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Finally, let me add a technical explanation. Many colleges currently carry different names from those with which they began. My usual practice, unless noted otherwise, has been to identify an institution by its present name.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Colleges and American Intellectual Traditions

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When in 1984 William Ringenberg published The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America, I was pleased to offer an introductory intellectual history to complement his extensive and well-researched institutional and social history. Now that Professor Ringenberg has prepared a thoroughly updated edition of his valuable book, I am glad for the chance to prepare a revised version of my earlier introduction.

In preparing this revision, I have made some abridgments and quite a few minor changes of wording and emphasis. Yet since my general conclusions about the subject remain pretty much as they were, I have not introduced major changes. Footnotes have been omitted. But readers who wish full attention to the matters discussed here may find such discussion in a number of outstanding books that have appeared since 1984. As a very abbreviated list, they include Louise L. Stevenson, Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends: The New Haven Scholars and the Transformation of Higher Learning in America, 1830-1890 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Michael James Lacey, ed., Religion and Twentieth-Century American Intellectual Life (Cambridge University Press, 1989); George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, eds., The Secularization of the Academy (Oxford University Press, 1992); George M. Marsden, The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief (Oxford University Press, 1994); William M. Shea and Peter A. Huff, eds., Knowledge and Belief in America: Enlightenment Traditions and Modern Religious Thought (Cambridge University Press, 1995); Bruce Kuklick, A History of Philosophy in America, 1720–2000 (Oxford University Press, 2001); J. David Hoeveler, Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D.
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For the very curious who would like even more of my opinions on these subjects, a précis of much that appeared in the original introduction was published as "Christian Thinking and the Rise of the American University," Christian Scholar's Review 9 (1979): 3–16. I have expanded some of the themes taken up by this introduction in later books, including Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822 (Princeton University Press, 1989); The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind (Eerdmans, 1994); and America's God, from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln (Oxford University Press, 2002). In the last of these books appears a much better accounting of "The Second Great Awakening" than I provide in this introduction.

The most important thing to stress about this new edition, however, is the same that needed to be stressed in 1984. Whatever one may think of my appetizer, William Ringenberg has prepared the hearty main course that will provide readers with their primary intellectual nourishment.

Christian higher education in America has passed through several distinct stages, with alternating periods of stability and change. These stages have reflected the developing nature of America's religious and intellectual culture. To understand especially how Christian colleges have promoted Christian worldviews, it is helpful to have a sketch of the historical terrain. Before roughly 1925, it is clear that American Christian thinking experienced two long and relatively stable periods of synthesis and two great and tumultuous periods of transition. Since 1925 the picture is not as clear, but even in more recent times it is possible to note some general tendencies.

The Puritan worldview provided the first relatively stable period of American Christian higher education. For the sake of convenience, we can date the prominence of this perspective from the founding of Harvard College in 1636 to the death of Jonathan Edwards in 1758. Then from about the mid-eighteenth century to the period of the Second Great Awakening (roughly 1795–1820), great changes took place in American society, affecting not least the nature of Christian thought. This transitional period was succeeded by another relatively stable time stretching from the Second Great Awakening to the beginning of the academic revolution that created the modern American university (1869 and 1876 are both useful chronological pegs at the end of this stable period, the first being the year when Charles Eliot began his momentous tenure as president of Harvard, the second being the year in which Johns Hopkins University began operation as a graduate school based on the German model). From that time until early in the twentieth century (the Scopes Trial over evolution in 1925 is another convenient date), there was once again a great tumult in American thought and religion that profoundly affected the shape of education generally and Christian higher education particularly. Since 1925 several forces have been at work within the thinking of theologically conservative Protestants. One effort seeks to roll back the clock to the early nineteenth century (i.e., to deny or repudiate the great changes at the end of the century). We might call that effort "fundamentalism." Another effort attempts to incorporate some of the ideas set in motion during the late nineteenth century into a Christian picture of the world. We might call that effort "evangelicalism."

These very general chronological divisions beg to be clarified. Each of the stages in American Christian thinking witnessed the development of complex intellectual problems. Each of these developments, in turn, had major implications for the shape of Christian higher education. And each contributed significantly to the present issues facing those who desire to develop Christian higher education appropriate for both modern culture and the students at Christian colleges.

Puritanism

The Puritans remain an object of discomfort for modern Americans, Christians no less than secularists. Some of this discomfort is warranted, for these energetic and sober Englishmen who set out to tame "the howling wilderness" could be an intimidating group. They would tolerate few concessions to human weakness and precious few alternatives when considering the path to the "city on a hill."

At least for modern believers concerned about the life of the mind, however, the Puritans deserve considerable praise. They remain, more than two centuries after the passing of their communities, still the only significant group of theologically conservative Protestants in American history who attempted both a Christian and an academic reconstruction of formal thought. Their colleges, of which seventeenth-century Harvard was most representative, were the most self-conscious practitioners of the integration of faith, life, and learning in the history of Christian higher education in America.

