

A University Committed to the Great Commission

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Introduction

The primacy of the Great Commission as a part of Baptist identity and outlook has been apparent ever since the ascendancy of Missionary Baptists over Primitive Baptists during the early nineteenth century. Southern Baptists in particular have a long tradition of looking to the Great Commission as their rallying cry for outreach ministries, missions, and the establishment of educational institutions. Universities have been in existence since the eleventh century, and a variety of purposes have been assigned to them over the centuries. Today, there are various models that operationally define universities and their functions in society. What implications and problems arise when an institution defines itself both as a university and as an institution that is committed to the Great Commission? Are certain models of university purpose more appropriate than others? Are there characteristics or hallmarks that distinguish such a university?

The Great Commission

In order to address these questions, we will first look at the Great Commission. How Jesus' command is interpreted has an enormous impact on how it is carried out in a university setting. The Great Commission, as understood by Christianity, is the statement made by Jesus of

Nazareth to His disciples prior to His ascension into heaven. It is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts but is not found in the Gospel of John. In each version of this last instruction of Jesus to His disciples, the emphasis is somewhat different.

Mark's Gospel is the most problematic both in text and theology.¹ The received text, dominantly represented by the King James translation but maintained in most modern translations, contains the most commonly known version of the several text variations of this Gospel. The command is to *Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation* (Mark 16:15 NASB). This version of the Commission also appears to include the necessity of baptism, and a listing of signs that will follow the believers confirming the Word preached. Luke's Gospel and companion Acts of the Apostles which claims the same author, more passively states . . . *that repentance for forgiveness would be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Luke 24:47 NASB).

The Gospel of Matthew, arguably the most Judaic of the Gospels, is emphatically different from the other gospels in recording this instruction called the Great Commission. Matthew records a fuller and more detailed statement that gives context and clarity to the intent of the others. It reads, *All authority is given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore (or more directly as you are going or have gone)² and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age* (Matt. 28:18-20

¹There are several alternative endings to Mark's Gospel in the manuscript history of the text. Scholars debate which of these is likely to be the most likely original ending.

²The Greek aorist participle renders the going as not the focus of the command. It would more likely read in English an understanding of wherever you go or find yourself.

NASB). Because of its fuller and more Judaic emphasis, the Matthew version will be the one referenced in this paper.

The plain language of the Matthew statement by Jesus to His disciples is that they are to *make disciples of all the nations*. No mention of the Gospel or its message is directly stated in the Matthew text. This means that the commission is about discipleship, not merely evangelism³. There are to be new disciples from all ethnic identity groups. This has two implications. One is the possibility that the disciples will cease to be identified with their nationality or ethnicity. That is, this is a call to convert the nations by assimilation into Israel, or at least this form of Judaism. That this is a possible interpretation of the command is demonstrated by the problem presented in the book of Acts that some of the disciples from the Pharisaic tradition of Judaism believed that the Gentiles⁴ must be circumcised and follow the traditions of Judaism to be truly saved.⁵ The other view, and the one which appears to be the approved one, is that in each people-language-national group, there are to be disciples. The primary intent of the Commission is that a group of disciples are to be developed in every people group and in every place that the disciples find themselves.

The question in all this is whether the call to make disciples is in the sense of adherents to a shared message, or, the establishment of a discipleship system which engenders mentoring relationships within a relational community that becomes the carrier and expression of this

³This is not to remove the Gospel proclamation from the commission, but it prevents equating the message with the commission.

⁴The term Gentiles is meant to mean any people group identity that is not Israelite or Jewish.

⁵Acts 15 explains this struggle to decide whether the Gentiles must become Jews religiously to be saved. The conclusion was that the Jews and Gentiles had equal access to God without converting religious or ethnic identity.

message. The answer to this question gives assistance to understanding the Great Commission, and challenges contemporary Christians to reconsider our direction.

Systems of Discipleship

Anthropologists have discovered discipleship systems in most cultures of the world.

