he simply replied, "Yes, you are. You just don't know it yet!" I helped organize the club and then spent several days of each month during my senior year substituting in elementary and junior high classrooms. I had to admit that teaching was more fun than I thought it would be, but I still did not feel it was for me. Then, one winter day, I was sent to a new school to substitute. I was appalled at the poor condition of the

building and the obvious lack of educational equipment and resources. There were no lesson plans available and, for the first time, I was completely on my own. Among other things, I had a spelling bee, played a math game, told stories, and worked individually with several children as they read silently. The day flew by and I loved every minute of it. Later that week, I was walking down town and heard a child say in an awed voice, "That is my teacher!" When I turned to look, it was one of the students in that fourth grade class, and she was talking about me! I was hooked! That was the moment that I knew that I was being called to be a teacher.

## The call to teach

I have spent most of my adult life as a teacher and a teacher educator. As a teacher, I have learned to recognize the tremendous impact, both positive and negative, that a teacher can have on his or her students. As a teacher educator, I have seen it as my mission to help others recognize their calling as teachers and to accept the responsibilities that entails. Part of that mission has also been to elevate teaching to the level which it deserves so that those who are called to the profession will

never view themselves, or have others see them, as “just teachers.”

### **Biblical value**

The value and importance of teaching is emphasized in the New Testament when James writes, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment” (3:1). He immediately follows this statement with his discourse on the tongue, which is the very tool of the teacher. He tells us that “the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things” (3:5) and “that from the same mouth comes both blessing and cursing which ought not to be” (3:10). Then he concludes with what should be the credo of one who is called teacher: “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him or her

### **JESUS WAS CALLED BOTH RABBI AND TEACHER.**

show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom” (3:13).

Teaching is recognized in the New Testament as a valued part of the church. At Antioch, teachers were ranked along with prophets as those who sent out Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1). In Paul’s list of gifts in the church in I Corinthians 12:28, teachers came second only to apostles and prophets. Again in Ephesians 4:11, Paul writes that, “He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping

of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” William Barclay (*The Letters to James and Peter*, 1976) suggests that teachers were particularly valued since apostles and prophets often did not stay long in one place but instead would leave behind teachers whose responsibility it was to lead the new converts toward a mature faith.

The teacher in the New Testament church replaced the rabbi of the Jewish religion with some significant differences. To the Jews, the rabbi was considered to be practically holy. The very name means “my great one” and was used to indicate high regard and great respect. According to Barclay, a Jew’s responsibility to the rabbi could even exceed that toward his parents. As a result, while there were good and spiritual rabbis, it was also easy for the rabbi to become the kind of person whom Jesus spoke of in Matthew 23: “They love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi.” He admonished his disciples “not to be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers” (Matthew 23:8).

Jesus was called both Rabbi and Teacher. Those who were close to him (Peter, Nathaniel, Judas, Nicodemus, Mary, the disciples) called him Rabbi, an indication of the respect and honor they had for him. However, J. L. Kelso (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1980) notes that in situations where extreme deference

(whether sincere or not) is intended, he was generally referred to as Teacher or Master.

Jesus referred to himself as Teacher in Matthew 26:18 and John 13:13. We often call him the Master Teacher.

The role of the teacher in the church is a significant one. It is the teacher who assumes the responsibility of guiding others toward truth, whether as a primary teacher in the Bible school or as discussion leader in an adult study. One could even argue that the role of the pulpit preacher is more that of a teacher than an evangelist. In listing the qualifications of elders in I Timothy 3, Paul writes that they should be able to teach. However, in spite of their significance to the body, little is done in terms of identifying and preparing teachers for this significant role. If the church is to grow, this has to change.

### **Teacher preparation**

Research in secular education has resulted in an accepted body of knowledge which defines qualities and characteristics of effective teachers. Teacher preparation programs plan their curricula so as to help prospective teachers develop these attributes and become successful in the classroom. If these are important in the secular world, they are even more critical for those who teach spiritual values. I would suggest that the church also needs to develop training programs to help its teachers become more effective. In the development of curriculum, it can use secular research

but with the perfect example. Jesus was the master teacher and in his ministry we can see all the elements that modern research has determined should be an element of effective teaching.

To begin with, an effective teacher must have a high level knowledge of the subject matter. While it is impossible to teach what one does not know, it is possible that a small amount of knowledge can do a great deal of damage. Jesus knew the scriptures and often quoted from them, moving his disciples to a better understanding of what was taught. Good examples of this are in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7) and in his discussion with the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-20).

### **Knowing how to teach**

Along with knowledge of the content, the effective teacher must also have knowledge of how that subject matter needs to be taught. Lee Schulman (“Knowledge of Teaching” in *Harvard Educational Review*, 1987) has coined the term “pedagogical content knowledge” to describe the knowledge that bridges content knowledge and pedagogy and distinguishes the understanding of a content specialist and a teacher of that content. An example of this is the Bible scholar who can translate Greek perfectly but who lacks the skills necessary to communicate that knowledge effectively from the pulpit or in the classroom. Jesus not only knew the scriptures but he had the ability to



temper that knowledge with teaching methodology that varied with the situation. Take, for example, Jesus' encounters with the Pharisees. In some instances, he quoted their own teachings back to them (Matthew 16:1-

### **WHEN THERE IS NO CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR, LEARNING HAS NOT TAKEN PLACE.**

4; Matthew 15: 3-9), as he condemned their actions. At other times, he used parables to teach them (Matthew 20:44 - 21: 1) or gave them a demonstration to make a point (Luke 5:23-24).

