



# The Unembarrassed Adventist

Adventist educators should initiate students into conflict and make them partisans.

by Charles Scriven

*It is the work of true education . . . to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. . . . [to] possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions.*

—Ellen White<sup>1</sup>

WHEN TONY CAMPOLO FLIES HOME TIRED from his speaking appointments, and his seatmate wants to know his name and what he does, the answer depends on whether Campolo feels like talking or not.

"When I want to talk," he explains, "I say I'm a sociologist. And the person next to me says, 'Oh, that's interesting.' But if I really want to shut someone up, I say I'm a Baptist evangelist. That generally does it."

Once, on a red-eye special, he told the man sitting beside him that he was a Baptist evangelist. But the man didn't retreat. "Well, do you

know what I believe?" he said. "I believe that going to heaven is like going to Philadelphia."

Campolo was taken aback—Philadelphia?

The man explained that just as there are "many ways to get to Philadelphia," so there are many ways to get to heaven. You don't have to be a Baptist or even a Christian—"we all end up in the same place; how you get there doesn't matter."

Campolo was too tired to argue. He maneuvered himself out of the conversation as fast as he could and went to sleep. But several hours later, when the plane began its descent into Philadelphia, he woke up to gusting winds, heavy rains, and fog as thick as wool. The ride was rough and scary. Everyone was tense.

So Campolo, feeling pugnacious, turned to his seatmate and said, "I'm certainly glad the pilot doesn't agree with your theology."

"What do you mean?"

"Down in the control tower," Campolo replied, "the controller is telling the pilot he's 'on beam,' and the message is: Don't deviate from this."

Campolo went on: "It's foggy outside, and

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I'm glad the pilot's not spouting off about how he can get to Philadelphia any way he pleases. I'm glad he thinks the controller knows the best path to the runway, and I'm glad the pilot's going to stay with it."

As for how to live the best life you can—how to get to "heaven," how to walk the road to fulfillment—Campolo's seatmate was very like the modern educational establishment. From the viewpoint of conventional understanding, school is no place to take a strong position about morality and religion. On these matters, the rule in school is, Don't be partisan, and don't ruffle any feathers.

When Adventist education was developing in the second half of the 19th century, our pioneers were flat-out partisan feather-rufflers. In her first extended essay on education, Ellen White declared that the young can be trained "for the service of sin or for the service of righteousness." She said, too, that we should give them "that education which is consistent with our faith."<sup>2</sup> Percy T. Magan, describing the 1891 (and first-ever) Adventist education convention, said the reform participants envisioned was seen mostly in terms of making the Bible central to the curriculum.<sup>3</sup>

All the while, the conventional secular orthodoxy, especially as regards higher education, was headed in another direction. The oldest colleges in the United States were sponsored by churches, but many were just then breaking their religious ties. Educational leaders were challenging, or even ridiculing, education that tried to instill in students a specific spiritual heritage with its own distinctive way of thinking and living.

At his inauguration in 1869, Charles Eliot, the Harvard president who cut the last links between the university and its original Christian patrons, mocked the teaching that tries to instill some *particular* set of beliefs about what is good and true. That may be "logical and appropriate in a convent, or a seminary

for priests," he said, but it is "intolerable" in universities.<sup>4</sup>

Eliot perhaps gleaned his comparison from Cardinal Newman, who in *The Idea of the University* had declared more than a decade earlier that the university is neither a convent nor a seminary.<sup>5</sup> In any case, the misgivings about religious training in higher education were taking an ever-stronger hold. In 1904, DeWitt Hyde, who studied at Harvard while Eliot was there and soon afterward became the president of Bowdoin College, called the "narrowness" he associated with church colleges "utterly incompatible" with responsible higher education. "A church university," he declaimed, "is a contradiction in terms."<sup>6</sup>

To these educational leaders, in other words, teaching a general awareness was fine; teaching a specific religious heritage was suspect. Today, well toward the end of the 20th century, this sentiment still predominates. Partisan education, especially in matters religious and moral, is seen widely to be, at best, narrow, and, at worst, bigoted and victimizing. Responsible teaching does not inculcate a particular point of view or set of virtues; it rather imparts knowledge and skills sufficient, as Mortimer Kadesh writes, to enable the self to criticize its "social milieu" and to "form" its being and "determine" its wants.<sup>7</sup> Even a teacher at a Southern Baptist college echoes the conventional understanding: "It's not my job as a professor to tell [students] what to think," the teacher told *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently, "it's my job to *make* them think."<sup>8</sup>