These systems have some common features. These features are:

1. The discipleship systems are relational in that they involve a Master-Disciple relationship.
2. The systems include rites of passage and reinforcement that initiate, identify and reinforce the disciple's identification with the Master and among the fellow disciples.
3. The discipleship structure includes the guidance of the disciple into the knowledge, skills and values of the discipleship system being learned.
4. The disciples never view themselves as above their master but are intended to become a master to other disciples to perpetuate the system.

The discipleship systems of Far Eastern cultures include religious-philosophic systems and martial arts systems. In Western cultures, discipleship systems were common among trades and craft guilds. In the Middle East, Judaism in particular made use of discipleship systems as a mainstay for retaining Judaism's existence after the loss of the First Temple and to maintain distinct sects within Judaism during the Second Temple period. It is in this particular context that the Judeo-Christian community developed using the same discipleship system.

The Judeo-Christian Discipleship System

The typical discipleship structure of the Second Temple period was built around a master teacher, called a rabbi, who had several disciples. Commonly, a group of ten or twelve disciples might be maintained. This number was symbolic of the basic minyan⁶ required for public prayer and other established ritual, or as a symbolic representation of the tribes of Israel. Within the

⁶The basis for this in Judaism is debated but several reasons are suggested. One is that the number ten is about accountability as in the story of Abraham asking God to spare Sodom if ten righteous could be found. A second explanation is that the number of spies sent to report on the Promised Land numbered ten.

group of disciples, a smaller group of two or three would be the primary focus of the rabbi who would often use them to train the younger or newer disciples. While the rabbi would teach larger groups of people, the primary relationship was between the rabbi and his disciples. The four characteristics stated above of a common discipleship system existed in this basic Jewish form which was adopted by the early disciples of Jesus. The New Testament gives many examples of this system being used by the early Church community.

The master-disciple relationship was the basic foundation of this Judeo-Christian system. This life-to-life relationship was primarily between men⁷ who lived together, interacting on a daily basis, and who learned together the worldview, values, skills, and knowledge that their rabbi taught them. They were accountable to each other and developed a kinship that became as important, if not more important, than their family kinship. We see this structure in John the Baptist with his disciples, Jesus with His disciples, Peter with Barnabus, and Paul with Timothy, Silas and Titus. The relationship between master and disciple was the conduit for the exchange of this religious system. This was not a classroom approach. The master would teach in the context of life, by lecture, by example, by task, and by observation, sometimes direct, sometimes indirect. Teaching was in group and individual contexts so that the development of the disciple was assured and paced to the needs of the disciple.

The discipleship system of the early believers involved an intentional relationship that included rites of passage and reinforcement. Baptisms of many types were common practice in Judaism for conversion, status change from common to holy, repentance and as the initiation into the relationship with a master and fellow disciples. John engaged his disciples in a baptism of

⁷Women were part of these disciple systems as is clearly seen by the women who accompanied Jesus and His disciples. But the women were seen as kinship extensions of the discipleship group. Usually they were mothers, sisters, or wives of the disciples.

repentance and preparation. Jesus' disciples also performed a baptism of repentance, although Jesus did not baptize. But in the Great Commission, a baptism different than John's is required that is based on the authority of Jesus and in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁸ This baptism was one of identification with that authority and name, and involved allegiance to that authority and name. This rite of passage was the manner of declaring oneself to be a disciple of Jesus and a fellow of this community of disciples. Beyond baptism, the symbols of the Passover Seder were also used to reinforce this identification with Jesus and the believing community by "eating this bread and drinking this cup in remembrance of Me," as Jesus had taught them. The Last Supper symbols focus on the person of Jesus as given on the behalf of the disciples. They belong to the Lord and each other and express this truth through the rituals of the community. This is explicit in the Great Commission. *Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 28:19).

