

Scholars and Witnesses:  
Defining the Pepperdine Difference

An Address to the Pepperdine University Faculty

October 6, 2006

by Darryl Tippens

*All scholarship should be witness.* – Luke Timothy Johnson, Pepperdine University,  
12 January 2004

*Invited or not, God will be present.*—Inscription over Carl Jung’s study

It is common for members of our University community to quote our mission statement. We often say that we educate students for lives of “purpose, service, and leadership.” That ideal is deeply embedded in our thinking, for which I am grateful. Could it be, though, that we have thought too narrowly about that phrase if we consider it only as an “outcome” for our graduates? What if we apply the phrase a bit differently, not seeing it solely as a *student* learning outcome, but the vocation of the institution, collectively speaking? Should Pepperdine University be viewed by its peers as an *institution* with a unique *purpose*, rendering unsurpassed *service* and providing exemplary leadership to the academy and the world? When people think of the top universities in the land, should they naturally think of Pepperdine as a leading institution, not according the criteria of a commercial magazine, but in terms of moral, intellectual, and spiritual purpose?<sup>1</sup>

Today, there is an ambivalence about, or disenchantment with, higher education. While the reasons are complex, some of the angst lies in the fact that universities appear to have lost their center and sense of direction. Many are saying they have lost their “soul.” Even as “the nation has lost its way and must now rediscover the path of truth,” in

the words of Daniel Yankelovich, our universities have fallen strangely silent on the most urgent questions of the day.<sup>2</sup> Harry R. Lewis, former dean of Harvard College, sounds the alarm in *Excellence without Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education*.<sup>3</sup>

As a vagueness about purpose grows, so does a predictable homogeneity. There is irony here. Even as institutional leaders promote diversity, the pressure for sameness mounts. Each month I receive scores of slick publications from the nation's best universities—each one straining to differentiate itself from the pack. But most of these pieces look and feel surprisingly similar. I wonder: if you just switched the names of the universities in these publications, but left the text essentially untouched, would anyone notice the switch?

What is the problem here? Clark Kerr, former president of the University of California system, has observed that today's university leaders have “no great visions to lure them on, only the need of survival for themselves and their institutions.”<sup>4</sup> It seems to me that Pepperdine is—or should be—a noteworthy exception to Kerr's observation. “Purpose” is not merely an outcome for our students, “purpose” lies at the heart of the whole enterprise, coloring and animating everything we do. We are like King Henry as he woos the French princess Katharine in Shakespeare's *King Henry V*:

Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined by the weak list of a country's fashion. We are the makers of manners, Kate. (5.2.272)

Rather than be confined by “the weak list” of the academy's fashion, shouldn't Pepperdine be “the maker of manners,” the one setting the standards for others to imitate?

If we are to be the makers of our own manners, what should they be? Precisely because we are a university, the answers should be the product of a rich and fervent

collegial conversation. Consider today's conference one phase in a continuing dialogue about such matters. Consider me today, then, your eager dialogue partner. You will find, not surprisingly, that I have opinions which I want to share with you, but I hope you will favor me with a reply. A conference is a place where you "confer." Let's do that today.

Permit me to get to my point quickly. I believe that Pepperdine University is positioned to play a unique role in higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, on the national stage and internationally, by virtue of our unique mission and our cultural milieu. The rare combination of the historical moment and our distinctive institutional character represents a stunning opportunity, *provided* we stay true to our mission, understand our strengths, address our weaknesses, more sharply articulate our distinctiveness, and act with courage. Let me begin with some comments about our historical moment.

#### The Milieu: Disillusionment with the Academy

The first observation about our cultural milieu is this: secular higher education in America today is under judgment. Our society is changing rapidly in many ways, and there is uncertainty as to whether or not the university can be responsive to these changes. Some would argue that higher education has "too many constituencies to satisfy, too many traditions, too many constraints weighing on it to lend it the flexibility—or the political will—to adapt rapidly to the outside world."<sup>5</sup>

Complaints against the academy are not new, of course. Town-gown disputes can be traced to the Middle Ages; yet higher education in the U.S. has generally enjoyed a comfortable and trusted relationship with the government and its citizens. Americans generally have believed deeply in the gospel of American education—the royal road to a

better life. But that conviction is under duress. In the late 1990's Ernie Boyer described "a growing feeling in this country that higher education is, in fact, part of the problem rather than the solution. . . ."6 Nathan Hatch, President of Wake Forest, describes the "rising tide of criticism, wave upon wave" that is eroding "the esteem once accorded the academy."7 In the halls of Congress and in the media we hear a chorus of complaints. Universities are too expensive, too arrogant, too easy, too politicized, too unaccountable, or too out of touch.