In addition to knowledge about content and pedagogy, an effective teacher must have an understanding of how learning takes place. Unfortunately, there is no one accepted theory of how humans learn but rather various theories depending upon the academic discipline (i.e. psychology, sociology, neurology, or education) from which the researcher begins his hypothesis. The one common denominator, however, is that all agree that learning results in a change in behavior. When there is no change in behavior, learning has not taken place. Teenagers who can quote scripture or win Bible Bowl contests but do not integrate that knowledge into behavior as they make moral decisions, have not learned what they were supposedly taught. Jesus recognized this when he taught the rich young ruler in Matthew

19:16-22. The young man knew the scriptures but Jesus pressed him to change his behavior and the scriptures tell us "he went away grieved" — with the lesson unlearned.

### **Learning styles**

In addition to knowing about learning theory, the effective teacher must also recognize that there are different styles or modes of learning. This is the human element and differs with individuals and between age groups. Again, there are various learning style models (Dunn and Dunn, Fischer and Fisher, Gardner, etc.) but all would agree that learning is influenced by environmental, emotional, sociological, and physical factors. Good teachers know whom they are teaching and what they are capable of learning.

Even adults react to learning factors. For example, the lowering of lights to make a more meaningful worship experience creates an effective learning environment for some individuals. For others, however, it simply makes them sleepy because they need bright light for an effective learning environment. Jesus always knew his audience and he chose his lessons and his words accordingly. To some he spoke in parables and to others he gave examples or asked difficult questions. At times he spoke from a mountain side or from a boat or to a large crowd or a selected few. As the master teacher, he recognized that one environment and one size did not fit all.

Today's teachers must also have a knowledge of ethnic diversity and be sensitive to racism, class-ism, and issues of gender. James Banks (*Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice*, 1994) suggests that one way this can be done is by helping teachers clarify and analyze their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions toward their own and other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. The rabbis of Jesus' time would have had a difficult time with this concept. Their answer was to reject and withdraw from anyone who was different from themselves. Jesus, on the other hand, taught an significant lesson to a Samaritan woman (John 4: 9-30) and made another Samaritan the hero who helped a Jew after his own people refused to do so (Luke 10: 30-36). He held up a poor widow as an example for giving (Mark 12: 42-44) and ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10, Mark 2:16, Luke 15: 1-2). When we look at the lack of diversity in many of our churches today, one cannot help but wonder who would be more comfortable there, the rabbis or Jesus? Effective Bible teachers must not only be aware of cultural differences but be able to modify their teaching in such a way as to incorporate diversity into the church family through both assimilation and example.

### **Jesus had a clear objective**

As a twelve year old boy in Luke 2, Jesus told Mary and Joseph that he had to be about his Father's business. That focus never changed. As a boy, he may

not have clearly understood all the implications of that focus but as he began his ministry, his eye was always on the cross. As a teacher, he knew what his disciples had to know and be before they could continue his work. He had a clear and focused objective. Students in my education classes learned that they had to plan lessons based on good behavioral objectives that defined the learning outcomes that they were expecting. They also learned that the expected outcomes determined the teaching methods that they would use and not the reverse. If teachers in our churches had clear objectives, there would probably be less coloring of Bible pictures or pasting cotton on cut-out lambs or filling in the blanks in an adult quarterly. Instead there would be more lessons designed to cause students to think beyond mere

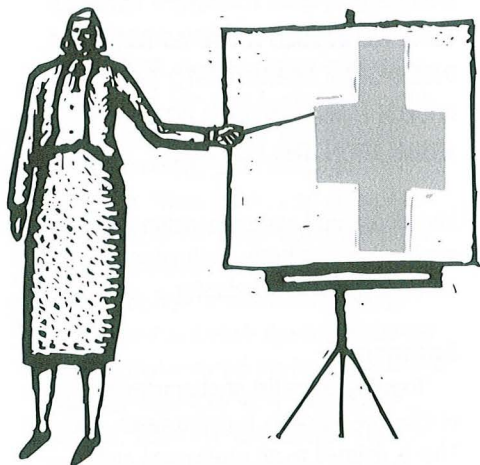
### **EFFECTIVE BIBLE TEACHERS MUST NOT ONLY BE AWARE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BUT BE ABLE TO MODIFY THEIR TEACHING IN SUCH A WAY AS TO INCORPORATE DIVERSITY INTO THE CHURCH FAMILY THROUGH BOTH ASSIMILATION AND EXAMPLE.**

knowledge and comprehension to application, synthesis, evaluation and, ultimately, changed behavior.

### **Enthusiasm**

Topping every list of characteristics of effective teachers is enthusiasm. This is defined as an excitement and

love for the content that is translated to students in such a way as to cause them to become involved learners. This does not mean that teachers are simply cheerleaders, but rather that they are able to communicate in the affective as well as the cognitive realm. Jesus was a man of emotions. He wept (John 11:35), he chastised (Luke 12:56), he joked (Matthew 7:4), and he got angry (Mark 11:14). He was not the sedentary man often pictured sitting on a rock surrounded by children, but an energetic man who overturned tables in the temple (Mark 11:15), who walked on water (Mark 6:49), who climbed mountains to pray (Luke 6:12), and who calmed storms (Matthew 8:24-27). If we want the church to become on fire with the gospel, that fire must begin in the hearts and actions of Bible teachers and preachers.



Effective teachers have good communication and questioning skills. This means that they have the ability to communicate their ideas clearly and concisely. For example, Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7) dealt with difficult subjects in a way that his listeners could easily understand. His illustrations were ones with which they could identify, such as sowing a field, attending a wedding, or building a house on a sandy foundation. Good teachers, however, are not simply tellers of information, but they also know how to ask questions in such a way as to cause their students to think for themselves and to begin to reason at a higher level. It is easy to ask questions that can be answered by telling who or what or when. It is much more difficult to ask why or what if. Jesus was a master at asking questions and often answered a question with a question (Matthew 22:41-46, Mark 10:2-3, Luke 20: 1-7).

