THE PROMISE OF A SECOND EVANGELICAL MIND:

FREE WILL BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE AND THE HYBRID MODEL OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

Phillip T. Morgan

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Thesis Committee:

Dr. Andrew Polk, Chair

Dr. Emily Baran

For Megan

Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits.

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ABSTRACT

Historians often describe conservative Protestants of the twentieth century as an anti-intellectual group whose focus on the spiritual world engendered an unreflective engagement with the physical world. This mindset was founded on the synthesis of faith and reason formed during the eighteenth century. Mark Noll suggests that when revivalism engaged this epistemic synthesis it rendered the conservative Protestant intellectual life moribund. Further, conservative Protestant higher education of the twentieth century inculcated this mindset by institutionally dividing study of God from study of the world.

The history of Free Will Baptist Bible College's first thirty years complicates this historical narrative. Committed to teaching both knowledge of God and knowledge of the world, the college's administration formulated a theologically integrated approach to knowledge that rejected the old synthesis in favor of a theologically integrated approach to knowledge of the world. This proves the development of a second conservative Protestant mind.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BJC Bob Jones College

BJU Bob Jones University

CRC Dutch Christian Reformed Church

JBC Johnson Bible College

NAFWB National Association of Free Will Baptists

OFWB Convention of Original Free Will Baptists

CHAPTER ONE

CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANTISM'S CONTENTIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

Historians have described American conservative Protestants as divided in their approach to knowledge.[1] Adopting a synthesis of faith and reason, this group has emphasized fervent piety on the one hand and Baconian empiricism on the other. When this synthesis was filtered through revivalism and the democratic spirit, it produced a theology centered on biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism. This theological position emphasized spirituality, but stifled meaningful intellectual reflection on the world. Conservative Protestant Bible colleges and liberal arts

[1] Intentionally using the broad term, conservative Protestant, forestalls lengthy discussions of the various and shifting names given to this body of American Christians. Conservative Protestantism incorporates elements of pre-World War II fundamentalism, neo-evangelicalism, and a variety of less clearly defined but certainly conservative elements within otherwise liberal denominations. For a more detailed discussion of these groups and where they fit in the evangelical world see: Timothy George, ed., *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail: Evangelical Ecumenism and the Quest for Christian Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980); Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era: God, Darwin, and the Roots of America's Culture Wars* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987); George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991); George M. Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism," in *Religion in American History: A Reader*, ed. Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998): 314-331.

universities propagated this divide and inhibited the development of a life of the mind. Therefore, conservative Protestants were forced to draw from traditional Reformation theology to develop a robust intellectual approach to the world.

However, not all conservative Protestants committed to biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism were intellectually bereft. These emphases were used by some as the foundation of a fully orbed approach to the world. This process can be seen in the development of hybrid conservative Protestant colleges. These institutions require every student earning an arts and sciences degree to complete an additional Bible major, consisting of 30 hours of Bible and theology instruction. As leaders in these schools sought to maintain orthodoxy while offering a wide range of academic studies, they developed a presuppositional approach to knowledge which allowed them to approach every subject theologically.

I will show the development of this conservative Protestant approach to knowledge through the history of Free Will Baptist Bible College in Nashville, Tennessee, from the years 1935-1970. During the founding of the college, the commitment to conservative Protestant theology was wedded with a desire to teach a broad range of subjects. Yet when the school opened for admission in 1942, its approach to education had not been fully settled. The ensuing competition over whether it would become a school for ministry training alone or something broader highlights the presence of competing approaches to faith and reason. Free Will Baptist Bible College began moving toward the hybrid approach to education in 1947, but four years later Mount Olive Junior College was started as a rival institution in North Carolina. The ensuing competition encouraged Free Will Baptist Bible College to begin working out a

theologically integrated approach to education. The result of this process was a rejection of the old synthesis in favor of a presuppositional approach to knowledge, which embraced all areas of academic study.

Commitment to biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism have not always short-circuited theological integration of knowledge. Rather, commitment to the Bible as true in all aspects of history, science, and anthropology has led some conservative Protestants to embrace knowledge of the world through a theological lens. Some conservative Protestant hybrid colleges, adhering to a hybrid approach to Christian education, offer insight into the development of this second evangelical mind.

Religion and American Higher Education

Protestants founded the vast majority of ante-bellum American colleges and universities. The early colleges like Harvard (1636), William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), and Princeton (1746) trained ministers and civic leaders. These schools taught the liberal arts with a strong emphasis on classic Western works along with their distinctive theology.[2] Theology provided the framework within which they understood the world. Baconian science allowed them to pursue knowledge of the world empirically, cataloging nature and discerning natural laws that dovetailed with the Bible. This provided a synthesis of faith and reason.

[2] George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 40.

During the eighteenth century, Protestant colleges shifted toward non-sectarianism, emphasizing the unity of Christianity. Thus, they eschewed distinctive doctrines in favor of broad theological themes. With the introduction of common-sense moral philosophy from Scotland, the universal principles of morality known by all humans took its place alongside theology in the curriculum.[3] From this point forward, Protestant colleges were teaching knowledge of both God and the world empirically.[4] This approach to education held sway until the late nineteenth century.

After the Civil War, American Protestants modeled their colleges on German universities. Throughout the nineteenth century, Americans traveled to Germany for graduate work. When they returned to the states, they brought with them a new way of studying the world heavily influenced by Darwinian evolution. Rather than seeing nature as static, they argued it was developing. Instead of knowing the world immediately through observation, the laws of nature reflected the scientist's creativity in imagining categories. Therefore, education was not so much a matter of learning received truths, as developing the student's skill for studying the world and creating hypotheses.[5] When Protestant scholars applied this developmental method to their study of the Bible and theology, many began to reject the traditional doctrines of biblical inerrancy and

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[3] Ibid., 61-63.

[4] Ibid., 63.

[5] Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 25.

authority.[6] Thus, Protestant academics no longer held the Bible to be accurate in matters of history, geography, or science. This movement, known as Protestant liberalism, controlled most Protestant colleges at the turn of the twentieth century.

The influence of economic and political changes also played a part in the development of the American university. While the German approach to knowledge encouraged academic specialization and professionalization, American industrialists demanded well-trained employees. Education began to take a more utilitarian turn, preparing students for specific jobs, without regard for the larger questions of life. The Morrill Act of 1862 backed this educational turn by providing government funding for colleges offering agricultural and mechanical instruction.[7] The advent of vocational education highlighted the division between the sacred and secular in the synthesis of faith and reason.

Conservative Protestants were largely unaware of these changes. Most, though not all, were rural farmers and small town merchants, wholly disconnected from the machinations of higher education. They continued to hold that the Bible was inerrant and authoritative for doctrine and practice. Even though Harold Bolce raised the alarm about American universities in his 1909 article "Blasting at the Rock of Ages," most conservative Protestants were nonplussed.[8] Those who cared could still send their

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[6] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 104-106.

[7] Warren A. Nord, *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 80-81.

