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Soul of the University Conference

March 25-27, 2004

How To Get An Education Even Though You are in College:  
The Pew College Society Vision and Program at DBU

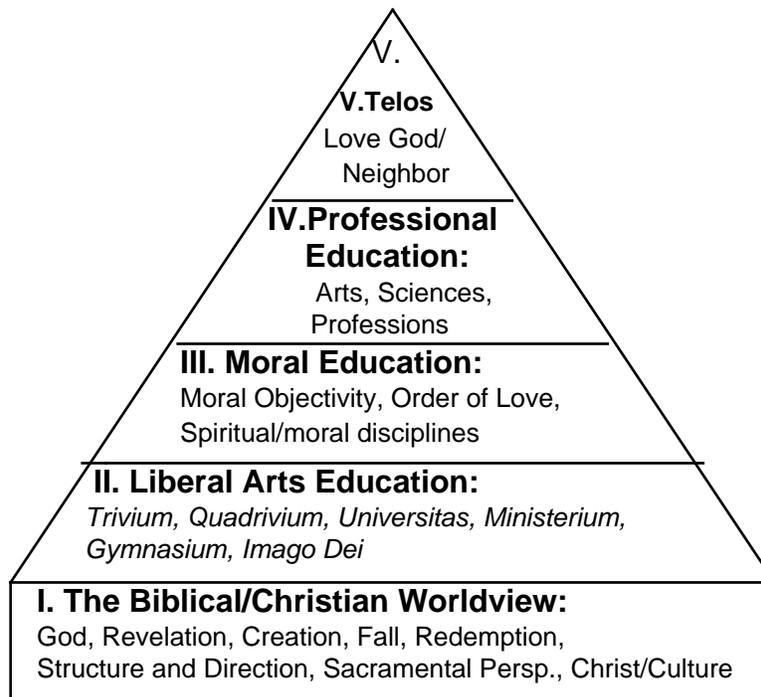
**Introduction**

The motto of the PCS at DBU is the Latin expression *Pietas et Doctrina*, piety and learning. Despite the typical separation of these two biblical ideals in many religious contexts, our organization is governed by the classic Christian ambition of uniting together the heart and the head, faith and reason, spirituality and scholarship, vital piety and the life of the mind in the self same Pew scholar. We wanted our students to have a full taste of a robust intellectual life established up authentic devotion as foundational preparation for the rigors of graduate school and a possible calling as a Christian scholar in the academy. Neither Christian spirituality without scholarship, which can devolve into sentimentalism, nor scholarship without Christian spirituality which can devolve into humanism would do. Rather, we wanted students to experience the integral connection of both at the undergraduate level before they moved into challenging futures where opposing forces would seek to tear apart these two things that God intentionally joined together.

In the Pew Society, we also wanted our students not only to have an educational experience that would prepare them for future work, but even more importantly, we also wanted them to have an educational experience that would expose them to the transforming power of Christian higher education as an inherent value and end in itself. How does this happen? What is necessary to bring this about? For so many students, school is just school — a dry, abstract, lifeless experience. They also suffer from what I call the “front-door, back-door syndrome.” Here students come in the front door as entering freshman and leave the university through the backdoor as graduating seniors in more or less the same intellectual and spiritual condition in which they arrived. Just as it is possible to be treated but not cured as a patient in a hospital, so it is equally

possible to be schooled but uneducated as a student in a university. If certain omissions may result in an incomplete healing, it is also possible that certain omissions may result in an incomplete education. Both mistreatment and miseducation in these respective domains are possible, with lifelong consequences for both the body and the mind. Just as the film *Patch Adams* illustrates how the intangibles of humor and compassion, often omitted and even scorned in the medical community, are powerful tools in the healing process, so we in Pew wondered what elements are characteristically missing in Christian higher education that undermine its effectiveness and reduce it to banalities?

So, we devised a philosophy of education for vocational and personal purposes, to prepare Pew students not only for grad school and the academy, but to shape them as Christian human beings and prepare them for life! Below is a diagram and a brief explanation of each of the seven basic components of this philosophy of education of the PCS at DBU.<sup>1</sup>




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<sup>1</sup> This present paper is a serious abridgment of a twenty-five page paper that develops these ideas in much greater detail. The longer paper is available at [www.dbu.edu/naugle](http://www.dbu.edu/naugle) under the heading Academic Papers.

