

1-1-2009

The Mission of the Christ-Centered Quaker College

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Recommended Citation

Anderson, Paul (2009) "The Mission of the Christ-Centered Quaker College," *Quaker Religious Thought*: Vol. 112, Article 3.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/qrt/vol112/iss1/3>

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THE MISSION OF THE CHRIST-CENTERED QUAKER COLLEGE

PAUL ANDERSON

In 1854 John Henry Newman published an epoch-making book on *The Idea of a University*. As rector of the new Catholic University of Ireland, Newman (later appointed Cardinal) first laid out a general discussion of the role of theology in the university, arguing for its central place in the quest for truth. After all, if the goal of a university is the study of truth in all its forms and branches, taking seriously the One who is the center of the universe as central to the quest should likewise be central to the quest for knowledge. It was upon that foundation that Newman then constructed his sketch of a center of inquiry in which leading authorities from the “universe” of disciplines could come together and provide students an unrivalled experience of learning and formation. Ironically, the institution founded by Newman collapsed within a half century or so, but Newman’s ideals continue to challenge educators of all persuasions with a vision of what institutions of higher learning could and should become.

The goal of the present essay, however, is to address a narrower target: the mission of the Christ-centered Quaker college. While central elements of that venture will be posed a bit later, an overview of some of the ways leading Friends have conceived of the educational mission of Friendly higher education may be serviceable.

FRIENDLY THOUGHTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Building on Newman’s work, D. Elton Trueblood delivered an address in 1949 on “The Idea of a College,” which was later expanded into a book.¹ In it he argued for the importance of creating a community of learning within higher education—one that teaches moral values as well as content; virtue as well as skills. To work, think, play, and pray together creates a society of inquiry among students and teachers alike. Citing Whitehead, “moral progress is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness” (Newby, 1978, 98). Here the student-teacher relationship is key, and central values are instilled around table fellowship, corporate worship, and engaging learning. Trueblood’s

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1976 essay, “The Redemption of the College,” called for restoring the spiritual features of the college as a place of rigorous learning and personal formation in community.² Here, Trueblood lays out a fourfold plan for the redemption of the Christian college:

1. *We must accept our uniqueness* as an institution with a religious mission and make the most out of the difference rather than concealing it.
2. *We must accept, unapologetically, the principle of requirement*, standing against permissiveness in the name of our mission; freedom for one delimits the freedoms of the other.
3. *We must be sincerely devoted to excellence*; mediocrity is the greatest heresy of all, and the love of God and the love of learning deserve to go hand in hand.
4. *We must reinstate the vision of wholeness*: “and” is “the holy conjunction,” and devotion deserves embodiment that embraces the polarities of life and defies contrived disjunctions as false dichotomies.

In representing the mission of Friends secondary schools, Thomas Brown contributed an extensive interview with T. Canby Jones in 1968 on “A Theology of Quaker Education” (*QRT* #20) to which several others responded. In this interview, Brown argues for a spirituality of education without falling prey to religious divisiveness, working toward an inclusive approach. Brown concludes that a Quaker education involves “not a technique but a vivid relationship to reality, a hunger for worship, a passion for truth, the experience of human growth both in the Light and toward the Light” (20). Several years later, Ward Harrington put it more pointedly in his 1982 essay, “The Quaker Role in Education” (*QRT* #54, 22). Citing the classic statement of George Fox (*Journal*, Nickalls edn., 11), “And so be valiant for truth upon the earth in the seed Christ Jesus, that through him who destroys death, you may have a crown of life; and through him you may be one another’s crown and joy in the Lord,” Harrington goes on to say:

Above all, education must nurture the capacity to come into communion with the Holy Spirit of God, for this is central to the Quaker heritage.

In all that we do there should be evidence of the Quaker confidence that we can come to Truth. From our natural capacities we see “as through a glass darkly.” When we come

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into the Truth of God, our directions and our requirements are made clear.

Our business is the nurture of human life—in body and spirit. In this we assist the process of coming to the fruition which arises out of commitment—the commitment which occurs when there is an opening to Truth.

In 1980 the Friends Association of Higher Education was founded for the purpose of facilitating collaboration among Quaker educators—serving both at Friends institutions and as Friends serving in non-Quaker institutions. Their annual meetings have created excellent opportunities for coming together and sharing what being Quaker educators ought to look like; the first issue of its journal, *Quaker Higher Education*, was published in April 2007. Building on presentations made at the 1984 FAHE and QTDG meetings held at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, one of the finest collections of essays on a Quaker theology of education was published in the November 1985 issue of *Evangelical Friend*.