I will show here why the historic Adventist understanding is closer to the mark than secular modern orthodoxy. My claim, made with a view to secularization *inside* as well as outside the church, is that teaching and learning in the Christian setting, including the Christian college, should be, as Ellen White insisted, "consistent with our faith." It should display (in its own way) the church's true

identity; it should be, indeed, a deliberate strategy for building and bracing the circle of disciples. Bland neutrality is a mistake, and it is a dangerous mistake.

Let me begin by explaining a figure of speech I learned from my teacher and friend, Professor James Wm. McClendon, Jr., now Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. In *Ethics*, the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*, he remarks that we humans exist “as in a tournament of narratives.”<sup>9</sup> What does he mean by the arresting phrase “tournament of narratives”?

His point, first of all, is that whatever idea or possibility confronts us, any day or any hour of the day, the way we respond—the way we think and feel and act—depends on the stories we’re attached to. The stories, or narratives, we know and identify with shape our whole lives, our whole ethos or ethics. Narratives, in other words, are bedrock—bedrock for both personal and communal frame of mind—for insight, for attitude, for conduct.

The second point of the phrase concerns conflict. The narratives men and women identify with are many—across the total human landscape, beyond counting. And frequently, like contenders in a tournament, these narratives clash with one another, one story feeding this loyalty or outlook and another that. The result is variety in human culture, often welcome and often winsome. But more than anyone would like, the conflict of narratives feeds strife as well, including violent strife. We are sadly aware, we who inhabit the world of Sarajevo and Rwanda and (for that matter) the

United States, that differences of faith, politics, morality, and custom occasion not only charm but also bloodshed.

These are the conditions we live in, and under these conditions, bland neutrality, I repeat, is a mistake. If uncharitable narrowness is also mistaken, that does not gainsay the point. Conflict is a fact, and bland neutrality leaves conflict, even violent conflict, unchallenged. Conflict is a fact, and bland neutrality puts blinders over people’s eyes. Bland neutrality, in short, threatens society by feeding indifference and then compounds the threat by feeding self-deception.

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*In a world of many languages and histories, there can be no neutral point of view, no single pathway of knowledge available to everyone. The point is not whether to be partisan, but how.*

It is in this light that I want to advance my claim, namely, that *Christian education, including Christian higher education, should be partisan*. It should not be blindly or arrogantly partisan, but, without embarrassment and without apology, it should both build and brace the circle of disciples.

As we have seen, among the secular-minded, and to a surprising degree among the religious, antipathy to the partisan is widespread. The background to this antipathy is the Enlightenment. Kant declared that movement’s ideal of the autonomous individual when he called his readers to thrust off dependence on others for direction. “Have courage to use your own reason!”—that, he said, “is the motto of the Enlightenment.”<sup>10</sup> And with the ensuing shift to the self-governing or self-defining individual, the meaning of respect for others veered toward non-interference, or even neutrality, with respect to differences of outlook and conviction. The partisan was now bad manners. Conflict was to be domesticated. The motive was admirable. The Enlight-

enment grew into full flower on bloodsoaked soil. The 'Thirty Years' War, religion-stoked and staggering in its brutality and senselessness, ended (more or less) in 1648, endowing Europe with a need and a lively desire for peace, or at least respite. Bloodletting had failed to resolve the doctrinal discord from which it sprang. As Stephen Toulmin writes, circumstances called for a means of determining truth that "was independent of, and neutral between, particular religious loyalties."<sup>11</sup>

But truth, despite these hopes, could not be determined in total independence of particular religious loyalties. Consider the idea that the individual is self-governing and self-defining, with no need to depend upon others for direction. This idea subverts—indeed, *it was meant* to subvert—accountability to authority, whether religious, familial, or communal. Autonomy was needed, so the thinking went, in order to fend off acquiescence to inherited prejudice and folly. But we each speak a human language, and every human language gives particular peoples, each with the particular narratives they have lived and told, the ability to communicate. What is more, every language bears the freight of stories past and so gives every user an inherited frame of mind. Thus no neutral vantage point exists from which the self may practice its alleged autonomy. In a world of many languages and histories, there can be no neutral point of view, no single pathway of knowledge available to everyone. How and what we think at all times reflects a storied past.

