

Pepperdine, Picasso, and the Idea of the Christian University

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“Faith is above, not against reason.” —Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

“In this way we shall do our small bit to glorify the name of God in the Earth and extend His kingdom among the children of men.”

—George Pepperdine, *Dedicatory Address*, September 21, 1937

Introduction

Few subjects interest me more than the complex issue of the relationship of faith and learning. The question might be framed in various ways: “Can Pepperdine be both academically sound and authentically Christian?” “What is the relationship between faith and learning at Pepperdine? Or, “How will we build an even greater academic institution and also be true to the faith of our founder?” My interest is not merely academic or theoretical, for upon such questions hang the future of our University.

To address such great issues, I would like to take you back to the spring of 1937, as George Pepperdine and his friends worked feverishly to found a new college in Los Angeles. The country was deep in the Great Depression. Fascist forces were rising in Europe and Asia—in Italy, Spain, Germany, and Japan. World War II and the Holocaust lay just around the corner. Hitler was forging the greatest war machine the world had ever known, and he was eager to test the capacity of his new implements of destruction. On a quiet day in April 1937, barely four months before Pepperdine opened its doors, an unprecedented atrocity occurred in a placid village in northern Spain. Hardly anyone had ever heard of it—Guernica. Hitler’s generals chose this hamlet for bombing practice. For three hours high-explosive, incendiary bombs rained down on this village of innocent

women, men, and children. There were no combatants in the town. The town had no military value. Guernica burned for three days. All told, sixteen hundred civilians were wounded or killed. Within days, the story of Guernica's destruction swept across Europe and around the world. It had the kind of impact not unlike 9/11 had on the international community, or the Madrid bombings had in Spain and in Europe generally. Meanwhile, a little-known Spanish artist named Pablo Picasso decided to express his moral outrage through painting. Picasso called his mural of protest *Guernica*. It remains one of the great monuments of art and a lasting protest against human depravity.

No one, I suspect, has linked Pablo Picasso, the cubist painter, with George Pepperdine, the self-made entrepreneur and founder of Pepperdine University. But this association may not be far-fetched. Mr. Pepperdine and Picasso not only shared the dark days of 1937, but both responded to the great challenges of the moment. Both fashioned monuments out of the raw experiences of the 1930's, creating something lasting and positive in the wake of great evil. One used art to declare a huge "No!"—a vibrant, lasting protest. The other used imagination, beliefs, and his financial resources to build an institution, in order to declare a vigorous "Yes!" to the future. We should pay attention to the ideas that circulated in Mr. Pepperdine's head in the summer and fall of 1937.

John Henry Newman maintained that a university does not begin with brick or mortar, nor even with students and faculty, but with an *idea*. I cannot stress this point enough. If *the founding idea* is not sound, the project will be flawed. The idea may grow and evolve over time; indeed, it should. So it is that *the idea* of Pepperdine University continues to mature "through the days and years and generations." The essential idea, the kernel, of the institution imagined by Mr. Pepperdine was clear from the beginning: It

would be a great institution committed to liberal learning and the professions, but it would also be dedicated to the glory of God. Mr. Pepperdine saw no contradiction between these twin goals. He believed that his college should offer a comprehensive education founded on solid scholarship and faith in the teachings of Scripture.

The first sentence of Mr. Pepperdine's Dedicatory Address, delivered September 21, 1937, lays the foundation. Buildings matter very little, he declared, "but the work which will be done through the days and years and generations to come will be of very great importance *if that work is guided by the hand of God*" (my emphasis). He then told the audience what is most needed: "America and the world need Christianity." Mr. Pepperdine's words were spoken less than five months after the destruction of Guernica and barely two years before Hitler invaded Poland. He continued:

Yes, [America and the world] need knowledge, culture, education, but they need Christ even more. The heart of man usually grows to be perverse unless trained by the influence of God's Word. If we educate a man's mind and improve his intellect with all the scientific knowledge men have discovered and do not educate the heart by bringing it under the influence of God's Word, that man is dangerous. An educated man without religion is like a ship without a rudder or a powerful automobile without a steering wheel.