As listed above, the discipleship system involved teaching the knowledge, skills, and values of the system through the medium of the rabbi in the context of the community. Typically the rabbi would teach, monitor and correct the disciples as they learned the system and internalized it so that the system became the worldview of the disciple. This was not a matter of instruction and testing. It involved dialogue, instruction, example and task-based learning that was monitored and corrected to insure the understanding by the disciple. Teachings were passed from master to disciple with minimal alteration. The Rabbi was not the author of the system, but the carrier. He had a responsibility to the senior master of the system to maintain the integrity of that system and teach within that structure. This does not mean no variation existed. But the system was not arbitrarily changed at the whim of a rabbi. The Great Commission specifically

⁸Acts 19:1-7 explains a group of disciples baptized using John's baptism of repentance, who upon hearing the Gospel, are baptized again. This baptism is in the name and authority of Jesus.

addressed this. Those baptized were to be taught to *observe all that I commanded you.* This use of the term “observe” was particularly Jewish. Observance in Judaism was both knowing and doing. To observe or keep the Sabbath was not simply to know about it, but to understand and behave accordingly. Jesus taught His disciples many things. They were to be sure that their disciples would be taught the same things and that they would do them.

Among the things Jesus taught was that the Old Testament was to be understood and obeyed correctly, not discarded. *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever, then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 5:17-19). This passage makes it clear that, though Jesus often rejected the way that some of the commandments were being observed (and He corrected these for His disciples), He never taught that they were to be rejected. His disciples were to teach and do them until all has been fulfilled and heaven and earth pass away.⁹

Jesus maintained that the two greatest commandments were to love God and to love one’s neighbor as oneself. All of the Old Testament depends of these two commands (Matt. 22:36-40). To these, He added another broad command upon which discipleship depends. *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:34, 35). The Great Commission then involves this requirement that those who

⁹This is not to say that salvation is accomplished by keeping the Law. Clearly Jesus is telling them that their place and reward in the kingdom is the focus. Salvation is a matter of a righteousness of faith, not works. I have addressed this in a paper on the relationship between the Gospel and the Torah which can be accessed at www.disciplecenter.com.

are baptized are to be taught to observe all that He has commanded. This is the “making” of a disciple, but not the end.

The last characteristic of the discipleship system is that the disciple becomes a disciplemaker himself. In this he never exceeds his own master in the process but may take on students of his own and in them, may do greater things than his master. This notion of humility in never exceeding ones own teacher in the relational respect, yet having the potential of accomplishing more than the master is also found in the scriptures. Jesus taught that a *disciple is not above his master. It is enough that he be as his master* (Matt. 10:24).¹⁰ Yet He also said that *the one who believes in Him will do greater works than He had done* (John 14:12). This principle in most discipleship systems requires a permanent humility and deference to one’s teacher regardless of one’s own accomplishments or prominence among others. A person who exceeds those who have gone before him is seen to be benefiting from what those before him have given him. A great student demonstrates that he is a result of a great master. So once one has become mature in the system, he will take his own place as a teacher but will always be indebted and subservient to his own master.

This last part assumes that the discipleship system will be perpetuated by the students of each generation and that this system will continue. This is also found in the biblical texts with regard to our faith. Paul, to his own disciple Timothy, tells him, *the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others* (2 Tim. 2:2). This responsibility to disciple others is a sharing in the stewardship of the discipline which is being taught and safeguarded. We are to select faithful disciples who will

¹⁰The application of this general rule is placed in the context that a student will be treated the same as his master but the application is being drawn from this general notion that a student never is higher in place than his teacher, even if he exceeds him in accomplishments.

be able to grow to maturity and become masters of other disciples who will continue this until in all nations (people groups) there are disciples who are fully instructed in the faith, once for all delivered to the saints, and who can be a community of witness from which this Good News (Gospel) of the Kingdom can be demonstrated and proclaimed.

The Great Commission is not merely as a message to be proclaimed to the nations but is a system of discipleship that is to be established in all people groups. These disciples, as a group of witnesses, will become a testimony of identification with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And from this community of disciples, the Gospel message will be proclaimed in word and deed. In addition, the original Master-Teacher will be there to guarantee its effectiveness until the end of the age.