The magnitude of the Puritans' accomplishment is suggested by the breadth of their reforming interest. This included not only the spiritual renovation of individuals and the systematic renewal of church and society, but also the reconstruction of the mind. Drawing upon ideas of covenant, which they traced back to Scripture but which also reflected the creative jurisprudence of Elizabethan England, the Puritans formulated relatively sophisticated theories of political and social cohesion. More than simple piety knit the Puritans together who ventured into the New World during the 1630s. Their covenantal theology, extrapolated into theories of
church, state, and society, provided a potent intellectual balance to what Oliver Cromwell once called "the heart of the matter," the soul's personal attachment to God. To be sure, Puritan theories of social order were not overly successful: England's "Puritan Revolution" lasted less than two decades and came to an end conclusively with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660; America's "Holy Commonwealths" in Massachusetts and Connecticut exhausted Puritan piety for Yankee profitability before a century had gone by in the New World. Yet the very presence of these experiments, not to speak of the lingering impact that so many Puritan ideas have exerted in America, distinguishes Puritan educational effort as a rare commodity in American history.

Puritan thought was also notable for its explorations in psychology and rhetoric. Its emphasis on conversion, witnessed in diaries, sermons, and formal treatises, went much further than either Luther or Calvin had gone in charting the migration of a soul from darkness to light. So careful could this reflection become, as illustrated in the diaries of Thomas Shepard or the sermons of Thomas Hooker and John Cotton, that later revivalistic and evangelistic thinking since the seventeenth century has amounted to little more than abridgments, popularizations, or simplifications of the Puritan standard. Puritans reflected with similar seriousness on the style of public speech appropriate to their messages. The development of the "plain style" sermon and the other forms of direct public address that the Puritan sermon encouraged was a result of self-conscious strategy. Rhetorical analysis, in this rare case, preceded argumentative speech. Even more rare was the fact that Puritans designed this rhetorical style to meet the needs of their larger commitments, rather than letting instances of rhetorical success dictate the shape of the larger commitments.

The Puritan intellectual tradition reached its culmination in Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), who faced a more difficult task than had Puritans a century before. By the early eighteenth century, a new form of ethics had emerged in the Western world that grounded virtue in the state of the inner being much as Puritan ethics had also done. This "new moral philosophy" differed from Puritanism, however, in its assertion that people possessed by nature the capacity to nurture goodness. For the Cambridge Platonist Henry More (1614–87), the British sentimentalist Lord Shaftesbury (1671–1713), and the Scottish moral philosopher Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) there was no need for the specific activity of God's grace to prepare the heart for virtuous behavior. Edwards, consequently, was faced with the task of defending a volitional and affectional ethics against the older Aristotelian legacy and a Reformed and Augustinian theology against his era's new moral philosophy.

Edwards's treatise, The Nature of True Virtue (published posthumously in 1765), was his major attempt at performing this task. In this book Edwards praised the new moral philosophers for certain aspects of their work. On the basis of a belief in common grace, Edwards held that natural conscience did possess a prudential value for regulating conduct, that sentiments of beauty provided insights into the nature of morality, that pity and familial affection helped stabilize society, and that the natural "moral sense" revealed some truths about the world. Edwards went on to assert, however, that these useful products of natural virtue fell far short of true virtue, which had its basis only in the saving grace of God. "Nothing is of the nature of true virtue," Edwards wrote, "in which God is not the first and the last."

Edwards's work did not convince everyone who read it in his day, nor has it ever enjoyed widespread approbation in American intellectual history. Nevertheless, modern evangelicals should be impressed with Edwards's effort, even if they may not approve its specific details. Modern Christian academics especially ought to be able to learn valuable lessons from Edwards as they plan their own strategies for effective use of learning. The importance of Edwards lies in the example he set by carefully dissecting and analyzing the intellectual discoveries, assumptions, and reflexes of his age. Edwards not only possessed a strong belief in God's particular grace, he also respected the wisdom that God had given to believers and nonbelievers alike. He thus studied very carefully not just the spokesmen for his own basically Puritan positions, but also Locke, Newton, the philosophers Samuel Clarke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson, and many more besides. In fact, Edwards's ability to mount effective counterarguments against the "new moral philosophy" depended upon his capacity to take the best thinkers of his day with utter seriousness. For Edwards, total dependence upon the Holy Spirit pushed him toward contemporary intellectuals, not away from them.

Edwards was virtually the last of his breed. After his time, even the best American Christian thinkers gave in readily to the idea that people possessed by nature the mental capacities necessary to understand the deepest secrets of the world and the moral ability required to act in accordance with conscience or the demands of the gospel. Yet even though Edwards had few heirs, his efforts deserve attention from those in our day who labor in Christian higher education. They hold up the vision of a Christian education at once open to the world's finest wisdom and fully consistent with biblical orthodoxy.

Before the changes of the mid-eighteenth century, the earliest American colleges had done their part in promoting the Puritan intellectual synthesis. College authorities assumed that students would matriculate with a full knowledge of Scripture, which then would mark the conceptual
boundaries of collegiate instruction. At least until the tumults of the colonial Great Awakening in the 1740s made officials skeptical about "enthusiastic" religion, they encouraged students to seek conversion. In addition, they provided instructional materials from the Reformed communities of England and the continent that depicted education as a practical service to God. They encouraged students to master the classical European curriculum (especially the grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic of the traditional university) because they regarded this curriculum as the distillation of the common grace that God had given to the ancients. But college authorities also taught the students that the classics could not provide the essential orientation to the world that came by God’s grace alone. A student, in the words of Harvard’s earliest set of “Rules, and Precepts,” was to “be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life . . . and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and Learning.” The result was holistic education that gave nature its due while reserving the essential framework, in both personal lives and academic instruction, for grace.