### A Good listener

Critical to being an effective communicator is the ability to be a good listener. As a junior high teacher, I found I often changed my lessons and my teaching when I listened to my students talk, both individually and in groups. Jesus often knew what people were thinking and directed his teaching accordingly (Luke 6:8, Luke 11:17). On one occasion, he asked his disciples what they had been discussing as they traveled. When they did not answer him, he taught them a lesson about servanthood indicating that he

knew that they had been discussing which of them was the greatest (Mark 9: 33-37).

### Creative

Successful teachers are creative. Being creative does not mean simply drawing cute pictures, making attractive bulletin boards, or designing colorful power point presentations. While all of these may contribute to the effectiveness of a lesson, creativity is more than art work. It is using ordinary things in extraordinary ways so that students are able to gain fresh insights and have new experiences. The teacher in the movie *Dead Poet's Society* demonstrated this characteristic by simply asking his students to stand on top of a desk for a new perspective on the world in which they lived. An ordinary desk provided for those students an extraordinary experience. Jesus often used ordinary things in unusual ways. A barren fig tree became a lesson, not for bearing fruit, but for what faith can accomplish (Matthew 21:19-22), a fish provided money to pay a tax (Matthew 17:27), and an uneducated blind man became a teacher to religious leaders of his community. (John 9).

### Improvisation

Related to creativity is the ability to improvise and to take advantage of what educators commonly refer to as "teachable moments." Take, for example, the first grade teacher who is so caught up in teaching children to read (a laudable effort) that she fails to

take advantage of the hands-on science lesson that can be taught when one of her students brings a butterfly or a jar full of polliwogs to class. Consider the high school Bible class teacher who staunchly holds to his lesson on the prophets on the day after the teenage shootings in Littleton, Colorado. Good teachers know when to be flexible and how to make the present into a lesson for the future. Jesus often took advantage of teachable moments. When a man was let down through the roof while Jesus was speaking (Mark 2:1-12), he used the interruption to teach a lesson that emphasized the spiritual (forgiveness of sins) over the physical (pick up your pallet and walk). Five loaves and two fish not only fed five thousand men (Mark 6: 35-44) but demonstrated Jesus' power. An event as simple as plucking grain in a field became a lesson on man and his relationship to the Sabbath (Luke 6: 1-5).

### Active engagement

A good teacher recognizes that mere listening does not equal learning but rather that learning takes place when the learner is actively engaged at the cognitive level. Jean Piaget, a learning theorist, suggested that one way to accomplish this is by creating "cognitive disequilibrium." This simply means that the teacher throws the learner off balance by creating a situation or asking a question that is unexpected. In order to maintain his cognitive balance, the learner must deal with the new information and, in the process,

learning occurs. Jesus often used this technique. Take, for example, the "You have heard it said . . .but I say to you" statements made in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. Another good example is the occasion in Luke 10 when a lawyer asked "Who is my neighbor?" Rather than giving an answer, Jesus told of the man who took a journey and was beaten by thieves. As he first told about the priest and then the Levite, his listeners would have expected them to help the wounded man. Instead, Jesus introduced the unexpected, a Samaritan, and then asked the lawyer to answer his own question. His answer indicated he had learned the lesson, and Jesus simply admonished him to "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

### Control

As a teacher, Jesus was always in control. Whether he was alming a storm (Matthew 8:24-26), walking on water (Matthew 14:24-27), or on trial before Pilot (Matthew 27:11-14), it was Jesus who was the master. Neither teaching nor learning can take place when there is a lack of control on the part of the one who is called teacher. Classroom management is a critical part of teaching, whether it is quieting the voices of second graders, focusing the attention of high schoolers, or recognizing boredom in a congregation of adults. It implies "with-it-ness" or an awareness of what is happening or about to happen and the ability to manage the situation so that the

learning environment remains intact. Teachers with this ability are often described as having "eyes in the back of their heads." In Jesus' case, his eyes were everywhere. John tells us that Jesus "did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25).

### Focus on people

Carl Rogers, a noted counselor, psychologist and therapist, asserts in *Freedom to Learn* (Merrill, 1969) that significant learning depends on the attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationship between the teacher and the learner and that such a relationship should include, on the part of the teacher, realness, valuing the learner, and empathic understanding. For several years, I planned a program that was designed to encourage young people to consider teaching as a career. The keynote speaker for the first year came highly recommended and gave a marvelous performance on the stage. However, she wanted no interaction with the high school students and refused to visit or eat with them. The second year, the chosen speaker came early in order to meet the students at the door, brought several on stage with him, and spent his lunch hour talking to individuals. While his speech was less than perfect, his impact on students was immeasurable. He was warm and empathic, a people person. She was cold and analytical, a mere performer. He attracted people; she put up barriers.

She talked about teaching; he showed them what a teacher should be. Jesus, as the master teacher, was always focused on people. He demonstrated this empathy to his disciples as he touched a leper (Matthew 8:2-3), felt a woman touch him (Mark 5: 25-34), and held children in his arms (Mark 10:13-15).

### Model

Finally, effective teachers model the behavior they anticipate or expect from students. I am reminded of the teacher education professor who gave an excellent lecture to his secondary students admonishing them not to use the lecture method when teaching. He then wondered why they continued to use the lecture as their primary teaching method. Bible teachers must take particular care that they do not contradict what they teach by the lives they lead. Jesus was the perfect example to his disciples, yet he took care that they would know what he expected of them. This is perfectly illustrated in John 13 when he took a towel and basin of water, washed their feet and then said, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13: 13-15).

The fifth grader that I once was, who thought teachers could only impact a classroom of students, was wrong. A good teacher can impact the world by changing lives, one student at a time. I think of teachers who have made a difference in my life. They each met the criteria of an effective teacher but often one or more characteristic stood out as being particularly significant.