[8] Harold Bolce, "Blasting at the Rock of Ages," in *Cosmopolitan* 46 (May, 1909): 665-676.

children to small denominational schools that were largely unaffected by these trends.[9] However, Marsden argues that ecumenicalism left the door for secularism to enter into these schools as well.[10]

Beginning in 1906, the Carnegie Foundation provided a financial incentive for the remaining denominational colleges to sever ties with their founding organizations.[11] Henry Smith Pritchett, the foundation president, argued that denominationalism was bad for education, increased inefficiency in the educational system, and was divisive.[12] Reuben and Marsden agree that Pritchett and the Foundation "financially sanctioned" the ecumenical ideal by intentionally excluding "denominational institutions from its new program of retirement pensions for faculty."[13] John Thelin notes that "financial pragmatism and the lure of a Carnegie pension plan" prompted "many presidents and boards to reconsider precisely how important a denominational influence was to the character of their campus."[14]

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[9] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 269.

[10] Ibid., 278.

[11] Ibid., 281-283.

[12] Ibid., 282-283.

[13] Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*, 87; Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 283.

[14] John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 148.

Most denominations tried to make their colleges hold to orthodox teachings, but found that their charters and other documents were too vague to defend any doctrinal point of view legally.[15] This was doubly frustrating for conservative Protestants who became increasingly aware of the "intellectual attitudes engendered by church-related colleges and seminaries" after the denominational battles over modern theology and evolution in the 1920s.[16] Not only were denominational liberal arts colleges leaving the fold, but also the divinity schools that trained clergy. Cherry suggests that Protestant divinity schools of the 1920s actively combatted conservative Protestantism, leaving many churches at a loss for orthodox trained clergy.[17] The Northern Baptists and Presbyterians charged several modernist professors and preachers with heresy, but few others even seemed to care.[18] In the end, conservative Protestants failed to gain control of any of their seminaries, colleges, or denominational boards.[19]

In response, conservative Protestants founded their own institutions. In 1882, evangelist A. B. Simpson founded the Missionary Training Institute in New York as a vocational ministry school, which later became Nyack Bible College. Its success led

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[15] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 305.

[16] Joel A. Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942," in *Religion in American History: A Reader*, eds., Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 386.

[17] Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 167-168.

[18] Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion*, 167-168.

[19] Ibid.

many conservative Protestant denominations and evangelists to found similar institutions. By 1961, there were at least 183 Bible colleges and institutes in the United States.[20] These schools offered extremely Bible-centered training for ministers, missionaries, Sunday school teachers, church musicians, and church administrators. Some offered enough general education courses to offer Bachelor's degrees, but many did not add liberal arts courses for fear they would encourage liberalization.[21] Most colleges successfully protected their orthodox beliefs and trained generations of conservative Protestant leaders.[22] Others changed into conservative Protestant liberal arts colleges and graduate seminaries.[23]

Conservative Protestant liberal arts institutions were less successful in remaining orthodox.[24] New colleges founded after World War II joined the few nineteenth century conservative Protestant liberal arts colleges to retain their doctrinal commitments into the

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[20] Safara A. Witmer, *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension* (Manhasset, NY: Channel Press, Inc., 1962), 40.

[21] Virginia Lieson Brereton, "The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education, 1880-1940," in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, eds., Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1987), 115.

[22] Brereton, "The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education, 1880-1940," 110-111.

[23] William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 164.

[24] See James T. Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998) and Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001).

twentieth. The Bible college movement encouraged many to increase their Bible requirements and provide a more Bible-centered approach to education.[25] During the 1970s, some colleges began integrating faith and learning based on the model provided by Abraham Kuyper and Calvin College.[26] Colleges that adopted this model had the most success in retaining their traditional doctrines.[27] Others had liberalized significantly by the 1980s.[28]

The higher education landscape of twentieth century American had little in common with its Protestant roots in the seventeenth century. The introduction of Enlightenment modes of thinking led Protestants to synthesize faith and reason. As long as science and moral philosophy confirmed the Bible, this did not present obvious problems. However, this approach separated theology from knowledge of the world. When a developmental understanding of nature entered this context, it undermined the synthesis. Protestant colleges rejected the old doctrines in favor of material explanations of the world. Conservative Protestants first tried to take back their institutions, and then resigned themselves to starting over again. When they did begin rebuilding, they divided theological education from general education, hoping to preserve theological orthodoxy.

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[25] Brereton, "The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education, 1880-1940," 129.

[26] Ringenberg, *The Christian College*,193.

[27] Ibid., 211.

[28] Ibid., 192-193.

Historiography

Historians have struggled to explain conservative Protestantism's conflicted history with higher education. Richard J. Hofstadter suggested in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1962) that traditional Protestant doctrine was undermined by rationalism, culminating with the introduction of historical criticism and Darwinian evolution. Although educated clergy accepted these intellectual changes, the uneducated committed themselves to hold to their "old-fashioned religion" of the heart.[29] According to him, their beliefs were irrational and thus their rejection of modernism was populist anti-intellectualism. Like sociologist Robert M. MacIver (1955), Hofstadter concluded that commitment to religious truths bound intellectual endeavor and propagated ignorance. Thus, as historic Protestant colleges increased their academic acumen, they would inevitably reject the old doctrines in favor of reason and modernism.

Educator Safara A. Witmer (1962), writing from within the conservative Protestant movement, agreed that rationalism was at the root of the intellectual problem. According to him, rationalism eventually led to agnosticism and secularism. However, this did not mean that conservative Protestants were inherently anti-intellectual. Ernest Sandeen (1967) agreed with Witmer that Hofstadter's analysis was too reductionist. Before Sandeen, the anti-intellectual narrative held sway among historians.[30] He showed that historians like Hofstadter were hesitant to consider the theological and intellectual

[29] Richard J. Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 128.

[30] Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era*, 11-12.

aspects of conservative Protestantism due to the "intellectual disrepute surrounding the Scopes trial."[31] Sandeen, however, responded to these early histories by pointing out theological influences on conservative Protestantism beginning in the late nineteenth century. He also highlighted the intellectual involvement of Princeton Seminary in combatting modernism and Protestant liberalism. As literary theorist and educator Stanley Fish has noted, many scholars still considered deeply religious people "quaintly pre-modern" and intellectually dry.[32]

Nathan O. Hatch (1980), drawing from the growing body of historical literature focusing on the social effects of the American Revolution, suggested that the democratization of the American mind extended to religion. Some early Republic conservative Protestants like the Disciples of Christ rejected traditional Protestant institutions and denominations.[33] These groups founded their own colleges during the nineteenth century.[34] Further, Patricia Bonomi in *Under the Cope of Heaven* (1986) showed that beyond inculcating individualism, the early Republic's disestablishment of religion encouraged pluralism and religious diversification. Building on Hatch and

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[31] Ernest R. Sandeen, "Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," *Church History* 36, no. 1 (Mar., 1967): 67.

[32] Stanley Fish, "One University, Under God?" *Chronicles of Higher Education* 51, no. 18 (Jan. 7, 2005) accessed April 17, 2016 at http://chronicle.com/article/One-University-Under-God-/45077.

[33] Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," *Journal of American History* 67 no. 3 (December, 1980): 545-567.

[34] L. Thomas Smith, Jr., *Above Every Other Desire: A Centennial History of Johnson Bible College, 1893-1993* (Kimberlin Heights, TN: Johnson Bible College, 1993), 50.

Bonomi, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1990; 2005) highlighted how this new religious free market allowed conservative Protestants with a clear doctrinal stance to make numerical gains at the expense of mainline Protestants.[35] The downside to such strong doctrinal boundaries, however, was divisiveness.