I. *Biblical Worldview.* The PCS at DBU is committed to a biblical worldview as the foundation for Christian higher education and the enterprise of Christian scholarship. Thus we embrace the infinite, personal, Trinitarian God, who has made Himself and all His works known in Scripture, as the final reference point for all reality. He is the creator, judge and redeemer of the world. The themes of an originally good creation, the corruption of creation because of human sin, and the “already but not yet” restoration of creation in Christ form a theological platform that grounds and renews educational and cultural pursuits, and opens up the whole of life to theistic meaning. Since God made everything by His word and wisdom and structured it by His law, the whole universe in part and as a whole reveals His presence, love, and glory. This sacramental perspective on reality imparts a kind of sanctity to the study of all disciplines, seeing in each of them an avenue to God. This sacramental perspective on reality with its inherent structural goodness also precludes dualism. Corruption in creation is not inherent, but adventitious and a misdirection of God’s handiwork. Christian redemption defeats sin and redirects and sanctifies all aspects of life in obedience toward God for His glory and human good. The Church’s redemptive mission, therefore, imparts to Christian education, as a countercultural enterprise, a vision of personal, social, and cultural renewal through faithful scholarship and teaching. This kind of worldview rooted in God and His word, the themes of creation, fall, and redemption, a sacramental perspective on reality, and a transformative approach to personal and cultural life animates the vision of the PCS at DBU.

*Liberal Arts Education.* This worldview is basic for liberal arts education. In addition to what Dr. Charles has already stated, I would add that, in its highest and holiest sense, liberal arts education is a theological concept. It contributes to the restoration of men and women as the *imago Dei*. It is concerned with persons as persons possessing intrinsic value, and with their development as persons — spiritually, intellectually, morally, and physically. By focusing on the tools of learning (*trivium*), the subjects of learning (*quadrivium*), the unity of learning (*universitas*), the service of learning (*ministerium*), and the care of the body

(*gymnasium*), human beings approach the fullness of their powers and the image of God comes to bright expression. The overall goal is captured nicely in the classic phrase: *mens sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in a sound body). This educational process terminates in human good and God's glory. As St. Irenaeus said, "When a person is fully alive, God is glorified!" Liberal arts education in a biblical context is at the heart of a Pew student's undergraduate career.

*Moral Education.* Rooted in a biblical worldview, and permeating the content of liberal education is the component of moral education. Contemporary culture, however, is engulfed in what C. S. Lewis has called "the poison of subjectivism," the fatal view that we have the power to create our own ethical standards.<sup>2</sup> This view, expressed in the contemporary language of "values" and "rights," is rooted in a relativist framework and produces what Lewis refers to in *The Abolition of Man* as "men without chests."<sup>3</sup> The content of ethical discourse on today's campuses and in society at large has been dominated by these ideas. The results have been telling personally and in corporate life.

Christianity proposes a radical alternative. It asserts that there is a moral order to the universe ultimately and firmly anchored in the immutable character of God's love and justice. Objective standards for character and conduct are known by natural law and special revelation, and are applicable to the ethical dilemmas of everyday life. On this foundation, Pew students as responsible agents are encouraged to cultivate rightly ordered loves and godly virtues through the faithful practice of a variety of spiritual and moral disciplines. Indeed, moral education is not only a theological mandate, but is also an essential intellectual pre-requisite. As Michael Jones argues, "the intellectual life is a function of the moral life of the thinker. In order to apprehend truth which is the goal of the

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<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, "The Poison of Subjectivism," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 72-81. He also refers to such individuals as "trouser apes" and "urban block-heads."

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Touchstone Book-Simon and Schuster, 1996), chp. 1.

intellectual life,” he says, “one must live a moral life.”<sup>4</sup> Thus the question of “how should we then live?” in private and public life is central to this philosophy of education.