Dr. Stephen Eckstein (recently retired from the faculty of Rochester College, Rochester, MI) is one of those. I think of his knowledge, his enthusiasm for sharing that knowledge, and his ability to make his students think at a higher, more spiritual level. Most of all, he modeled for us, a Christian life style that included giving of himself and his resources and by simply being a servant. I am thankful that he chose to be "just a teacher."

James' warning against being a teacher because of the tremendous responsibility it incurs is one that needs to be heeded. However, the church needs individuals who are willing to risk a greater judgment and to do so by taking as their teacher the one who is the perfect example. Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:25, "It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master." When that happens, what a blessing it will be to hear the words "That is my teacher!" ❀

*Dr. Joyce Hardin recently retired as Dean of the College of Education at Lubbock Christian University, Lubbock TX. She has been kind enough to share this article as her tribute to another fine teacher, Dr. Stephen Eckstein, who was her professor at Eastern New Mexico University, and who has recently retired from his post at Rochester College, Rochester, MI.*



# Questions About Bible Colleges Answered

Seth Wilson

The Bible college presents itself as an arm of the church and a servant unto God. You may have a part in it, if you understand its nature, its purpose, and how you may serve God in and through it.

Many people have asked, and others have wondered and wanted to ask about the Bible college — why and how it is of any importance. We are glad to have such questions asked, and are happy to give the answers. When the editor of *Christian Life* magazine was preparing a special issue on education, he sent out to many schools five questions so clearly stated and so appropriate that we answered them rather fully, and we recommend to you both the questions and the answers.

## Unique Role of Bible College

*What do you consider your distinctive and unique role as a school in relationship to the over-all program of Christian education?*

Our work is, first of all, to teach the revealed Word of God, to build the students up in the faith and to instill in them a firm desire to know and do the will of God. In connection with this purpose, we try to educate them in the

languages, the mental sciences, the historical studies that will enable them to understand and use the Bible correctly and effectively. Various forms and fields of Christian service are taught in a practical manner for the twofold purpose of challenging students with a vision of the work which can be done, and of giving them basic skills and principles to be used in their work.

If these purposes are being served by Christian liberal arts colleges and graduate seminaries, we rejoice in their fellowship. But we are specializing in Christian service and actually putting into four and five year courses significantly more Bible than is available in both the liberal arts college and the theological seminary, without sacrificing the tools of basic education.

We honestly believe:

1. that the Bible known and understood constitutes the most important knowledge in the whole world and the only valid theology;
2. that the Bible obeyed in everyday life constitutes Christian practice;
3. that the greatest need of the world is for men and women whose lives are devoted to service in the name of Christ with ability to teach and

demonstrate His eternal truth and grace.

## Distinctive Teaching Program

*Specifically how does your teaching program incorporate the distinctive objective of your institution?*

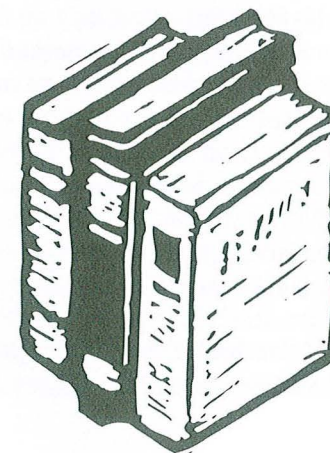
We offer to students a variety of courses suited to their various talents and proposed fields of service. But every curricular program of the college puts first emphasis upon basic Bible courses.

Our main emphasis is upon a program of five years (160 semester hours) leading to a Bachelor of Theology degree. This requires over 38 hours of direct study of the Bible itself, 30 hours in a chosen major field, 14 hours of Greek, about 46 hours of Bible-related and ministry courses and additional hours of general education.

The most significant additional factor in our Bible program is the training received and the service rendered by our students through projects and activities of Christian service while they are pursuing their course of study. Scores of churches are served by regular preaching ministry of students. Some students serve churches regularly in leadership of music; many more make frequent contributions to church services through special musical presentations. Several are regular teachers in Sunday Bible Schools. A large group is devoted to the promotion of missionary interest and knowledge both on the campus, with weekly meetings, and by visiting churches all over the middle west. They

give of their money and encourage others to give to the evangelization of the world, accepting suitable goals and responsibility for support of missions. Students take part in many youth rallies and service camps. They conduct or assist many evangelistic campaigns in local churches. Some students participate in the production of Christian radio programs. Several groups present Christian programs in churches and meetings over a wide area. Others have organized special services of witnessing and encouragement every week to persons in rest homes. Several write for Christian publications and produce local church

**WE HAVE REGULAR WEEKLY FACULTY MEETINGS, USUALLY LASTING ABOUT TWO HOURS, IN WHICH WE EXHORT ONE ANOTHER AND PRAY TOGETHER THAT OUR ALLEGIANCE WILL BE, NOT TO THE COLLEGE, BUT FIRST TO CHRIST AND THEN TO SERVING THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST.**



papers; sometimes this includes translating and publishing material for missionary use.

This kind of activity is certainly not forced upon the students. Most of it is designed and undertaken on their own initiative. The motivation for it and the methods are taught by the professors, who are zealous Christians both in the classroom and outside.

Another important factor in our working toward our distinctive goals is found in the attitudes and activities of our faculty and staff. We seek to have on our staff those people who desire above all to serve and to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. We have regular weekly faculty meetings, usually lasting about two hours, in which we exhort one another and pray together that our allegiance will be, not to the college, but first to Christ and then to serving the church as the body of Christ. The development or needs of individual students are informally discussed; and we plan and pray for their growth on the basis of the pooled information and the united judgment of the whole staff. Our faculty members do extra work to edify the churches in many ways. This doubtless does sometimes make them tired, but it also refreshes them and gives focus and vigor and purpose to their teaching. We believe it does not detract from, but enhances, the effectiveness of their teaching. It certainly helps to accomplish the overall purpose for which our school exists. It also helps to develop a sense of fellowship between the college and the congregations. From the fact that

the college sincerely tries to build up the churches, the churches in turn become interested in assisting the college.