Along similar lines, George Marsden wrote in *Reforming Fundamentalism* (1987) that conservative Protestants had "substituted orthodoxy for love."[36] According to him, the fear of liberalization made orthodoxy essential, and the democratization of religion allowed discontents to strike out on their own with ease. This differed from Laurence Moore's approach. He argued in *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America* (1986) that Christian sects in America held to their strict doctrinal beliefs as a means of providing self-identity in the surrounding culture.[37] Expanding on this idea, religious scholar Stephen Prothero (2003), argued that some conservative Protestants sought out or intentionally embraced a sense of identity through opposition.[38]

This analysis overlooked that conservative Protestants became a distinct group unwillingly. Marsden argued in *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (1980) that mainstream America largely cut them out of the dominant culture, and thus higher

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[35] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy* 2nd ed. (1990; rev., New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

[36] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 172.

[37] R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 21.

[38] Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003).

education, against their will.[39] Richard J. Mouw (2004), theologian, philosopher, and president of Fuller Theological Seminary, noted that most conservative Protestants felt abandoned by American society rather than set apart.[40] Yet Moore and Prothero were not alone in their assessment of conservative Protestants. Even Mouw and other evangelicals accepted aspects of a more nuanced version of this historical narrative.[41]

While Marsden bemoaned the worst aspects of conservative Protestant divisiveness in *Reforming Fundamentalism*, he argued in *The Soul of the American University* (1994) that a lack of concern for orthodoxy was the primary cause of secularization in American higher education. Most historians agreed with Marsden that eighteenth century Protestants synthesized faith and reason by assuming that knowledge received from the Bible would always mesh with knowledge received empirically.[42] Marsden described this as a modern Thomist synthesis.[43] Further, these schools were committed to non-sectarianism and thus eschewed divisive doctrines in their instruction. The combination of these two emphases encouraged colleges to replace theology with

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[39] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 204-205.

[40] Richard J. Mouw, "What Evangelicals Can Learn from Fundamentalists," in *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail: Evangelical Ecumenism and the Quest for Christian Identity*, ed. Timothy George, Beeson Divinity Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 50-51.

[41] Mouw, "What Evangelicals Can Learn from Fundamentalists," 46-48.

[42] Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 114; Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism," 323; Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*, 14.

[43] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 131.

moral philosophy in their curriculum. When German ideas of developmental science and knowledge were introduced in the late nineteenth century, the last vestiges of Christian orthodoxy were considered disproven and then summarily discarded.[44]

Graduate schools, which began to appear in the late nineteenth century, further emphasized a theoretical and skeptical approach to knowledge and education, exacerbating the situation and bearing "immense repercussions" for American higher education.[45] Reuben argued that "institutionalizing the ideal of open inquiry" soon demanded specialization and separate departments, independently seeking truth.[46] Marsden pointed out that this ideological shift was encouraged by democratic notions of education. When Catholic immigration increased during the late eighteenth century, anti-authoritarian concepts of freedom became the "watchword" and "touchstone of civilization."[47] Protestant American universities defined themselves as "havens for free scientific inquiry" in an attempt to set themselves against "Catholic authoritarianism."[48]

The democratization of education also had effects on the curriculum and the exclusion of religion. Nord agreed with Marsden that democratic individualism

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[44] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 119; Virginia Lieson Brereton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880-1940* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 6.

[45] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 154.

[46] Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*, 267.

[47] Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, 14.

[48] Ibid.

undermined the old authoritarian model of education where teachers passed on knowledge to students. Instead, curriculums were aimed at the freedom of the scholar to discover the world for themselves.[49] McKinney went a step further by arguing, "The most important single consequence of the emergence of the university was that undergraduate students were able to exercise a larger amount of choice in their studies as opposed to the old required curriculum."[50] To education scholar Larry McKinney's (1997) mind, this shift carried religious implications and helped to sever the connection between religion and education.[51] Marsden agreed, detailing how prominent "Christian" academics such as Daniel Coit Gilman at Johns Hopkins University defended these developments by arguing that science would always harmonize with Christianity, even if historic interpretations of the Bible might have to change.[52]

Conservative evangelicals did not accept this "speculative" and "restless" approach to scholarship.[53] Instead, they began founding new institutions designed to protect orthodoxy. Witmer (1962) was one of the first scholars to study the Bible college movement seriously. He considered these colleges a conservative Protestant response to secularism and humanism. The schools were Bible-centered in their curriculum and

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[49] Nord, *Religion and American Education*, 74-76.

[50] L. J. McKinney, *Equipping for Service: A Historical Account of the Bible College Movement in North America* (Fayetteville, AR: Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges, 1997), 49.

[51] McKinney, *Equipping for Service*, 49.

[52] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 157.

[53] Brereton, *Training God's Army*, 34.

evangelistic.[54] Virginia Lieson Brereton (1992) agreed with his assessment that the movement was birthed in Germany and England through pietism's zeal for missions. Nyack Bible College and Moody Bible Institute followed the European model by focusing their efforts on training laypeople for spreading the gospel.[55] McKinney suggested that the focus on evangelism was also a response to the Social Gospel's emphases on social reform.[56]

Brereton highlighted the practical nature of this education. Instead of studying abstract theories to be applied in particular situations, students focused on evangelism and ministry training. She noted that this correlated closely with the advent of vocational schools at the end of the nineteenth century. William C. Ringenberg (2006) expanded on this aspect of Brereton's work by highlighting the expansion of higher education and federal funding during the early twentieth century. Brereton described the Bible college movement developing through three states. First, schools started with small student bodies of mostly older students, but the grew rapidly. Second, during the 1910s and 1920s they began to define specific courses of study. During this period, many adopted Dispensationalism. Third, during the 1940s, they shifted from two and three year institutes to four year colleges and moved from the inner city to the suburbs. Witmer and Ringenberg suggest that the shift to four year programs was primarily a response to pressure from students seeking full college degrees. Brereton highlighted that even after

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[54] Witmer, *Education with Dimension*, 30.

[55] Ibid., 34-35.

[56] McKinney, *Equipping for Service*, 32-38.

reaching the third stage of development, Bible colleges retained their focus on literal interpretations of the Bible, strong moral codes, and evangelism, usually eschewing the liberal arts.[57]

Marsden showed in *Reforming Fundamentalism* that when conservative Protestants did branch out into more academically robust programs, they were not always accepted. His study of Fuller Seminary's early years underlined the wariness of conservative Protestants toward sustained intellectual reflection. Even though the school was founded in 1947 by a prominent evangelist and adhered to traditional Protestant orthodoxy, it came under fire for being too ecumenical. While conservative fears may have been overblown at first, in the late 1960s the seminary began to reject certain key doctrines of conservative Protestantism, like biblical inerrancy and separatism. This liberalizing narrative is recapitulated ad nauseam in theologian James Tunstead Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light* (1998). His magisterial study of Christian liberal arts institutions across a wide range of doctrinal traditions suggests that once colleges gain academic respectability, they find it difficult to submit to the doctrinal constraints of their founding tradition.

Religious scholar Robert Benne's 2001 response to Burtchaell, *Quality with Soul*, argued that colleges that integrated theology into every aspect of their curriculum had largely avoided this fate. However, as Thomas Askew (1987) has noted, few Christian liberal arts universities approached education in this manner before the 1980s. Instead

[57] Brereton, *Training God's Army*, 105.

they continued to hold to the old Thomist synthesis of faith and reason.[58] Benne argued that this approach explained why so few institutions successfully remained orthodox during the twentieth century.