*Professional Education.* Most people go to school for the sake of their careers. Obtaining the necessary marketable knowledge and skills for success in the workplace is the fundamental goal. Our culture and economic system demand that people pursue such training in order to assume their place in the workaday world in an effective and profitable way. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with this typical vocational ambition, on its own it comes up short as the chief *telos* of the educational enterprise. In fact, professional training as a student’s primary academic goal could very well generate the condition of being schooled, but uneducated. As G. K. Chesterton argues, “training youth to earn a living is not education at all, [and indeed] . . . a specific training may keep the youngster from earning the best kind of living.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus in our Pew program, we propose that professional education be immersed in the larger educational context of the preceding elements of this model. How much deeper, richer, fuller would professional studies be if they were informed by a knowledge of God, creation, fall, redemption, a sacramental view of reality, and an understanding of the Christ/culture relationship, all supplied by the biblical worldview? How much deeper, richer, fuller would professional studies be if students have cultivated the tools of learning, understood the subjects of learning, grasped the unity of truth, and developed a sense of the responsibility of knowledge and care for the body, all contributions of liberal arts education? How much deeper, richer, fuller would professional studies be if they were influenced by insight and submission to the moral order of the universe, by the power of virtue and rightly ordered loves, and by a life shaped by the moral

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<sup>4</sup> E. Michael Jones, *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehavior* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Illustrated London News*, American edition, March 29, 1930; quoted in George J. Marlin, Richard P. Rabatin, and John L. Swan, eds. *More Quotable Chesterton*, intro. George W. Rutler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 142.

and spiritual disciplines, all products of moral education? Students exposed in this kind of curriculum will likely experience a transformation of life during their university years. Through them, the professions themselves, and culture at large, may be positively altered through the vocations of thoughtful, caring graduates educated in this manner.

*The Telos of Education.* Is there an ultimate end to the educative process? Why go to college in the first place? What is the point of a university career? Since every action aims at some good, as Aristotle pointed out, what is the true good of education? Many say it is money, credentials, grades, prestige, advancement, and so on. There is, however, a more profound motivation. We propose that the biblical response to the question about the purpose of education is the same response to the question about the end of all human action: it is found in love. When Jesus was asked which law summed up the Old Testament and brought the goal of human life into focus, He answered by saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ “This is the great and foremost commandment.” “The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22: 37-39). Education in a Christian context provides the opportunity to fulfill these greatest of commandments. Through various academic endeavors, Pew students have the opportunity to prepare to be and actually become better lovers of God and better lovers of their neighbors as themselves.<sup>6</sup> They seek to honor God and serve others through their studies. The final goal of worldview formation as well as liberal, moral, and professional education ought to be unadulterated Christian charity!

In analyzing the motives of learning communities, Bernard of Clairvaux noted over seven-hundred years ago that some were inspired by curiosity, others by fame, still others by profit. Best of all, however, were those who were motivated by love: “There are many,” he writes, “who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge: that is curiosity. There are others who desire to know in order

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<sup>6</sup> These thoughts and this way of putting the matter I owe to Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., “Intellectual Love” (opening convocation sermon delivered at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, September 9, 1996); also available in *Christianity Today*, August 10, 1998, pp. 50-2.

that they may themselves be known: that is vanity. Others seek knowledge in order to sell it: that is dishonorable. But there are some who seek knowledge in order to edify others: that is love.”<sup>7</sup> If our students, therefore, are willing to step back for a moment and think about why they are in school, and if they are willing to swim against the cultural stream, then they need look no further than the greatest commandments of love for God and neighbor as the primary *telos* of their education, their primary goal being not so much to become a scholar, but to become a saint.

*Mentors.* Early on in American educational history, the German research university that emphasized large lecture classes and little pupil-professor contact replaced the English tutorial model which focused more on mentoring relationships. The personal influence of faculty members on students dwindled, and it continues to this day. We encourage students to resist this situation since the central feature of Christian pedagogy is that teaching and learning is always *incarnational* at its heart: becoming flesh and dwelling among them.<sup>8</sup> Jesus nurtured His disciples for a short three or so years, and eventually they turned the world upside down! It is hard to overestimate the indispensable influence of a good teacher on a teachable student. As John Henry Newman writes,

The personal influence of the teacher is able in some sort to dispense with an academical system, but that system cannot in any sort dispense with personal influence. With influence there is life, without it there is none. ... 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.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore we recommend mentoring to our students. Not just anyone mentor will do, however. It must be someone who is not only a little older and a

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Mark Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 60.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Garber, *Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior During the University Years* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 136.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Schwehn, 61.

little wiser, but also someone who has built into his or her life the habits of mind and heart that our students wish to emulate for a lifetime.

*Community.* But one-on-one relationships are not enough. There is also a need for community. Just as mentoring has declined in the last several decades, so also has the experience of genuine community. But it, too, is a central component to the biblical vision of the Christian life, and its importance is hard to overemphasize. Perhaps that's because so much of life is shaped by the company we keep, a fact pointed out in these helpful words from Robert Bellah.