Within that issue Ron Johnson describes the distinctive challenges of Christian liberal arts colleges (2-4) and argues that an education received in such institution offers many distinct advantages over secular higher education. Arthur Roberts then poses 16 “Queries for the Quaker Campus” (4), calling for Friendly approaches to decision-making, mutuality in relationships, and the faithful articulation of the Quaker Testimonies. Lee Nash describes nine qualities that have distinctive Friends slants (6-7) including concerns for *worship and the devotional life*, *peace*, *community*, *group decision-making*, valuing *women’s roles in leadership*, *servant-oriented leadership*, *embracing hurting people*, valuing *simplicity*, and fostering *creative individuality*—all of these can sometimes be prophetic. Hal Cope contributes an engaging interview with Howard Macy (8-9) exploring how Quaker values can be enhanced in Quaker institutions.

Making impacts far beyond the Quaker world have been Parker Palmer’s books emphasizing the essentially spiritual character of teaching. In his pivotal 1983 book, *To Know as We are Known*, Palmer argues that excellent teaching involves creating the space in which the truth can be discerned, seeing Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. Challenging our modernistic tendencies to objectify the truth, the connecting of Christ and truth highlights the subjective character of truth, as well. As a spiritual quest, it is not only we who seek the truth, but Christ as Truth also seeks us. Therefore, in our learning

ventures can we open ourselves to being found, as well as finding, the truth? In his best-selling book, *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer elevates the heart of good teaching: “good teaching cannot be reduced to a technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (10). It is no exaggeration to say that these and other books by Parker Palmer have done more to impact the world of education—secular and religious, especially in their capacity to present a Quaker understanding of the learning process as a spiritual endeavor—than any other Quaker contributions by a single author over the last quarter century.³

Another important Quaker approach to education is Paul Lacey’s Pendle Hill Pamphlet, *Education and the Inward Teacher*,⁴ in which Lacey lays out six elements of how the educator might facilitate welcome openness and responsiveness to Christ, who teaches us inwardly through the Holy Spirit (31-40):

- First, it helps if we hold out the expectation for one another and for our students that human beings can hear and follow the inner voice, that it is an expression of our deepest hopes, the response to our truest needs.
- Second, we can invite the Inward Teacher by providing occasions which seem most propitious.
- Third, we can surround ourselves with living examples of the encounter with the Inward Teacher.
- Fourth, we can deliberately fill the faculty, staff and administration of our schools with people who live their lives in opening to the Inward Teacher and obedience to His or Her leadings.
- Fifth, we can search for the methods and disciplines which best open us to the inner voice.
- Sixth, we can look for ways which balance inwardness with productive outward activity.

Lacey goes on to argue that “All we need to know about living the centered spiritual life we can learn by turning within ourselves, where Christ the Inward Teacher waits to instruct us; right worship is waiting in silence, to be taught what to do; true religion is to visit the fatherless, the widows and strangers, and to keep unspotted from the world; it brings unity and the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience” (41).⁵ Indeed, if the purpose of education is the transformation by the renewal of one’s mind (Ro. 12:1-2), creating openness to God’s

working in persons' lives is of central importance.⁶ From all of these explorations it is obvious that Friends have done a good deal of thinking about what a Friendly approach to education should look like, but how do institutions approach the subject in particular?

In 2007 a historic collection of essays was published, outlining the history and development of fifteen Quaker colleges and universities. *Founded by Friends* broke new ground in its treatment of the diversity of higher educational ventures founded by Friends in North America.⁷ It also showed the diversity of approaches to higher education among Friends. Some institutions (Cornell, Johns Hopkins) were simply founded by Friends with a vision for what a higher education experience could become. Others (Haverford, Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr, Guilford, Earlham, William Penn, Friends University, Whittier, George Fox) were founded as Quaker liberal arts colleges, intended to serve the needs of Friends and others by providing a "guarded" education of excellence. Still others (Malone University, Barclay College, Azusa Pacific University) began as ministry training schools or as Bible colleges, designed to prepare young men and women for ministry within the Quaker movement and beyond.

What, then, do the Friends colleges and universities share in common? In many cases, not much, other than the fact that they have or have had a Quaker background. Then again, some of the differences reflect three other sets of variables: a) the distinctive educational purpose of the institution, b) the proximity of the institution to its founding religious body, and c) differences between the particular branches of Quakers in America, themselves. A fourth factor d) reflects the general movement of American institutions of higher learning to move away from their founding religious bodies largely during the 20th century. Indeed, pressured by needs of fiscal survival, driven by the standards of accreditation, and enticed by such sirens as the benefits of the Carnegie Foundation's retirement plan (offered only to non-denominational institutions), many a church-founded college over the last century or more has forfeited its birthright for a mess of pottage.⁸ Therefore, Friends colleges and universities have weathered the tensions between viability and religious identity with varying degrees of success, along with those founded by other religious bodies.