The point, despite conventional modern thinking, is not *whether* to be partisan, but *how*. Even so, the narrative that shapes the dominant version of higher education continues to be that of the Enlightenment. The debate over "political correctness" sweeping the campus and the wider culture betrays, it is true, growing uneasiness about standard, educational assumptions. Still, the curriculum usu-

ally comes across as a kind of intellectual bazaar, catering, at least ostensibly, to autonomous selves in the process of forming their being and determining their wants without "direction" (as Kant put it) from others. Students are still said to be learning how to think, not what to think. It is still "narrow" and "sectarian" to inculcate a particular point of view, especially if the point of view involves religious or moral commitment. Except in defense of diversity itself, it is still bad manners, and bad education, to be partisan.

The deception in all this, or self-deception, is palpable. But antipathy to the partisan jeopardizes education in other ways as well. For one thing, it trivializes differences. When disagreements over faith, politics, morality, and custom flame up in violent strife, as they often do, it is disingenuous to speak, in the customary, bleached-out phraseology, of mere "competing value systems," as though students were consumers meant to pick and choose like shoppers in a marketplace. To be or feign to be impartial is to push the truth away, to keep it at a distance. It is a kind of indifference, and it communicates indifference.

Far from being innocuous, the indifference damages humanity. For when in matters of faith and morals, education must be too open to contain conviction, it can no longer fight off the tendency to spiritual coma that seems in any case to bedevil contemporary culture. Differences trivialized by the trivialization of morality itself—and examples abound: This is an age when expert witnesses can make ethical judgments seem repressive even at an incest trial; it is an age when "standards" at media command posts consist of whatever the market will bear; it is an age when lawmakers wring their hands over teen violence and still cast votes for murder weapons. The situation recalls what Yeats, in "The Second Coming," declared of an age without conviction: "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The

blooddimpled tide is loosed . . .”

Suspicion of commitment in the classroom does not, of course, produce students with no biases at all; it rather favors their “assimilation,” as Patricia Beattie Jung writes, to the “prevailing cultural ethos.”<sup>12</sup> The fiction of neutrality tends to baptize the status quo, with its implicit morality or immorality, and to nullify the stark alternatives. Antipathy to the partisan turns out, then, not just to trivialize differences, but also to protect whatever now predominates. Despite the homage paid to criticism, antipathy to the partisan is fundamentally conservative.

What this entire criticism of liberal education displays is the emerging awareness that the modern era, heralded by Descartes and the Enlightenment, is now passing. We are entering what some now call the “postmodern” era, with its key realization that outlooks are bequeathed to individuals, not discovered or created by them. How we see and live depends on the background—family, community, history—we each absorb growing up in our particular language and culture. Systems of thought and practice characteristic of particular communities may involve differences too deep to be adjudicated or even understood through simple conversation.

But does all this add up to irrationalism, add up to the tribalization, as one might say, of knowledge? This is question central to the issue of ethics and education. If we are left with mere subjectivity, if everything comes down to mere personal choice, how is anyone accountable? How does ethics, with its assumption that some attitudes and actions are right and some wrong, even have a place?

Nietzsche, who in the 19th century anticipated the shift to the postmodern, believed that the ideas we consider true are fixed and binding merely from long usage and endorsement within a particular group. One may employ strategies to promote or subvert a point of view, but it is impossible to adjudicate

among contending points of view. So-called “truths” are only fictions to assist the “will to power,” conventions whose conventionality has been forgotten.

But even if we accept the absence of a neutral viewpoint, it’s still possible—and important—to make a vigorous argument for accountability, and thus for the importance of defending right against wrong. Sheer consent to rival truth claims, after all, is not just the embrace of charming or fertile disagreement; sheer consent is surrender to injustice and bloodshed, for these are what differences of faith, politics, morality, and custom all too often bring about. Writers such as Alisdair MacIntyre, James McClendon, and Nancey Murphy, who will figure prominently in what follows, argue that even though we see the world through our inherited frameworks, no framework must be a prison-house. It is possible and important that conversation, both within and across the lines of human difference, should yield new increments of understanding and agreement. The shift to the postmodern does not, in other words, compel anarchy and resignation with respect to human knowledge.