From the above factors it will be seen that an important part of our "teaching program" is outside the classroom and the scheduled curriculum. A veteran of many years in preaching and missionary work, after he had become acquainted with various alumni and students and after visiting the college for a few days, said to us: "You are doing a great work here, because you are certainly giving the students something of vital importance in addition to knowledge."

Still we do try to stress excellence in the classroom work. Transfer students from state colleges tell us that much of the class work here is more difficult than that which they had in other colleges.

### **Activities of Alumni**

*Describe the activities of an alumnus who best illustrates the type of graduate you endeavor to produce.*

We have graduates in several different fields of service, and are glad that we do.

The largest group consists of preachers serving local churches in America. These churches are independent congregations of Christians who desire to belong to Christ and the whole body of Christ, but not to any sect or party. They claim allegiance to Christ as sole Head of the Church and

are bound by no written traditions or convention directives; but they desire the unity of all Christians and seek fellowship with any believers on the basis of obedience to the New Testament. The ministry of such preachers is rather well-known, but it is not always fully understood. They are occupied with teaching the Word of God publicly and from house to house. They lead and encourage all the workers of a congregation in a full program of living the Christian life as individuals and as a united body for evangelizing the whole world and edifying all believers. They labor to build up a Scriptural eldership under which the churches will be shepherded according to the instructions in the New Testament. They teach in Christian Service Camps and labor in many youth programs to raise up workers for the Lord's harvest and to commit the Word of God to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.

A growing number of our graduates are in foreign missionary service: evangelizing and managing schools in Southern Rhodesia, doing pioneer translating and evangelizing in northern Thailand, teaching church leaders in Brazil, establishing churches in Canada, Mexico, Hawaii, Jamaica, Italy, or South America. Some are employed by churches as ministers to plan and execute effective teaching ministries. Some are producing Christian literature in this country or abroad. Some are teaching in Bible colleges. All of these we wish to multiply.

### **Greatest Problems**

*What do you consider to be your single greatest problem to achieving your goals?*

**Student Effort and Time.** The one greatest problem seems to be in the realm of attaining sufficient devotion of the students' life and time to learning and training activities. This takes two distinct forms. One is the problem of the many students who drop out of school without reaching their goal and without adequate training. The other is the problem of applying enough of each student's time and attention to their studies and service activities to result in the fullest preparation of their minds, characters, and abilities for the great work before them. Both forms of the problem are closely connected with the needs of students for making a living and the world of material things competing for their interest and efforts. Nevertheless, these problems cannot be overcome by simply providing them with easy money. That often tends to weaken or destroy their Christian purpose and desire to serve.

**Drifting Motives.** But probably the greater problem for the Bible college, in the long run, is the inclination to become more and more given to general education and less and less distinctively Christian. We see the need and the usefulness of education. Any real teacher, growing in his or her own knowledge and understanding, wishes to lead students farther and farther into the vast sea of all there is to know. Especially teachers wish to see students' abilities developed and their

dormant talents awakened. Since we work with students of college age and teach on a college level, we seek to have their work with us accepted by other colleges, as far as it is pertinent to their course.

We must remember, however, that education may be of very little value. Extensive education has prevailed in nations that were only led into depravity by it. Our own land is in

### **OUR OWN LAND IS IN GRAVE DANGER BECAUSE OF THE DARKNESS AND DECEITFULNESS OF EDUCATION WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD . . .**

grave danger and deep trouble because of the darkness and deceitfulness of education without the knowledge of God and without faith that willingly submits to God's supreme wisdom. The wisdom that is not from above is still "earthly, sensual, demoniacal," even in the church (James 3:15, original translation).

This same basic problem takes a very practical and critical form in the area of the business management of a college. Whereas we seek to have adequate buildings, good equipment and the best kind of teachers paid enough that they can be at their best, unhindered by financial worries and divided interest, we become dependent upon a large income. This calls for keeping the college in public favor and tends to make it seek higher and

higher standing in the educational world, often at the cost of sacrificing to some extent its Christian emphasis and using more and more of the students' limited time in the pursuit of merely mundane information or even the understanding of the inscrutable inanities of leading theologians.

In order to continue in this purpose we must find trustees and teachers who do put God and the Bible first to the extent that they will not be primarily concerned with how our work fits into the general world of colleges, but will be fully committed to developing students who know divine truth and handle it aright in a life of useful service. We also need to keep our purpose clear and plain before the eyes of the supporting churches and the generous individuals who do believe that God's wisdom, instilled into human lives, is the only hope for a world which education cannot save from decay and eternal destruction.

We must be Christian first and educational second. We must give the students a knowledge of the Light of the world, a motive for learning all that will serve God's purpose in our lives, and a basic training in how to learn and grow. Then we must leave it to them to continue their education after they are out of school. We must let nothing lead us to reverse this order and exchange the one emphasis for the other.

Not of the World, but of God. We need to realize that our success does not depend upon the favor of people, but on the favor of God. Therefore, let

us daily give thanks to God for the material support which has been entrusted to us. Let us believe that He is able to supply all our need. Let us remember:

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31, KJV). Shall we not dare to be different? Remember, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above His master" (Matthew 10:24, NASB). If the world, or an association of colleges, does not honor Jesus Christ, may we not be misled by seeking their approval of us while we do what is essentially for His honor and glory? Where Christ is reproached, shall we seek to be praised?

This suggests that basic to our keeping on the right track in Christian teaching is the question of how we identify ourselves, in our own minds and to the public. Are we a college in the swim and the competition of the world of colleges? Or are we a group of Christians, doing a work for Christ, incidentally at a college level and overlapping somewhat with college education?