Universities

According to earliest recorded usage, “university” referred under Roman law to “a collective unit of property” or “a corporate body of persons” that as community owned a unit of property. This usage goes back to the *Institutes* of Gaius and the Justinian *Digest*¹¹ and covers a wide range of communities that were corporations for legal purposes, including cities and religious organizations, but somewhat surprisingly not schools or academies as we know those terms today. As a point of comparison, the earliest recorded usage of “college” referred to a “board of priests” or a “guild, club, society, fraternity” of those belonging to a skilled trade, and

¹¹The term is “uniuersitas” [recall that, like the letters “i” and “j”, distinguishing “u” from “v” was a late invention in our alphabet] and these definitional phrases come from the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1996/2002). The reference to the second century *Institutes* is from the *Dictionary’s* usage notes, where a passage at §2.191 is cited. The reference to the sixth century *Digest* is from personal research, and includes a passage at §38.3.0. Both authors are available in Latin online. See <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS/gaius.html> (last accessed 28 July 2003) for Gaius’ commentaries; and <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS/justinian.html> (last accessed 28 July 2003) for the full corpus of Justinian’s jurisprudence.

seems never to have gained jurisprudential currency as a term designating those who owned anything or had powers beyond the scope of its constituent members.¹²

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) tells us that our contemporary English usage actually derives from the Old French rather than the original Latin¹³ and is used to signify far more than a property-owning corporation or postsecondary institution; rather, it is

The whole body of teachers and scholars engaged, at a particular place, in giving and receiving instruction in the higher branches of learning; such persons associated together as a society or corporate body, with definite organization and acknowledged powers and privileges (esp. that of conferring degrees), and forming an institution for the promotion of education in the higher or more important branches of learning.¹⁴

Note first that the *OED* definition begins with a focus on persons in community, not material objects like buildings or real estate owned, or a body's legal status as a corporation. This accords with what we know of the gradual formation and establishment of universities during the period we typically call the Late or High Middle Ages: first instructors and their students found an amiable site for study; their numbers grew; and only after stability in those relationships was clear were official sanctions and titles and buildings and lands forthcoming. For example, the official date given for the establishment of the University of Bologna—the first university in the western world, is 1088.¹⁵ But a more complete history of that university would

¹²The term is “collegium” and these definitional phrases also come from the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* noted above. An associated Latin term, “schola,” refers *inter alia* to a public area or building where members of a collegium could meet; and is itself a transliteration of the older Greek term σχολή from which root is drawn the meaning of “leisure” or “rest” as well as “school” and “scholarship.” See Liddell & Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon* (9th ed. 1940/1996). The derivation of “academy” follows a similar transliterary route, but to different purpose and effect, going beyond the more limited purposes of this essay.

¹³Not too surprising since the University of Paris is the second oldest university established in the western world, and became the pattern for the Oxbridge universities established soon after.

¹⁴*OED* Digital Third Edition (2002). Cited is principal meaning I.1.a, with earliest usage references to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

¹⁵See the University’s website, at <http://www.unibo.it/Portale/Ateneo/La+nostra+storia/default.htm> (last accessed 28 July 2003). The page is currently available only in Italian.

note that it was “formed between the 11th and 14th centuries”¹⁶ and it is not uncommon to find other medieval universities being given significant date spreads for their foundings. The typical naissance would occur as follows:

A doctor of some reputation drew around him a group of disciples eager to be instructed. Their numbers gradually increased; other doctors, finding an audience all ready, set up their chairs near his; and thus was founded a school. . . . The University of Bologna . . . had eighty professorships, and whither flocked as many as twelve thousand students from all countries.¹⁷

Instructors lived off the fees they charged their students, while the students studied only with those lecturers who were perceived to give value for money. There were initially no degrees or certificates conferred or granted, no administrators,¹⁸ no classroom buildings, no dormitories or cafeterias . . . only the doctors and their disciples, living in towns that could provide the necessities of life and welcomed the incoming tide of bodies into their homes, their inns, their churches, their marketplaces.¹⁹ Once a group of doctors and their disciples had grown into a relatively large, stable cohort, petitions would be drawn and delivered to the king and pope with the request that they be granted formal recognition and support: be it in formal proclamations of recognition and powers (such as to confer degrees and own property), and

¹⁶See e.g. “The History of the University of Bologna,” part of the online background material for a World Congress held at the University in 1999, at http://www.frame-uk.demon.co.uk/congress/history_of_university.htm (last accessed 28 July 2003).