In light of all this, let me now suggest the outlines of a postmodern conception of intellectual *accountability* for colleges of explicit Christian *commitment*. How can higher education under the church’s auspices contend responsibly—with no retreat of mind or heart—in the human tournament of narratives? How can it nourish post-adolescent minds with its own distinctive vision? How can it be partisan and still hold itself responsible to justify its partisan convictions? *To begin, let me say unmistakably that the partisanship in question is countercultural.* From the biblical narrative, this is obvious enough: solidarity with God and God’s Messiah means dissent from the wider world. Nevertheless, the lure of respectability within the surrounding, domi-

nant culture has always tantalized the Christian community. As McClendon writes, "The church's story will not interpret the world to the world's satisfaction. Hence there is a *temptation* (no weaker word will do) for the church to deny her 'counter, original, spare, strange' starting point in Abraham and Jesus and to give instead a self-account or theology that will seem true to the world on the world's own present terms."<sup>13</sup>

What is true for the church is true for its colleges. Here, too, the endurance of distinctively Christian vision must be a matter of deliberate design. In its decisions about personnel, curriculum, and student life, the Christian college must renounce congenial neutrality, which is in any case artifice and self-deception, and embrace without apology its own heritage and discipline. In the tournament of narratives, anything less is a recipe for defeat. Anything less marks capitulation to "the unstoried blandness (and the mortal terrors) of late-twentieth-century liberal individualism."<sup>14</sup>

In the college setting, learning takes place under the leadership of teachers. So if the countercultural, the embrace of distinctive vision, is crucial for responsible Christian partisanship, a corresponding view of the teaching function is also crucial. In the guidance and inspiration of students, intellectual accountability allows, and indeed requires, commitment to a particular point of view.

Being responsibly countercultural means acknowledging the self-deception and emptiness in the platitude about teaching students how to think, not what to think. The platitude fits neatly with the Enlightenment antagonism

toward authority and obsession with personal autonomy. It reflects as well the earlier Socratic form of moral education, which trained students for criticism of convention without offering a positive account of the good in human life. The overall impact of a purely negative approach was to leave students without reasons for preferring one way of life to another, and thus without reasons to fend off the blandishments of purely private satisfaction.

In his play *Clouds*, the Greek writer Aristophanes made this point with his imagination. A father named Strepsiades has a son who is a spendthrift and idler, with hardly any conscience at all. The father, desperate for change, brings his son to the school of Socrates in Athens.

Socrates arranges for the son to hear a debate between one teacher, who is a stern guardian of traditional values, and another who is a smirking, self-indulgent enemy of these values. In the end it becomes clear that Socrates himself,

though courageous and serene compared to both debaters, has more in common with the smirking critic of traditional values. It turns out that he has nothing positive to teach about how to live. He is like the tradition-hating debater, in that his whole mode of teaching is to raise questions about traditional morality and to shoot it down. He ridicules inherited wisdom and those who try to instill it in the minds and lives of students. And it's all the worse because he offers virtually nothing to substitute for what he ridicules. He says nothing about what a person *should* aim for in life, nothing about the standards and convictions that *should* prevail.

Aristophanes is Socrates' critic; he thinks the

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situation is disastrous. So in his play, the fancy education at the fancy school in Athens leaves the son as selfish as ever. In the end, he just doesn't care about anything but himself, anything but his own personal satisfaction. The wider world, and the people in it, don't meet any of his needs and don't even matter.<sup>15</sup>

In order to make advances in awareness and comprehension, the inquirer must first have been taught what to think, must first have been initiated into some actual way of life or type of practice. Knowing how to think presupposes some partisan account of the subject matter, some positive immersion into a tradition. Being partisan may, it is true, slump into narrow indoctrination.

But it doesn't have to, and responsible partisanship is in any case fundamental: Nothing positive can happen without it. The road to enlightenment requires advocacy as well as criticism.