Such criticism comes not only from the folks in the "town." Those who wear the gown are also saying many of the same things. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that "[u]ndergraduate education in the research university is a project in ruins."8 Harry Lewis, former dean of Harvard College, says that Harvard's undergraduate curriculum is a "total disunity."9 David L. Kirp notes an incoherence and uncertainty "about what knowledge matters most."10 C. John Sommerville, professor emeritus of English history, the University of Florida, in his recent book *The Decline of the Secular University*, maintains that universities today cannot or will not address the most urgent questions that face us, because to do so would require some attention to matters of faith and values—and universities just cannot go there. "Universities are not really looking for answers to our life questions."11

There is deep frustration among faculty. Parker Palmer describes professors who enter the university with passion, but end up in pain, "disconnected from their students, from their souls, from each other."12 The former president of Cornell, Frank Rhodes, laments the dramatic decline of community in the university: "loss of community is not a mere misfortune," he says. "[I]t is a catastrophe, for it undermines the very foundation on

which the universities were established. . . . Our loss of community reflects not a lack of agreement, not even a lack of cohesiveness, but rather a lack of discourse, an absence of meaningful dialogue, an indifference to significant communication.”<sup>13</sup> Edward Erickson describes aging faculty members who entered the professoriate in the Sixties with “[e]nergy and high spiritedness,” but who “have given way to joylessness, sourness, brittleness. Proclaiming nihilism has led to experiencing exhaustion.” These aging activists now have the unhappy task of playing “the conservative role of defending their version of the university’s good old days against those they consider the new barbarians at the gate.”<sup>14</sup>

#### The Milieu: New Openness to Religion and Spirituality

A second fact about our milieu is this: Even as universities fall under suspicion, in much of the world there is a new openness to religion and spirituality. Whether you call it postmodern, post-secular, or post-Reformation—many observers point to a significant cultural shift. It has been traced empirically by Alexander Astin’s research into spirituality in higher education through UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute.<sup>15</sup> A revolution appears to be underway. Daniel Yankelovich reports that one of the most significant trends facing higher education in the next decade will be the public’s increasing skepticism that science can provide all the answers to our essential questions, coupled with a growing conviction that

other ways of knowing are also legitimate and important. . . . Americans hunger for religious ways of truth seeking, especially with regard to moral values. By seeming to oppose or even ridicule that yearning, higher

education pits itself against mainstream America. Unless it takes a less cocksure and more open-minded approach to the issues of multiple ways of knowing, higher education could easily become more embattled, more isolated, and more politicized.<sup>16</sup>

Given the public's suspicion of higher education, given the growing conviction that "some categories of truth" do not "yield to scientific inquiry,"<sup>17</sup> and given the growing populations of minorities which are overwhelmingly religious (e.g., African American, Hispanic, and Asian)—we can reasonably conclude that Pepperdine is well placed to be a leading university on the national and the world stage.

#### Opportunity, Risk, Vision

Indeed, I am optimistic about the prospects for a university like Pepperdine. In being faithful to the founding vision, we can achieve something few universities can. We are not imprisoned by narrow, doctrinal boundaries which characterize some Christian colleges; nor are we silenced by a secularist or naturalistic worldview that typifies many institutions. There is a longing for a university that both advances the knowledge brought forward by the Enlightenment and sets this knowledge within contexts of meaning that promote the full flourishing of human beings and their societies under God. We already possess the qualities that would make *excellence with soul* a possibility. This should be "the era of Pepperdine." Yet through a failure of imagination or nerve we could miss our greatest moment.

In the remarks that follow I wish to suggest some of the qualities that ought to characterize the vibrant, faithful university of the next generation. I think we already

possess many of these qualities, but they are in need of *preservation* and *enhancement* if we are to meet the challenges and opportunities before us.

## I. VISION

First and foremost, we must articulate a vibrant and distinctive vision. Christianity first became a world religion because it simultaneously presented a convincing account of reality and a compelling way of life. People believed it was true—true not only in some abstract or philosophical way, but true “on the ground,” true to human experience. No university can hope to succeed today unless it promises and delivers the good, the true, and the beautiful. According to Robert Benne, the faithful university ought to offer an “articulated account of reality. . . . a comprehensive account encompassing all of life; it provides the umbrella of meaning under which all facets of life and learning are gathered and interpreted.”<sup>18</sup> This university will have a compelling story to tell—one that convincingly accounts for what it means to be human, that encourages human flourishing, that addresses life’s deepest questions.

In 1986 anthropologist Mary Douglas wrote a book called *How Institutions Think*. Normally, we suppose that only individuals “think” or have “minds,” but institutions also “think” in certain ways. Institutions “pressure and socialize people to think in specific ways.” For example, most Americans think “Americanly,” because they have been shaped by certain founding documents—the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and by distinctive cultural practices. Americans’ thoughts do not range freely, but are bounded by tacit cultural convictions, derived from the national story.<sup>19</sup>

So the question might be: *How does Pepperdine University think?* What philosophy guides us and frames our thinking? Carlin Romano, in a very insightful essay,

suggests that it is possible to establish “One University, Indivisible, Under a Coherent Idea.” If that were true, what would the “coherent idea” of Pepperdine be? Given our historic ties to the Churches of Christ, we might ask, what contribution does that tradition offer to the articulation of that “coherent idea”?