The Revolutionary Generation

From the end of the French and Indian War in 1763 to well beyond the start of the next century, America’s cultural values were in flux. Within the space of a half century, Americans threw over the rule of the world’s most powerful nation. They dallied with several forms of the European Enlightenment before coming to embrace a conservative expression of that great movement. They embarked on a love affair with the idea of liberty that had both bracing and unsettling consequences. And they reestablished Christian thinking and the churches on new foundations. It is hardly surprising that in this rapid realignment of values, the nature of instruction at the country’s colleges, and the colleges themselves, also changed dramatically.

The ideology that lay behind the War for Independence certainly played an important part in the change. Stress on the corruption of the Old World, insistence upon “natural rights” in the face of Parliament’s “tyranny,” and a vision of history as a never-ending struggle between forces of oppression and freedom shaped perceptions not only for politics but for every sphere of American life. Thus, upstart religious bodies broke from the settled traditions of established denominations, the older denominations themselves were forced to reconstitute on American principles, formerly respected professions like the law came under attack as unjustly privileged sanctums, and politicians began to make much of “the people.” In general, the forces that led both to “the age of the common man” and to the Civil War were set in motion.

A Christian-Cultural Synthesis

In the years between America’s War for Independence (1776–83) and the American Civil War (1861–65), Protestant values and the values of American public life joined in a powerful cultural synthesis. The Revolution had brought the United States into existence; its ideology of liberty provided a powerful impetus for constructing a new nation. Similarly, the Second Great Awakening witnessed the conversion of many people; its twin engines of evangelism and reform also offered means to reconstruct society. When these two influences came together—as they did so clearly for the great revivalists such as Charles G. Finney, the great reformers such as abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld, the great organizers such as Lyman Beecher, the great educators such as Noah Webster, and the great politicians such as Abraham Lincoln—the result was a singularly powerful set of cultural values that decisively shaped the character of America’s Christian higher education.

Three central beliefs governed the synthesis. Antebellum America believed in America itself, it believed in individual freedom, and it believed in what could be called Protestant Newtonian philosophy. The belief in America is evident most clearly from a northern perspective during the years immediately before the Civil War. For many in both North and South, this struggle brought together reform, millennialism, and the sense of America’s unique destiny under God. For northerners the preservation of the union meant no less than breathing life into Manifest Destiny, overcoming slavery (the greatest evil remaining in America), and perhaps even bringing in the millennium. “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the strife will not be long,” wrote George Duffield in 1858. The words of the New School Presbyterians at their General Assembly of 1861 spoke for many others: “Rebellion against such a government as ours... can find no parallel, except in the first two great rebellions, that which assailed the throne of heaven directly [Satan], and that which peopleed our world with miserable apostates [Adam and Eve]. . . We here, in deep humiliation for our sins and the sins of the nation, and in heartfelt devotion, lay ourselves, with all that we are and have, on the altar of God and our country.” For their part, southerners often looked at Yankees as lawless aggressors destroying the precious Christian heritage of the United States.

Christian America believed not only in itself as a nation, but in the individual freedom of its citizens. This second belief was compounded of much that was vital in America’s young history: the stirring words of the Declaration of Independence, the convictions of Presidents Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, the philosophical individualism of John Locke and the Scottish Realists, the accelerating influence of the Methodists, and even the newer theories of some Calvinists. In its extreme form the belief
in individual freedom resulted in visions of human perfection—some arising out of the Unitarian departure from Calvinism, others from the more advanced forms of Methodism. In its usual forms, American individualism foresaw great social benefits arising from individuals organized against social evils—slavery, drunkenness, dueling, prostitution, the theater, and frivolous amusements. Although America’s infatuation with the individual was not confined to Christian circles, Christians no less than non-Christians gave their whole-hearted commitment to the individual as the hope of the future.

Finally, the educated elite of nineteenth-century America were committed to a worldview in which first principles were God-ordained laws and motivating forces were innate human capacities. This was the philosophy of Protestant Newtonianism. Americans were Protestant in their convictions about Scripture, their commitment to the priesthood of believers, and their primitivist allegiance to first-century Christianity. They were Newtonian, and hence of the Enlightenment, in their commitment to simplicity in ideas and in a corresponding distaste for intellectual ambiguity. They reflected this Newtonianism even more in their commitment to a concept of static law. It was, for example, as axiomatic as the law of gravity that national prosperity was a sign of God’s blessing or that the exercise of correct stimuli in a revival would bring the correct results. Protestant Newtonians held that externally fixed laws governed the “facts” of national life and morality as surely as they did the “facts” of nature.