Mark Noll deepened and unified the body of scholarship surrounding conservative Protestantism's relation with higher education in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994). A "historical meditation," this work synthesized and sharpened a wide range of historiographical insights into a cogent thesis, positing that the distinctive doctrines of conservative Protestantism precluded true intellectualism. He suggested that this evangelical mind was formed in the crucible of revivalism, the American Revolution, and Enlightenment empiricism.

Drawing on the work of Hatch and Bonomi, Noll argued that the individualism of the Revolution mixed with the anti-traditional fervor of the revivals to form an extremely divisive and independent religious group. He then wove in the implications of Fink and Stark's work. Dismissive of traditional theology and opposing points of view, conservative Protestants developed during the nineteenth century a uniquely utilitarian theology aimed at reaching the most potential converts. Rather than offering sustained theological arguments for conversion, evangelists called for immediate personal decisions of the heart.[59] In a religious market place of buyers and sellers, the messages were simple,

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[58] Thomas A. Askew, "The Shaping of Evangelical Higher Education Since World War II" in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, eds., Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1987): 137-152.

[59] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 64-67.

entertaining, and emotionally gratifying. John Corrigan (2002) later expanded on this understanding of conservative revivalism by suggesting that these were not only religious transactions, but emotional ones.[60] The resulting theological approach of conservative Protestantism was shallow and myopically focused on the spiritual.

Agreeing with Marsden that all Protestants adopted the Thomist synthesis of faith and reason by the eighteenth century, Noll then addressed conservative Protestants' unique appropriation of this epistemic divide. He suggested that the individualistic and anti-traditional elements of conservative Protestantism coupled well with common-sense Enlightenment modes of thinking. However, where Marsden focused on the ways in which mainline Protestants used common-sense reasoning to undermine the importance of the Bible, Noll explained that conservatives radically applied the same philosophy to glorify it.[61] Conservative Protestants applied empirical study to the Bible to uncover facts about nature, history, and humanity.[62] For them, the Bible was inerrant and authoritative in all subjects. Therefore, when scientists began to describe nature, history, and humanity differently than the Bible, conservative Protestants rejected such conclusions out of hand. However, they still retained their faith in the objectivity of Baconian science and held tightly to their synthesis of faith and reason.

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[60] John Corrigan, *Business of the Heart: Religion and Emotion in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

[61] Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 96-98.

[62] Ibid., 97-98.

When these believers joined the commitment to biblical inerrancy and authority with revivalism's demands for separated holy living and evangelism, "the things of earth [grew] strangely dim."[63] Noll argued that these characteristics focused conservative Protestants' minds away from reflection on the physical world and toward a vibrant, active spiritual realm. Thus, they eagerly accepted ridicule for their beliefs from unbelievers as a sign of true spirituality. While this protected orthodoxy, it left conservative Protestants open to criticisms like Hofstadter's and MacIver's. Noll admitted that Hofstadter was not completely incorrect in his analysis, but rejected that all religious beliefs hampered the life of the mind.[64]

According to Noll, these conservative Protestant intellectual developments exacerbated the old Thomist synthesis.[65] By the turn of the twentieth century, the only reliable source of knowledge was the Bible. Conservative Protestants viewed Scripture as inerrant and authoritative for matters of doctrine, history, science, and anthropology. Baconian science was still useful as long as conclusions differing from the Bible were excluded. Rejecting Moore, Noll argued in line with Sandeen that the theological and intellectual aspects of conservative Protestantism need to be taken seriously. In fact, he suggested that it is impossible to understand their educational, political, and cultural actions in the twentieth century without them.

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[63] Ibid., 144.

[64] Ibid., 11-12.

[65] Ibid., 123-130.

Noll argued that conservative Protestant ventures in higher education during the twentieth century reflected and propagated the modern Thomist synthesis of faith and reason. He acknowledged Witmer, Brereton, and Ringenber's point that institutionally separating theological and ministerial instruction from the liberal arts protected orthodoxy. In this way faith was safe from reason, but it also meant that reason did not benefit from the influence of faith. Even when these colleges did begin to shift toward a more Augustinian approach to knowledge and education, Noll argued that it was only under the influence of the Reformation. He contends that the distinctive evangelical emphases of biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism were intellectually unfruitful. Those who did cultivate a Christian life of the mind drew from the Reformation directly or through the immigrant groups like the Dutch Christian Reformed Church.

Although Noll's historical meditation provides a satisfying and convincing narrative, it is too monolithic. Certainly, conservative Protestants adopted the Thomist synthesis of faith and reason during the eighteenth century and carried it forward into the twentieth. Few would disagree that conservative Protestants have exhibited anti-intellectual strains due to their commitment to biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism. As Sandeen and Marsden have suggested, their theological and philosophical positions need to be evaluated seriously. These ideological positions did provide a sense of identity, but there were also fissures within groups that adhered to them. When conservative Protestants began building their own institutions, protecting these doctrines was uppermost in their minds. The hybrid approach to Christian higher education forced them to readdress the relationship of faith and reason

through the lens of their tradition. This led to the development of a second evangelical mind that was Augustinian rather than Thomist.

CHAPTER TWO

THOMISM TO AUGUSTINIANISM: FREE WILL BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE AND THE HYBRID CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MODEL

The development of Free Will Baptist Bible College's educational philosophy exposes several fault lines in current historiographical descriptions of conservative Protestant higher education and evangelicalism. Although historians have noted that Calvin College and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (also known as Biola) employ the hybrid approach to higher education, they described them as outliers. Instead, Free Will Baptist Bible College is an example of the wider swath of conservative Protestant colleges and universities that theologian and philosopher Robert Benne (2001) has described as "orthodox."[1] While this group includes Calvin and Biola, other schools like Free Will Baptist Bible College and Johnson University developed the hybrid model over the twentieth century and were thus overlooked by historians.

The presence of these hybrid institutions suggests the need to reassess Mark Noll's (1994) representation of the evangelical mind. Rather than "intellectual sterility" producing "virtually no insights into how, under God, the natural world proceeded, how human societies worked, why human nature acted the way it did, or what constituted the blessings and perils of culture," these schools represent a distinctive evangelical mind

[1] Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

that actively pursued knowledge of the world in relation to God.[2] Although Noll rightly identified the dominant tendencies of conservative Protestantism, hybrid colleges and universities show a developing Augustinian presuppostionalism that complicates his analysis.

Free Will Baptist Bible College was founded by the National Association of Free Will Baptists (hereafter NAFWB) in 1942 to serve the educational needs of the denomination. Addressing these needs led the college to expand from only training for Christian ministries to offering a variety of liberal arts degrees. Even so, each degree program at Free Will Baptist Bible College still required thirty credit hours of biblical and theological instruction.[3] This hybrid approach, administrators and faculty believed, allowed the college to serve a broader swath of Free Will Baptist students by offering a variety of degrees taught from a Christian worldview. However, it took time to work out a presuppositional approach to education. From 1938, when the NAFWB voted to form the college, various approaches were recommended and discussed in both regional Free Will Baptist periodicals (*The Free Will Baptist* out of Ayden, North Carolina, and *The Free Will Baptist Gem* out of Monett, Missouri), suggesting a denomination-wide discussion.

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[2] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 137.