Some historians of Churches of Christ and their educational institutions, Richard Hughes and Tom Olbricht among others, have presented helpful descriptions of the “Restorationist” or Stone-Campbell educational system as it was fleshed out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of your own religious affiliation, you will understand Pepperdine better if you have at least a primer’s understanding of this heritage. But there is still much work to do in this area.

Take just one lively issue that is provoking conversation at many faith-based colleges today: *the relationship between faith and learning*. Jewish scholars have long debated the question under the term *Torah umadda* (law and secular learning). The earliest Christians considered deeply the connection between faith and reason (the logos). For centuries Catholics have wrestled with the question of the relationship of faith and reason. (Anselm’s and Augustine’s “faith seeking understanding” or “I believe in order that I might understand.”)<sup>21</sup> The Lutheran and Reformed traditions have robust traditions upon which to draw. May I suggest that it is time for Pepperdine’s faculty to reflect seriously upon and to write and publish on such crucial matters. The rare convergence of Church of Christ scholars with those from Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish traditions well positions us for rich inquiry. We must offer a free and friendly space where, in Mark Schwehn’s phrase, “spirited inquiry” can occur.

Let me turn for a moment to some specific aspects of the Church of Christ tradition—both its strengths and challenges. The picture of Church of Christ or Restorationist education is a *mosaic*. I use the term in two senses: first, like distinct pieces of glass found in a work of art, ours is a collection of disparate influences and features. Mosaics can be both beautiful and enduring. The earliest surviving churches in the Holy Land contain the remnants of elegant mosaics. Visit the Getty Villa or the houses of Pompeii and you will see how beautiful mosaic patterns can be. Perhaps Pepperdine is meant to be such a mosaic.

Church of Christ-related higher education is “mosaic” in another sense: we have an abiding commitment to moral order, reason, and law. Historically, Churches of Christ have combined a strong biblicism; a love of early Christian sources; common sense realism; rationalism; a measure of classical decorum; a devotion to the practical arts for service to society; an objective, analytical approach to subject matter; and a strong focus on morality and ethical living. Listen to Mr. Pepperdine’s founding address and you discern many of these elements in the original institutional DNA. Over time, to these elements we have added many things: new disciplines, the methods of the secular research universities, the standards of professional societies and accrediting agencies. But the original design, the deep moral purpose (the *mosaic* pattern) remains.

The danger is that, while we have some wonderfully colorful pieces in our ceramic, without periodic review and conscious reflection, the newly added elements may not constitute a pleasing design or a coherent unity. Things can go wrong when you get lazy and do not ask the big questions about what is happening.<sup>22</sup> For example, because our secular disciplines and our theology are seldom brought into conversation (at

least until recently), scientific and religious ways of knowing may operate in what Michael Beaty has called “the two-realm theory of truth.” On the one hand, we are faithful believers, and, on the other hand we are good scholars; but there may be little meaningful connection between the two domains. Education in the Campbell tradition seems naturally to inspire this two-sphere theory of truth,<sup>23</sup> a bifurcation that can lead to divided minds, a confused identity, and a divided existence. It can mean we serve two masters—and neither very well.

The capacity to articulate a coherent vision may be at risk for another reason. As the external pressures to conform to secular models of education increase and as religious institutions undergo change, links to the University’s spiritual heritage may wear thin and deteriorate. Michael Hamilton has noted that denominational colleges face the loss of their identities and “the real possibility of secularization” because “these schools have always thought of their religious identity mainly in denominational terms, rather than thinking of themselves more broadly as Christian colleges. The hard truth is that the old denominational identity that has kept their schools Christian is dying.”<sup>24</sup> He cites Southern Baptist institutions as being particularly vulnerable, because their religion is so deeply “intertwined with the distinctive cultural features of the South.” “For many, being Southern Baptist was as much about being Southern as it was about being Baptist. . . . As Southern distinctiveness dries up, the cultural foundations of Southern Baptist identity are crumbling from beneath the denomination’s schools.” These schools face a “stark choice,” Hamilton says. “They must either build new kinds of Christian foundations for their schools, or watch the Christian character [I would say their “Southern American”

character] of their schools fall into disrepair.” Hamilton believes the same identity crisis is afflicting Churches of Christ-related colleges. Shouldn’t we consider his claim?

