Jacobsen, Douglas and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen. "The Ideals and Diversity of Church-Related Higher Education." *The American University in a Postsecular Age*, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 63-80.

5

The Ideals and Diversity of Church-Related Higher Education

Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen

Visitors to one East Coast liberal arts college are informed that the steepled, churchly looking building in the center of campus was never a chapel. While the school was founded by a religious denomination, the reason for building this "chapel" was purely aesthetic: It would give the campus a more quaint and traditional look. At most church-related colleges and universities, however, the old chapel really did once serve a religious purpose, and many still use their chapels for worship or contemplation today. At other institutions the old chapel now serves primarily as a setting for alumni weddings, but students stream into a large sports auditorium for required chapel services several times a week. These very different chapel configurations are a visible sign of the amazing diversity that exists among the nation's church-related colleges and universities.

It is difficult to make generalizations about any group of institutions so varied, but one thing these schools share in common is the fact that religion is not only allowed on campus, it is typically promoted in some way. During much of the twentieth century—during the years when secularization was a dominant theme in higher education—many of these schools felt defensive about their religious connections, perhaps even a little embarrassed. As a result, some church-related colleges and universities severed their religious affiliations. But religion is no longer embarrassing, and church-related higher education is flourishing in our present postsecular age.

This essay examines the historic ideals that drive these schools and how religion impacts the education that takes place on their campuses.

The Demographics of Religiously Affiliated Higher Education

Religiously affiliated colleges and universities play a significant role in American higher education. In 2004 (the latest year for which information is available), more than eight million students were enrolled in four-year undergraduate bachelor's degree programs in the United States.[1] Nearly two-thirds of these students (65.7 percent) attended publicly funded schools and the other third (34.3 percent) attended private institutions. Approximately 40 percent of those enrolled in these private schools—more than one-eighth of the total undergraduate population and representing well over a million individuals in all—were students at religiously affiliated colleges or universities.[2]

Religiously affiliated schools tend to be smaller than their public university counterparts, so this one-in-eight student ratio translates into a significantly larger proportion when comparing institutions. In fact, one out of every three bachelor's degree–granting colleges and universities in the United States—768 out of a total of 2,345 institutions listed in the United States Department of Education college database—claims a religious affiliation (figure 5.1).[3] American colleges and universities supply their own information to this database and each one decides for itself whether to list a religious affiliation. In some cases, historical connection to a religious body may not translate into current affiliation. For example, both Baylor University and Bucknell University were

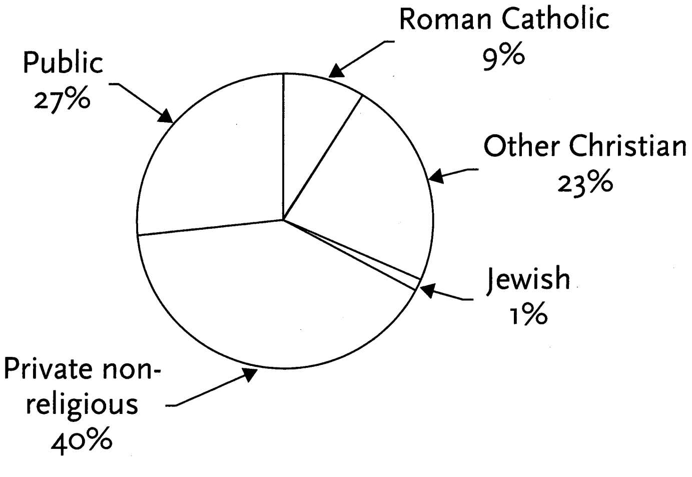

FIGURE 5.1. Distribution of Undergraduate Institutions by Religious Affiliation

founded by Baptists, but now only Baylor lists itself as religiously affiliated. Similarly, both Haverford College and Earlham College were founded by Quakers, but currently only Earlham describes itself as church related.