When Mr. Pepperdine spoke of dangerous men who used their scientific knowledge for evil purposes, was he thinking of those who obliterated Guernica? Time would soon reveal how eminently cultured Nazis, educated in the best universities of Berlin, Heidelberg, and Munich, could blow up a thousand Guernicas and incinerate millions in

the death camps—with untroubled consciences. How could they do this? In part, they could do this because they had received a reductive education that had long since divorced knowledge from religion, science from moral values. Mr. Pepperdine was only anticipating the disasters to come. Improve a young person’s mind with scientific knowledge, but leave out the education of the heart, and you create a dangerous person, indeed. I have always found Mr. Pepperdine’s Dedicatory Address succinct and insightful; but considering the mounting horrors of his day and our own, his speech is prophetic.

The enterprise called Pepperdine University is a grand one, so large, in fact, that it is difficult to grasp. Like the Grand Canyon or the Pacific Ocean, the sheer scope challenges our capacity to take it all in. Sadly, there are days when I am so busy with my immediate duties that I do not look out my window to take in the amazing prospect of sea and sky. Many of us who work at Pepperdine can so focus on our daily tasks—worrying over the budget, hiring new faculty, revising the curricula, resolving the crisis *du jour*—that we may not step back and take the long view; yet it is the long view that we really need. For a few minutes I wish to ask you to take a journey with me, to draw back a bit in order to gather in the sweeping prospects of this amazing enterprise—to look wide and deep in order to understand what we are about. “What we are about” riveted Mr. Pepperdine in September 1937. It should rivet us too.

The first goal of this journey is to locate Pepperdine *historically*. The university in the West evolved over the last eight centuries. We can understand ourselves better if we recognize our place in the long lineage deriving from the first universities in the West.

Secondly, with greater historical understanding, we can think more deeply about our uniqueness. Pepperdine occupies a particular spot within the broad spectrum of academic institutions. Of the 4,168 U.S. institutions of higher learning,¹ there is only one Pepperdine. While we have much in common with our peers, we have some singular differences too. It would be good if we better understood how we differ from our secular counterparts.

Finally, I wish to offer some ways for “keeping the faith,” that is, for keeping the faith component of the University alive and well. As history shows with abundant clarity, the temptation to secularize is as predictable as it is powerful. It has happened to the best. It could happen to us, but it is not inevitable. There are concrete choices to make—and values to hold tightly—if we are to keep this from happening.

It’s worth recalling that though the idea of the university may seem old to us, it is a relatively young invention, considering the duration of human societies. Whole civilizations have risen and fallen, without universities. Universities as we know them are only about eight centuries old. They have changed much through the centuries, but core elements of the medieval foundations can still be seen in the modern university. One can better understand our University’s present identity by recognizing its genetic relationship to its antecedents. Just as a child carries the DNA of his great grandmother, whether he knew his great grandmother or not, I would maintain that Pepperdine University carries the DNA of its predecessors—Oxford, Prague, Paris, and Bologna—whether or not we recognize the family lineage. Let me summarize four historical eras of Western universities, each of which has contributed something important to Pepperdine University.

¹ *The Chronicle of Higher Education: Almanac Issue 2003-5*, 27 August 2004: 4.

1st Era: Foundations in Europe (12th –18th Centuries).

Universities began as *religious* enterprises. They were born out of monasteries and cathedral schools of the Middle Ages, “out of the heart of the church,” in fact.² In the New World, Protestant churches quickly imitated the Old World practice, founding colleges to train ministers and to advance the faith. It’s worth remembering that for six centuries or more universities operated within a philosophical framework which saw no inevitable or essential conflict between religion and intellectual work. Though many assume that religion and science must conflict, it has not always seemed so. Until the Enlightenment at least, one could be thought to be both a great intellectual and a devout believer. Occasional skirmishes between the church and scientists notwithstanding, Christian belief was no enemy to learning. On the contrary, theism was the loving mother and gentle nurse of advanced learning. Pepperdine owes an immense debt to these first centuries of the University: our notions of the college as a residential community, a place of collegiality, our concern for students’ moral development, our notions of academic disciplines, the design of many of our academic degrees, the very rituals and regalia of commencement exercises, our academic titles like doctor and provost, and above all, our basic conviction that the search for God and truth are compatible activities. We owe much to these centuries of cooperation between Christianity and the academy. Yet it is easy to forget.