A serious question confronts us: *If student or faculty loyalty to, or knowledge of, Churches of Christ, wanes in the coming years, what then? If the Churches of Christ continue to become less distinctive and more amorphous, which now seems likely, what then? What will sustain us?*

One possible approach would be to write more rules, adopt a creed, batten down the hatches. But credalism is alien to Churches of Christ, and even creedally-based institutions find this “rules” approach inadequate. James T. Burtchaell, former provost at Notre Dame, once observed:

Notre Dame’s character is not guaranteed by its Charter, Statutes, or Bylaws, nor by those who govern it, despite the assertion of our Statutes that it is the “stated intention and desire of the Fellows that the University retain in perpetuity its identity as a Catholic institution.” Living traditions live not at all by law and governance if the law and governance do not find their affirmation in the persons who live by them.<sup>25</sup>

We cannot write enough policies or bylaws to protect the spiritual legacy that has been entrusted to us. Though a formal connection to a sponsoring church is important, a strong ballast against drift, written rules alone will not guarantee the future. We will best sustain our heritage if the members of our community are shaped by a singular, compelling “vision.” Robert Benne describes three ways we ensure our future: “three components of the Christian tradition . . . must be publicly relevant: *its vision, its ethos, and the Christians who bear that vision and ethos*” (my emphasis).<sup>26</sup>

May I suggest that a clearly articulated vision needs greater attention at Pepperdine. If we are to sustain our mission over the generations, we must encourage our best and brightest, whatever their discipline—but our philosophers and theologians in particular—to articulate the vision. This is a particularly apt time for doing this, as there is a growing sense that we are entering a post-Reformation moment. Protestants demonstrate a new interest in the great tradition of pre-Reformation thinkers. Catholic leaders today are initiating dialogues with other traditions. A fruitful Jewish and Christian dialogue is certainly underway as well. Pepperdine’s diverse faculties may be uniquely situated to hear and learn from one another—and to construct a new intellectual consensus, a new foundation.

Resources lie all about us. In recent months, we have invited to our campuses Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic, evangelical, Reformed, and Jewish scholars to help us think about our work. This very conference last year featured John Polkinghorne (Anglican), Julia Kasdorf (Mennonite), and Lee Shulman (Jewish). The dialogue was rich. Lee Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation, demonstrated how a theory of knowledge and a pedagogy could be derived from his youthful experience studying Torah. The active interrogation of the text, the movement from the “plain meaning” of the text, to interpretation, to filling in the gaps through *midrash*, bear a striking resemblance to what I was taught to do with sacred texts within my tradition. Of course, we have been learning from our Reformed colleagues at Calvin, our evangelical friends at Wheaton, our Anabaptist friends at Goshen or Messiah. But the work of revisioning needs to move forward.

A university does not live by endowments and tuition alone. It also lives by *ideas*—compelling, audacious, life-changing ideas. To do our work, we need healthy, robust departments of philosophy, history, and theology which will inspire us to do this original constructive work. All our disciplines need to examine the methodological assumptions that govern their practices. Our graduate and professional schools can also enhance their capacity to impart practical knowledge, if their professors do their theory well. Even our most practical degrees should be overseen by faculty who have a broad understanding of the theoretical issues lying back of their disciplines as well as an appreciation for the urgent issues gripping our society. “The life of the mind” is for all of us; otherwise, we segregate ourselves into intellectual ghettos—the thinkers from the narrow technicians.

What I am describing is more than a productive life of the mind. It may take us a long time to develop a theological vocabulary, a conceptual repertoire, an agreed upon language and syntax for discussing the relationship of faith and learning. And if we achieve it, we will find that it is insufficient to the vision. We must also attend to the concrete practices that hold our university together: the social virtues, the practice of hospitality, care of the body, the honoring of time, and so forth—the practices that shape us into a very particular kind of community. So, while we strive for an *intellectual* consensus, we should vigorously pursue an *ethical* consensus that will truly distinguish us.

Part of our work is to return to the sources—both to the sources of the earliest colleges and universities, but also to the sources of Western rationality and those early practices that shaped both churches and universities. As we enter a post-Reformation era,

the old sectarianism wanes (something Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone dreamed of), “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived” (2 Corinthians 2:9) we are now able to see, hear, and conceive in our day. In the words of one of my colleagues: “In general, Christian educators, like me, value denominational specificity but we want nothing to do with any sectarian exclusivity. We have bigger fish to fry, such as confronting and transforming a post-Christian culture, and this challenge is so large and so complicated that there isn’t time to re-fight the battles of the sixteenth century.” By transcending the debates of the Reformation, new possibilities beckon.

Robert Louis Wilken, in his elegant and scholarly *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, shows how Christianity was persuasive in the ancient world because it constituted “a way of thinking about God, about human beings, about the world and history.”<sup>27</sup> It has been cogently argued recently that Christianity was born at a unique historical moment when Judaism encountered Greek rationalism. Both the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament and the New Testament were written in Greek and bear “the imprint of the Greek spirit.”<sup>28</sup> In that ancient setting *thinking was a part of believing*; thought and practices were intimately related. The university with soul will explore the necessary connection between faith and reason, thought and practice. So many of our intellectual and moral problems today—concerning epistemology, the problem of authority, the nature of truth, the abuse of human persons, the neglect of the weak and the marginalized, etc.—were first probed by our spiritual ancestors. They thought deeply about the relationship of faith to reason, knowledge to love, and they offered helpful paths that we have largely forgotten.<sup>29</sup>

Forgive my camping so long on the matter of *vision*, but nothing else counts for much, if we don't get the vision right. If there is no vision, the university perishes. In the moments remaining, permit me to offer three additional theses—essential features of the faithful university—to further the dialogue.