¹⁷Unnamed annalist, as quoted in Gabriel Compayré, *Abelard and the Origin and Early History of Universities* (1902/2002), 28-29. This book also provides a detailed table of European universities established from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, beginning with the universities of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge which were established in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and received formal recognition from governmental and religious authorities at various times during the mid- to late thirteenth century. *Ibid.*, 50-52.

¹⁸Indeed, the first administrators (e.g. the first Provost of the University of Paris) were students elected by the student body to handle the day-to-day matters of university life. The faculty were rarely involved in governance in these early centuries. The nearest example of this today, of which I am aware, is the governance of Deep Springs College (California), with 26 students and 4 faculty, who manage their institutional life in relative isolation.

¹⁹While records are incomplete, if not wholly silent, as to average failure or attrition rates for students and teachers, the best evidence suggest that few students or instructors actually “failed”; rather, one could tell the better students and instructors simply by both the scope of their learning and the quality of their robes.

grants of lands, buildings, stipends and staff. In this manner the community evolved into an institution recognizable today in the language of the second half of the OED definition noted.

Comprehensive Universities

Most such schools that sought to become universities also sought to offer comprehensive higher learning. That is, each assemblage of scholars ultimately sought to establish schools in the four key disciplines: arts, theology, law, and medicine. Yet, most of these early universities were able to establish reputations only in one or two of these areas during the first centuries of their development: differentiation through specialization was the key to success in an education system where students were drawn from an entire continent, and known scholars who could draw their own disciples wherever they went were few.

It was out of this reputational struggle during the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries that European universities came to be expected both to specialize and yet offer a comprehensive set of studies to their student bodies, and subsequently it was this very focus on reputation and comprehensiveness that led to the transformation of American higher education during the nineteenth century. To compress a long history into a short space, the American experience with higher learning from the seventeenth century forward was principally in colleges established by religious bodies to prepare young people for work in denominational ministry, and later expanded their mandates to include law and medicine. These institutions were more like combination senior high schools/community colleges today in terms of the ages and prior academic preparation of students attending. Yet their curricula generally were rigorous and thoroughly orthodox in nature, comprising studies in the Seven Liberal Arts: the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic), and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, music, astronomy, geometry); and classical languages. Significant pressure for reforms, induced in part by those returning from

studies in Europe (especially theology students returning from Germany) who brought with them the desire to replicate in the United States what they had seen and experienced overseas, and in part by the needs made manifest by the Civil War, found fervent spokesmen amongst educational leaders of the day. Frederick Barnard, president of Columbia, argued for such reforms in 1882 and sought to shape leading institutions from being meager colleges into renowned universities:

The distinction between a college and a university is to be understood to be not one of powers but comprehensiveness. It is understood that while the teaching of the college is confined within a pretty sharply defined limit, the teaching of the university has no definite limit at all.... An educational institution approaches the ideal of an [sic] university in proportion as it transcends the narrow limit which is supposed to define the proper province of the college.²⁰

For all the energy that went into advocating such expansive reform, and the receptive ears on which it fell, this proposed transformation was not without its opponents. Edwin Greenlaw of the University of North Carolina wrote that:

we cannot gain unity merely through offering our courses in Sanskrit, butter-making and photo-play writing in an institution directed by the same president and faculty, employed by the same board of trustees. . . . Comprehensive institutions, offering comprehensive courses in all areas of knowledge, could not be equated with a comprehensive curriculum.²¹

Land Grant Universities

Alongside this debate concerning comprehensiveness was an added call for an appreciably different design to university education. As mentioned above, there were perceived needs flowing from the Civil War period that were reflected in the Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890.²² Following the educational philosophy of men like Benjamin Rush and John Dickinson

²⁰As quoted in Julie Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (1996), 62. The opening clause is Reuben's.

²¹Ibid. Reuben, quoting and paraphrasing Greenlaw, 231-232.