Perhaps one school can be both for a time and to a considerable extent. I do not know that it is impossible; but I do know that vast resources and many lives have been lost from the church because institutions which were established to be primarily Christian have been tragically changed in their efforts to become primarily educational. This result was not simply because of the effect of education, but the effect of seeking the favor and

honor of people rather than the approval of God. They sought or consented step by step to satisfy fleshly desires and worldly designs of people.

If the apostles of Christ had to be not of the world while they were in it, in order to do Christ's work, will we not have to be not of the world although we are in it, if we really want to glorify Him and accomplish His work?

### **Assistance by Churches and Christians**

*In what way can (1) a church and (2) an individual assist a Christian school such as yours?*

Churches and Christian individuals can help this kind of school in the following ways.

(1) Recruit dedicated young people (and some not so young) to train for specialized Christian service. Preach and teach and pray about the challenge of service for Christ and for alleviation of the world's genuine need. Show that you take this seriously. Then show it by continuing to encourage, advise or assist the recruits, at least with prayer and moral support.

(2) Finance the Bible colleges so that they can provide such education without prohibitive cost to the students, and with increasing effectiveness. Realize that it does not have any financing from state or secular sources.

(3) Keep in contact with the college enough to have a helpful fellowship with its staff and students. This can help keep the college a part of the

church, doing a distinctively Christian work; and it can help keep the students from developing a harmful sense of separateness and superiority toward the other Christians.

(4) Recognize the special character of the Bible college. Realize that it is doing the work of the church more than the work of higher education. Do not expect it to fulfill all the purposes of colleges, or all of its credits to be pertinent to just any college program.

(5) Pray for us.

(6) Help us to remember and maintain the aims which were well stated in an address on Bible college aims by J. C. Macaulay, of London College of Bible and Missions.

*First is the glory of God.*

*Second is the making of saints. . . . When our students come to us, they are saints at various stages of saintliness, and our responsibility is to promote their growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . It is not just a matter of improvement in one or two areas of character; however, but of having Christ formed in them. This, of course, lays heavy demands on faculty, staff and administration. We cannot lead the young people farther than we have gone ourselves.*

*Third is the furtherance of the Gospel. . . . Our aim is that the*

*witness of Christ will flow through every life committed to our care, both while they are with us, and after they leave us. "Then we come to the aim which too many put first, last and all time — to develop scholars. I do not put it last because it is unimportant, but because nothing must be allowed to challenge the priority of the others, and because this must be regarded as a great contributing factor in all the others. True scholarship will certainly glorify God more than shoddy academic procedures. True scholarship will give breadth and depth to character. True scholarship will arm our young people with a clear definition of the Gospel. Bible college scholarships must be superior; just because it is not an end in itself, but the servant of higher ends.*

I don't care how good a "college" we may or may not be, if we can really be an effective instrument for putting God's Word to work in the hearts of people. If we were to cease being a "college," it might be no great loss; but if we cease to believe and teach the Word of God, though we develop the greatest college in the world, we have failed — failed God and failed humankind! ❀

*Dr. Seth Wilson is the Dean Emeritus and a Professor at Ozark Christian College, Joplin, MO. These remarks were first published in The Mind of Christ: A Tribute to Seth Wilson (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1987, Lynn Gardner, ed.). Used with the kind permission of the author.*



## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Truth of Things: Liberal Arts and the Recovery of Reality**

by Marion Montgomery (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), 305 pp.

Reviewed by Robert M. Woods

The end of the twentieth century has witnessed significant upheaval within higher education in general, and liberal arts education, in particular. There have been many who have offered various explanations as well as solutions to the problem. Most of the books written in the past decade or so begin by marking the 1960s as the beginning of the downward spiral. While there is some truth to this common date, Marion Montgomery argues convincingly that liberal arts education took a turn for the worst after the Middle Ages.

*Up to the Renaissance, and then lingering thereafter until the accelerated dissolving in our century, the common concern for knowledge by the intellectual community still anticipated knowledge as leading to understanding, and thence mayhap to wisdom (xiii).*

The problem of the modern academy is described by Montgomery as the dominance of what he

frequently refers to as a type of modern gnosticism. It is a kind of rationalism floating around without a body. In other words, it is the exercise of the rational mind without proper regard of community and common intuition.

The decay of "higher education" has been taking place in the West for centuries, not decades. The full extent of that decline has led to the current crisis. How serious is the problem? According to Dr. Montgomery, the situation must be seen as "sliding toward the collapse that now seems immanent" (p. 23).

While others have championed rationalism as construed by the "Enlightenment" (i.e., Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*), Montgomery joins the ranks of the critics of the historical era designated the "Enlightenment." Dr. Montgomery is persuasive as he demonstrates through medieval modeled logic and examining the social consequences of the period that it has been mislabeled the "Enlightenment." This era may actually be better understood as the eclipse of the truly intellectual.

## Whom is this book for?

Dr. Montgomery's intended audience is those within the non-community of the academy—the academy that is ironically largely responsible for its own continued descent. Montgomery says to these strangers in a strange land,

*As such I am convinced of a prophetic responsibility: namely, to recall us to known but forgotten or programmatically rejected understandings of education. I would speak to such a concern, on behalf of that abiding "academician, the lover of wisdom, the true philosopher, who proves timeless in history, and so who will and must recover those virtues suited to the academy as devoted to higher education in the interest of community in time.* (pp. xiii, xiv).

The book is rich with keen insights into the reality of the current circumstances common to the contemporary academy. However, it is not filled with doom and gloom. While the situation is grave, it is certainly not hopeless. Dr. Montgomery believes that the university should be "an institution vital to a community of souls." (p. 80). The teacher of the liberal arts "must as well profess the virtue of the tenacity of intellect in its pursuit of the truth of things—and discovers himself not only steward of things in themselves actual, but of those permanent things, the truths essential in things, (p. 99)."