## II. DISCOVERY

Second, the faithful academy will demonstrate a passionate commitment to the discovery and transmission of knowledge, for there is no university if there is no discovery and diffusion of learning. Universities by definition “encourage curiosity, discovery, intellectual risk-taking.”<sup>30</sup> We will not slavishly imitate the great research universities in this goal, however. The U.S. certainly has a sufficient number of secular research universities. Pepperdine need not be one of them. We rightly refuse to sacrifice our primary service to students in order to discover new knowledge. However, great liberal arts colleges and professional schools serve their students best by inviting them to join a rich culture of discovery. I emphasize the word *culture*, for the secular university has adopted an exceedingly narrow definition of “discovery,” and it has seemingly lost its memory of the traditions and practices of the intellectual life, which have their roots in the Christian past. For example, excellent scholarship is only possible when grounded in certain virtues (honesty, truth-telling, humility, etc.). Good scholarship is produced by good men and women—people of high ethical character. Scientific reductionism, stripped of transcendent purpose, cannot in the long run sustain the scientific enterprise. Pepperdine must be unapologetic about the spiritual foundations of good research.

This requires a robust understanding of the past. The faithful academy will cultivate a community rich in memory. One element of the Restoration impulse is the

uncovering of what has been forgotten and passing it on (the *traditio*, i.e., the handing down, the delivery of, surrendering of the wisdom of the ages).<sup>31</sup> Yet Americans in general, and our students in particular, are often victims of amnesia, blissfully unaware of the riches of the past. “Not to know what happened before you were born is to remain forever a child,” said Cicero. “In remembrance lies the secret of redemption,” said the Ba’al Shem Tov. The Judeo-Christian tradition invites us to see ourselves as participants in an on-going historical, purposeful narrative, and Pepperdine should be superior at explaining this story. Alexander Campbell understood our membership in a timeless community and believed that Scripture teaches us to see humanity as it was, as it is, and as it will “hereafter be.”<sup>32</sup> Our strong sense of story will have a strong teleological and hopeful direction. We participate in a narrative of *eternal purpose*.

### III. HEART

Third, the faithful academy will be heart-centered in the classical sense of the term. We will recover the “heart side” of faith and learning. *Heart* in ancient traditions is a large and resonant term.<sup>33</sup> In the Bible, for example, the heart involves *thinking* as well as *emotion*. It is the zone of “emotion-fused thought,” which includes intelligence, mind, wisdom, intention, will, love, sadness and joy.<sup>34</sup> Recent discoveries in science are enabling us to reconsider the vital bond between thought and feeling. After centuries of segregation, many are re-imagining an integration of head and heart, rather like the poet W. B. Yeats:

God guard me from those thoughts men think,  
In the mind alone;

He that sings a lasting song  
Thinks in the marrow-bone.

According to the work of Robert and Michèle Root-Bernstein, for example, body orientation and visceral feelings play significant roles in major scientific discoveries. At Pepperdine there should be a natural ease in linking one's intellectual life and work with one's passion for service, love of people, and care for the world. "The love of learning and the desire for God" will not be seen as competing aspirations, but a single aspiration.

We should note how prominently the heart figured in Mr. Pepperdine's thinking. In his founding address, he said "If we educate a man's mind and improve his intellect with all the scientific knowledge men have discovered and do not educate the heart . . . the man is dangerous."<sup>35</sup> The healthy university will reconnect the head-bone to the heart-bone, and we will seek more than knowledge but the *transformation of hearts*.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV. INCARNATION

Fourth, the faithful university will be incarnational. In this respect, Pepperdine's essential difference from the other great universities of our day may be most apparent, for this *incarnationalism* will color all our practice and set the agenda in many ways: in our appreciation of mystery as well as reason, in our love of nature, in our commitment to hospitality, and in our devotion to discernment and wisdom.

Desecularization. By many accounts, the Enlightenment is over and "desecularization" is underway. According to Peter Berger, "The assumption that we live in a secularized world is false." "The assumption that 'modernization necessarily leads to a decline in religion' has proved to be mistaken."<sup>37</sup> What is desperately needed in this

new era (which bears an uncanny resemblance to the pre-modern era) is the capacity to honor a God-infused universe—a sacred reality. The doctrine of the incarnation, which declares that the divine has touched and continues to inhabit material reality, causes us to say with John of Damascus: “I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake, who willed to take His abode in matter; who worked out my salvation through matter. Never will I cease honoring the matter which wrought my salvation.”<sup>38</sup>

Love of creation, the arts, and practical wisdom. There will be a strong appreciation for the arts and sciences at any university where the incarnation is taken seriously. A love of creation will inspire artistic productivity. We will know that Pepperdine University will have matured when it produces a number of artists, musicians, novelists, dancers, screenwriters, and poets. Beauty will abound. We will say with Augustine, “How beautiful is everything, since you have made it, but how ineffably more beautiful are you, the Creator of all this” (*Confessions* XIII.xx.28). Such a sacramentalism will not only inspire the production of “high art.” It will also validate all honorable human endeavors: life-enhancing entrepreneurs, devoted public school teachers, legendary jurists, and committed public servants.<sup>39</sup>

Because we believe that the Logos, Reason, took flesh and dwelt among us, we will hold a special love of nature. The university will have a “green” cast to it because we will see that we cannot honor the “Maker of heaven and earth” and trash what the Maker has made. With Simone Weil, we will say, “Let us love the country of here below. It is real.”<sup>40</sup> And to love it means to protect it, care for it, and renew it.