²²Those needs are reflected in the federal government's enticements to the states to establish their own public institutions of higher education with foci on agriculture, mechanical arts/engineering and home economics, to

(who co-founded Dickinson College in 1783), the design of Land Grant institutions was to provide functional as well as progressive education to students in order “to produce citizen-leaders who possessed the comprehensive knowledge and virtue needed to build a just, compassionate, economically sustainable democracy.”²³ There was in that case to be offered grounding in the liberal arts, but with added emphases on developing functional or vocational/practical skills. States were given incentive by grants of federal lands to establish at least one institution in the state “where the leading object shall be . . . to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life.”²⁴ In short, this scheme of higher education was aimed to induct/entice members of the general public to gain those skills necessary to fabricate the nation anew. As summarized in an interpretive news essay released by a land grant institution, itself: “higher education should be practical and available to the masses. Before the land-grant universities, college was for a select few. . . . The Land-Grant Act . . . promoted the notion that a student might attend college to learn to grow

be endowed by the sale of federal lands granted to the states for those purposes. This legislation, sponsored by Congressman Justin Morrill (Vermont) and hence popularly called the Morrill Land Grant Act, was promulgated in 1862 (now also called the First Morrill Act, at 7 USC §301 *et seq.*). Nearly three decades later, a Second Morrill Act was passed into law in 1890 (at 7 USC §322 *et seq.*) to entice [particularly southern] states to establish A&M universities for African-Americans. Subsequent amendments to the Acts also permitted establishment of Native American land grant institutions in US states, and higher education institutions in US territories like Guam and the Virgin Islands. For an interesting interpretation of the land grant idea, see Roger L. Williams, *The Origins of Federal Support for Higher Education: George W. Atherton and the Land-Grant College Movement* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

²³William Durden, “The Liberal Arts as a Bulwark of Business Education,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 18 July 2003, B20 (Point of View), paraphrasing Benjamin Rush. (Durden is the current president of Dickinson College.) The title is a play on John Dickinson’s calling the College a “tuta libertas” or bulwark of liberty. See the history of the College, as laid out in its website at <http://www.dickinson.edu/about/history.html> (last accessed 28 July 2003).

²⁴First Morrill Act, 7 USC §304 (closing sentence). This same section also provides for training in “military tactics,” which was to become the legal vehicle for introducing ROTC training units in all land grant institutions.

corn, build a bridge, even raise a child.”²⁵ So successful was this call and support for functionalist higher education that there are more than 130 land grant institutions operating today,²⁶ including some we might not recognize as such, like UC Berkeley.²⁷

Liberal Arts Universities

While not clearly contradicting each other, the serious tensions evident between Barnard’s vision of comprehensive studies and Greenlaw’s reservations concerning unity of one’s educational experience, alongside an alternative call for mass education in the practical affairs of life, reflect similar, concurrent debates on the other side of the Atlantic. In 1851, John Henry Newman accepted the charge of establishing a new university in Dublin, an institution that would clearly be both Roman Catholic and offer as good instruction as could be had in the Protestant-cum-secular universities in Britain. In preparation for that task, Newman described and defended his vision of higher education in a series of lectures that were collected and published as *The Idea of a University*.²⁸

In that work, Newman proclaimed, beginning in the Preface and continuing throughout, that a university is by definition and necessity

²⁵Linda Charles, “Land-grant universities born from radical idea,” *The Iowa Stater*, February 1997 [online at <http://www.iastate.edu/IaStater/1997/feb/landgrant.html> (last accessed 26 June 2003)]. Charles is the TIS editor.

²⁶Ibid. The breakdown in institutional numbers noted there by Charles includes ~105 public land grant institutions operating in the US and its territories, and ~29 Native American universities.

²⁷UC Berkeley was the result of a merger in 1868 between the College of California, a private school chartered in 1855 by a Congregational minister from New England, and the Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts College, established as a land grant institution by the state, in 1866. See the history of the UC system and UC Berkeley outlined online at <http://www.berkeley.edu/about/history> (last accessed 28 July 2003). For all that, it is tough to say the UC system generally or UC Berkeley particularly has retained the Land Grant ideal in its educational operations.