It is common today to describe the United States as a religiously pluralistic country. In fact, Diana Eck, who is director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, calls America "the world's most religiously diverse nation."[4] While that statement is true in the sense that virtually every religion on earth can now be found somewhere in the United States, it is also true that America remains a decidedly Christian place. This is reflected in the structure of religiously affiliated higher education. In terms of students, 99.6 percent of those attending religiously affiliated colleges and universities are enrolled at Christian institutions. In terms of institutions, 741 (96.5 percent) of the 768 religiously affiliated colleges and universities in the United States are Christian and the remaining 27 (3.5 percent) are Jewish. No other religions are represented. While there now are a handful of colleges and universities in America that have ties to other religions, no school describes that relationship as formal affiliation. Thus, for example, Soka University in Southern California says in its promotional materials that the school was founded on "Buddhist principles of peace, human rights, and the sanctity of life," but lists itself in the Department of Education database as religiously unaffiliated.[5]

This essay focuses specifically on "church-related" higher education, on the Christian colleges and universities that account for the overwhelming majority of religiously affiliated institutions of higher education in America. Our intention in adopting this focus is neither to marginalize the nation's Jewish institutions of higher learning nor to downplay the increasingly pluralistic nature of religion within higher education generally in the United States, and it is certainly not to encourage Christian hegemony. Rather, it is merely to acknowledge existing realities and to make clear that our observations apply only to the particular histories and contemporary challenges of Christian higher education in America.

Stereotyping Religious and Secular Schools

Americans live and breathe diversity, yet they long for simplicity. That longing for simplicity is reflected in the way people sometimes talk about faith and higher education using a bipolar frame of reference that ignores actual diversity. Their bipolar framework suggests that colleges and universities in America are either thoroughly religious or they are not religious at all. That is far from the truth—religion is present in many different forms and to varying degrees on public and private school campuses across the nation—but the stereotypes continue to be powerful.

It is this bipolar framework—extreme secularity versus extreme religiosity—that serves as the backdrop for Naomi Schaefer Riley's popular book *God on the Quad: How Religious Colleges and the Missionary Generation Are Changing America.* Describing the students who attend religious colleges and universities she writes:

> The 1.3 million graduates of the nation's more than seven hundred religious colleges are quite distinctive from their secular counterparts. And the stronger the religious affiliation of the school, the more distinctive they are. The young men and women attending the twenty religious colleges I visited in 2001 and 2002 are red [i.e., socially and politically conservative] through and through. . . . They reject the spiritually empty education of secular schools. They refuse to accept the sophisticated ennui of their contemporaries. They snub the "spiritual but not religious" answers to life's most difficult questions. They rebuff the intellectual relativism of professors and the moral relativism of their peers.

Riley calls them collectively the "missionary generation" and says their goal in getting a religion-based education is "to change the culture of Blue America from the inside out."[6] The juxtaposition is stark. Riley describes the schools she studied as being really religious; one might call them "religionist" institutions. By implication all the other colleges and universities in America are "secularist" wastelands.

Riley's book goes on to portray with considerable nuance the complex and fascinating realities that actually prevail at various religious colleges, but other commentators are happy to embrace the stereotypes. In fact, sharp distinctions between secularist and religionist alternatives are standard fare in the rhetoric employed by those who consider America to be embroiled in a culture war. Proponents on both sides of that conflict have a stake in keeping the distinction between faith and secularity as wide as possible in the culture at large and in higher education in particular. Examples are not hard to find. David Wheaton, a former tennis professional who is now a popular evangelical writer, speaks from the religionist side when he likens professors at mainstream colleges and universities to the serpent who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden: "Just like their forefather, Professor Serpentine, they have rebelled against God and rejected His word. Their dismissal of, or in some cases their disdain for God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible spawns their ideology and fuels their cause—they want to dismantle your Christian faith and replace it with a biblically counterfeit worldview called humanism. . . . Your University of Instruction will turn into your University of Destruction. Guaranteed."[7]

Writing from the opposite ideological camp, the secularist Sam Harris has produced a best-selling book that calls upon thinking people everywhere to rise up and defeat the evil forces of religion. He assumes that religion is antithetical to human reason: "The central tenet of every religious tradition is that all others are mere repositories of error or, at best, dangerously incomplete. Intolerance is thus intrinsic to every creed. Once a person believes—really believes—that certain ideas can lead to eternal happiness, or to its antithesis, he cannot tolerate the possibility that the people he loves might be led astray by the blandishments of unbelievers. . . . On this subject liberals and conservatives have reached a rare consensus: religious beliefs are simply beyond the scope of rational discourse."[8]

Religionists and secularists both deal in stereotypes, and stereotypes often do have a kernel of truth imbedded in them somewhere. While there may be no genuinely secularist institutions in America (i.e., institutions where opposition to religion is an explicit goal), it is likely true that some faculty members at some colleges and universities actively seek to disabuse students of their faith. The same is true on the other side of the equation, where some schools embrace the religionist option. The recently established Patrick Henry College located near Washington, D.C., for example, describes its goal as "the transformation of American society" through the preparation of "Christian men and women who will lead our nation and shape our culture with timeless biblical values and fidelity to the spirit of the American founding."[9] The reason Patrick Henry makes news, however, is not because it is typical, but because it is not.