There are truths we do not see when we adopt the language of radical individualism. We find ourselves not independently of other people and institutions but through them. We never get to the bottom of ourselves on our own. We discover who we are face-to-face and side-by-side in work, love and learning.<sup>10</sup>

So we encourage our students to be committed to the Pew/Paideia College Society as a spiritual and learning community. Its Christian commitment, dedication to good books, conversation, ideas, vision for the moral life, cultivation of the virtues and practice of the spiritual disciplines, and its quest to love God and neighbor in authentic ways has been a source of support and encouragement for all involved. It has been morally, spiritually and intellectually formative, established abiding friendships, lasting collegiate memories, an ongoing yahoo group listserv, and even a few marriages! We have been surprised by community!

Thus these seven features — a foundational biblical worldview, an emphasis on liberal and moral education, a contextualized approach to professional training, the final *telos* of love, and the reinforcements of mentors and community — have been at the heart of the educational vision of the PCS at

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, 145.

DBU. We have also sought to implement this vision through a variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities which I would like to summarize at this time.

### **Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities of the PCS**

*PCS Curriculum.* You will recall that the theme of our PCS is *Pietas et Doctrina* (piety and learning), and that its mission is to challenge intellectually gifted undergraduates with a *vision* for pursuing scholarly careers as avenues to Christian service and to help them gain admission to excellent Ph.D. programs at major universities. On the basis of this theme and in support of this mission, we developed two senior level elective Pew courses on the subjects of classic Christian spirituality (*pietas*) and the Christian intellectual tradition (*doctrina*). Both courses required each student to read about 1500 pages of primary source material and contemporary works, and was taught in a graduate seminar format focusing on intensive conversation, weekly writing assignments, an oral presentation on a course text, and a major research paper at the end of the term.

The course on Christian spirituality was based on the theme that the intellectual life and product of a scholar is a function of his or her moral and spiritual condition. Paul Johnson's book *Intellectuals* illustrated this theme, and this was followed by a reading and discussion of Augustine's *Confessions*, his *Enchiridion*, Aquinas on the Virtues, Luther on "The Freedom of a Christian," selections from Calvin's *Institutes*, Jonathan Edward's *Religious Affections*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, Philip Pfatteicher's *Liturgical Spirituality* and Parker Palmer's *To Know As We Are Known*.

The course on the Christian intellectual tradition focuses on the historic concept of *paideia*, the shaping of the student into his or her true form. We begin with the educational components of Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nichomachian Ethics* and then go on to read Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*

and his *De Magistro*, followed by Aquinas on *The Teacher*, Luther's essay on education, John Milton's essay "Of Education," a chapter on the puritan vision on education, John Henry Newman's, *The Idea of a University*, C. S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*, Mark Schwehn's *Exiles from Eden*, and George Marsden's *The Soul of the American University* and his *Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.

These two courses are at the heart of our Pew program, and combined they provide students with an anticipatory graduate level educational experience, an exposure to and knowledge of classic texts in the Christian spiritual and intellectual traditions, and most importantly a foundational vision for the scholarly vocation that integrates the twin ideals of *pietas et doctrina*, piety and learning.

*Extracurricular activities.* We reinforce this rather intense curricular aspect of our Pew program with a variety of extracurricular activities, even though most of them have an academic cast. Every fall semester we have an event called "**Books and Coffee**" in which we spend about two hours at the flagship Half Price Book Store in Dallas, and then head over to a nearby café where over coffee we share conversation with one another and talk about the books we bought. Each student who attends must buy at least one book. The goals here are to highlight the role of used bookstores in a scholar's life, the importance of books and reading, and enjoyment of a community experience.

Also in the fall term, the PCS sponsors a **study weekend** at a nearby retreat facility. Students read materials in advance of the retreat which itself consists of in-depth discussions in the context of music and worship, along with plenty of food, fellowship, recreation, and an annual installment of the Dead Pew Society where we share our favorite cds. Retreat themes have been on puritan education, common grace, Christian humanism, the educational writings of C. S. Lewis, social justice, the clash of civilizations, and my own book on worldview.

Each fall term ends in a **Pew Christmas party** our home which consists of a vespers service followed by a Mexican buffet, Pew students sharing their semester research papers, and white elephant gifts.