This being the case, the present essay does not pretend to speak for all of Quaker higher education; that is a larger enterprise, and perhaps an impossible one. Because the original missions of the Quaker colleges around the world have generally been Christ-centered, though, even

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if some institutions might not currently define themselves accordingly, it still is a worthy subject for analysis and consideration. Nonetheless, if the enlightening work of Christ is understood as a dynamic and spiritual reality, a Quaker view of Christ poses a welcome antidote to more dogmatic and wooden views of religious faith. Seeing Christ as the Light (the “Light of the world” who “enlightens every one,” Jn. 8:12; 1:9) and the Present Teacher (at work in people’s lives through the Holy Spirit, Jn. 14:26; 20:22) highlights his spiritually enlightening work in the world.⁹ Liberation by truth is the goal of all educational aspirations (Jn. 8:31-32), and such a mission not only coincides with the missions of other Quaker educational institutions; it also overlaps with all authentic ventures of higher learning because the quest for truth is the overarching goal. Therefore, a brief consideration of an educational mission as a calling is a worthy place to begin.

ELEMENTS OF A CHRIST-CENTERED QUAKER EDUCATION

Again, while not all Quaker colleges and universities share the same sense of religious identity, all of them started out with a Christ-centered Quaker vision of what their mission should be. Therefore, the following elements will be of varying degrees of interest to different institutions. Nonetheless, some elements will be centrally relevant, and even those not embraced directly will help others understand the intentional investments of their sister institutions. A clarification or two at the outset, however, may be helpful. First, “Christ-centered” is both an open and pointed means of describing the heart of Christian faith and practice. In its openness, rather than a dogmatic outline of propositional points about theology, seeing the reality of Christ as being spiritual—though incarnated and revealed in the works and words of Jesus—alerts one to the dynamic character of Christ’s working within and among us.¹⁰

In terms of its pointedness, a focus on Christ raises up the center of Quaker faith and practice. From a historical and theological standpoint, non-Christ-centered Quakerism is a contradiction of terms. Every time Fox and early Friends used the term “Light” they were referring to the Light of Christ that enlightens all (Jn. 1:9). Likewise, Fox’s reference to “that of God in every one” refers to the principle of God within—itself a reference to the Light of Christ in human hearts—the locus of human-divine encounter.¹¹ This being the case, elements of a Christ-centered Quaker education draw upon the wisdom of a rich

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heritage, seeking to express the meaning of Jesus Christ in the world through the lives of those who are schooled in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

1) A Mission as a Calling

As with every collective venture, a vision of what an institution might achieve drives it forward as nothing else can. Where the mission is clearly articulated, broadly understood and corporately shared, institutional vitality is insured. This is because a lively sense of mission forces the adjustment of priorities toward achieving goals larger than institutional survival or maintaining a current status. Accreditation visits focus the attention of any academic enterprise upon its mission, and they then expect institutions to describe how the various branches of the enterprise carry out that mission effectively in contributing to the large whole. Indeed, the Scripture is true that “without a vision the people perish” (Ps. 29:18); the same is true for academic institutions.

As a calling, though, the mission of a Quaker college is higher than its survival and actualization. Actualization seeks to become all that one can be; vocation seeks to give all that one can give.¹² In terms of divine callings, actualization makes vocation possible; it is not a transcendent value, but an instrumental one. On this score, Friends have always sided with practical ventures of life—seeing them as part and parcel of a spiritual mission. Scientific, physical, economic, political, aesthetic, and commercial realms of life—in addition to religious and academic ones—are included in the spiritual realm. They are the venues within which we serve the world. Therefore, the challenge becomes how to train people to be redemptive agents of the heavenly Kingdom in preparing children, men, and women for service in the common ventures of life.

Here the learning process is seen as a spiritual venture in addition to the service that students will be performing as graduates. The quest for truth is a thoroughly spiritual quest, with God squarely in the center. Therefore, the classroom may well be seen as “the meeting for worship in which learning is conducted.” The point, however, is that neither teachers nor textbooks are the sole dispensers of knowledge; the Holy Spirit is (Jn. 14:17; 15:26). Further, the Spirit may work in and through the experiences of students to inform classmates and teachers alike, replacing monologues with a more dialogical approach to inquiry. If the Spirit of Christ is present in the classroom, the

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conviction of George Fox, that “Christ is come to teach his people himself,” impacts the ways we envision learning and teaching. Indeed, teachers play an irreplaceable role in the venture, but that role is often facilitative rather than authoritarian; authority is ever a factor of truth rather than position (Jn. 18:36-37). And, if the discernment of truth is the goal of the classroom, the learning process itself must be seen as a spiritual process, not an intellectual venture alone.