2nd Era– Enlightenment and the Triumph of Secularism (18th – 19th Centuries)

The friction between the church and university intensified in the 18th century—the age of the Enlightenment. The increasing emphasis upon the human capacity to know

² The expression derives from Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Constitution entitled *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990).

truth objectively took a secular turn. The scientific method gained ascendancy. Religion seemed only marginally useful, if not irrelevant. Intellectual inquiry that had been rooted in fundamental theistic assumptions, now took a more hostile position, perhaps best illustrated by the work of Darwin in biology, Marx in politics, Freud in psychology, and Nietzsche in philosophy. Collectively, the disciples of these four revolutionaries constituted an assault on the very beliefs that had undergirded the university for centuries. Christianity and science, once partners, underwent a painful divorce—or so it seemed.³ The Judeo-Christian worldview was subverted, marginalized, if not banished outright. In its place arose a new approach to knowledge that made theism, Scripture, and the sacred generally unworthy of academic consideration. Institutions that started as Christian colleges—Harvard, Yale, Princeton, USC, Cornell, and so forth—largely abandoned their original missions.

Understandings of the mission of the university changed as well. Formerly, the inculcation of values and the formation of students' moral lives had been primary. The new goal was the creation of new knowledge. Of course, certain goods came from these changes, including the formation of the great research universities of our day. The scientific method produced stunning results in science and technology, and the successes continue. Pepperdine University benefits greatly from the contributions of this era. Indeed, our scholars use the methods perfected during this era of expansion. Our scientists compete for research dollars and produce original research, like their colleagues

³ Rodney Stark points out that the idea that “science required the defeat of religion” was a falsehood first promoted by certain Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Gibbon. In fact, Stark argues, “through the centuries (including right up to the present day), professional scientists have remained about as religious as the rest of the population—and far more religious than their academic colleagues in the arts and social sciences.” “False Conflict” *The American Enterprise* Oct./Nov. 2003: 28. See his book *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-hunts and the End of Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003).

at the great research universities. But, as is often the case, with the gain, there were losses, which have only become apparent over time.

3rd Era: Reaction and Crisis (1900 – Present)

Scientific naturalism triumphed in Europe and in America, producing the great research universities where my colleagues and I earned our Ph.D.'s. These institutions enjoy enormous success by almost any standard of measure—large endowments, coteries of Nobel Laureates, huge federal grants, and considerable prestige. All should be well in the halls of ivy. This should be the final chapter in a very happy story of success and triumph. Our essential problems should have been solved; but, of course, they are not. Guernica is just one illustration of the fact that science and technology do not guarantee an unqualified better future. Through the rear-view mirror called history, we see that our efforts to improve the world along secular lines have produced unexpected and unintentional miseries. It is exactly as Mr. Pepperdine had feared in 1937. Two crises in higher education might have been predicted by our founder: a crisis in values and a crisis in knowledge.

The Crisis in values. Until World War I, European and American intellectuals were often *meliorists*—devoted believers in progress. They were convinced, despite small or occasional setbacks, that the world was getting better and better. It seemed obvious, because science and technology were making amazing leaps. It seemed only a matter of time before we would reach something like perfection in medicine, health, economics, etc. This conviction was dealt a powerful blow by the horrors of World War I. In the light of unprecedented human suffering it became harder and harder to defend the meliorist line. The world-wide Depression constituted a second major blow, followed by a cascade

of disasters: the Spanish Civil War, Guernica, World War II, the Holocaust, the Cold War, Vietnam, and international terrorism. The genocides and brutalities of the 20th and now the 21st centuries have mortally wounded Western dreams of moral progress.