Intellectual life in America’s college before 1870 bears little resemblance to what we know today. The curriculum of the old college consisted of a little mathematics; a great deal of praise for empirical science with, however, only meager opportunities to carry out actual experiments; much drill in the classics; and an exposure to systematic arguments for morality, civic virtue, and the existence of God. Modern languages and literature had no place in the curriculum, and history as a discipline was just beginning to be recognized. Instruction proceeded by recitation. The professor, acting more as scorekeeper than teacher, called upon the students to translate, parse, recapitulate, or summarize. Close discipline, extending well beyond the classroom, was the rule. Teachers were regarded as keepers of the peace. At Harvard in 1827 a financial crisis forced the college to increase teaching loads, consolidate positions, and also extend the responsibilities of the faculty to nightly bed checks of the undergraduates. Not surprisingly, the tedium of the classroom, the rigor of extracurricular discipline, and the natural feistiness of late adolescence led to student unrest. One of the less destructive ways in which students protested their lot was to disrupt morning prayers by herding a compliant cow into the chapel. Student unrest often led to violence as well, including once or twice the murder of professors who had offended students.

By 1870 it was clear that the old college was barely keeping pace with the intellectual needs of the country. In that year the nation’s colleges enrolled about 52,000 out of a general population of 40 million (the equivalent of 350,000 students in our present population). Furthermore, the rate of growth in the number of college students was falling behind the rate of growth in the country as a whole.

For all of its weaknesses, however, the old-style American college had one important advantage: with very rare exceptions, it was founded and operated as an avowedly Christian institution. In the great westward expansion of the country before the Civil War, Protestant denominations exceeded one another in founding educational institutions. Many denominational schools were founded through the efforts of a single clergyman. Most struggled along with pitifully few students and a rapidly changing faculty. Most suffered from a surplus of competition and a deficit in financing. All sought to answer the Protestant need for a literate laity and a learned clergy and the democratic American need for informed citizens.

The capstone of the college experience during this period was a year-long course, often taught by the college president, in “moral philosophy” or “mental science.” It was a course with vast horizons, including everything having to do with human beings and their social relations (the subjects studied under this rubric would later become the separate disciplines of psychology, philosophy, religion, political science, sociology, anthropology, economics, and jurisprudence). The course almost always included an investigation of epistemology in general and the epistemological foundations of Christianity in particular. The purpose of the course was to provide final Christian integration for the college career and final exhortations concerning the kind of citizenship good Christians should practice.

The Rise of the Seminary
A number of different factors led, in the early nineteenth century, to the founding of schools devoted specifically to the training of candidates for the ministry. Before this time ministerial education had been a random process. Among the older denominations like Congregationalists and Presbyterians, college graduates regularly studied as apprentices with older ministers for a year or two before seeking their own charges. The newer denominations such as the Baptists and the Methodists did not require formal training in college or elsewhere but relied rather upon native intellectual ability and the more direct calling of the Holy Spirit. This varied approach to ministerial training changed first for Congregationalists and Presbyterians, but by the time of the Civil War, formal seminary education was standard for most of the major Protestant bodies. The effects on the Christian colleges, and on the effort to formulate Christian perspectives on the world, were considerable.
Andover Seminary in Massachusetts was the first of the new institutions. It came into existence in 1808 specifically as a trinitarian and evangelical protest against the appointment of a Unitarian to the professorship of divinity at Harvard College. Soon there were other seminaries. Princeton, established in 1812, was the first of many such schools founded by Presbyterians. Yale created its own Divinity School shortly thereafter to serve primarily Congregationalists. Soon almost all of the major Protestant bodies possessed their own specialized institutions for training clergymen.

More than anything else, the cultural crisis of the Revolutionary period was responsible for the rise of the seminary. The Revolutionary picture of the past as a sink of corruption and its great stress on the rights of individuals created a situation in which authority had to be a function of individual ability and accomplishment. In addition, the rapid growth and spread of the population led to a desperate need for clergymen to minister in the new centers of population. As an indication of the dimensions of this problem, annual reports of the Presbyterian General Assembly during the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century regularly showed more vacant “preaching stations” than churches with regularly settled ministers. In addition, secularization (or “infidelity,” in the terms of the day) seemed to be spreading much more rapidly than the gospel. At least until the full effects of the Second Great Awakening were felt in the 1820s, church leaders wondered if a Christian witness could be preserved in the country. In response to all of these needs, the theological seminary seemed to be an idea whose time had come. It offered a respectable certification for candidates against the threat of egalitarianism, single-minded attention to training for ministry against the threat of unreached people, and specialized study in the Bible and theology against the threat of infidelity.

The seminaries did meet these needs. In the process they went on to become the prototype for graduate education in the country and, into the twentieth century, remained the nation’s most successful institutions for advanced study. By the time Princeton Seminary celebrated its centennial in 1912, for example, it had trained more than six thousand students, far more than any other institution of graduate education in any field in the United States. The only competitors at that time were Andover Seminary, which had educated already nearly 3,600 students, and the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, with 4,500 alumni. The seminaries also served as effective training grounds for Christian workers and were one of the reasons why American missions, home and abroad, possessed the personnel to accomplish its great tasks in the nineteenth century. In addition, the seminaries provided a setting conducive to serious academic work. Until the Civil War, Journals from the Protestant seminaries were probably the most sophisticated general publications in America, and they retained some of their intellectual weight and cultural breadth into the twentieth century. The autonomous seminary, separate from college or university and often under the direct control of a denomination, was a singularly American creation. It has exerted a profound influence on the shape of the Christian faith in America.