2) Common Traits of a Friendly Education

While there is a huge diversity among Friends in America, from liberal Friends to evangelical Friends, several traits of a Quaker approach to education are notable, from preschool through university levels of training. Ways of describing these may be more and less religiously explicit, but among them are the following convictions:

1. *All truth is God’s truth*; therefore, we seek to know the truth by all means possible, drawing on the most fruitful of disciplines in service to the particular inquiry at hand (Ps. 24:1; Heb. 1:1-4).
2. *All persons have access to God’s truth*—at least potentially; therefore, we seek to empower young and old, male and female, sophisticated and simple in the venture of pursuing the truth in all ways serviceable (Jn. 1:9; Ro. 2:14-16).
3. *No one has sole access to the truth*—at least not exclusively; therefore we seek to discern God’s truth in collaborative and corroborative ways, appreciating the strengths and weaknesses of one’s own approaches, as well as those of others (Jn. 1:18; 6:46).
4. *All worthy truth claims will withstand rigorous analysis, critical scrutiny, and the test of time*; therefore, seekers of truth are welcome to bring any and all questions to bear on the subject at hand (Ps. 34:8; 1 Pet. 3:15).
5. *Truth is both abstract and grounded*; therefore, effective learning involves engaging subjects of interest theoretically and experientially, as deep learning can only come from personal encounter (Job 42:1-6; 1 Jn. 1-3).
6. *Truth includes a multiplicity of dimensions, not just one*; therefore, objective and subjective measures, rational and

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aesthetic engagements, personal and collective appraisals, and expressive and impressive approaches to truth deserve to be explored (1 Ki. 19:11-12; 2 Cor. 4:3-7).

7. *Truth is unitive rather than divided*; therefore, synthesis and integration are central factors in the assimilation of knowledge from diverse sources and perspectives (Jn. 17:22; Eph. 4:4-6).
8. *Authentic learning is a factor of discovery rather than force or coercion*; therefore, truth can only be attested, discerned, and obeyed, and the authority of truth ever lies in its power to convince—not in manipulated positive or negative reinforcement (Jn. 14:17, 26; 16:13).
9. *Truth is conveyed and demonstrated incarnationally*; therefore, living the truth in terms of integrity, justice, righteousness, and love say more about one's abiding in the truth than any other measure (Jn. 13:35; Gal. 6:22-24).
10. *The quest for truth is a deeply spiritual venture*; therefore, inquiry itself is a form of prayer, listening is as vital to learning as speaking, and the classroom experience deserves to be regarded as the meeting for worship in which learning is conducted (Ps. 27; Jn. 4:21-24).
11. *Jesus invites his followers to embrace his yoke and to learn of and from him*; therefore, he not only is the humble and refreshing pattern to be emulated, but he is also the source of instruction as our present teacher (Matt. 11:28-30; Jn. 13:34).
12. *If Christ is the way, the truth and the life, this has serious implications for the spiritual heart of learning*; thus, it is not only we who seek the truth, but the truth also seeks us—inviting us not only to be finders, but also to be seekers found—liberated by the truth (Jn. 14:6; 8:31-32).

Given these understandings of the educative venture, one can see how deeply spiritual Friends have understood the learning process to be. Also, given the biblical origins of all of these convictions, one can understand how early Friends railed against constrictive theological education, believing with the counsel of William Penn, “let their education be liberal,” that the educative venture should apply the truth of God to the common ventures of life, in service to the truth.¹³

3) The Christ-Centered Quaker College—A Welcome Alternative

As such, a Christ-centered Quaker college poses a welcome alternative to other institutions. Whereas secular colleges and universities, claim to be open and liberal, the academic environment is more often than not one that is hostile to faith—especially Christianity. Indeed, as the largest religion in the world, some forms of Christian expression have been oppressive and coercive, but anti-Christian secularism fails to offer much of an improvement. It might even be noted that “anything but” a Christian perspective is welcome in some academic circles, and in that sense, a Christ-centered Quaker approach is *more inclusive* than its secular counterparts. Instead of expunging the Bible (the single most important literary influence in human history) from literary, political, and social studies of Western Civilization, curricula that include biblical literacy as foundational to the collegiate experience are more liberal and open than educations in alternative settings.

On the other hand, in contrast to other religious institutions of higher learning that suffer from either religious lethargy or zealous dogmatism, a Friendly approach to Christian faith and practice poses a valuable contrast. Rather than seeing the work of Christ as a dogma or a set of propositions to be memorized and recited, his work is embraced as the heart of God’s saving/revealing activity in redeeming of humanity. Therefore, Christ’s healing and liberating work is celebrated as the soothing balm and nourishing resource for a hurting and hungry world, and his followers become ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18).