In the spring semester, we have an annual film night called **Cinematic Confabulations** which is just a fancy phrase for “movie talk.” After a quick meal together, we take in an art house film, and then find the nearest Starbuck’s where we linger long over a variety of beverages in critical conversation about the form and content of the film we have just seen. Learning to watch movies with wisdom and discernment is the goal of this outing, along with just having a good time.

The big event each spring is our annual **Pew College Society Student Conference**. Each conference features a keynote speaker, student paper presentations, a concert or a film, and a concluding banquet. Over the years, we have enjoyed keynote addresses by Daryl Charles, Steve Garber, Ken Myers, Amy Sherman, John Seel, and Paul Marshall. Our seventh Pew student conference begins one week from today with Nigel Cameron who is speaking on bioethics, followed by an evening concert with singer-song writer Kate Campbell, and a Saturday filled with twenty-four student papers and our evening banquet.

Finally, each Spring semester ends in the same manner in which the fall semester does, with a **Pew party** at our house, but this time with barbeque rather than Mexican food.

The PCS also provides students with information on extra-curricular study opportunities at home and abroad. It invites certain Pew students to present an exceptionally good paper he or she has written at our university’s weekly lecture series called the Friday Symposium. When funds are available, Pew purchases subscriptions to significant journals and other resources for students (*Books and*

*Culture* and Mars Hill Audio), and provides money for travel to graduate schools and for graduate school applications.

### **PCS Students and Graduate School**

Speaking of graduate school, a central concern of our Pew Society is encouraging students to consider graduate education and providing them with information and assistance in making application to various graduate programs. Our Pew group has been relatively successful in the acceptance of a number of our students to various graduate programs around the country. Here is the breakdown of the schools they are attending and their disciplines.

- Baylor University (English, philosophy, political science, sociology)
- University of Dallas (humanities, philosophy)
- UT-Austin (Asian studies)
- Texas A&M University (American history)
- Wheaton College (biblical studies, church history)
- University of Oregon (branch thereof; computer science)
- University of Notre Dame (medieval English literature)
- University of Texas at Dallas (philosophy)
- University of North Texas (photo journalism)
- George Bush School of Government, Texas A&M (public policy)
- Texas Christian University (English literature)
- Southern Methodist University (Piano performance)
- Duke University Divinity School
- Truett Seminary (Baylor University)
- Princeton Theological Seminary
- Golden Gate Theological Seminary (San Francisco)
- Beeson Divinity School (Samford University)
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Regent College, Vancouver B.C.
- UT Southwestern Medical School; UT Galveston Medical School; University of North Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine

We are pleased with the progress these students are making in their graduate studies and look forward to many more finding their way into solid graduate programs in the years to come.

### **Summer Institute in Christian Scholarship**

Three years ago, the PCS gave birth to an offspring in the form of a Summer Institute in Christian Scholarship (SICS). The SICS is a professional development program for DBU faculty, designed to deepen their understanding of the Christian intellectual and educational traditions, and to sharpen their vision and skills as Christian university professors and scholars. The SICS “fellows” meet once a week for ten weeks in a three and a half hour seminar session. Each fellow receives a \$2000.00 stipend to participate, as well as all the books and other materials that comprise the seminar curriculum. Approximately forty-five faculty members have participated in this program to date. Similar to the Pew program itself, the Summer Institute exists for the following purposes:

- An intensive reading of a variety of classic and contemporary texts on the Western and Christian intellectual traditions (Plato, Augustine, Luther, Milton, Newman, Lewis, and others).
- In-depth discussions of this literature with colleagues in a seminar context where significant ideas about scholarship, teaching and learning are the focus of attention.
- Developing an understanding of a biblical worldview at a deeper level and exploring its implications for Christian higher education and scholarship.
- Defining and refining an overall philosophy of Christian education that provides a vision for scholarship, teaching, learning, and working with students.
- Writing and presenting a scholarly paper in the weekly Friday Symposium Lecture series as a way of sharing the results of the Summer Institute with the wider university community.
- Participating in a spiritual and learning community comprised of DBU colleagues who are supporting each other in their efforts as Christian scholars and educators.

### **Conclusion**

This, then, is the essence of the Pew College Society at Dallas Baptist University: its philosophy of education, curriculum, extra-curricular activities, graduate school emphasis, and Summer Institute progeny. Those of us who have

been involved in the PCS over the years are grateful to God for His grace, strength and blessing this on this work.

Now you will have the opportunity to hear a few words from two students who will share their ideas and reflections about the PCS at DBU.