While there may be no such thing as a typical college, every institution of higher learning in America shares a commitment to reason and to some basic expectations and standards regarding the educational process. Church-related institutions share those commitments, but they pursue them in conjunction with respect for or fidelity to some specific religious tradition. Understanding the promise and perils of connecting faith and reason requires some familiarity with the long history of Christian higher education.

The Deep Roots of Christian Higher Education

medieval

The deep roots of American church-related higher education are in the medieval universities of Europe that came into existence during the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries. The emergence of these institutions signaled the end of the so-called "Dark Ages" when learning had been largely eclipsed.

Their rise was made possible by the reintroduction of various writings from ancient Greece and Rome (especially those of Aristotle) that had been lost in the West, but had been preserved by Muslim and Jewish scholars in North Africa, southern Spain, and the Middle East. Having regained that wisdom of the past, these universities sought to construct a complete and coherent understanding of reality by combining everything that humanity had discovered about the world with everything that God had revealed in the Bible and in Christian tradition. Pulling all these tidbits of knowledge together and using reason to draw out all the possible inferences, scholars toiled to produce a *summa,* or summation, of all knowledge both human and divine. Saint Thomas Aquinas is perhaps the best known of the many medieval university "scholastics" who worked on this task of using logic to bring together faith (understood to be the repository of accumulated Christian truth) and ordinary human knowledge.

But the scholastic ideal fell on hard times as the power of deductive logic came under attack and as unanimity about what constituted Christian truth dissolved. During the late medieval period, a new group of philosopher-theologians called nominalists suggested that, as a general guide to truth, careful observation of the world and simplicity of explanation were preferable to the often convoluted, complex, and sometimes seemingly counterfactual assertions of theologically informed logic. The universe did not always make logical sense—the world just *was*—and the task of scholarship came to be understood as the discovery of the world's quirks and anomalies as well as its beauty and order.

The second development that undermined the scholastic ideal was the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Protestants did not accept the Roman Catholic interpretations of God's revelations in the Bible and church tradition, and they began to formulate their own new versions of Christian faith. With the rise of various competing and to some degree contradictory understandings of Christian faith, it was no longer possible to speak of *the* Christian tradition. Now there were many traditions rather than one tradition, and attempts to summarize all knowledge human and divine were derailed by the lack of a preexisting Christian consensus. The best that scholars could hope for was a clear and relatively comprehensive view of reality that accorded with the teaching of one of the several Christian subtraditions that had emerged in Europe.

While this was a truncated ideal, it was enough to keep scholars busy for the next two or three centuries. Europe was largely segregated along the lines of religion, with one form of Christianity dominating in each locale (e.g., the Reformed Church in Holland, Lutheranism in Scandinavia, the Anglican Church in Great Britain, and Catholicism in most of southern Europe). The people of Europe were frequently at war with one another (and religion was a contributing factor), so it is not surprising that universities rarely felt compelled to look beyond the religious perspectives of their own local region. Surrounded by the like-minded, it was easy to assume that one's own viewpoint represented the fullest and best possible expression of religion, and this prejudice was sometimes reinforced by legal decree. In England, for example, dissenters (individuals who were members of Protestant churches other than the established Anglican Church) were not eligible for degrees from Oxford University, and that rule was not eliminated until 1866.

During the 1700s, however, a set of new philosophical and educational ideals began to percolate through Europe, and they slowly reconfigured faith, knowledge, and education. Taken together, these forces are known as the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was a complex movement that assumed different forms in different European states, so that the English Enlightenment, for example, was led by moderate deists, many of them ordained clergy, while the French Enlightenment took a more radical and often explicitly anti-Catholic tone. Yet four convictions formed the basic core of all Enlightenment thinking: (1) more truth can be discovered than we know right now; (2) reason, and not authority, should guide the search for truth; (3) the search for truth is open equally to every rational human being; and (4) the purpose of education is accordingly not merely to transmit truth to a new generation, but to advance truth on all fronts even if this makes it harder to envision any overall pattern of unity in the structure of human knowledge. These convictions, however they were interpreted or applied, represented a massive challenge to older Christian conceptions of the university.