Here a rich heritage of Quakerism documents countless exceptions to worldly and religious norms, becoming guiding points of light for the future: opposing violence and working for peace, refusing to see the other as an enemy, welcoming the stranger, working to overthrow the institution of slavery, calling for women’s suffrage, believing in the ministry of every Christian, supporting the ministry callings of women as well as men, caring for prisoners and the mentally ill, providing relief after wars, educating the poor and disenfranchised, exemplifying fairness and working for justice—in all these ways and more, Friends have sought to *embody the meaning of Christ* through their lives. As George Fox said in his *Journal*,

This is the word of the Lord God to you all, a charge to you all in the presence of the living God; be patterns, be examples, in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and

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to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you: then to the Lord God you will be a sweet savor, and a blessing.

While some religious traditions may benefit from diminishing their denominational associations, the *opposite* is the case for Friends. Among the Irish, East and Central Africans, Central and South Americans, Russians, Norwegians, Germans, Japanese, and even among the British and North Americans, the conscientious service of Friends in generations past has been an inspiring witness, *not* a liability. Therefore, Friends have not only sought to be bearers of the Good News; that is what they have sought to *become*. As such, a Christ-centered Quaker education poses a welcome alternative to religious and secular educational enterprises alike!

4) The Formation of Lives as a Spiritual Challenge

While all educational enterprises seek to be involved in the formation of lives, Friends see this venture as a deeply spiritual challenge. If the quest for truth is essentially a spiritual quest, this conviction bears with it several priorities within the educational enterprise.

First, *one cannot teach what one has not already learned*. Therefore, institutions committed to the spiritual heart of learning must insure that their teaching, service, and administrative staff members are all vitally engaged in the life of the Spirit—as befits the religious character of that institution. It cannot be otherwise; if the faculty and staff are not spiritually engaged authentically, they will not be able to connect with, let alone lead, students in their spiritual quests. Proficiency at a subject is important, but dedication to the spiritual life and mission of an institution is essential if that institution is to thrive spiritually. Otherwise, the spiritual mission of the institution will be diminished or lost; it shall always be so. Therefore, insuring a personal sense of calling among those who serve the institution is essential for maintaining its spiritual mission.

Second, *worship and service must be integral parts of community life*. This can happen in a variety of ways, but coming together as a community of worship on a regular basis—in large groups and small groups—is vital for the spiritual well being of the institution.

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Indeed, spiritual formation happens through a variety of means, but without small groups for worship, prayer, study and support, personal and relational growth will be less than optimal. And, unless the larger community gathers together for worship with some regularity, it is impossible to develop a spiritual sense of the whole. It is also essential that the community finds ways to serve together. Whether that involves special venues of community service, service trips, or service learning, inculcating an ethos of service is what leadership after the manner of Jesus is all about. Whatever the spiritual character of the host institution, intentional venues of worship and service must be planned and celebrated. It is also within those venues that Quaker convictions about the character of worship and service are conveyed most effectively, as most learnings are often caught rather than taught.

Third, *the highest of moral standards must be advocated for the community of learning.* However defined, students and staff alike need to be willing to abide by the lifestyle expectations of the institution. Being a member of a community of learning is not a right; it is a privilege. One need not be a person of religious faith to abide by standards of honesty, decency, and integrity, but one must be willing to abide by community standards if a member of it. While specific standards will vary from one group of Friends to another, and from one campus to another, whatever standards are embraced by that community should be maintained by students and staff alike. The mutuality of shared values thus reinforces the equality of expectation within the group, and shared lifestyle agreements—whatever they may be—become intentional means of inculcating the values of the institution with relation to the thrust of its mission.

Fourth, *the dynamic character of the divine presence should be present within the classroom and the learning venture, itself.* Therefore, while teachers explore a subject with their students, loading them with content is not the primary goal. The primary goal is to engage them with a subject so that they are able to be taught and led by Christ, the Present Teacher, who teaches within the classroom and beyond it. Therefore, the most important content derived from a dazzling lecture or an engaging discussion may be the application of timely truth to the need and situation of the learner. For this to happen, space must be created—even within the classroom experience. Quiet waiting in the classroom? Not a bad way to let the truth settle in students' lives. Listening to the other—even the fellow student, even to the non-religious student? Beware; God may be speaking through

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them. Discerning steps of action to be taken in response to a pressing issue of justice or ethical concern? These may be the most important things a student can learn. Therefore, the teacher is the servant of the student, as both are servants to the truth. Service to the student's learning is the way the teacher serves the world, and ultimately serves the Lord.