Hospitality. Our incarnationalism will transform our view of human beings. We will practice a radical hospitality, loving the stranger across class, gender, ethnic, and religious boundaries to a degree seldom seen. Much modern higher education is the antithesis of hospitality. Parker Palmer reports that “education is a fearful enterprise.” “Fear is everywhere.”<sup>41</sup> If we practice a “mere Christianity,” “a generous orthodoxy,”<sup>42</sup> our faith will not be coercive or triumphalist, but welcoming, humble, and servant-hearted. Seekers, non-believers, and believers from other faith traditions will feel honored and welcomed. We will not merely practice “toleration,” but something more welcoming. Doubters will study beside the faithful in an atmosphere of honesty and charity.

Diversity and a Decentered Christianity. This hospitality will extend to those from the other two-thirds world. It will be open to the new *Southern Christianity*—not of the American South—but of the burgeoning populations of the Southern hemisphere. Recognizing that the majority of Christians no longer reside in North America and Europe and knowing that the world of higher education is “flat,” a new internationalism will characterize the hospitality of our institution. We will consider closely the fact that Christianity was not originally a “Western” religion, and it will be less and less so in this generation.<sup>43</sup> It’s worth noting that even in our own Southern California neighborhoods, the growing Hispanic and Asian populations are also predominantly Christian. We will more effectively serve these populations if we acknowledge the increasing multi-cultural complexion of the faith.

Service to the World. One of the historic strengths of faith-based colleges and universities has been a strong commitment to practical service and the betterment of society. Our students are known for their outreach to the community and to the world—

through service days in the community, “spring break” missions, “Step Forward” days, support of charitable works of all kinds. Our graduate students work on behalf of victims of religious persecution; street persons needing legal and psychological care; poor people ravaged by AIDS, tsunamis, or hurricanes. This has long been so.

The charter of Bethany College, Alexander Campbell’s college founded in 1840, was dedicated to “science and literature, the *useful arts, agriculture*, and the learned and foreign languages” (my emphasis).<sup>44</sup> Campbell’s practical orientation is clear in his emphasis upon the sciences, which included mechanics, acoustics, optics, agricultural chemistry, engineering, and geology.<sup>45</sup> Such practical orientation can be seen in Mr. Pepperdine’s original vision and in our robust graduate and professional schools. The earliest Christians were much like our founder Mr. Pepperdine, in that they were interested not only in ideas, but in practices—not merely *orthodoxy*, but *orthopraxy*: “immersion in the *res*, the thing itself, the mystery of Christ and the practice of the Christian life. The goal was not only understanding but love. . . .”<sup>46</sup>

The earliest “colleges” (monastic schools) were sometimes called “schools of charity.” The great university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will also be a “school of charity.” Love is meaningless if it does not translate to the concrete and the material. We may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but if these do not lead to loving actions, so says the Apostle Paul, we are “a noisy gong or a clanging symbol” (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). The university with soul will be known for the cultivation of *phronesis* (practical wisdom, the virtues). We will challenge the devastatingly reductive turn taken by higher education when it abandoned its commitment to moral and spiritual formation. The faithful university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be committed to the formation of the whole

person, as we learn from the great traditions and incorporate new knowledge about how learning occurs.

Community Formation. Because virtue is fostered *in community*, the faithful university will be committed to the communal life to a degree that the secular university cannot. We will challenge the bankrupt North American myth that one find one's "true self" in radical independence from others. Through shared practices, especially shared worship, a flourishing common life will be evident throughout the institution. Students, having experienced a rich *koinonia* (fellowship), will know how to form and sustain communities once they depart alma mater, and loyal alumni will remember with gratitude their years in a soul-forming community.