Newman's Vision

Writing from Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic scholar and eventual cardinal John Henry Newman articulated a fresh understanding of higher education that combined these new Enlightenment ideals with the historic goals of the Christian university. His classic work *The Idea of a University*, first published in 1859, lines out the contours of a search for truth that welcomes the insights of everyone, allows faith a place in the dialogue, and preserves as much as possible of the old medieval ideal of the unity of all knowledge. Newman's Core

In keeping with the Enlightenment, Newman argued that the search for truth should be "free, independent, [and] unshackled" and, in addition, he suggested that religious authorities and others might, at times, need "to bear for a while with what we feel to be in error, in consideration of the truth which it is eventually to issue."[10] But in keeping with older medieval scholasticism, he also affirmed that ultimately all truth coheres and "we cannot separate off portion from portion, and operation from operation, except by a mental abstraction."[11] For Newman, God was part of that mix and he thought scholarship would be diminished in both scope and depth if God was ignored.

At the core of Newman's vision of the intellectual life was a rich and dynamic understanding of tradition, which he defined as the long, multigenerational process of exploring all the implications and ramifications of a complex idea. The unfolding of that process could itself be complex and sometimes convoluted: "At first no one knows what it is, or what it is worth. It remains perhaps for a time quiescent; it tries, as it were, its limbs, and proves the ground under it, and feels its way." But slowly, and with many incremental changes over time, tradition unfolded bringing new insights with it. Newman commented: "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."[12] Far from being a dead weight that slowed the growth of knowledge and insight, tradition was, for Newman, the dynamic force that prodded understanding forward.

Newman's vision of higher education is formidable. It makes the case that Christian colleges and universities ought to be places where inquiry is free and wide-ranging, where learning is holistic and interconnected, and where reflection is informed by a deep and lively sense of religious tradition. Virtually all contemporary church-related colleges and universities have adopted Newman's ideals to some degree. They have committed themselves to being places where genuine learning and unfettered inquiry can flourish alongside of and in dialogue with living traditions of religious faith and practice. But America is a very different place than Europe and it is necessary to examine the peculiar dimensions of American cultural, educational, and religious history before reflecting on the ways different religious traditions might interact with education at church-related colleges and universities today.

American Developments

Both faith and reason resonate differently in America than in Europe. When it comes to reason, Americans tend to value the practically minded more than the theoretical, and when it comes to faith, Americans generally prefer clear moral guidance to nuanced theological speculation. As a result, higher education in America has never been as elitist as in Europe nor has it been as grandiose in its claims. Whether the issue is either faith or reason, Americans want to know the practical implications; working out the theoretical kinks is not given the same priority.

Just as significant for church-related higher education is the fact that American religion is unfettered by government dictates or regulations. Americans can be members of whatever religions they choose. This commitment to religious freedom was remarkable from the start, and it remains so today. Equally remarkable is that America's religious diversity has never produced anything like the religious warfare that is part of European history. The notion of "friendly competition" may be a bit too upbeat, but it captures reality better than any war-derived metaphor. Religions compete in America, but they do not do battle. The diversity of church-related higher education in the United States is, in part, a result of that harmonious competition.

Religiously related educational pluralism and particularity were evident in America as early as the 1700s when Yale offered a staunchly conservative Puritan alternative to Harvard's growing liberalism and to Princeton's revivalist option. And then there were the Anglican schools, William and Mary in Virginia and later King's College (Columbia University) in New York, along with Ben Franklin's nonsectarian University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The diversity was already significant before the nineteenth century when the religious composition of the country expanded and the church-related college market expanded with it. Methodists, Baptists, and Christian restorationists (like the Churches of Christ), along with many other Protestant denominations and a host of Roman Catholic religious orders, began planting colleges across the west almost as fast as Johnny Appleseed planted fruit trees.

Ethnicity often had as much to do with founding these schools as did religion. Dutch Reformed Christians founded Dutch-speaking institutions for the Dutch, and Norwegian Lutherans did the same for Norwegians. Literally hundreds of church-related colleges were launched during the nineteenth century, and almost all of them began as very modest endeavors, with perhaps ten or fifteen students meeting in a large old house at the edge of town and one or two not-very-well-credentialed "professors" in charge. But what was true of church-related schools was also true of other schools founded at the time: They all began small. Many of these schools did not survive, but the failure rate was probably less than 50 percent—not bad given their circumstances.[13]

Unlike today, there was no clear-cut distinction drawn during this time between schools that were religious or private in character and those that were public. In fact, it was rather typical for a church-related college "to petition a state legislature for some funding on the basis that it was a 'public' college."[14] While church-related schools were often launched with specifically religious purposes in mind, they usually thought of themselves as simultaneously serving the public good, and they opened their doors to all comers. Compartmentalization and specialization eventually increased, but until the end of the nineteenth century there was still a fairly fluid environment for all American colleges and universities.