Yet another respect in which the learning environment at Adventist institutions must swim against the current is in the attention paid to the total way of life—not just technical, calculating intellect but also feelings, imagination, habits, and virtues. The mere removal of ignorance—what the distinguished education writer Jacques Barzun reveres as the “prime object” of education<sup>16</sup>—calls for such attention, anyway, since study itself is a discipline involving virtues. Just paying attention and seeing clearly—traits important for scholarship as well as moral growth—require emotional involvement. As Martha Nussbaum argues, interpreting Aristotle, a person may know something as a fact—a connection as father or mother, say, to a child; or the benefit of unearned privilege relative to others in one's society—yet fail to take in the fact “in a full-blooded way,” fail to confront or acknowledge what it means and what response it calls for. When a person lacks “the heart's confrontation” with what lies open to view, the deficit

narrows vision and foils insight. Perception, to be complete, must involve “emotional and imaginative, as well as intellectual, components.”<sup>17</sup>

But as with the bare noticing of facts, so with the emotion and imagination that deepen our perception: They, too, reflect personal experience over time. Emotion and imagination disclose stories heard and lived. They reveal communal ways of life. They make manifest the past and present habits, duties, and affiliations that constitute the evolving self. All this signals the need for attention to the whole person. Education must concern itself with character, with the total way of life. This matters, indeed, for the mere removal of ignorance; for positive enlightenment, it matters all the more.

That is why Parker Palmer, in *To Know as We Are Known*, his work on the spirituality of education, declares his opposition to “objectivism” in education. In this still-dominant classroom pattern, students learn the “facts” from an emotional distance, like bystanders. Mostly, the heart has no role; in accordance with the “objective” ideal, what is investigated remains at arm's length, an object and nothing more. Yet this detachment, this denial of the connection and interdependence of the student and the subject matter, “leaves the inner self unexamined.” And without attention to the inner self, Palmer declares further, humans tend to scorn the common good and veer toward arrogant manipulation of the world outside themselves.<sup>18</sup>

If mere technical expertise—the mere removal of ignorance—were truly the prime object of education, then few could be said to have received better training than the scientists who produced the first atomic bomb. Before the initial explosion, their technical expertise smoothed the way toward the perfecting of their awesome creation. On the day after the first mushroom stained the sky, when the scientists stopped to agonize over what

they had done, one said that “the glitter of nuclear weapons,” had seemed “irresistible.” The participants were overcome, he said, by “technical arrogance” that arose from their knowledge of what they could do with their minds.<sup>19</sup> They no doubt understood, at some level, that weapons with the capacity to lift a million tons of rock into the sky would bring unspeakable danger and death to humanity. But without confronting this fact “in a full-blooded way,” through feeling and imagination as well as calculating intellect, they failed to see what it meant or what response it called for.

The story illuminates the point: Education that plays down feeling and imagination and pays no heed to training the entire self, including those habits, duties, and affiliations that give shape to feeling and imagination, is both indigent and undependable.

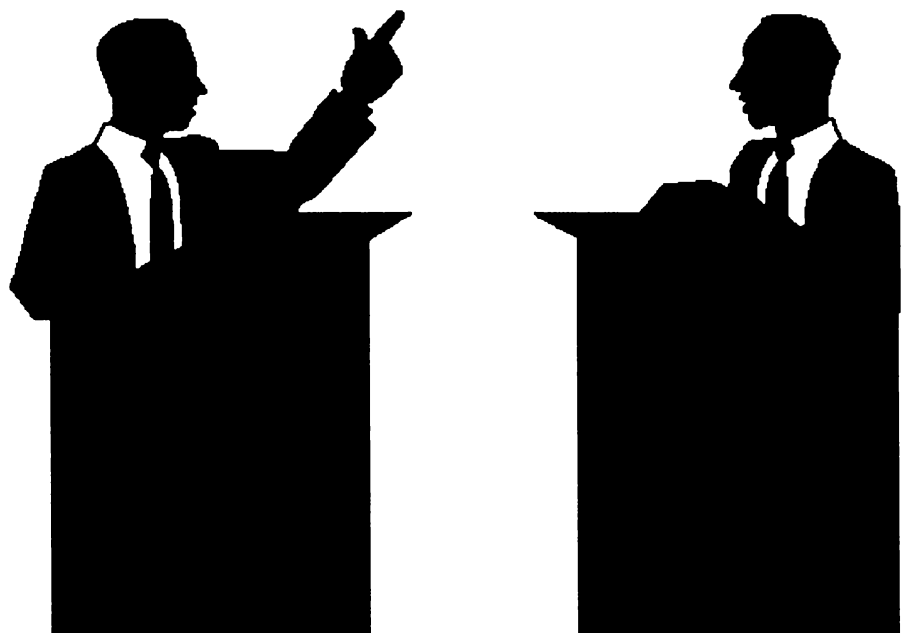
A third aspect of responsible partisanship is this: *It must acknowledge conflict and confront conflict; it must initiate students into conflict.* James McClendon writes about the school in Alexandria where Origen, the great Bible scholar and theologian, first gained fame as a teacher. He told his students no topic or question or opinion was off limits, but at the same time took an unmistakably partisan position. By instruction and example, he sought to instill the theory and practice of Christianity and to model an alliance of piety and scholarship. To him, the school was a training ground; its goal was the formation of lives that would honor and reflect the church’s narrative.<sup>20</sup>