C. S. Lewis is eloquent on this point. In his prescient work *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis, like Mr. Pepperdine, saw that an education divorced from values was a disaster in the making. It is too easy to produce “men without chests” (that is, human beings without interior, ethically centered lives). He writes:

You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more “drive,” or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or “creativity.” In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.⁴

Lewis, the eminent Oxford scholar, is not complaining about scholarship or the scientific method; rather, he is exposing the silly notion that fact-oriented education, in and of itself, will make people virtuous. He is complaining about the triumph of the “cerebral self” over the faithful, soul-full self. By Lewis’s day it was evident that university systems were losing their moral bearings. They were becoming less able to offer a coherent moral system to combat manifest forms of evil. They had become masters at answering the “how” questions: *how to make things, how to manipulate nature or human beings*; but they were ill equipped to answer the “why” questions: *Why are we here on this earth? To what end or purpose?*

⁴ *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1975): 35.

What Mr. Pepperdine and Mr. Lewis saw in the thirties and forties has become obvious today: *Humanity's moral development has not kept pace with its scientific development.* Cell phones and airplanes are wonderful devices, but who is to teach us not to use them to set off bombs on commuter trains or incinerate the next Guernica? What is there in the university curriculum that would inoculate one against fraud, greed, pride, or violence? *Homo homini lupus*, the Roman poet Plautus taught us. "Man is a wolf to man."⁵ How could we ever have fallen for the notion that human beings, armed with ever more technology, were *necessarily* getting better and better? Could it be that our mastery over nature just makes us more accomplished exterminators of our enemies?

The knowledge crisis. To the moral crisis we must add the *knowledge or epistemic crisis*. Briefly stated, many of the fundamental assumptions that led to the Enlightenment have been challenged on philosophical grounds. In our day, there is no longer a consensus about how we know what we claim to know. In the place of objectivity reign perspectivism and relativism, especially in the humanities and the social sciences. Without centers of authority, identity politics determines what is good or bad, right or wrong. Standards and norms are increasingly difficult to locate. Multiple "isms" roam the campus, seeking ascendancy. Not much is left but the "will to power," just as Nietzsche had predicted. The university is fragmented and stressed, roiled by doubt and self-doubt. University campuses seem to mirror the world described in the Book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

⁵ So Sigmund Freud observes, on the eve of World War II, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1989): 112.

Numerous books and articles address the current crisis of the secular university.”⁶ Many of the critiques are written by academics quite loyal to the academy, but they are dismayed by the confusion, the alienation, and the anomie. Parker Palmer describes academics who enter the university with passion, but end up in pain, “disconnected from their students, from their souls, from each other.”⁷ Nathan Hatch, former Provost at Notre Dame and new president of Wake Forest University, points out the “rising tide of criticism, wave upon wave” that is currently eroding “the esteem once accorded the academy.”⁸ The public is slowly awakening to the crisis of doubt that permeates the university today. Ernie Boyer describes “a growing feeling in this country that higher education is, in fact, part of the problem rather than the solution. . . .”⁹ When you hear of “culture wars” on university campuses today, you will understand better what is happening if you see these skirmishes as surface manifestations of deep-structure confusion over values, purpose, and identity in a world where there is no longer any agreement about absolutes, except perhaps the absolutes of “diversity” and “autonomy.” Too many academics have lost their way, unable or unwilling to distinguish moral categories.

To recapitulate: *the university is in crisis*. The grounds have shifted. The ways of knowing are no longer agreed upon. There is no longer a coherent theory of knowledge operative in the university. Scientific naturalism produces certain forms of discovery which we continue to be of great value—but *science is fundamentally unable to provide*

⁶ See, for example, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992): 13.

⁷ Qtd. in Pelikan: 18.