[3] Ministerial students were required to take forty credit hours of Bible and theology in addition to their other courses.

When the school opened for students in 1942, founding president, Linton Carroll (L. C.) Johnson admitted the matter was not yet completely settled.[4] As president of the college for over thirty years, Johnson guided the college's philosophical development. Even though he did not remember the hybrid approach to education being considered prior to 1948, a clear distinction can be seen between his first presidency (1942-1944) and L. R. Ennis' presidency (1944-1947).[5] Ennis wanted the college to focus on practical Christian training in evangelism, ministry, missions, and church administration.[6] This educational model embraced Empiricism's divided approach to knowledge of God and the world. When Johnson returned in 1947, the differences between his philosophy and Ennis' became even more obvious.

Four years later, forces within the denomination seeking political power challenged the educational model of the school by founding a competing institution. Mount Olive Junior College (now University of Mount Olive) was started by North Carolina Free Will Baptists in 1952 as a liberal arts junior college.[7] The college's second president, Burkette Raper, described the Mount Olive as a non-sectarian institution,

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[4] L. C. Johnson, interview by Paul Vernice Harrison, October 25, 1983, in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[5] L. C. Johnson, "Over My Shoulder: Part IV, Laying a Firm Foundation," *Contact*, April, 1979.

[6] *Lumen 1944-1945* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1945), 2, 6; Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

[7] The college's original name was Mount Allan Junior College, but the name was changed in 1955 to Mount Olive Junior College. This paper will refer to the school as Mount Olive Junior College.

deploring "those narrow concepts of dogmatism that would enslave men and defeat the true purpose of education," which was to encourage "free inquiry."[8] Thus, Mount Olive engaged the opposite side of the Empiricist division than Ennis had, focusing on knowledge of the world instead of knowledge of God. Although the college grew rapidly, it came under fire for liberal moral standards and theological trends in 1960.[9] Regardless of the veracity of these early accusations, the school's subsequent history followed the general secularizing narrative of American higher education, ending in a loose alliance with its denominational founders.[10] Mount Olive drew students, finances, and qualified faculty away from Free Will Baptist Bible College, but more importantly, it encouraged the denominational school to formalize its philosophical approach to education in order to avoid the same fate.

Johnson relied heavily on the thinking and writing of F. Leroy Forlines (Bible and theology professor and 1952 alumnus) and Robert E. Picirilli (college registrar, New Testament professor, and 1953 alumnus), to articulate and define the educational

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[8] W. Burkette Raper, "Report of Mount Olive Junior College to the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptist Churches, September 17, 18, 1958" (Mount Olive, NC: Unpublished, 1958), 1, in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[9] Ronald Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, February 8, 1960; Ronald Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, August 1, 1960; Ronald Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, September 4, 1961.

[10] Promotional Pamphlet, "Mount Olive College: The College that Cares" (Mount Olive, NC: Mount Olive College, [1975]), in NAFWB Historical Collection; J. William Byrd, "Message from the President," in *Mount Olive Undergraduate Catalog: 2005-2006* (Mount Olive, NC: Mount Olive College, 2005), 9; "College Profile," *Mount Olive Undergraduate Catalog: 2005-2006* (Mount Olive, NC: Mount Olive College, 2005), 13; "Best Speaks on Value in Higher Education at Spring Convocation," *Free Will Baptist* 126, no. 3 (March, 2009).

philosophy of the school. In 1964, Forlines produced *The Bible College Approach to Education* to explain to the denomination the college's educational philosophy.[11] Several years later, at the request of Johnson, Picirilli presented to the faculty, "How Broad the Umbrella?," exploring the implications and methods of expanding the degree offerings of the college.[12] Both of these works stated that the equivalent of a Bible major was necessary for every student, no matter their degree program, because advanced biblical knowledge was required to approach other subjects from a Christian worldview. This argument led both men to formulate a transformational approach to education based on presuppositionalism. The work of Forlines and Picirilli, among others, kept the college from slipping into either a Bible college or Christian liberal arts model.

Fulfilling the Needs of a Denomination: Founding the College

For the NAFWB to gather the resources to found a school, the needs and desires of the whole denomination had to be taken into account. The first catalog for Free Will Baptist Bible College was printed for its second year of operation. The opening pages contain a "personal word" from the president of the school, L. C. Johnson, who begins his address by stating, "The Free Will Baptist Bible College is not just an ordinary school with an ordinary purpose. If that were true there would be no reason for its existence."[13]

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[11] F. Leroy Forlines, *The Bible College Approach to Education* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, [1964]) in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[12] Robert E. Picirilli, interview by author, Hermitage, Tennessee, April 21, 2016, in Phillip T. Morgan's private collection.

[13] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1943-1944* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1943), 5.

Clearly, from the school's inception a justification for its existence was necessary. Since some conservative Christian colleges and seminaries were still operational in the American Southeast in 1942, Free Will Baptists needed good reasons to put forth the effort and money to found their own institution.[14] Most Free Will Baptists felt that a denominational school would serve several important purposes for the newly formed NAFWB as well as for society. Meeting these expectations made room for the college's hybrid educational model to develop.

For many Free Will Baptists the new school was simply a return to earlier Free Will Baptist educational concerns. Denominational leader and college trustee John L. Welch and his wife Mary Ann began their history of the college's founding by marking the loss of earlier colleges from the northern movement of Free Will Baptists.[15] In 1780 Benjamin Randall began the northern movement of Free Will Baptists (hereafter the Randall Movement) in New England. As the Randall movement spread into the Midwest and south into Texas, it founded at least fifteen schools, including high schools, seminaries, and liberal arts colleges. [16] When the majority of the Randall Movement

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[14] The few conservative colleges like Bryan College (1930) were recent additions to the educational landscape and may not have been as well known. See Safara A. Witmer, *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension* (Manhassett, NY: Channel Press, Inc., 1962).

[15] John L. Welch and Mary Ann Welch, "Early efforts Toward a Centrally Located School for Free Will Baptists" (Unpublished, [before 1970]), 1.

[16] Damon C. Dodd, *The Free Will Baptist Story* (Nashville, TN: Executive Department of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, 1956), 141-146. Of these schools Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan; Bates College in Lewiston, Maine; and Rio Grande College (now University of Rio Grande) in Rio Grande, Ohio, still exist as private institutions, though they no longer belong to Free Will Baptists or any other religious body.

merged with the Northern Baptist denomination in 1911, the colleges went with them. Randall Movement Free Will Baptists who refused to join the merger were left without a single institution they had worked so hard to build.[17] Lonnie Ray Skiles argued that losing the schools was the "most devastating effect of this merger."[18] On the other hand, Jesse F. Owens has pointed out that the faculty members of these schools were Protestant liberals who likely would not have been welcome in the post-merger denomination.[19] Owens eve hinted that losing these schools in 1910 allowed Free Will Baptists to avoid the fundamentalist/modernist denominational battles of the 1920s.[20]

The southern movement of Free Will Baptists (hereafter the Palmer Movement) was led by Paul Palmer in the early eighteenth century. Beginning in North Carolina and spreading across the Southeast, the Palmer Movement also developed a number of schools over the years. However, none of their schools gained the kind of support and success that the Randall schools had received. Many Bible Institutes were held sporadically, offering training in Biblical study and church work (*e.g.* Sunday School teaching, Vacation Bible School administration, and treasurer and clerk training). More

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[17] William F. Davidson, *The Free Will Baptists in History* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2001), 255.