Then, in the early twentieth century, a complex reconfiguration occurred in both the educational and the religious landscape. Higher education was transformed by the professionalization of the academy and the emergence of the modern university ideal. Being a college or, even more, being a university, became serious business. Wealthy patrons competed with one another over whose school was the greatest. Chicago, Cornell, Stanford, and other new universities vied with the older schools of the East Coast for prominence and acclaim. These "great universities" as a group were soon perceived as defining "real" higher education—and that education looked quite similar to how they did things in Germany. It was directed by scholars who had distinguished themselves by their academic accomplishments and not their faith, and the education these schools offered concentrated much more on the sciences and humanities than on religion. Religion was no longer assumed to be a first-order concern for any great university or college.[15]

At the same time, the modernist-fundamentalist controversy erupted in the church world, creating new religious tensions that cut across the older denominational divides. The core issue was straightforward. Various religious "modernists" had begun revising Christian doctrine in light of new scientific advances and scholarly ways of reading the Bible, and these modernist forays had prompted the formation of a "fundamentalist" opposition that saw any suggestion of doctrinal change as a form of apostasy. While this dispute was ignored by many people in the pews and while many church leaders wanted no part of either camp, the conflict had symbolic importance because it suggested that the grand complexities of American Christianity (at least in its Protestant forms[16]) could ultimately be reduced to a simple choice between liberal and conservative. That imagery was stark and in many ways unreflective of the continuing differences within religious groups, but it was compelling. Everyone from backcountry preachers to New York City journalists picked it up, and it became a common point of reference for defining religious and social developments in American culture.

The end result was that church-related colleges had to stake out their identities on newly professional educational turf as well as newly politicized religious turf. It was almost as if another act had begun in the play of American higher education, and the stage set had been rearranged. Many church-related schools tried to resist making any choices and to go on as usual. Others made a conscious decision to leave their religious roots behind, going with the flow of the increasingly secular norms of the higher educational mainstream. Still others opted to embrace their religious roots even more tightly and accept, however grudgingly, their diminished status within the academy. And in a host of different ways, other colleges tried simultaneously to honor the intellectual task while remaining religiously connected.

Contemporary Diversity

The diversity of church-related higher education in America today reflects both the older denominational identities of these schools and the different ways they have responded to twentieth-century developments—and that diversity is breathtaking. Table 5.1 displays some of this diversity in simplified form, but it provides only the broadest of brushstrokes.[17] For example, the Catholic label represents over fifty different religious orders along with other schools affiliated with local Catholic dioceses. The Baptist label is similarly simplified, clumping together American Baptists, Southern Baptists, National Baptists, General Baptists, Free Will Baptists, and Seventh-Day Baptists. All told, more than fifty distinct Protestant denominations are currently identified as having a formal affiliation with one or more schools, and in addition to these denominational schools, many others describe themselves as "multidenominational," "interdenominational," or "undenominational." Anyone reading the names of the largest schools affiliated with various Christian groups in America from Table 5.1 will immediately recognize that they represent a wide range of approaches to higher education. In particular, they have very different conceptions of what it means to be church-related and of how to connect faith with reason. Some of these schools have assumed that church-relatedness has to be described in clearly measurable terms such as mandatory chapel for students, statements of faith that faculty are required to sign, or strict codes of behavior that are enforced on campus. Yet religion can also exert its influence in subtle ways that are more qualitative than quantitative.