The same spirit and goal must infuse the responsible partisanship of Christian colleges today. If all education, to be complete, must

engage the whole person, Christian education must do so in a manner appropriate to its own struggle in the tournament of narratives. It must acknowledge and deal constructively and honestly with the challenges posed by other points of view. Masking over differences feeds apathy by pushing truth away, whereas the point is to nourish passion and involvement.

In the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*, McClendon says that Jesus enrolled his followers “as students in his school, his open air, learn-by-doing, movable, life-changing dialogue.” The purpose was “training” for world-changing witness; the method was “costly apprenticeship.” Then he alludes to blind Bartimaeus, said by Mark to have received his sight from Jesus and immediately followed him on his dangerous mission to Jerusalem. On the view suggested by the story, declares McClendon, “enlistment and scholarship are integral parts of one whole.” Bartimaeus, occupied with Jesus’ mission and immersed in its conflict, was “the paradigmatic Christian scholar.”<sup>21</sup>

Alisdair MacIntyre, who himself suggests the need for “rival universities,” says one task of responsible partisanship is “to enter into





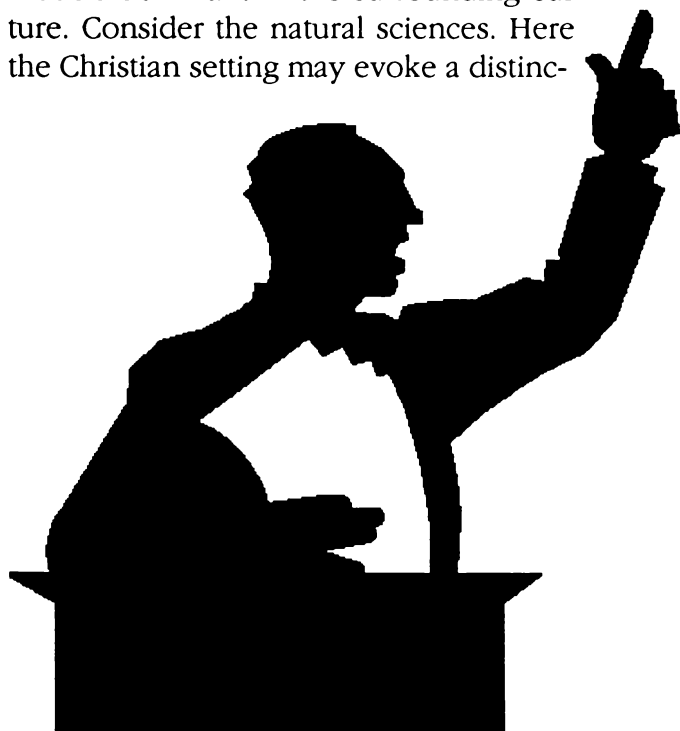
controversy with other rival standpoints." This must be done in order to challenge the rival standpoint, but also in order to test one's own account against "the strongest possible objections" against it.<sup>22</sup> The pairing of enlistment and scholarship by no means entails, in other words, a flight from challenges or a refusal to give reasons and make adjustments. Within limits required by the maintenance of basic identity, the Christian college or university, like a responsible partisan journal or newspaper, must tolerate—must, indeed, seek out—lively confrontation with other points of view. This can happen, not just in the classroom or library, but also through the selection of students or even faculty. Postmodern awareness puts the difficulty of the knowledge enterprise in bold relief, but accountability is still vital. Convictions must still be justified. To be responsible, partisan higher education must provide, or better, *be*, a context for accountability.