#### CONCLUSION: The Faculty Role

But how shall such a university come to be? It will not happen because the provost, the president, or the Board of Regents wills it. It can happen if the faculty wholly embrace the vision. The faculty are foundational to the future of the project. The personal influence of the teacher is the single most important element in higher education. If we lose that, we lose it all. As John Henry Newman once warned:

With [faculty] influence there is life, without it there is none. . . . An  
academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils  
is an Arctic winter; it will create an ice-bound, petrified, cast-iron  
University, and nothing else.<sup>47</sup>

Mr. Pepperdine was apparently possessed by the thought of faculty *influence* when he penned his inaugural address. (The word *influence* appears at least five times in his short

message.) He understood well that teachers are “the books our students read most closely.”<sup>48</sup> He knew that faculty “must be wise and mature and good people, not merely smart and accomplished and skillful and expert.”<sup>49</sup>

Yet even the best academically prepared faculty may not be ready for the unique task of educating in the kind of university we are contemplating, unless we offer them the means to develop in ways different from, and beyond, the reductive traditions of the research university. The formation of faculty may well be our most urgent, unfinished (perhaps never-quite-finished) task. James Burtchaell more than thirty years ago commented on the difficulty of sustaining a university’s faith mission:

[I]t is the faculty deliberations within the departments, not in the mind of the University leadership, that [core] beliefs are given flesh. Please understand that this preservation of our corporate strength is nothing that can be accomplished by administrative fiat, or quantitative norms, or official pledges of affirmative action. It is only a conscious conviction and commitment among the faculty that will assure its own continuance.<sup>50</sup>

In 2004, the esteemed biblical scholar Luke Timothy Johnson delivered the Staley Distinguished Lectures. In one address, he offered what at the time may have seemed like a slight comment. He said, “*All scholarship should be witness.*” Most of us were schooled in intellectual traditions that would render this claim either strange or heretical. In my graduate studies I was instructed to segregate my scholarship from my witness, to conceal my convictions behind a façade of pure disinterestedness.

Today we can see that certain essential questions about life cannot be answered by a narrow understanding of reason or through the silencing of faith. When Clark Kerr

delivered the Godkin Lectures at Harvard in 1963, he enthusiastically envisioned a great future for the multi-versity, “the city of the intellect”: “a city of infinite variety . . . held together by a common name and . . . related purposes.” Nearly forty years later, Kerr’s enthusiasm gave way to something akin to despair. When he wrote a new last chapter for his classic *The Uses of the University*, he was less confident and less positive about the university’s future. University leaders, Kerr noted sadly, have, “*no great visions to lure them on, only the need for survival for themselves and their institutions*” (my emphasis).<sup>51</sup>

At the end of a sobering critique of higher education today, David L. Kirp, Professor of Public Policy at Berkeley, concludes with this riveting question: “*If there is a less dystopian future [for higher education], one that revives the soul of this old institution, who is to advance it—and if not now, then when?*” (my emphasis).<sup>52</sup> May I suggest that it is Pepperdine’s destiny to answer the call. And how will we do this? Consider the words of Margaret Mead:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

The vision of a faithful university will become real when a group of thoughtful, committed faculty members determines that it will be so. It will happen when they say: “*Here we are, poised to restore what has long been disjoined: a comprehensive educational vision which unites knowledge, virtue, faith, and service. At Pepperdine University knowledge will seek wisdom through love, understanding through faith. That is how we will be purposeful, that is how we will serve the world, and that is how we will be a leader in higher education.*”

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- <sup>1</sup> I am indebted to many who offered ideas for the paper's theme and in several instances read drafts and offered suggestions. In particular, I wish to thank Paul Contino, Ronald Highfield, D'Esta Love, Donald Marshall, Edward Rockey, Regan Schaffer, Chris Soper, Michael Williams, and Jeff Zalar.
- <sup>2</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, "Ferment and Change: Higher Education in 2015," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 25 Nov. 2005: B8.
- <sup>3</sup> Harry R. Lewis, *Excellence Without Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education* (New York: PublicAffairs / Perseus Books, 2006).
- <sup>4</sup> C. John Sommerville, *The Decline of the Secular University* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006) 21.
- <sup>5</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, "Ferment and Change: Higher Education in 2015," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 25 Nov. 2005: B6.
- <sup>6</sup> Ernest L. Boyer, "The Scholarship of Engagement" in *Selected Speeches 1979-1995* (Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1997) 85.
- <sup>7</sup> Nathan Hatch, "Christian Thinking in a Time of Academic Turmoil" in *Faithful Learning and the Christian Scholarly Vocation*, eds. Douglas V. Henry and Bob R. Agee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 88.
- <sup>8</sup> Stanley N. Katz, "Liberal Education on the Ropes," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 1 April 2005: B6.
- <sup>9</sup> Lewis 264.
- <sup>10</sup> David L. Kirp, *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003) 259; Sommerville 21.
- <sup>11</sup> Sommerville 8. See also Sommerville, "The Exhaustion of Secularism" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 9 June 2006.
- <sup>12</sup> Qtd. in Pelikan 18.
- <sup>13</sup> Frank H. T. Rhodes, *The Creation of the Future: The Role of the American University* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2001) 47.
- <sup>14</sup> Edward E. Erickson, Jr., "The University Under the Microscope," *Books and Culture* May/June 2005. <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2005/003/14.10.html>>.
- <sup>15</sup> Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin et al., *Meaning and Spirituality in the Lives of College Faculty: A Study of Values, Authenticity, and Stress* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, 1999).
- <sup>16</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, "Ferment and Change: Higher Education in 2015: Higher Education in 2015" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 25 Nov. 2005: B8.
- <sup>17</sup> Yankelovich B9.
- <sup>18</sup> Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 6.
- <sup>19</sup> Carlin Romano, "One University, Indivisible, Under a Coherent Idea" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 26 July 2002: B10.
- <sup>20</sup> See Richard T. Hughes and Thomas H. Olbricht, *Scholarship, Pepperdine University, and the Legacy of Churches of Christ* (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University Center for Faith and Learning, 2004); and Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian, *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 402-441.
- <sup>21</sup> Dennis O'Brien, *The Idea of the Catholic University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 25.
- <sup>22</sup> Harry Lewis 268.
- <sup>23</sup> Cited in Dovre 4.
- <sup>24</sup> Michael Hamilton, "A Higher Education" *Christianity Today* 6 June 2005: 31.
- <sup>25</sup> James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., "Notre Dame and the Christian Teacher," *Notre Dame Magazine* Dec. 1972: 14.
- <sup>26</sup> Robert Benne 6.
- <sup>27</sup> Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven: Yale, 2003) xiii.
- <sup>28</sup> Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason, and the University: Memories and Reflections," Lecture at the University of Regensburg, 12 September 2006. [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2006](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006).
- <sup>29</sup> It is time to declare our intellectual and spiritual poverty and to rediscover Augustine, Origen, Justin, Irenaeus, Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Gregory of Nyssa. I can't help feeling we would be miles down the road if we absorbed the learning of just one or two books—like Rowan Williams's *The Wound of Knowledge*—and then conducted a campus-wide discussion of what we had read. Rowan Williams, *The*