²⁸A useful version of his text is available in the Yale University Press series, *Rethinking the Western Tradition* (1996), where Newman’s original 1852 discourses are collected together with his four additional “university subjects” selections, 1854-1858, and accompanied by five essays from contemporary interpreters and critics of Newman’s vision.

a place of *teaching* universal *knowledge*. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement. If its object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students; if it is religious training, I do not see how it can be the seat of literature and science. Such is a University in its *essence*. . . .²⁹

Hence, the university curriculum should be set so that all students are exposed to all subjects in order that they might grasp all concepts essential to a free life. Research is not precluded, but it cannot be the focus of the institution's activities (as it is, for example, at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, which has no students and is devoted solely to fundamental research and scholarship). Teaching is to be the *raison d'être* of the university. Nor is it a matter of funneling to students opportunities to develop practical skills or vocational training of limited scope (as it is, for example, at colleges and institutes that offer certificate programs in gourmet cooking or automobile mechanics). For no less important is what is to be taught, being knowledge that is universal, not particular; a way of life, not job skills for one's livelihood. Thus, what is envisioned is the teaching of knowledge that bridges all of existence and so permits students to mature into that wisdom which gives meaning to one's and another's lives.

Newman here seems to be following the insights of Peter Ramus (Pierre de la Ramee), a sixteenth century French philosopher, who characterized a proper educational system as an *encyclopedia* or “circle of the arts”—as the Greek roots of the term, itself, suggest.³⁰ The result is that even when students cannot “pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the

²⁹First paragraph of his opening Preface (original italics). It is telling that what we call research universities—a title after which many educators hanker—is for Newman a misnomer, while the concern for students being lost in the research shuffle is one of the key criticisms cited when it is said that leading universities have been mismanaged.

³⁰Ramus' ideas are noted in Reuben, footnote 20, *supra*, at page 17.

gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education.”³¹

There also remains an important sense that studying everything, covering all subjects essential to a free life, is attainable at a university by each and every student. The bottom line of this conceptualization of education is what Newman calls its fruit:

[The student] apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scales of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called “Liberal.” A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom … a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching.³²

No single student thus comes to apprehend every shard of knowledge, but is capable of learning anything essential to a free life since no door of investigation perforce is foreclosed. To put it slightly differently, education is about producing persons, so each and every student should come to know everything essential to developing or realizing fully human, integrated personhood.³³

A University Committed to the Great Commission

If the focus of the Great Commission is a call to make disciples as discussed in the first section of this paper, what should a university committed to that commission be like? Is there a particular model that such a university should pattern itself after? Are there particular characteristics that will allow a university to enable its students to carry out the Great Commission?

³¹Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse V, section 1, paragraph 3.

³²Ibid.

³³This concern for persons can be found reflected in the work of Arthur Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), chap. 3.

University Models

Should a university committed to the Great Commission be comprehensive in its approach to the disciplines or be more narrowly focused, concentrating only on those disciplines that seem most “relevant” or popular? While the tradition among most church related colleges and universities has been to be more narrowly focused, it is appropriate for some to now attempt to become more comprehensive in nature. The language of the Great Commission is expansive (*make disciples of all nations*), and it seems disingenuous to assert that certain subjects and areas of study are not worth pursuing in the context of such a comprehensive commission. Does this mean that a small college with limited course offerings cannot be committed to the Great Commission? Certainly not. But if an institution is going to call itself a university and is hoping to meld that concept with that of the Great Commission, then it should always be striving toward a more comprehensive curriculum.

Moving toward comprehensiveness, however, engenders a challenge that many Christian universities will have great difficulty overcoming. In today’s climate of political correctness and restraints on free inquiry, it is questionable whether any university, secular or religious, can truly call itself “comprehensive.” Secular campuses operate under an illusion when they proclaim themselves as bastions of free inquiry. Certain viewpoints, particularly if they come from a Christian worldview, but also others that may be racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. are simply not tolerated. In most disciplines, there are certain orthodox perspectives that must be adhered to; otherwise faculty or students who hold these viewpoints are subjected to ridicule. Christian universities, while obviously tolerant of a Christian worldview, often exhibit a lack of tolerance for “marginal” viewpoints, and also tend to impose restrictions on the discussion of texts or ideas that are deemed sexually inappropriate or sacrilegious. In their move toward comprehensiveness

Christian universities will need to address this issue forthrightly, yet with sensitivity to their primary constituents.