⁸ Nathan Hatch, “Christian Thinking in a Time of Academic Turmoil” in *Faithful Learning and the Christian Scholarly Vocation*, eds. Douglas V. Henry and Bob R. Agee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003): 88.

⁹ Ernest L. Boyer, “The Scholarship of Engagement” in *Selected Speeches 1979-1995* (Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1997): 85.

meaning and purpose for human existence. In such a setting, the Christian institution of higher education shines like a beacon in a dark night. In the words of Nathan Hatch, these institutions “have an unusual opportunity to articulate what may be the only coherent educational philosophy in the marketplace” (89).

4th Era: Renaissance of the Faith-based University (21st century)

We are entering, I believe, “the age of Pepperdine.” In a postmodern, post-Enlightenment, postliberal culture something surprising is occurring. Educators, students, and the general public are discovering anew that education without heart is dangerous. Leon Lederman, Nobel laureate in physics and director emeritus of the Fermilab National Accelerator Laboratory, is eloquent on this point. He recalls that while scientists are generally honorable people, “a depressing number are greedy, unethical, selfish, egocentric, intolerant, racist, narrow-minded—all the way to evil. Scientists cheat, plagiarize, work on poison gases or for tobacco companies, advise and support tyrants and dictators.” He adds: “We must learn to educate for wisdom and moral quality as we teach science. We must be involved in clarifying the role of science—what it can and cannot do.”¹⁰ This sounds rather like George Pepperdine, doesn’t it?

Dr. Alexander Astin, co-investigator at UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute and one of the leading authorities in higher education today, is calling for a renewal of religious and spiritual concerns in the American university. His research shows some troubling consequences of the divorce of knowledge from values in the academy. His survey shows that 77% of students pray; 73% say that their religious beliefs helped develop their identity; 71% find religion helpful. *But 62% of them report*

¹⁰ Leon M. Lederman, “What about Scientists? Some Saints and Some Sinners, Too.” *International Herald Tribune* 27 July 1999: 6.

that their professors never encourage discussions of religion or spirituality. “[S]tudents have deeply felt values and interests in spirituality and religion, but their academic work and campus programs seem to be divorced from it.”¹¹ Christian universities which vigorously maintain the significance of theism to the intellectual enterprise enjoy a new opportunity to take their place at the table of scholars, scientists, and philosophers, while serving students who are hungry for a robust, transformative education. Alan Wolfe has argued in “The Opening of the Evangelical Mind” that institutions like Pepperdine have a great opportunity to serve culture as unapologetic faith-based institutions.¹²

Maintaining Our Heritage

It would indeed be ironic, if, at the very moment when culture at large and even secular educators are calling for a greater role for religion and spirituality, we were to lose heart or lose our way. The new openness to spirituality and religion in the academy should be our summons to join in the enterprise of reviving significant scholarship that is rooted in a Christian worldview.¹³ Christian intellectuals elsewhere, including Richard Hughes and George Marsden, but many others with them, are producing new and coherent arguments for the enterprise called faith-based education, or theistic scholarship.¹⁴ Respected scientists, scholars, and intellectuals are making the case for faith-based scholarship in many specific disciplines. These people should be on our

¹¹ *L.A. Times* 21 Nov. 2003. See also the Executive Summary of “The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose” (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, n.d.).

¹² “The Opening of the Evangelical Mind,” *Atlantic Monthly* Oct. 2000: 55-76.

¹³ Alan Wolfe argues that because secular academic cultures are experiencing their own crisis of faith, because the academy is “riven by sectarian [i.e., ideological] warfare,” and because there is no longer “one ‘hegemonic’ truth” to which all must adhere, “room can be made for any group, including conservative Christians” (76).

¹⁴ See Hughes, *The Vocation of the Christian Scholar: How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997). See also the works of George Dennis O’Brien, Jaroslav Pelikan, Arthur Holmes, Nathan Hatch, Parker Palmer, Robert Benne, etc.

faculty or should regularly participate in our university life. As the University's chief academic officer, I believe that it is my particular duty to encourage the fellowship of the spiritual life and the intellectual life. We must end what Marsden calls "Christian schizophrenia."