[18] Lonnie Ray Skiles, "A Short History of Free Will Baptist Bible College: 1942-1972" (master's thesis, Austin Peay State University, 1972), 1.

[19] Jesse F. Owens, "The Free Baptist Merger and Higher Criticism," (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists National Convention, July 19, 2016), in Phillip T. Morgan's private collection.

[20] Owens, "The Free Baptist Merger and Higher Criticism," 20.

formal, broad, and extended efforts also existed. Zion Bible Institute in Blakely, Georgia, began providing a "minimum of preparation for the ministry in 1930."[21] It continued to exist until the opening of Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1942.[22] Several schools were started to provide secondary education for areas that lacked public schools, while others offered general college education.[23] Each school eventually folded due to lack of interest and financial support. Still, Free Will Baptists continued to work toward the development of schools that were broad in their purposes, supplying "general education as well as ministerial courses."[24]

In 1935 the remains of the Randall Movement that had not merged with the Northern Baptists joined the Palmer Movement to form the NAFWB. John L. Welch was instrumental in bringing these two groups together and began working to found a Free Will Baptist school as early as 1931.[25] Many were convinced that a national college in a denominationally central location would encourage young people from across the

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[21] Michael R. Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists* (Mount Olive, NC: Mount Olive College Press, 1996), 246.

[22] Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, 246.

[23] These efforts include, Ayden Seminary (1898), The Free Will Baptist University of Nashville, Tennessee (1908), Tecumseh College (1917), and Eureka! College! (1926).

[24] Mary Ruth Wisehart, "Education in the Palmer Movement" (paper presented for Heritage Week, Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, TN, February 3, 1993), in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[25] Davidson, *The Free Will Baptists in History*, 275; Welch and Welch, "Early Efforts Toward a Centrally Located School for Free Will Baptists," 2-3.

NAFWB to bond and solidify the new denominational identity.[26] Skiles identified the "two most serious deficiencies" of the early NAFWB as a "lack of organization and lack of education." He wrote that these shortcomings "sapp[ed] the very strength out of the denomination."[27] However, this approach turned out to have fewer benefits than was originally thought.

Beyond these unifying aims, young people within the denomination pressed for a denominational school that would provide them with training in Christian ministry as well as accredited college courses.[28] Small Bible Institutes were carried out around the denomination, but some felt that an "accredited Bible Institution" could best provide ministers and soul winners for the "intelligently and ardently" growing number of college educated youth in the United States.[29] Free Will Baptist youth issued a "challenge" for general collegiate education during the 1930s so that they could reach these educated Americans. This goal for Christian education was not limited to Free Will Baptists. Conservative evangelical scholar J. Gresham Machen also argued that a robust education was necessary for effective biblical evangelism to succeed in reaching people who had

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[26] Mrs. J. E. (Agnes) Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine," *Free Will Baptist*, January 24, 1940; Willet L. Moretz, "Two Worthy Causes," *Free Will Baptist*, March 15, 1939; Welch and Welch, "Early Efforts Toward a Centrally Located School for Free Will Baptists," 4.

[27] Skiles, "A Short History of Free Will Baptist Bible College," 2.

[28] Paul Woolsey, *God A Hundred Years and A Free Will Baptist Family* (Chuckey, TN: The Union Free Will Baptist Association, 1949), 170.

[29] National Educational Board of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, "Plans of National Educational Board" *Free Will Baptist*, March 8, 1939; Editorial, "Missouri's Educational Line-up," *Free Will Baptist Gem*, January, 1940.

been shaped by "the thought of the day" in secular institutions.[30] Machen's concern for educated evangelists reflected the rapid increase in college enrollment during the early twentieth century. The percentage of the American population between the ages of eighteen and twenty attending college jumped from less than 5 percent in 1917 to 15 percent in 1937.[31]

Although many conservative Protestants wanted to reach the growing numbers of college-educated Americans with the gospel, they were not willing to attend secular colleges for fear of modernism. At the 1938 NAFWB meeting, students called for "a school of higher training where they may obtain an accredited college education, and yet return without having their minds contaminated with the modernistic riff-raff so prevalent in the average American college."[32] During the latter half of the nineteenth century, American scholars abandoned a common sense realism approach to reason in which definite laws of nature were extrapolated from observing fixed reality.[33] Instead, they

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[30] J. Gresham Machen, "The Importance of Christian Scholarship" (Addresses given at Bible League Meetings in Caxton Hall, Westminster, London, June 17, 1932) in J. Gresham Machen, *Education, Christianity, and the State: Essays by J. Gresham Machen*, 16; J. Gresham Machen, "The Scientific Preparation of the Minister" (An address delivered September 20, 1912, at the opening of the one hundred and first session of Princeton Theological Seminary) in Machen, *Education, Christianity, and the State*, 52.

[31] John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 205.

[32] George D. Dunbar, "The National Educational Program," *Free Will Baptist*, Dec. 14, 1938; also printed in *Free Will Baptist Gem*, Jan., 1939.

[33] George M. Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism," in *Religion in American History: A Reader*, eds. Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 323.

embraced a more theoretical and skeptical philosophy of knowledge, emphasizing "open inquiry and the dynamic improvement of scientific theories."[34] By the turn of the century, the positivism of August Comte and Herbert Spencer, which overtly set science against religion, had greatly influenced American colleges and universities.[35] As a result, religion and the Bible were increasingly marginalized.[36] Describing the results of this shift, education scholar, Warren Nord wrote, "the underlying worldview of modern education divorces human kind from its dependence on God; it replaces religious answers to many of the ultimate questions of human existence with secular answers; and, most striking, public education conveys its secular understanding of reality essentially as a matter of faith."[37] Free Will Baptists were deeply troubled by these changes in higher education, especially with their modernist philosophical underpinnings.[38]

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[34] Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 14

[35] George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 130-131. Edward Power's perspective on this subject as an educator is also informative. Edward J. Power, *Educational Philosophy: A History from the Ancient World to Modern America*, Studies in the History of Education (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 115-117.

[36] Warren A. Nord, *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 86.

[37] Nord, *Religion and American Education*, 160.

[38] Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine"; Winford Davis, "Shall We Have A School?" *Free Will Baptist Gem*, April, 1940; George D. Dunbar, "The National Educational Program," *Free Will Baptist Gem* Jan., 1939 also published in *Free Will Baptist*, Dec. 14, 1938.

The state's increased role in education during the early twentieth century was another motive for founding a new college.[39] The United States Bureau of Education was formed in 1867, but had remained relatively toothless until the early twentieth century.[40] The situation changed when the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations teamed up with the Bureau of Education to financially incentivize standardization.[41] Colleges and universities were encouraged to abandon all denominational idiosyncrasies in order to receive funding.[42] Many denominational schools sought to be released from their denominational connections in order to qualify for Carnegie funding; they appealed to the state for help.[43] For example, Vanderbilt University gained freedom from the Southern Methodist denomination after a 1914 Tennessee Supreme Court ruling.[44] Even though the court simply made a ruling on the case, such actions were easily misconstrued as government intrusion into a private matter.

More subtly, but perhaps more pervasively, the state's presence in local schools was epistemological. According to education scholar, John Power, John Dewey's progressive and pragmatic approach to education was "instrumental" in effecting the

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[39] R. E. Tripp, "The School Problem," *Free Will Baptist*, Jan. 4, 1939.