Its existence, however, also created problems for Christian liberal arts education. If seminaries specialized in theology and encouraged systematic reflection on Christian interaction with the world, what theological role remained for the Christian colleges? This question did not loom as large in the antebellum years before the rise of academic specialization and professionalization, but it was still a difficulty. Should the colleges become miniature seminaries in focusing their curriculum on biblical and theological subjects? Are theological reflection, and the consideration of how revelation affects other areas of thought, to be left with the professors at the seminaries? Such questions took on increased importance when it became clear that the most influential, and perhaps also the most intelligent, Christian commentary on science, and eventually the social sciences, on public ethics, and on the religious destiny of the United States came from the seminaries instead of the Christian colleges. To this day, professors at evangelical seminaries are the best trained of all professional academics identified with evangelical institutions, and their work is read far more widely in evangelical circles than work from professors in the Christian colleges.

The rise of the seminary was a phenomenon of the early nineteenth century that continues to have an influence on American Christian thinking to this day. Even more, the educational changes of the late nineteenth century still shape the intellectual world in which the Christian colleges attempt to accomplish their tasks.

The Emergence of Modern Higher Education

No historical event has been more important for contemporary Christian higher education than the reorganization of the colleges at the end of the nineteenth century. We must not forget, however, that it was but one aspect of another broad crisis in cultural values comparable to that of the Revolutionary era. The issues constituting this crisis, however, were broader than those of the previous century. Would America be able to offer her freedoms not only to Northern European Protestants, but to Southern European Catholics, to Jews, to Asians, and to the African Americans who began to insist on civil liberties? How would the reconstruction of economic life in an industrial society affect perspectives on consumption, social status, and personal worth? How would America’s emergence as a world power
change its image of itself? Perhaps above all, how would American culture react to the momentous ideas of nineteenth-century Europe promoted by seminal minds like Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and Darwin? The educational story, as it affects the Christian colleges today, is the story of changes so striking as to deserve the overworked term "revolution."

The years from 1865 to 1900 constituted the great period of transition for American higher education. When Charles Eliot became president of Harvard in 1869, he set that influential institution on a course of innovation and expansion. The Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1876, exercised leadership in the establishment of graduate education. Other major changes were also under way: new universities were founded such as Cornell, Chicago, Stanford, and Clark; older private colleges such as Yale, Princeton, and Columbia were transformed into universities with the addition of graduate and professional schools; major state universities such as Michigan and Wisconsin grew up almost overnight in the Midwest and West.

It is of the greatest significance that the money for this academic explosion did not come from the Christian communities that had hitherto been the financial bellwether for American education. Rather, the federal government began to provide land and money for the practical arts through the Morrill Act of 1862. Even more important were the large sums coming from the new industrialists—that is, from those who had best exploited the expansion of the American economy after the Civil War. Before citing names and numbers, it would be helpful to establish a standard of comparison from the old-time college. Harvard enjoyed a $10,000 annual grant from the Massachusetts legislature for the ten years following 1814 and was the envy of struggling academicians everywhere. When Princeton a decade later audaciously sought $100,000 from its alumni, it created a sensation.

The sums contributed to establish the new universities, however, were on a different level entirely. Ezra Cornell, who made his money in telegraph construction and banking, donated $500,000 to the school that bears his name and managed a Morrill grant for $2,500,000 more. Johns Hopkins, a banker and investor in the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, left $3,500,000 to the university and an equal sum to establish a teaching hospital. Cornelius Vanderbilt (steamships and railroads) gave an initial gift of $1,000,000 to establish Vanderbilt University in Tennessee and later followed up with other generous bequests. Leland Stanford, who parlayed political office into control of the Central and Southern Pacific Railroads, left $20,000,000 to establish a university in honor of his son. James Duke, of the American Tobacco Company, assigned the largest part of the income from a $100,000,000 trust fund to the university that bears his name. John D. Rockefeller's gifts to es-

lish a great Baptist university in Chicago eventually totaled $45,000,000. From a different but still dizzying perspective, private donors in the twenty years from 1878 to 1898 gave $140,000,000 to American colleges and universities. What this could do for an individual institution can be seen from the jump in Harvard's permanent endowment from $2,500,000 in 1869 to $20,000,000 in 1909.

The number of students attending colleges and universities grew almost as rapidly as the number of dollars going into education. While the country's population nearly doubled (40 million to 76 million) from 1870 to 1900, the number of college students leaped nearly fivefold (from 52,000 to 238,000). In 1870, 1.7 percent of the eighteen- to twenty-one-year-old population was in college. By 1930, the figure had reached 12.4 percent. To cite again the example of Harvard, it grew from 1,000 students in 1869 to 4,000 in 1909; during the same period its faculty grew even more rapidly, from 60 to 600. The surge in attendance was fueled by the growth in public high schools, by the growing numbers of women seeking higher education, and by an increasing desire for higher education by individuals outside of the traditional Anglo-Saxon Protestant sources.