If Mr. Pepperdine's ideas made sense in 1937, in the smoky shadows of Guernica, then they make even more sense today. More than ever, we need leaders of great intellect, great heart, and great faith. If we do not produce them, who will? And if it is our task, how will we accomplish it? How do we preserve what we have and move forward with courage and conviction?

Three Essentials: Vision, Ethos, People

I believe that we fulfill our spiritual mandate by paying particular attention to the spiritual DNA of our organization. According to Robert Benne, we sustain our institutional DNA in three basic ways: through *vision*, *ethos*, and *people*.¹⁵ Vision might also be called "worldview": "It is a comprehensive account encompassing all of life; it provides an umbrella of meaning under which all facets of life and learning are gathered and interpreted" (6). Christianity's comprehensive account of reality

does claim to offer a paradigm [a conceptual framework or worldview] in which ... data and knowledge are organized, interpreted, and critiqued. Furthermore, the Christian vision is, for believing Christians at least, unsurpassable; it cannot be replaced by a better account, and therefore for believers its essential core persists through time. It claims to be the vehicle of ultimate truth, such that if another account of life surpasses the

¹⁵ *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions.*

Christian story in the lives of believers, they no longer legitimately claim to be Christians. And finally, the vision is central to life. It definitely addresses all the essential questions of life: meaning, purpose, conduct. (6-7).¹⁶

Secondly, we preserve the organization through **ethos**. Benne observes: “Christianity ... is more than intellectual. The account it gives of reality is also lived, embodied, and expressed in an ethos, a way of life.” And of course each specific Christian tradition conveys a specific ethos. . . . (7) Ethos involves many things—practices of worship and “patterns of moral action” (6). Thus, Pepperdine should not only be a place where great ideas are advanced, or where bodies of knowledge are transmitted, but a place where a certain way of life is honored and performed.

The third requirement is that we gather **people**—students, administrators, faculty, and staff—who embody the vision and practice a particular way of life. “[P]ublicly relevant Christianity in higher education” requires “persons who understand and articulate the Christian vision and embody the ethos of that particular tradition. Without committed persons, a religious tradition is merely an historical artifact. Persons are the bearers of a living religious tradition as individuals and participants in churches, church-related institutions, and associations of that tradition” (8).

Six Goals

With these essential requirements—vision, ethos, and people—in mind, I conclude by summarizing six qualities that must characterize the Pepperdine of the future, if it going to be serious about its calling as a Christian university:.

¹⁶ See also Paul Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999): 3-13.

1. Worldview. Because there must be a compelling and comprehensive account of reality on this campus, we have work to do in the area of worldview. Everyone must answer the fundamental question, “Where do reality and power reside?,” so Parker Palmer reminds us. “The foundation of any culture lies in the way it answers this question.¹⁷ There are many appealing but finally inadequate answers to the question. If we teach that reality or power ultimately reside in human minds, in the state, or even in nature—no matter how we spin it, we will be a secular university. Instead, we must hire teachers and mentor students who are able to say with conviction: “Jesus Christ is the foundation of reality. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Power resides in the Creator, not in us.” Our faculty and administration need to share the “umbrella of meaning under which all facets of life and learning are gathered and interpreted.” Even if they come from different faith traditions, our professors must take the spiritual quest most seriously.
2. Scholarly Engagement. It is not enough to have a theistic worldview. We must vigorously engage the critical questions and concerns of our age in the marketplace of culture and in the larger academy—to resist marginalization, in other words. Some of our faculty do this with grace and brilliance, but more should be doing it. We do not apologize for having a set of presuppositions that shape our understanding of reality. Faith in God does not diminish the intellect, nor does it need to blunt the vigorous quest for truth. Our assumptions must be tested by, and against, those of the larger culture. “Iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17).

¹⁷ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998): 19.