Richard McCormick, professor of ethics at Notre Dame, says, for example, that a great Catholic university is one that has some people on campus who "have assimilated Catholic culture so personally and deeply that their attitudes, habits, and values are thoroughly stamped by it." He describes these people as "walking symbols" of faith, winsome representatives of the school's religious identity. They are not pushing their faith on anyone; they are simply exemplifying it in their own personal lives. How many of these people are required in order for an institution to qualify as a "great" Catholic university? McCormick does not give a precise answer, but indicates that "it would be unrealistic to

TABLE 5.1. Church-Related Colleges and Universities That Offer Bachelor's Degrees

Religious Identity	Number of Schools That Offer Bachelor's Degrees	Largest Schools
Roman Catholic	**208** 28.1% of church-related colleges and universities 8.9% of all colleges and universities	DePaul University, IL St. John's University, NY Saint Louis University, MO Boston College, MA Loyola University Chicago, IL Fordham University, NY Georgetown University, DC Saint Leo University, FL Marquette University, WI Regis University, CO
Baptist	**106** 14.3% of church-related colleges and universities 4.5% of all colleges and universities	Baylor University, TX Liberty University, VA Mercer University, GA Campbell University, NC Wayland Baptist University, TX
Methodist	**95** 12.8% of church-related colleges and universities 4.1% of all colleges and universities	Duke University, NC Emory University, GA American University, DC Southern Methodist University, TX Hamline University, MN
Presbyterian	**58** 7.8% of church-related colleges and universities 2.5% of all colleges and universities	University of Tulsa, OK Arcadia University, PA Carroll College, WI Trinity University, TX Buena Vista University, IA
Churches of Christ/ Disciples	**52** 7.0% of church-related colleges and universities 2.2% of all colleges and universities	Columbia College, MO Texas Christian University, TX Pepperdine University, CA Chapman University, CA Harding University, AR
Lutheran	**43** 5.8% of church-related colleges and universities 1.8% of all colleges and universities	Concordia University, WI Capital University, OH Valparaiso University, IN Pacific Lutheran University, WA Augsburg College, MN
Other Christian affiliation	**179** 24.2% of church-related colleges and universities 7.6% of all colleges and universities	Brigham Young University, UT Brigham Young University, ID Indiana Wesleyan University, IN Azusa Pacific University, CA Ashland University, OH Biola University, CA Elon University, NC The University of Findlay, OH Olivet Nazarene University, IL Bob Jones University, SC

expect to find large numbers."[18] McCormick has confidence that a small number of truly saintly exemplars can season an entire campus with an aroma of faith that others will find inspiring and even enticing, and he would find it alarming and antithetical to faith were a college to stipulate specific rules of doctrine and behavior for its students.

Each church-related college and university has its own unique take on how best to pursue knowledge in a faith-seasoned environment. Some church-related schools believe it is their responsibility to actively advocate certain religious ideas and ideals, and they carefully craft curricular and cocurricular programs in that light. Other schools take a more neutral posture when it comes to inserting religion into the curriculum or other student programs. Most schools seek to combine these approaches, advocating religious commitments or values in some settings, while adopting a religiously neutral stance in other institutional endeavors.

It is important to note that schools that take a more neutral, hands-off approach are not necessarily being less faithful to their spiritual traditions. For some groups such as the Society of Friends (Quakers), it is a central tenet of their faith that religion must never be forced or coerced. For them, it would be inappropriate for a college or university to stack the religious deck. Their policy of religious neutrality communicates to students that they must decide for themselves what to believe without any official winks or nods from the school. Like many public universities and private nonreligious schools, non-advocatory church-related colleges and universities will have people on staff—chaplains, counselors, and other student life professionals—to provide students with unbiased information about religion and to assist students who find themselves embroiled in life-upsetting personal crises of faith. But outright advocacy would be antithetical to the institution's ideals.[19]

Religious Advocacy and Religious Neutrality

Defining and maintaining the ideal of religious neutrality can, however, be difficult. Does giving all religious groups the same support constitute being neutral, or can schools make reasonable judgments about which perspectives are welcome on campus and which are not? Would any school allow a religious group on campus that expressly preaches hate? Or what if an individual professor or other staff member begins to boldly advocate one particular religious or antireligious stance in the classroom? Should the school intervene and mandate neutrality? How does one prevent a religiously neutral approach from looking like it is simply not interested in religion at all? The questions can be multiplied. Neutrality is not as easy as it might first appear.

Neutrality may also, in some circumstances, be an impossible or even undesirable goal. Robert Orsi, professor of the history of religion at Harvard, points out that "it seems virtually impossible to study religion without attempting to distinguish between its good and bad expressions."[20] In our post-9/11 world, politicians, commentators, and people on the street, as well as college and university professors and administrators, routinely make distinctions between what they see as good and bad religion, or between what is more often called "true" religion and "extremist" religion. Who has not heard it said that "true" Islam is a religion of peace, and that Muslim "extremists" do not represent the real heart of this venerable tradition? Are such statements fully neutral? Of course, they are not. They recommend certain religious alternatives as superior to others and thus they are, in some sense, advocatory. Even those who are most committed to religious neutrality would likely have few qualms about this kind of modest advocacy.