Almost unnoticed in the great influx of dollars and students was the decline of the Christian characteristics that had earlier marked higher education. Neither the new donors nor the new breed of administrators were overly concerned about the orthodoxy of their faculties. Visible signs of this change abounded. At Harvard, compulsory chapel ceased in 1886. The opening ceremonies at Johns Hopkins in 1876 contained no prayer but did feature an address by British evolutionary theorist Thomas Huxley. As money from businessmen increased, so did their concern that boards of trustees and college administrators function in a businesslike way. Thus it was that businessmen replaced clergymen as trustees, and laymen replaced ministers as college presidents. In 1839, fifty-one of the fifty-four presidents of America's largest colleges were clergymen (forty of these being Presbyterians or Congregationalists). By the end of the century the number was greatly reduced. Princeton, always conservative, waited until 1902 to name its first lay president, Woodrow Wilson.

If the German example was the source of the university's professionalization, the new science was the source of its pride. This new science was popularly, if inaccurately, associated with the name of Charles Darwin, whose Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection had been published in 1859. Darwinism, which one scholar has neatly summarized as "a scientifically credible theory of random and purposeless change," stood for an intellectual perspective that went well beyond questions in biology. It is in fact possible to see three levels of Darwinism: a scientific method, a scientific result, and a philosophical system. At each level, Darwinism both un-
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dercut the antebellum scientific world of American higher education and offered the glowing prospect of unprecedented scientific progress.

A whole new idea of the faculty member was also coming into existence. The new professional enjoyed certifiable training and coveted standing in an academic specialty. He, and gradually she as well, normally went through a probation period as teacher-researcher-scholar. Scholars sought employment at institutions offering specialized instruction. They were committed to publishing the results of their research for scholars outside their own institutions. Their scholarly functions and professional reputation became at least as important as their teaching responsibilities or their institutional loyalty. Befitting this new status, faculty members were spared some of the responsibilities they had traditionally exercised. One of the first of their traditional tasks to go was disciplinary responsibility for the students during their non-class hours.

The new professors also adopted a different role in society and in the world at large. Old-time college leaders had spoken to society as a whole, but mostly as moral cheerleaders or defenders of a public faith. The new academicians achieved their recognition as experts, individuals with extraordinary competence in one or another of the new disciplines cultivated at the new university. The public pronouncements of Oliver Wendell Holmes on the law, Thorsten Veblen on economics, or William James and John Dewey on philosophy were not always followed, but they were heard. Worldviews were now coming from the university.

In sum, more than just thirty-five years separated the new university at the start of the twentieth century from the old college at the close of the Civil War. The new university was professional; it offered technical training in a wide variety of separate fields; it was funded by large gifts from America’s industrial giants; it had laid aside the external marks of Christianity; its professors sought to become well known in their specific disciplines and to speak expertly to society as a whole; its new science purported to illuminate a better way to truth, progress, and perhaps even happiness; and it was offering its wares to an ever-growing part of the American population.

In almost every way imaginable the new university undercut the traditional values of Christian higher education in America. Excess capital generated by the industrialists after the Civil War arose from a widespread exploitation of new scientific technology. This excess wealth was generated, furthermore, by individuals who had largely laid aside the constraints of Christian altruism that moral philosophy, for which the new capitalists had no time, sought to inculcate in college graduates. American industrialists, to one degree or another, seemed to have favored the kind of social Darwinism popularized by Herbert Spencer. One of the reasons this new class of wealthy Americans funded education was to encourage more of the practical science and managerial theory coming from the new universities and less of the moralism coming from the old colleges. Whether through the direct influence of the industrialists or not, clergymen were replaced by businessmen on college boards of trustees and ministers were replaced as college presidents by educators alert to management ideas and the demands of the new science. These new presidents, in turn, focused much more attention on scholarship than on orthodoxy. Furthermore, the new scholarship that these presidents encouraged had been supposedly “liberated” from the old orthodoxies of moral philosophy. It was frankly naturalistic in science and pragmatic in philosophy. In turn—and this brings the circle full—the new naturalistic science and the new pragmatic philosophy encouraged industrial giantism by providing training and technique to the capitalists while at the same time offering few criticisms of the new industrial wealth.

Against this combination of new money, social Darwinism, and naturalistic science, the old Christian moral philosophy and the old Christian college stood almost no chance. Its reductionistic Christianity had little guidance to offer industrialists or the new urban masses. Its individualistic ethics could not comprehend the magnitude of new economic and social developments. Its empiricism had been turned against the traditional orthodoxy.

The collapse of moral philosophy signaled the collapse of the effort to preserve a unified Christian worldview in America. From the point of view of the new university, the effort to view knowledge whole was abandoned under the assumption that discrete parts of truth, discovered through empirical science, could stand on their own. The effort to integrate religious faith with learning was abandoned under the assumption that the pursuit of science carried with it no antecedent commitments to a worldview.

This transitional period in American higher education marked the demise of the nineteenth-century Christian-cultural synthesis as the dominant American worldview. The earlier alliance between Christian and Enlightenment values experienced notable strain. For many scholars in the new universities, an enlightened pursuit of learning led to the abandonment of historic Christianity. The crisis, however, did not lead conservative Protestants to break with the Enlightenment. American evangelical educators tended rather to insist upon the Enlightenment-Christian synthesis even as it slipped from dominance in the colleges and universities. Theologically conservative Protestants, in other words, were not returning to the model of Edwards or the Puritans, nor attempting to reconstruct the life of the mind on the basis of a new perspective on the categories of spe-
cial revelation and common grace. They were rather digging in their heels and insisting upon the continuing validity of the earlier synthesis.