Should a university committed to the Great Commission be more oriented toward practical application of knowledge or strive toward a more liberal arts type of approach? This is a difficult question, since there are obvious connections to the Great Commission within both of these models. The land grant model fits quite nicely with the Great Commission in that it encourages students and scholars to go out into the world and apply knowledge for the betterment of humankind. This model also fits well with the charge of service that many denominational colleges are given in their charters. However, the liberal arts tradition is very in tune with the Commission's disciple-making charge and may be more effective in preparing students to be holistic followers of Christ. Which direction a particular university will tend to lean probably will not affect its ability to be committed to the Great Commission. Certainly a "land grant" oriented institution can also have a strong liberal arts component in its general education curriculum while an institution that defines itself as a "liberal arts university" can have a vibrant and effective service component in its curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Characteristics of a Great Commission University

While there may be a variety of university models that institutions may adopt and remain committed to the Great Commission, there are several identity elements that must be embraced. These include a decidedly evangelical viewpoint, active disciple-making, and outreach.

Many colleges and universities in the United States started out as Christ-centered, evangelically oriented institutions. Today, many of these institutions do not even give lip service to their Christian heritage, much less claim to have any commitment whatsoever to the Great Commission. There is no requirement for faculty or students to be Christians, a secular

worldview is dominant, and while disciple-making happens, it is only tolerated if it occurs outside of the Christian context. If a university claims to be committed to the Great Commission, it must retain a strong Christian identity. This is exemplified by the commitment of faculty to the integration of the Christian faith into their teaching and scholarship. It is also exemplified by the participation of the entire university community in corporate acts of worship. Finally, it is exemplified by identification with other universities and institutions that consider themselves to be Christ-centered.

In addition to having a decidedly evangelical viewpoint, a university committed to the Great Commission will be actively involved in making disciples out of students. It is important that we consciously look at the pattern of disciple-making established by Jesus and actively develop strategies to make it happen. A university committed to the Great Commission must determine how it can work in concert with this discipleship pattern and the communities it produces. We must be able to assist both the process of discipleship and the relationships required by that discipleship process.

Unfortunately, the basic structure of modern universities may serve as a hindrance to the process of discipleship. The universities of the Renaissance were structured with faculty as “masters” and the students as “disciples,” which allowed for the kind of mentoring that Jesus was able to facilitate that is described earlier in this paper. In modern universities, the corporate body of individuals who are employed by the university has become the “master.” Students taught in lecture halls and through on-line course platforms have little opportunity to develop a master-disciple relationship with faculty. While there is an opportunity for this type of relationship to develop at the doctoral level, few Christian colleges have programs at this level (which, again, reinforces the call to comprehensiveness). In addition, many of the relationship-building

activities that used to take place between faculty and students have now been taken over by professional staff. Faculty no longer live in the residence halls with students; resident directors do. Faculty typically do not direct co-curricular activities anymore, coaches and student activities directors do. In most Christian universities the job of running corporate worship, small-group Bible studies, and outreach ministries is given to a campus ministries staff. Faculty are even getting out of the advising business, with more and more universities placing the responsibilities for advising on professional staff rather than faculty. With the level of interaction limited to the content learning environment, it is very difficult for faculty to “make disciples” of students. While it is possible for the corporate university to “make disciples” of students, the structure is somewhat unnatural and cumbersome.

The final characteristic of a university committed to the Great Commission is a commitment to outreach. Whether this outreach involves community service, denominational service, social and political activism, or evangelism, or all of the above, probably does not matter. What is important is that students, staff and faculty are “out there” somewhere doing something. While Jesus spent significant amounts of time cloistered with his disciples, He also had them out and among the local populace doing His work. It is absolutely essential for a university committed to the Great Commission to follow this pattern.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the prospect of an institution that calls itself a university and also claims to be committed to the Great Commission. While such a prospect faces several challenges, it is a possibility. Although a university committed to the Great Commission may pattern itself after a variety of university models, a move toward comprehensiveness is more desirable than a more narrow focus. A university committed to the

Great Commission exhibits distinctive hallmarks, including a decidedly evangelical viewpoint, active disciple-making and outreach.