But not all schools opt for neutrality. Some schools have decided that their calling is to be selectively and proactively advocatory, at least in some situations. Church-related colleges and universities are private institutions, and as private institutions they can legally advocate all sorts of things, including religion. Most church-related schools that engage in one or another form of religious advocacy acknowledge that ultimately faith is a personal choice and that religion cannot be imposed on anyone. But persuasion is not coercion. The presentation of one religious option in a manner designed to make it seem more attractive than other options is a form of persuasion. Schools taking a persuasive approach assume that college and university students are fully capable of assessing, and then either accepting or rejecting, whatever pro-religious perspective their institutions may want to advocate.

Religious advocacy can take many different forms. Some schools advocate very specific doctrines and religious rules of life; others focus on faith or values much more generally. Some church-related institutions ask their student life professionals to handle religious matters, trying to keep discussion in the classroom religiously neutral, while others think the classroom is precisely where religion ought to be addressed. Some religious colleges and universities restrict their advocacy to what takes place in theology or Bible classes; others think religion should be discussed across the entire curriculum. All of this can vary greatly in both content and intensity. Every church-related school has to make determinations about what is appropriate on its own campus based on its own particular religious tradition.

Tradition-Enhanced Learning

Church-related colleges and universities are rooted in different traditions of faith and practice, and those differences are not inconsequential. Even at schools that are now only historically associated with some particular denomination or religious group, one can often still smell the lingering fragrance of that tradition on campus. For example, visitors to Swarthmore College, which no longer considers itself a Quaker school, might still detect a mix of peaceableness and feistiness on campus that seems distinctly Quakerish. The special contributions that church-related schools make to the broader academic enterprise—as well as the unique experiences they offer to students—are derived from these different traditions.

The word *tradition* is sometimes used as a synonym for religion, as when people speak of the Catholic tradition or the Jewish tradition or the Buddhist tradition. Tradition also describes the active process through which religions reproduce themselves over time and through generations. In order to keep these two notions clear, the religious historian Dale Irvin uses *tradition* for one and *traditioning* for the other. Traditioning involves "reinventing our traditions in order to make them relevant," and Irvin notes that "nothing less is at stake in this process than the meaning and identity of faith itself, for a truly irrelevant faith will soon die of its own irrelevance, and the identity of the community will pass into the arena of being a historical relic or part of the archive."[21]

Awareness of traditioning as a dynamic of religious faith is relatively new, at least among Christians. Until recently, "most Christians of the world have . . . assumed that both tradition and identity were given in an unambiguous manner."[22] But historical and postmodern perspectives have revealed the naïveté of that view. Traditions change and grow as they are handed down, branching and reconverging, advancing laterally and in depth, incorporating or actively rejecting insights from other traditions. But all is not chaos. Like a symphony that progresses through very distinct movements, but constantly reaches back to pick up early note sequences or syncopations, reincorporating them in new forms in the ongoing flow of the music, religions maintain their identities through traditions that creatively circle around a few key insights, mixing and matching those insights with an array of other new ideas, values, practices, and concerns that enrich the music and move the rhythm along.

It is these living traditions of faith, and not simple lists of doctrine and dogma, that enhance the education being offered at most church-related colleges and universities. This is where Newman's European vision of higher education as the tradition-informed search for knowledge begins to blend with the practical character of American faith and education. The goal is not to put strictures on what can and cannot be taught; the goal is to add something positive to the excellent education that every college or university in America seeks to offer and it is to make a practical contribution to the common good. Most church-related schools want to be involved in the growth of knowledge, and they also want to have a positive, practical impact on the world.

Schools that are rooted in the same religious tradition will likely share certain general approaches to education, but individual colleges and universities make adjustments as they respond to the particular needs and challenges of different constituencies. In the end, the schools may end up looking like very different institutions despite their shared denominational affiliation. Beneath the surface, however, one will likely find more similarities than are apparent at first glance since religious traditions have an abiding influence.[23]

Take the Lutheran tradition as an example. Martin Luther, the founder of Lutheranism, said that God is hidden in the world and that finding God almost always comes as a surprise. From the perspective of the Lutheran tradition, the world is a complex place where the deep truths of life are often buried underneath a welter of seemingly contradictory facts and assertions. Higher education in the Lutheran tradition comes with an expectation that truth is clothed in irony and overlaid with ambiguity. It follows that Lutheran schools often have exceptionally strong programs in the arts, music, history, and literature—academic disciplines that have the capacity to express the ironies and ambiguities of faith and life.