The fundamentalist-modernist controversy certainly exacerbated problems for Christian thinking in this transitional era. So thoroughly had evangelicals internalized the values of the Enlightenment into their Christian worldview that they reacted to both modernistic theology and new proposals in science, philosophy, and the arts as equally heretical. Fundamentalists, committed both to historic Christianity and to the thought forms of the early nineteenth century, were naturally suspicious of proposals that called either into question, especially when the new ideas were allied with assaults upon traditional theology or morality.

Many modern evangelical colleges are heirs of the rearguard action that preserved a Christian dimension in American higher education at the turn of the century. Much has happened since then to force rethinking of the distinctions that fundamentalists drew between historic Christianity and the new learning. By their continued adherence to Christian norms, evangelical colleges today testify to their debt to the fundamentalist naysayers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Just as surely, however, by their selective reengagement with modern forms of thought they testify to their implicit judgment that the reductionistic faith, the Baconian science, and the individualistic ethics of the nineteenth-century Enlightenment-Christian synthesis had become a burden as much as a blessing in the pursuit of Christian higher education.

**The Twentieth Century**

Since the academic revolution at the turn of the century and the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of roughly the same period, the evangelical colleges have returned at least part way to the educational mainstream. At the same time, they have also maintained many of the theological and ethical convictions of the nineteenth-century Christian colleges. Living between two worlds as they are, committed both to Christian values and to modern learning, the evangelical colleges have singular opportunities and singular difficulties as they attempt to encourage Christian perspectives on the world.

As demonstrated extensively by Professor Ringenberg’s research, the most obvious characteristic of the evangelical colleges in recent American history is their institutional vigor. A form of higher learning that seemed doomed by the educational revolution of the late nineteenth century has not only survived, but prospered. As an indication of strength, there are now more than one hundred colleges and universities associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities; many of these institutions are doing at least fairly well in terms of students, finances, and intellectual vitality.

Several distinct elements have contributed to that prosperity. One is the colleges’ ability to provide students with the necessary educational certification for entering the major vocations and the leading professional schools. Another is their success in cultivating the support of Christian communities that had come to distrust modern higher education but that expressed confidence in those institutions which retained Christian professions and traditional behavioral standards. A third is the capacity of faculties at the evangelical colleges to articulate to themselves, to college administrators, and to wider Christian constituencies the theoretical and practical necessity for distinctly Christian views of the world.

Merely to note these factors, however, does not take us very far into the many different histories represented by the various Christian liberal arts colleges. Although the evangelical colleges do share much in common, they also are products of many different strands in Protestant history. As such, the relationship between colleges and the constituencies which they serve can be very different in spite of the fact that they advertise nearly identical educational goals. Some of the colleges, founded by more recent immigrants, have never had to overcome the distrust of higher education that characterized the American fundamentalists. Others, however, wage a constant battle to convince their supporters of the values of the liberal arts and the virtues of an acquaintance with modern thought. Just to note that Baptists, Presbyterians, Reformed, Independents, Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Brethren, Mennonites, Lutherans, and still others work together in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities is enough to indicate the varied traditions that participate in evangelical higher education. The most that can be said now is that distinctly different patterns do appear. Some evangelical colleges are the lengthened shadow of one person or one family. Others rest securely within a particular denomination, and still others serve complex interdenominational networks. These patterns, and wide variations within each, call for explication of the sort that follows in this book.

Something of the same may be said for the question of faculty professionalization. Quite clearly the modern evangelical college expects its faculty to possess standard graduate training and to take some part in the ongoing professional activities of their academic disciplines. While the Christian colleges employ only a few professors who have become prominent in their disciplines, they are home to many scholars who regularly read papers at academic conferences, review books for professional journals, and engage in some kind of continuing research. This pattern, however, is fairly recent; it developed only after World War II. A number of factors contributed to this professionalization, among them a growing distance from the fundamentalist-modernist controversies and wider exposure to European forms
of orthodox Christianity. Yet this is a subject needing more serious investigation. Faculty professionalization touches upon the recent history of the evangelical colleges at many points. One of the most interesting of these pertains to the renewed relationships that these colleges have established in wider worlds of American higher education. Especially at a time of increasing competition for government funds, Christian colleges are finding common cause with other private institutions. Relations established here, within the accrediting associations and among administrators and faculty at many levels, beg for insightful research and clarification.

Faculty professionalization also raises larger questions of self-identity. Do they want students to have models of caring teachers who occasionally do a little research, or do they themselves want to make a contribution to knowledge?

Also important in the recent past are those developments that relate especially to the promotion of a Christian view of the world. Commitment to a Christian worldview is the academic raison d'être for the evangelical colleges. Yet much in the heritage of the colleges and in their present operation militates against either the creation of Christian perspectives or their application to modern intellectual life.