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*Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to Saint John of the Cross* (Cambridge: Cowley, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> Lee Shulman, "More than Competition." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1 Sept. 2006: B9-10.

<sup>31</sup> Various church historians and theologians have noted that a deep ambivalence about the past pervades the Stone-Campbell "Restoration" movement. On the one hand, its leaders appealed to the sacred past, focusing intently upon the Bible and, to a lesser extent, the ancient world in which the Bible was written. Yet the influence of modernity also prompted the same leaders to treat the history of the last nineteen hundred years with cavalier indifference. Thus, two different principles operated within the movement—one historical, one anti-historical.

<sup>32</sup> He wrote: "Lectures on the Bible are lectures on antiquities of the world; on creation itself; on language; on man [sic] as he was, on man as he is, on man as he will hereafter be." *Millennial Harbinger* (1860): 512. Qtd. in Thomas Olbricht, "Whatever Happened to Alexander Campbell's Idea of a Christian College?" [unpublished lecture].

<sup>33</sup> Heart is a term of honor, for Jesus loved the heart and sought its transformation. See Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 68.

<sup>34</sup> Malina 68-75.

<sup>35</sup> "George Pepperdine, "Founder's Address," 21 September 1937.

<sup>36</sup> Robert S. Root-Bernstein and Michèle Root-Bernstein, "Learning to Think with Emotion," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 14 Jan. 2000: A64; Robert S. Root-Bernstein and Michèle Root-Bernstein, *Sparks of Genius: The Thirteen Thinking Tools of the World's Most Creative People* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> Joel Carpenter, quoting Peter Berger in Carpenter, "The Christian Scholar in an Age of World Christianity," in Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beaty, eds. *Christianity and the Soul of the University* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 68.

<sup>38</sup> *On the Divine Images* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press, 1980) 16.

<sup>39</sup> I wish to express appreciation to Professor Edward Rockey for suggesting that these practical professions may be seen as incarnational.

<sup>40</sup> Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: harper and Row, 1951) 178.

<sup>41</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998) 36, 56.

<sup>42</sup> See Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). While I do not endorse all aspects of McLaren's definition of "a generous orthodoxy," I heartily commend the concept.

<sup>43</sup> See Philip Jenkins, *The New Christendom*; and Joel A. Carpenter, "The Christian Scholar in an Age of World Christianity," in Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beaty, eds., *Christianity and the Soul of the University* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 85-99.

<sup>44</sup> "Charter of Bethany College," *Millennial Harbinger*, April 1840: 176. Qtd. in Thomas Olbricht, "Whatever Happened to Alexander Campbell's Idea of a Christian College?" 2.

<sup>45</sup> Campbell wanted a chemistry curriculum that would be "useful to farmers." "The great use and end of science" is "to improve art," that is, to improve our technology, practical skills. See Olbricht 6.

<sup>46</sup> Wilken viii.

<sup>47</sup> John Henry, Cardinal Newman, *University Sketches* (London: Walter Scott Pub. Co., 1902) 73.

<sup>48</sup> Louis Menand qtd. in Harry Lewis 102.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis 266.

<sup>50</sup> Burtchaell, "Notre Dame and the Christian Teacher" 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> Kirp 259. See Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002) vii, ix, 1, 31.

<sup>52</sup> Kirp 263.