Fifth, *we press for excellence because our mission in service to the world demands it*. In contrast to worldly grasping for glory, the motivating impetus underlying the mission of the Christ-centered Quaker college is the desire to further God's reign—as Jesus taught his followers to pray—on earth as it is in heaven. And, it is not only service to the student that calls for expectations of excellence; it is the desire to serve the world beyond them, through their changed and changing lives twenty and thirty years later, by working them hard now. Therefore, a key difference between the striving for excellence among those who serve at a Christ-centered Quaker college and other institutions is that excellence is motivated not by the quest for accolades but for the sake of service. The habitual striving for excellence thus becomes the hallmark of those seeking to change the world through the teaching, modeling, mentoring, encouraging, celebrating, and learning that we do. It is also what propels faculty to publish and to impact their fields as experts and generalists alike. Service to the truth requires aspirations to excellence, and those commitments are lived out within the community of learning.

These are just some of the ways that the spiritually formative character of the educative venture can be furthered. While none of them guarantees an outcome, they at least provide a foundation on which to build. In a day where young adults are often subjected to campus cultures that destroy lives rather than build them up, which ridicule faith rather than undergird it with knowledge, it is not only people of faith that need an alternative context of formation—so does the world! At the threshold of the post-Christian era, the role of the Christ-centered Quaker college is not only distinctive; it is *essential*.

5) A Distinctive and Essential Mission—What the Church *and* the World Need

While the 20th century has witnessed the loss of a sense of spiritual mission among hundreds of formerly Christian colleges in America, spiritual demise is not inevitable. Spiritual renewal is also possible, and

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a good number of Christ-centered institutions have not only survived the throes of secularism; they have thrived despite them. In his 2004 plenary address to the Friends Association of Higher Education meetings held at George Fox University, Arthur Roberts laid out a compelling outline for how the threat of secularism can be resisted in the name of a coherent view of truth. Indeed, the hegemony of religion was countered by Friends in 17th-century England; today it is the hegemony of secularism that calls for concerted resistance. The following seven pillars thus apply not only to Friends institutions, but to all Christian institutions of higher learning and believers teaching in other institutions.¹⁴

1. *God is sovereign.* The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This is our epistemic base. Faith is antecedent to reason. This pillar provides a hedge against self-delusion, cynicism, and social hubris. By modeling spiritual devotion and by affirming that faith in God is foundational for knowledge, the awe of worship and learning are conjoined for teachers and students alike.
2. *Creation is good.* In awe at its immensity and complexity we offer our scholarship to the Creator as requisite worship. The cosmos is God's and we are called to be good stewards of God's property. Planet earth is our laboratory, our theater, our business district, our shopping mall. Affirm the cultural mandate and base it on a good creation. Let the whole earth be full of God's glory!
3. *Truth is revealed.* We do not invent truth; it is something God plants and we discover. All truth is God's *word*. God reveals truth in diverse modes: through the natural order, through personal and social experience, through Jesus' Incarnation, and through Scripture.
4. *Intelligence is embodied.* Human bodies are temples of the Spirit. To interpret what our physical senses (God's messengers) inform us concerning God's complex creation, our intellects devise taxonomies, create categories, and in other ways lay logic grids upon the natural and social worlds, so we can survive physically and live creatively, faithful to the divine image in which we are created.
5. *Humanity is of one blood.* Clans, tribes, language groups, nations, ethnic groups, are all subsets within the human circle. This is the true basis for cultural diversity, a foundation

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for morality, and a guiding principle in respect to our stewardship of the earth.

6. *God's Kingdom defines community.* In numerous creative ways, academic scholarship transcends tribal, ethnic, gender, class, linguistic, and national boundaries to envision and to actualize social and political structures demonstrating community. The term *collegiality* itself connotes being gathered in common purpose, in covenant, being together in place. If campus collegiality is truly practiced we more readily become educational mentors to our students.
7. *Christ is God's redemptive Word.* The violence of our times forces us, like Simon of Cyrene, to shoulder Jesus' cross. An inward glance at the One by whose stripes we are healed constrains us to bear that cross willingly, grateful for God's redeeming grace. Thus emboldened we will, with God's help, bring every aspect of knowledge entrusted to us into subjection to Christ.