In certain academic disciplines and aspects of collegiate bureaucracy, the Christian institution may find itself in virtual consensus with models dominant in the surrounding culture. Consider the natural sciences. Here the Christian setting may evoke a distinc-

tive framework for instruction—it may, for example, lead teachers to discourage the use of scientific knowledge for violent purposes—but the course content will no doubt reflect what broadly respected authorities have had to say. At the points, however, of profound difference—in the human sciences and the humanities; in the administration of student life—the only responsible conduct in the face of challenge is honest conversation. And this means readiness "to amplify, explain, defend, and, if necessary, either modify or abandon" what one believes.<sup>23</sup>

In her book on *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning*, Nancey Murphey argues that the right method for defending Christian convictions is exactly analogous to the scientific method. She writes from a postmodern point of view and relies on the distinguished philosopher of science, Imre Lakatos. Christian communities, she says, are "experiments" in a "research program." The program has to do with the claims of the gospel. As in productive science, the convictions central to the program must be held tenaciously. Secondary convictions may be held less tenaciously, but all—the central as well as the secondary—must be willingly subjected to testing. The testing is in the living out of Christian life, and in the meeting of objections to the beliefs and practices associated with that life. The objections are met either by displaying, through words or deeds, their deficiency, or by attempting to make adequate adjustments. Over the long run, evidence accrues that counts for or against the secondary or even the central convictions. The intent and hope, always, is that "new and more consistent models of the Christian theory" may emerge.<sup>24</sup>

A paragraph gives short shrift to the nuance and complexity of Murphy's argument. She means to embrace the postmodern awareness of the limits and uncertainty of human knowl-



edge while arguing for standards of evidential reasoning that defeat "total relativism" and reclaim accountability. Justifications cannot be absolute, even in the natural sciences. In the domain of moral and spiritual conviction, as in the human sciences, the difficulties are even greater. But when challenges are sufficiently understood to cause dismay—a common enough experience—they must be dealt with through honest, open conversation. The attempted justifications, as McClendon writes in his own discussion of these matters, may seem acceptable and effective only in the eyes of the person or community being challenged.<sup>25</sup> But the effort of justification, and the intent of framing new and more consistent models of the Christian theory, must be embraced. Otherwise, the partisanship so necessary for growth in knowledge becomes a barrier to growth and ceases to be responsible.

For colleges and universities of explicit Christian commitment, then, intellectual accountability requires a countercultural frame of mind, a willing dissent, that is, from the wider world and a deliberate advocacy of the church's distinctive belief and practice. In the exercise of such accountability, teachers should first of all be protagonists. Second, they should, in their teaching, engage the whole person, intellect and character alike. Third, they should acknowledge and participate in conflict; they should meet challenges with attempted justifications.

In these ways, colleges that honor and reflect the church's narrative can address the

"critical years" of post-adolescence when, as Sharon Parks writes, the emerging self is especially open to "life-transforming vision."<sup>26</sup> In these ways such colleges, following their particular purpose of education, can embody and refine the practices of teaching and learning and thus create standards for these activities that assist congregations and eventually the wider world.

The genesis of modernity was, substantially, a hope for peace. But the attempt to realize the hope proved self-deceptive and, all too often, oppressive, not just in its hostility to differentiation but also in its drift toward compelled uniformity. My argument for partisan education is an acknowledgment, as Toulmin puts it, "of the unavoidable complexities of concrete human experience."<sup>27</sup> But as a call for responsible partisanship, it is also an evocation of a humane approach to discord—honest partisanship, involving mind and heart alike, fused with honest conversation and shorn of the need to injure or coerce. Here higher education can be a beacon—and especially Christian higher education, whose narrative, in decidedly unmodern fashion, calls its partisans to peaceable and prayerful regard for those with whom it differs, including its mortal enemies.

The point of the Christian narrative is not resignation, it is transformation. In a sometimes winsome but often violent tournament of narratives, colleges embracing such an approach to discord and such a hope of transformation may and must stand tall.

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19. Parker Palmer tells this story to introduce his argument. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.

20. McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics*, pp. 42-44.

21. James William McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Doctrines* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), ch. 1, p. 12 of the May 1993 draft.

22. Alisdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 231.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

24. Nancey Murphy, *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 196.

25. James William McClendon, Jr., and James M. Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), p. 182.

26. Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 17.

27. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, p. 201.