A series of conundrums can show the difficulties that the evangelical colleges face in this regard. In an age when the thinking that shapes worldviews comes regularly from research universities, there is only one evangelical institution that is trying to function as a full-scale research university. Baylor University in Texas has made great strides in reaching that goal, but whether it will succeed fully is still an open question. In an age when secularism tugs at Christian thinking from one side and long-entrenched denominational shibboleths tug at it from the other, evangelical higher education retains the distinct college and seminary tiers of its heritage and the barriers to cohesive Christian thinking that this structure perpetuates. In an age when scholars (sometimes even Christian scholars) have called into question almost every settled intellectual tradition in the West, evangelicals remain surprisingly content with the intellectual synthesis of the early nineteenth century. In an age when sophisticated secular intellectuals set the tone for considerations of politics, economics, and secular values, evangelicals continue to set their course by popular preachers who are not reluctant to pronounce judgment on every facet of modern learning. In an age, finally, demanding forceful Christian responses to powerful secular ideologies, careful Christian probing of complex intellectual issues, and creative Christian initiatives for pressing contemporary problems, much of evangelicalism still retains a stultifying nineteenth-century suspicion of all thinking that does not rest on mythic views of America's past, egalitarian common sense, or popular interpretations of the Bible.

These conundrums speak as much to the broader evangelical culture as to the liberal arts colleges themselves. They are nonetheless the pressing problems that evangelical colleges face in attempting to articulate Christian views of the world. They are problems, moreover, rooted in the history of the colleges and their constituencies.

The Path Ahead

The Puritans who established the colonial colleges had a vision. The intrepid ministers who created a vast network of higher education in the opened frontier, the energetic theological conservatives who founded Bible colleges or who maintained Christian distinctives during the academic revolution of the late nineteenth century, the hard-pressed immigrants who scraped together the means to preserve both Christian and Old World commitments, and the evangelical trustees, administrators, and faculties who guide Christian higher education through the perils of contemporary life have all shared this vision. Their vision, however, inarticulate at times, has been to capture thinking for Christ, and by so doing to contribute also to good citizenship, the spread of the gospel, social harmony, and the general well-being of students and constituencies alike.

At the same time there remain challenges for the future. Most obviously, evangelical colleges face many of the problems that confront all private colleges in the early twenty-first century. Financial pressure, the changing nature of governmental support, and uncertainties concerning the number of available students are difficulties as urgent on the campuses of the Christian colleges as elsewhere in private higher education. Yet these may be the least serious issues facing the Christian colleges.

Far more germane to the purposes for which these institutions exist are questions related to overall academic purpose and to relationships that the college sustains with their wider constituencies. The history of Christianity in America, not to speak of its worldwide history, testifies to the precariousness of Christian thinking. The tendency has ever been present for Christian academics to drift into the secularism of the wider culture or to relapse into the obscurantism of cultic sectarianism. Only an unambiguous loyalty to the priority of special revelation can check the propensity to secularism; only an unwavering commitment to the values of common grace can restrain the sectarian impulse. Against the children of the world, Christian colleges must stand for grace; against the children of grace, Christian colleges must stand for the world.

More particularly, Christian institutions of higher education are poised
between the demands of free academic inquiry and of committed theological loyalty. Without the first, it is hard to see the Christian colleges preserving intellectual viability, but without the second they will not retain their Christian character. Again, the evangelical tradition in America has had difficulty finding a place for intellectual freedom within the general framework of orthodoxy. The challenge for the future is to broaden expectations for creativity while at the same time heightening the value of theological commitment.

Finally, social and political factors pose a growing dilemma for evangelical higher education. The Christian Right has strong convictions about social and political questions and (often) the money to promote those ideas in the colleges. The Christian Left has less money, but its positions are argued with equal moral fervor. The challenge to evangelical higher education is to open doors wide to any political or social position that claims to rest on Christian foundations, but then to go on to rigorous scrutiny of the position and its supposed Christian base, never allowing the gospel to be equated with any changeable form of human conviction.

In the pages that follow, William Ringenberg provides a well-connected and up-to-date history of many of the developments that I have sketched in this introduction. His history, rather than my speculations, is the proper place to begin serious consideration of today's Christian colleges in relationship to their past. But because his history is done so well, it too will illuminate some of the questions that I have attempted to address.

The Colonial Period

The average American living in the late twentieth century finds it difficult to identify with the colonial period, for that era differs sharply from the present in many ways. The colonial population, even at its peak, never equaled 2 percent of today's census; those few million colonists lived in only that small section of North America between the Atlantic Ocean and the Appalachian Mountains; they found it very difficult to travel even moderate distances except by water; and nearly everyone was a farmer, while almost no one worked in an industrial or service occupation.

Higher education, then and now, also offers a study in contrasts. Only a very small percentage of colonial young men enrolled in college (the colleges awarded only nine thousand baccalaureate degrees between 1642 and 1800); the professors had acquired little training beyond their own undergraduate courses of study and they usually cultivated additional professional interests such as the ministry or medicine; the curriculum placed primary emphasis upon the study of Latin, Greek, and mathematics; and the colleges were more, rather than less, religious than was society in general (by 1800 only 7 percent of the population had joined a church, although approximately twice as many attended without formal membership).

The Pervading Christian Purpose of Colonial Education

The Christian worldview, more than any other system of thought, dominated American intellectual development during the colonial period. As clergymen were the leading representatives of the intellectual class, it is not surprising that they, and the denominations that they represented, took the lead in founding colleges and instructing the students. While religious leaders founded institutions of higher learning primarily to educate future ministers, these colleges never operated solely as ministerial training sem-