## Hope—and instructions—for academe

Those living within the institution and teaching liberal arts ought to demonstrate a genuine sort of humility. It is a humility of "intellectual accommodation to reality, a return to the truth of things, including the truth of himself as finite creature" (p. 103). This intellectual is him or herself part of a "community of mind" (p. 100), with a memory that "is deeper and more ancient, bringing father Adam to the present moment of our exile" (p. 102). The humble liberal arts professor is open to other minds "on the condition that the welcomed mind is devoted through piety to the truth of things" (p. 153).

Professors of the liberal arts must recover the old "town and gown" relationship. They must move beyond an appreciation of the virtues of a liberal arts education and declare the "healthful service of liberal arts to the community itself" (p. 110).

The title of the book comes from Thomas Aquinas and goes against the grain of much of what passes for orthodoxy in the modern academy. Aquinas affirmed that "the purpose of philosophy is not to learn what others have thought, but to learn how the truth of things stands" (p. 91). The glory of a quality liberal arts education is that it tends toward the knowledge and wisdom of "how the truth of things stand."

Borrowing imagery from Dante and T.S. Eliot, unfortunately, according to Montgomery,

*We have come a long way in abandoning that old vision of the manner and ends of higher education, only to find ourselves to have regressed, to be the more lost in dark intellectual woods, and the symptoms of that losing of the way appear sharply evident as beams of light—the truth of reality itself—occasionally pierce that darkness.* (p. 289).

Dr. Montgomery also affirms that one must see literature as a means to an end. The end to which we are moving is the "humanizing" of the student. (pp. 51,52). In a poetically powerful manner, Montgomery contends that "the ultimate earthly end of liberal arts training must always be to prepare a particular man to hear, really hear, Oedipus's agonized cry so well that he knows agony as never before" (p. 58).

It would be relatively easy to make the case from this quote and others within the book, that a quality liberal arts education (preferably within the context of Christian conviction) is complimentary to the faith and not in opposition to it. In other words, we could say that real liberal arts training within a Christian community would not confuse the student embarking on Christian pilgrimage, rather, it would serve as a suitable companion.

## The real issues

Montgomery makes it clear that the real issues related to a liberal arts education are not what one can do with

this type of training; rather, what kind of person one becomes during and after liberal arts instruction. (pp. 66, 67).

Lest a reader believe that Dr. Montgomery sees liberal arts as the solution to all of humanity's problems, he acknowledges its inherent limitations in both content and outreach. A liberal arts education is not synonymous

## AQUINAS AFFIRMED THAT "THE PURPOSE OF PHILOSOPHY IS NOT TO LEARN WHAT OTHERS HAVE THOUGHT, BUT TO LEARN HOW THE TRUTH OF THINGS STANDS"

with divine revelation. In addition to this truth, the majority of the people within our national community will not receive the best of liberal training.

Montgomery asserts that as Christian intellectuals, we should never forget that "we have here no abiding city or academy within the city of man" (p. 95). Dr. Montgomery demonstrates keen sensitivities to the real problems and solutions to redeem the liberal arts. He wryly comments that education does have the potential to make one arrogant so one should be careful "lest intellectual pride reduce creation to a flat world, as has progressively developed in the West since the Renaissance" (p. 92).

Dr. Montgomery acutely avoids the current Scylla and Charybdis of the modern academy: an academy perverted by the arrogance of Enlightenment rationalism on the one side



and post-modern anti-realism on the other. He navigates a course toward a renewed vision of a pre-modernism when the liberal arts were grounded in a community of faith. The purpose of the humanities was to assist in making humans more humane by redeeming the whole person for service of God and humanity.

In this wonderful book, *The Truth of Things* by Dr. Montgomery, the reader receives countless insights from the liberal arts about the real value of a liberal arts education. While the book is certainly not for everyone because it is steeped in the language of the discipline, it should be required reading for all Christians teaching the liberal arts. All people need to be reminded as to why they followed a certain calling. The Truth of Things is a powerful reminder, a perceptive analysis of the problems with a hopeful

solution to the current crisis.

If there is any truly great news in the midst of an overall dismal diagnosis, it is the hope found in universities historically associated with religious communities and Christian conviction. These universities and colleges are closer to a realized potential of liberal arts institutions Dr. Montgomery describes as being a quality liberal arts community. These universities have explicit categories such as transcendence, revelation, and metaphysics and these categories impact the whole life of the university. Within these communities, the humanities help shape more humane character. When the revelation of scripture is central to the whole academic enterprise, then the eternal is more likely to be both the foundation and the ultimate orientation of all persons involved within the liberal arts endeavor. ❁



*Bachelor's Club,  
David Lipscomb College,  
1923*

**Robert M. Woods** holds a Ph.D. in Humanities from Florida State University. In addition to teaching 12 years on the college level, he recently completed a two year preaching ministry with the Pine Valley Church of Christ in Wilmington, NC, and is a Fellow for the Morris Institute for Human Values. He also returned to the academy as Professor of Literature at Faulkner University last fall.



I used to look down my nose at Christian colleges. I graduated from a big, famous state school, and my degree has served me well in several ways. I learned a massive amount—despite falling asleep in huge lectures taught by teaching assistants with questionable English fluency, making unwise class choices (“Waves and Beaches” to get that Natural Science requirement out of the way), and partying on the weekends (I didn’t commit my life to the Lord until a few years later). I met and learned to respect people of all possible backgrounds (one of the most positive aspects of a secular university education), was exposed to every philosophy and religion under the sun (regrettably, worship of the almighty dollar is most prominent), and sat at the feet of some amazing professors (my favorite English professor read modern poetry so beautifully that I cried, but he often wore two different shoes).