[40] Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 238.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 282-284; Nord, *A History of American Higher Education*, 147.

[43] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 283.

[44] Ibid., 279.

redirection of "philosophical discourse from traditional and metaphysical and epistemological issues to social and ethical problems."[45] Dewey's *The School and the Society* (1889) argued that education should affect social change.[46] Following from the evolutionary theories of Darwin and Herbert Spencer, Dewey determined that humans experienced three types of evolution: biological, psychological, and social.[47] Within his paradigm, the chief end of man was "useful and responsible membership in the community."[48] Machen and other evangelicals worried about both manifestations of the state's power over education, fearing that "morality" would become a matter or "consequence of patriotism; the experience of the nation is regarded as the norm by which a morality code is to be formulated."[49] Conservative Protestants thought removing religion from the foundation of education would allow the state to set the goals of education based on its conception of a useful citizen.

Free Will Baptists responded to these educational developments in four ways. First, as Milton Fields has suggested, the state's intrusion into education merely

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[45] Edward J. Power, *Educational Philosophy: A History from the Ancient World to Modern America*, Studies in the History of Education (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 161.

[46] Power, *Educational Philosophy*, 161.

[47] Ibid., 136.

[48] Ibid.

[49] J. Gresham Machen, "Reforming the Government Schools" (Trustees u/w J. Gresham Machen, 1925) in J. Gresham Machen, *Education, Christianity, and the State*, 61.

confirmed the suspicions of some toward education.[50] Henry Melvin noted that after the 1911 Free Baptist merger, in which the upper class and educated segment of the Randall Movement joined the Northern Baptists, some Free Will Baptists saw education as "a sign of an unbeliever or agnostic.[51] L. C. Johnson and Free Will Baptist Bible College's first promotional director J. R. Davidson recognized some anti-intellectual tendencies in the denomination, but little written evidence of this position is currently available.[52] To the contrary, Davidson, among others, wrote about the great educational desires of Free Will Baptists.[53]

Second, some Free Will Baptists thought the state should be responsible for "secular" education (non-Bible subjects), leaving Christians responsible solely for religious education. In an article for *The Free Will Baptist* in 1939, R. E. Tripp wrote, "Let the state have the responsibility of training the general public in its secular arts. Our responsibility is to train servants of the church in the art of holy living and rightly

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[50] Milton Fields, phone interview by author, Ethelsville, Alabama September 16, 2016.

[51] Henry Melvin's response to questions provided by Bert Tippet (Unpublished, [1967]), 2, in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[52] L. C. Johnson, "Interview by Lonnie Skiles," cited in Skiles, "A Short History of Free Will Baptist Bible College," 11; L. C. Johnson, "Over My Shoulder: Part I, Pre-Bible College Days," *Contact*, January, 1979; J. R. Davidson, "Our National Educational Work," *Free Will Baptist Gem*, February, 1939; J. R. Davidson, "Our Educational Program," *Free Will Baptist Gem*, January, 1940.

[53] J. R. Davidson, "What if we had?" *Free Will Baptist Gem*, April, 1940; Clarence Bowen, "What Happened at Nashville," *Free Will Baptist*, Nov. 30, 1938; National Education Board of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, "Plans of National Educational Board."

dividing the Word of God for ourselves and others."[54] A year later, *The Free Will Baptist* ran a similar article by non-Free Will Baptist E. A. Shugart, whose vision for Christian education also consisted of biblical and ministerial training with a strong practical works element, consigning the liberal arts firmly to the realm of public education.[55]

Taking a broader approach, others, like C. M. Dauber, sought "a great Denominational College."[56] A poor Arkansas laymen with a fourth grade education, Dauber spoke with great regret about his lack of educational opportunity and his strong desire to have "just as good a school as a pupil would want to attend."[57] Several wanted a school for all Free Will Baptist students, necessitating a broader curriculum than just biblical training.[58] Agnes Frazier best articulated this approach when she wrote about Christian education in the *Free Will Baptist* and *Free Will Baptist Gem*. Her article was written on behalf of the National Education Board of the NAFWB which was tasked in 1935 with raising the money and starting the college. Frazier, a graduate of Peabody Normal School, argued that the "real forces in education are not material, but personal and spiritual."[59] She considered the state educational system morally and epistemically

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[54] Tripp, "The School Problem."

[55] E. A. Shugart, "Correlation of Forces in the Development of Youth," *Free Will Baptist*, Jan. 24, 1940; Tripp, "The School Problem.".

[56] C. M. Dauber, "Rebuilding the Walls," *Free Will Baptist Gem*, Feb., 1940.

[57] Bruce Phillips in "Letters of Interest and Field Reports," *Free Will Baptist Gem*, Feb., 1940.

[58] Dunbar, "The National Educational Program"; J. C. Griffin, "Notes and Quotes," *Free Will Baptist*, Jan. 3, 1940; Moretz, "Two Worthy Causes."

[59] Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine."

atheist because it "debarred" the "teachings of the Bible and the truths of Christianity."[60] In order to combat these developments, she wrote passionately, the denominational school should be accessible for all Free Will Baptist students so that they might be "fitted to do the work of construction and order in our civilizations, whether they serve in the field of religion, medicine; or whether their chosen field is in some other sphere."[61] To fulfill this mission, Frazier suggested the college provide a broad range of curricular offerings "underpinned with the Christian postulants."[62]

This statement represents the beginning of the hybrid model of education at Free Will Baptist Bible College. Frazier argued that the college needed to offer much more than just Bible courses and ministerial training. However, the whole curriculum needed to be taught from a Christian worldview. For students and teachers to accomplish this feat, both needed to be well trained in the Bible. This explains part of her frustration with the removal of the Bible from higher education. Knowledge of the Bible and thus God was necessary to properly understand the physical world. Therefore, she provided one of the earliest Free Will Baptist articulations of Augustinian presuppositionalism. Though

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid. Robert E. Picirilli suggests this likely was also a hope of Welch's as he worked to found the school during the 1930s. Picirilli interview, April 21, 2016.

[62] Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine."

Frazier's article received a good response from readers, her approach took time to develop at Free Will Baptist Bible College.[63]

The First Ten Years

When Free Will Baptist Bible College began accepting students in 1942, the matter of educational philosophy was still unsettled. The variety of opinions about the purpose of the school made meeting everyone's expectations nearly impossible, but most were willing to set aside disagreements for a time to train ministers and missionaries.[64] The college's first president, L. C. Johnson, quickly experienced administrative difficulties with J. R. Davidson and L. R. Ennis.[65] After two years, Johnson determined the current situation was untenable and resigned.[66] Ennis succeeded Johnson, but he too resigned three years later.[67] The board of trustees then approached Johnson to return. Johnson and the board began his second term with a common institutional mission and Johnson remained president for nearly thirty years.[68] However, as the college's approach

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[63] J. E. Hudgens, "Letter from Ashland City, Tennessee" *Free Will Baptist*, March 27, 1940; Clyde C. Flannery, "The Need of Education," *Free Will Baptist*, February 14, 1940.

[64] Moretz, "Two Worthy Causes."

[65] Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

[66] Ibid.

[67] John L. Welch, interview by Paul Harrison, Nashville, Tennessee, January 3, 1983.