Roberts then goes on to suggest how teachers can further wisdom within their fields, classrooms, and communities. Raising four queries as a means of getting to the heart of the matter, Roberts points the way toward creating communities of wisdom in the work that educators do.¹⁵ 1) *How can we apply wisdom to curricular subjects?* By accepting our academic specialty as a summons from God, respectfully taking off our shoes, as it were, and letting God instruct us how to be knowledgeable of truth, how to discern its values, and to apply knowledge effectively, and with ethical integrity. 2) *How can we apply wisdom to pedagogy?* By accepting a servant role before students—to bring them *all* to the feast, not just collect bright trophies to stroke our egos. 3) *How can we apply wisdom to how we live?* Obviously in keeping with our heritage, we Quaker scholars can model morality, demonstrating by our personal lives simplicity, honesty, faithfulness, contractual accountability, and compassionate service. 4) *How can we apply wisdom to the communities in which we live?* One way is boldly to witness to Christ on campus and within the professional guilds. Tolerance doesn't require clamping our mouths shut to Christian words, but rather to discern how to speak truth lovingly.

As we consider our distinctive mission among other religious institutions of higher learning, the Christ-centered Quaker college plays an important role within the church and beyond. We are called

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to prepare faith-embracing leaders from all backgrounds in ways that bespeak character and competence. The numbers of Friends students that might attend our Quaker colleges and universities have never been enough to support the entire enterprises; therefore, Quaker colleges have always sought to develop the leadership of other traditions, as well. And yet, the ways we do that should be commensurate with our Friendly convictions and understandings of how God works. In that sense, our colleges become a basis for witness and a means of inviting others to follow Jesus together, as we all have been led to do. This leads, of course, to challenging people toward service *and* devotion. As Elton Trueblood reminds us, “and” is the “holy conjunction.” It is not one or the other, but both/*and*—the warm heart *and* the clear mind; spiritual engagement *and* social concern; academic theory *and* practical implementation. This is why we are called to create communities of worship, service, and fellowship; the solitary venture is in itself insufficient. It is as we come together in communities of learning that devotion and service find their fullest bloom.

As valuable as the contribution of the Christ-centered Quaker college is for the church, however, this is not its primary vocation. Our first calling is to address the needs of the world with the loving resources of Christ. Indeed, the call to be followers of Jesus is not an invitation to a sheltered refuge, but it is to be propelled into the world as transformative agents of change—as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14)—instruments of penetration, healing, and redemption. As the furthering Christ’s Kingdom first is the foundational calling of the Christian, any calling to serve is also a calling to *prepare* for that service. Jesus prepared for thirty years to serve for three; can we who have been called to devote a lifetime of service in reaching the world with God’s love do any less? In that sense, the calling of the Christ-centered Quaker college is not simply to serve the student, or the Society of Friends, or the rest of the Christian movement; it is a high calling to serve the world. This is why it demands our sacrifice, our investments, and our commitments.

CONCLUSION

While there is a huge diversity among the missions of Quaker colleges and universities, there is still an impressive commonality of purpose among those individuals and groups that seek to educate and engage in the formation of lives as informed by Friendly wisdom and

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perspective. Not only have Friends led to impressive advances among educators due to their understandings of how truth is discerned and discovered, but Friends have also founded a number of first-rate educational institutions far beyond their number. Elements of a Quaker educational mission have historically involved a Christ-centered approach to the learning process rooted in the conviction that, as Fox declared, “Christ is come to teach is people himself.” In Jesus’ invitation, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart,” (Matt. 11:29) we are invited not only to learn “of” Christ as an example, but we are also invited to learn “from” Christ, as truth in all its forms is engaged inwardly and transformingly.

Therefore, the mission of the Christ-centered Quaker college is not simply to impart important content via the services of engaging faculty and excellent programs; it is to work for the enrollment of student and teacher alike as humble learners in the school of Christ. When that happens, authentic learning requires neither a Christian nor a Quaker name to be recognized; rather, it will be attested by the changed and changing lives of those who are patterns and examples, whose “carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them.” While the impact of Newman’s thoughts on the ideal character of a university extended far beyond the institution he founded, the impact of Friends upon higher education has been disproportionate to the size of their movement. In seeking to be “valiant for the truth” in the work we do, the truest measure of our success is not the numbers of students enrolled in our institutions of higher learning or in their prowess. Rather, the success of our educational missions will be determined by the degree to which student and teacher alike become humble learners in the school of Christ.

And, within that school, matriculation is always open.

ENDNOTES

- 1 D. Elton Trueblood, *The Idea of a College* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959). The original essay was included in *A Philosopher’s Way*, ed. by Elizabeth Newby (Nashville: Broadman, 1978) 93-103, along with other important essays on the subject.
- 2 D. Elton Trueblood, “The Redemption of the College,” published by Elizabeth Newby, *ibid.*, 107-25. The four points here summarize the expansions made by Trueblood (120-25).
- 3 Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a*

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Teacher's Life (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998). Palmer's other work can be noted on the website of his Center for Courage and Renewal, <http://www.couragerenewal.org/parker>.