Along with the all-night study sessions, the earnest quest for self-discovery, and the generally high-stress life of an undergraduate, two wonderful things happened to me while I went to school in Ann Arbor, Michigan: my husband, Bruce, and I fell in love, and he reintroduced me to Jesus Christ. Now, many parents insist on Christian college for their kids specifically so that they’ll find a Christian mate and so

that their faith will be strengthened; however, my experience is proof that both Jesus and a Godly spouse are possible to find at a secular university. This being the case, why would we bother considering Christian college for our kids?

### **What is it about secular universities?**

Well, the other day our 9-year-old son mentioned in conversation that he’d probably end up going to U of M. Amused that he was thinking so far ahead, I asked him why. He said, “Well, you and Dad went there, so I will, too.” Done deal.

My reaction wasn’t at all what it might have been a few years ago. Now, the University of Michigan is about the last place I hope David ends up attending.

You see, now as I look back and remember how thirsty I was for knowledge, for *truth*, at that time in my life, I can see how impressionable I was, and how I looked up to my professors unquestioningly. And I can remember what they taught me:

I remember very clearly Philosophy 450 (“Contemporary Moral Problems”) where I learned all sorts of “moral defenses” for abortion, and where, in fact, I learned that all “contemporary moral problems” (euthanasia, suicide, drug taking, etc.) could be defended on some “moral”

basis (all except eating meat, that is. *That* one was definitely immoral by any standard).

I also remember having Erica Jong assigned alongside Wordsworth in an English literature class. I remember that Christianity was considered by many of my professors to be some sort of quaint and outmoded philosophy. And outside the classroom, things were no different. I remember Resident Advisors (slightly older peers who oversaw a hall in a dorm) regularly recommending birth control of one sort or another to their charges. Premarital sex and drunkenness were absolutely rampant on campus. This is not an exaggeration.

And it's no different in 2001: in the English classroom, the canon of literature continues to change to reflect the political biases of the academic far left (I would imagine this is true in other disciplines as well); outside the classroom, temptation to sin is rampant. It's extremely difficult to preserve sexual purity and other hallmarks of a Christian life.

### **A professor at a secular university comments**

Integrity Board Member Elton Higgs, who taught English Literature at the University of Michigan-Dearborn for 36 years, observes, "You wouldn't believe the amount of space the MLA (Modern Language Association) gives in its catalogs and seminars to what they call 'gender studies' (this would include writings by those who advocate radical feminist/anti-male perspectives, and those who promote homosexuality and transgenderism)."

He continues, "It used to be that, as an academic, one was generally dealing with the rationalism of academe. Faith was not a substantive part of the interpretation of life. But in the last 10 or 15 years, postmodernism has taken over. Academia is not even precisely anti-Christian; rather, if one sees Christian influence in some kind of thought or writing, the response is, 'So what?' Now all thought is a relative blob. It's just another cultural influence to be 'deconstructed' from the text."

### **A disclaimer**

I know that it's possible for good, moral people to stay that way as they pass through secular universities. In fact, for a student with a firm foundation in Jesus Christ, the secular university can be a challenging mission field, ripe for harvest. We need strong Christian students at secular universities to be bold ambassadors for Christ, teaching their fellow students how to live and whom to serve. That being said, however, I can't emphasize enough how difficult the struggle is, even for strong Christians, to graduate from a secular university with one's faith in Christ and one's morality intact.

If you or your children attend a secular university, I pray you and they will find a church family that is as nurturing as the Ann Arbor Church of Christ was to Bruce and me. The warm and caring people of that church took (and still take) very seriously their mission to shepherd college students,

*(continued on inside back cover)*

becoming surrogate parents to those who are far away from home. Campus ministries on secular campuses are also vital lifelines for students.

### **Another disclaimer**

It is clear that Christian colleges aren't perfect, as Becki Pate and Emilie Shepherd, two of our authors in this issue, attest. I have seen some pretty pharisaical behavior and some seriously damaging hypocrisy displayed by "nice" Christian college graduates. I also know that drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex are no strangers at Christian colleges. The difference is that, while many types of immorality (most notably sexual) are considered normal and even abetted at secular schools, they are not tolerated at Christian colleges. When such behavior is discovered, appropriate discipline is meted out. People who have attended Christian college have been taught the truth; they have been reminded about what sin is. They have the advantage of having been nurtured in an environment where Jesus is Lord.

### **The acid test**

I asked Elton if he and his wife, Laquita, (who taught history at the University of Michigan for over 10 years) if they would send their daughter Rachel to U of M.

"As a matter of fact," said Elton, "Laquita and I have just made out our wills. We have specified that, in order for our children or grandchildren to receive any financial assistance from us for college, we *require* that they spend at least the first two years of their college career at a Christian college or university."

How convincing that a couple who has been as immersed in secular academia as long the Higgses have, want their offspring to steer clear of such schools.

### **Christian colleges: all that's left?**

The small and strange (to us outsiders) world of Christian colleges is not, however, a poor and distant second if you decide against secular colleges. Says Elton, "Most Christian colleges are of more than sufficient academic quality; in fact, they offer a kind of intellectual integrity you won't find at a state university." He points out that, at a Christian college, students will receive more personal attention, have more rapport with professors who are serious Christians and are free to talk about their faith, and, finally, grow in an atmosphere where moral standards can be unashamedly espoused.

Finally, he says, Christian education may be becoming like the monasteries of the Middle Ages: "they are the only place where true respect for the rationality God gave us is still being promulgated." Christian colleges defend rationality to articulate truth, whereas secular universities more and more frequently assert that there is no truth that can be objectively articulated. "Truth" is merely what those in power say it is.

While no college is perfect, Bruce and I agree with Elton and Laquita. We will encourage our children to satisfy their quest for knowledge while being nurtured in the loving arms of a Christian college.



Noreen Bryant  
Co-Editor