The Reformed tradition, harking back to the sixteenth-century Protestant reformer John Calvin, stresses the coherence of truth and its codifiable nature. Churches in the Reformed tradition, such as Presbyterians, assume that God has created a world where things operate decently and in order. Higher education in the Reformed tradition has accordingly given special attention to philosophy, trying to understand the logic of the world and the systematic structures of human thought. At Reformed institutions, one is likely to study not only science but also the philosophy of science; not only art, but philosophical aesthetics as well. And a business major might reflect on business as a way of life, assuming that it will contribute to the common good and not just to the individual's paycheck.

Schools that locate themselves in the Catholic Franciscan tradition or in the Protestant Anabaptist tradition are much more likely to direct student attention to addressing human needs. Saint Francis, who lived in the thirteenth century, devoted his life to serving lepers, the poorest of the poor, in northern Italy where he lived. Anabaptists, who have pacifist roots that go back to the sixteenth century, have been known for service to others (even their enemies) since the earliest years of their movement. It is not surprising that schools in these traditions emphasize fields of study like social work, psychology, and economic development, and they seek to inspire students who will undertake the often hard and almost always monetarily under-rewarded work of caring for those who need assistance.

Jesuit schools take their name from the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), which was founded in the sixteenth century by Saint Ignatius Loyola. The Society of Jesus began as an order devoted to preaching the Christian gospel both in Europe and in foreign lands. As a preaching order, skills of communication and persuasion were essential; as missionaries, cross-cultural communication was highlighted. In more recent years, that cross-cultural concern is evident in emphases on global social justice. How can one communicate across cultures and not be touched by the misery of so many of the world's people? And how can one feel that misery and not seek to change the structures of the world that cause and perpetuate such pain and suffering? Many in higher education express concerns about justice, but students attending schools in the Jesuit tradition are likely to find that concerns about justice are deeply imbedded in the campus ethos.

In the mid-twentieth century, an emphasis on any religious tradition—whether Lutheran or Reformed, Franciscan or Jesuit—would have made little sense to most educational leaders. They would have seen religious tradition as almost by definition restrictive and sectarian, as something to shed or to move beyond as quickly as possible. But in recent years the notion of tradition as a potent—and often positive—force in human life and thought has been retrieved both within the academy and within the culture at large. It is assumed that no one operates from an entirely bias-free perspective, but rather that a person's life history, including participation in communities of tradition, will shape that individual's experience and interpretation of the world. Thus, it is now commonplace for scholars to acknowledge their location within a particular community of discourse when discussing topics that impinge on issues of meaning and purpose.

The gap between church-related higher education and mainstream nonreligious higher education has, in some ways, shrunk. Both kinds of institution value objective inquiry and critical rationality, and professors at both kinds of institutions may identify their particular communities of discourse. Leaders at church-related institutions usually recognize that tradition by itself is not sufficient, since higher learning requires an openness to new and even contentious viewpoints that may contradict or undermine prior affirmations. Most church-related colleges and universities are thus as committed to critical thinking and academic excellence as other schools, just as many public and nonreligious private colleges and universities are looking for ways to allow the discussion of purpose, meaning, values, and even faith into the classroom.

But the two domains have not merged. They continue to have different goals and they are circumscribed by different regulations regarding what is and is not appropriate. The tradition-informed instruction that is the stock-in-trade of many church-related colleges and universities would be clearly out of bounds at public institutions of higher learning where neutrality toward religion is the legal standard. Church-related schools have the freedom to experiment and to innovate in matters related to religion, and each of the 768 institutions that describe themselves as church-related has its own approach to higher education. In the process of making connections between a religious tradition and higher learning, some of them will produce environments that are less than hospitable to doubters and skeptics, and some of them will have little appeal to those outside of a particular religious community. Yet each one offers a distinctive educational alternative and together they provide important resources for understanding the variety of ways that living religious traditions and higher learning can interact.

Douglas Jacobsen is Distinguished Professor of Church History and Theology at Messiah College. **Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen** is Director of Faculty Development and Professor of Psychology at Messiah College. They are coauthors of *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (Oxford University Press, 2004).