- 4 Paul Lacey, *Education and the Inward Teacher* (PHP 278; Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Press, 1988).
- 5 One of the most thoughtful treatments of a Quaker view of education was first put forward a decade earlier by Howard H. Brinton, *Quaker Education in Theory and Practice* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Press, 1940).
- 6 See Ron Miller, "That of God in Everyone: The Spiritual Basis of Quaker Education" in *Nurturing Our Wholeness: Perspectives on Spirituality in Education*, edited by John P. Miller and Yoshiharu Nakagawa (Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal, 2002). See also the collection of essays edited by Paul Lacey, *Growing into Goodness: Essays on Quaker Education* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Press, 1998).
- 7 *Founded by Friends: The Quaker Heritage of Fifteen American Colleges and Universities*, ed. by John W. Oliver Jr., Charles L. Cherry, and Caroline L. Cherry (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007).
- 8 This is certainly the conclusion of several important studies performed on the history of church-related colleges and universities distancing themselves from their founding religious bodies in North America over the last century or so: Merrimon Cuninggim, *Uneasy Partners: The College and the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994); James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Mark W. Schwehn, *Exiles From Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and *Professing in the Postmodern Academy: Faculty and the Future of Church-Related Colleges*, ed. by Stephen R. Haynes (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2002). Conversely, note the more hopeful analyses presented by Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (revised, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
- 9 When Fox refers to Christ as the *present teacher*, or the *inward teacher*, he invariably follows the biblical connection between Jesus and his promise to send the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of Truth," who abides with and in believers (Jn. 14:17). In 1 John 2:1, Jesus Christ is described as "an advocate with the Father," while the Holy Spirit is described in the Gospel of John as "another advocate" (in Greek, *paraklētos*, one called alongside, to help, Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) who is sent by the Father (Jn. 14:16, 26) and the Son (Jn. 15:26; 16:7), who will bring to mind the teachings of Jesus (Jn. 14:26; 15:26), continuing to lead believers into all truth (Jn. 16:13). Likewise, Jesus is one with the Father because he represents the Father's will identically (Jn. 5:19-27) as the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15-22), and he is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," through whom all who come to the Father do so (Jn. 14:6-7). Therefore, the work of the Present Christ is conveyed through the Holy Spirit, just as the will of the Father is carried out faithfully by the Son. This agency of representation extends to believers, as Jesus prays that his followers will be one with him, just as he is one with the Father (Jn. 17:20-26)—hence, the invitation to partnership as his witnesses is extended to all believers, as well as the privilege of being called his "friends" (Jn. 15:14-15). For more on John's presentation of Jesus as the Christ and his ongoing work in the world, see Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel; Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John*

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- 6 (with a New Introduction and Outlines, Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, scheduled for 2009).
- 10 For a treatment of how all the Friends Testimonies (authentic and transforming *worship*; inclusive, compassionate, and inspired *ministry*; an incarnational *sacramentology*; *convincement* of the truth rather than coercion; *peacework*, *nonviolence*, and *social concern*; *integrity*, *plain speech*, and *simple living*) connect with the spiritual and unmediated reality of the risen Lord's power and presence, see Paul Anderson, "A Dynamic Christocentricity—The Center of Faithful Praxis" *QRT* #105 (2005): 20-36. See also Corey Beals, "Truth as a Way of Life," *QRT* #102 (2004): 7-16.
 - 11 Over 50 references to "the Light" in Fox's *Journal* include the modifier, "of Christ." Likewise, in all of Fox's dozen or more references to "that of God" in his *Journal*, an explicit reference is made either to the Light of Christ (John 1:9) or the Law of God at work in non-Jewish people's (and by extension, non-Christian people's) consciences (Ro. 2:14-16) within the immediate context. Christians who confine the revelatory work of Christ to religious dogmatism have failed to note its universal presentations in Scripture; Quakers who distance "Light" and "that of God in every one" references from the work of Christ Jesus have failed to consider the unequivocal connection in the works of Fox, Barclay, Pennington, Penn, Woolman and others. The former have departed from Scripture; the latter from historic Quakerism.
 - 12 See the important distinction between living according to actualization and living according to vocation in James W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (revised, New York: Jossey-Bass, 1999).
 - 13 See the treatment of Penn's vision for a liberal education in David Yount, *How the Quakers Invented America* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007) 8-9.
 - 14 Arthur O. Roberts, "Every Thought Captive to Christ," *QRT* #102 (2005): 17-30. Excerpts from his paragraphs on each point expand upon each of his statements.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 26-29.