3. Connections. We must explore connections more fully—between faith and scholarship; between our institution and other faith-based institutions. The great project of imagining the work of the faith-based university in the 21st century is a lively and on-going project. We must make this university a crossroads for intellectuals, scholars, performing artists, poets, scientists—especially those who are thinking about worldview issues. We need assistance in constructing (or reconstructing) Christian intellectual culture in our time. We have allies—present and potential—around the globe. We must know them, and they must know us.

4. A Way of Life. As administrators and faculty we must model *a particular way of life* rooted in the ethical teachings of Jesus and Scripture: “truth apart from charity is not of God, but his image and idol” (Pascal). We must resist the compartmentalization that says that one’s professional life and one’s personal life have nothing to do with each other. George Pepperdine believed that the moral life of the professor was central to the success of the college. The ethical standards of Jesus must be ours—humility, charity, truth-telling, hospitality, integrity, and self-discipline, among others. Newman said it like this: “With [a teacher’s influence] there is life, without it there is none; if influence is deprived of its due position, it will not by those means be got rid of, it will only break out irregularly, dangerously. An academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils is an Arctic winter; it will create an ice-bound, petrified, cast-iron University, and nothing else.”¹⁸

¹⁸ John Henry Newman, *University Sketches* (London: Walter Scott Pub. Co., 1902): 73.

5. Learning as personal formation. We must remain focused on the fact that true learning, as George Pepperdine affirmed, transcends head knowledge. Learning, finally, is not only information, but *formation*: formation of a heart, mind, and soul. We are here to develop “real three-dimensional persons of wisdom, individuality and conscience.”¹⁹ Education at Pepperdine will always be deeply personal. A university is “*Alma Mater*, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill,” says Newman.²⁰ It will, therefore, necessarily be personal in nature. We must connect our students fully to the joint enterprise of scholarly discovery.
6. Community. There is an unbroken line in the essential idea of the university, stretching from Bologna, Prague, and Oxford, all the way to Pepperdine University. One unbroken theme is the necessity of community. Today the forces of fragmentation are powerful. Our very ability to communicate today is at risk. Frank H. T. Rhodes, President Emeritus of Cornell University, believes the death of community in the American university is a catastrophe, undermining “the very foundation upon which the university was established.”²¹ Pepperdine University must preserve the conditions of respectful and positive communication. Our Christian heritage protects this goal, just as it did in the first universities of Europe. Community, of course, implies people. We must continue to hire faculty and nurture students who share the vision and the ethos of the faithful university.

¹⁹ William DeVone qtd. in Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination*: 53.

²⁰ Qtd. in Pelikan: 180. Newman, *Idea of the University* (I.vi.8)

²¹ *The Creation of the Future: The Role of the American University* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001): 47.

In a World Lit by Lightning: Creating the Future

The year 1937 was a hinge moment in history. Tennessee Williams, the great American playwright, set one of his most stirring plays, *The Glass Menagerie*, in that fateful year. At critical moments in the play, Williams describes a dark world racked by fear and violence. “In Spain there was Guernica,” he writes. “All the world was waiting for bombardments! . . . For nowadays the world is lit by lightning!”²² In the same year, as we have seen, Picasso gazed upon Guernica and feared for the future, and Mr. Pepperdine gazed upon Los Angeles and founded a new college for the future.

Mr. Pepperdine lived in a troubled era, but on that day in September 1937, he looked into a sea of young faces and was inspired, not by fear, but by faith, hope, and love. People of faith are always hopeful. It has been said, “The best way to predict the future is to help create it.” This is what Mr. Pepperdine set out to do. He helped to create the future we now enjoy.

His task is now ours. We are in this calling because we know that it is possible to create a better future through Christian education. I cannot say that the world is better today than it was in 1937. I can say that the kind of faith-centered education George Pepperdine called for is worthy of our imagination, labor, and sacrifice; for it is still true as it was in 1937 that “In this way we shall do our small bit to glorify the name of God in the Earth and extend His kingdom among the children of men.”

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²² Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (New York: New Directions 1970): 57, 115.