[68] Johnson, "Over My Shoulder: Part IV."

to education began to emerge over the next ten years, the old educational differences came back into focus.

The Board of Trustees was elected from the floor of the NAFWB business session and reported to the denomination each year, but they were entrusted with the power to hire faculty and administration. In 1942 the board, led by Ennis, hired Johnson to be the college's first president. Johnson was a recent graduate of Bob Jones College (hereafter BJC) and a pastor. He did well at BJC and developed a close relatinoship with Bob Jones Sr.[69] Even though Johnson was young, he held a bachelor's degree, which was a rarity among Free Will Baptists.[70] Welch maintained Johnson was the most qualified person to lead the school in 1942.[71] Later, Johnson pursued graduate work at Winona Lake Seminary in Indiana and BJC, but his responsibilities as president curtailed further education.[72]

Johnson's presidency began without a clear decision as to whether the college would become a Bible college or a hybrid institution."[73] His guiding principle throughout

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[69] Jones married Johnson and his wife Ruth on March 30, 1940. L. C. Johnson, "My Life Story" (Nashville, TN: Unpublished, n.d.), 12, in NAFWB Historical Collection; L. C. Johnson, interview by Paul Harrison, Nashville, Tennessee, October 13, 1983, in Welch College Archive.

[70] Welch interview, January 3, 1983.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Jones selected Johnson to receive an honorary doctorate in the Humanities from BJC on May 18, 1952. Johnson interview, October 25, 1983; Paul Vernice Harrison, "A Biography of Linton Carroll Johnson" (master's thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1988), 131.

[73] The terminology surrounding Christian higher education is only slightly less fluid than the designations for conservative Protestantism. What Johnson considered

his administration was meeting the needs of the denomination.[74] This initially led the school to offer high school level instruction and college courses, but it also kept the mission of training ministers and Christian workers in the foreground.[75] For the first five years, the focus of the school as a "Bible school" was almost wholly on training students for ministry.[76]

However, several aspects of the early years point toward a wider understanding of education. In the college's first catalog, Johnson wrote that the denomination's need for leadership must be fulfilled, but in addition the college would "expect to stimulate initiative to go out and open up new and greater fields of labor."[77] Even though the course offerings primarily consisted of biblical and ministerial instruction, the presence of English Literature and Ancient Civilization courses suggests a wider interest.[78] Spanish was offered for "practical" value to missionaries, but the catalog also noted its general "cultural value."[79] Dramatic productions and formal banquets were required for

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Bible institutes and Bible colleges correlates to what this paper refers to as Bible colleges and hybrid institutions respectively. L. C. Johnson, "Over My Shoulder: Part III, The War Years," *Contact*, March, 1979, 31.

[74] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1943-1944*, 5.

[75] Dodd, *The Free Will Baptist Story*, 147; Davidson, "Our National Educational Work;" Davidson, "Our Educational Program."

[76] Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

[77] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1943-1944*, 5.

[78] Ibid., 10, 11.

[79] Ibid., 11.

students to "develop some cultural appreciation."[80] However, the next administration made changes soon thereafter.[81]

Johnson admitted in his 1985 interview with Paul Harrison that he resigned in 1944 because of tensions with the board of trustees over the administration of the school.[82] Some of the tension was created by the administrative naiveté of all involved, but philosophy also seems to have been in play.[83] Both Ennis and Davidson, who simultaneously served as the chairman of the board of trustees and the Business Manager, were mentors for Johnson and perhaps expected him to seek their counsel more than he did.[84] Even though Ennis did not serve on the board at the time, he was brought into an April 1944 meeting with Johnson to "explain what he thought [Johnson] should be doing."[85] Johnson did not offer specific information about Ennis' comments, but the changes that Ennis instituted during his brief tenure as president of Free Will Baptist Bible College offer some clues.

Ennis attempted to reorient the school more directly toward Christian ministry training by adjusting its identity and course offerings. Because Johnson's resignation was

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[80] Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

[81] Johnson resigned at an April 1944 board meeting, but the board did not accept his resignation until July. Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

not accepted until July 1944, the 1944-1945 catalog reflects his vision for the following year more than Ennis'.[86] However, the 1945 yearbook, *Lumen*, offers an excellent glimpse of the changes Ennis brought with him. It included two articles absent from previous *Lumens*. "The Purpose of the College" bears Ennis's signature and states that the school is "committed to the enterprising task of training its students for efficient Christian service" in a manner that is "practically evangelistic."[87] Another unsigned article described Christian education as "training the convert to fill the place to which he aspires to serve in the spirit of constraining love for Christ."[88] Secular or "popular" education trains thinkers, "but," the author states, "this is not Christian education."[89] The "greater knowledge" of Christian education is doing "higher and holier things for the glory of God and for the benefit of mankind."[90] Even assuming a student wrote the unsigned article, its addition to the *Lumen* in 1945 suggests that Ennis' influence was encouraging students to divide the world epistemologically along spiritual and physical lines. Such a division allowed the world to study and think about the natural world, leaving true Christians to the "higher and holier" work of evangelism.

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[86] No significant changes were present in this issue of the catalog and the opening personal note from Johnson remained. See *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1944-1945* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1944).

[87] *Lumen 1944-1945*, 2.

[88] Ibid., 6.

[89] Ibid., 6.

[90] Ibid., 6.

These changes extended to the school's history. Even though the college was only one year old in 1943, the first catalog offered a short history.[91] The 1945 *Lumen* presented a slightly adjusted narrative. References to the 1940 meeting of the NAFWB described the objective of the school as the "preaching of the whole Gospel to the whole world."[92] Further, this same adjustment was reproduced in the 1946-1947 college catalog with one more alteration. Concerning the 1940 NAFWB meeting, it added, "It was here that the guiding principle, 'evangelism must drive education,' was acclaimed."[93] Although, this statement did not appear in the record of the 1940 meeting of the NAFWB, inserting it into the historical narrative shifted the school's purpose and mission.[94] If evangelism was supposed to drive education, then Free Will Baptist Bible College needed to focus only on training for Christian ministries.

Training for evangelism did not require the same courses that had previously been offered. Ennis attended Moody Bible Institute and Johnson believed that he began to structure Free Will Baptist Bible College along similar lines.[95] Moody instructed laypeople in church music and choir direction. Basic Bible courses were offered to familiarize men and women with the English Bible, but biblical languages were left to

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[91] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1943-1944*, 3-4.

[92] *Lumen 1944-1945*, 19.

[93] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1946-1947* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1946), 9.

[94] See *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, 1940*, in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[95] Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

seminaries. A key aspect of Moody's curriculum was practical work that trained students in personal evangelism and church administration.[96]

During Ennis' presidency, courses not directly relatable to Christian ministry disappeared. A basic grammar course entitled "Functional English" remained, but English literature was removed.[97] Ancient history courses were replaced with "History of Christian Education," which was "devoted to a survey of the history of Christian education and church school curriculum . . . . [and] designed to prepare pastors and directors of Christian education for the successful supervision, correlation, and integration of the whole Sunday school program."[98] The one credit hour geography course perhaps best exemplifies this educational model: "This course deals with the geographic background of the Bible."[99] These changes are small but significant. Ennis had adopted an educational model that focused solely on knowledge of God and practical church work separated from knowledge of the world. When considered in conjunction with the adjustments in the school's stated purpose and historical narrative, these course changes highlight how Ennis' philosophy of education differed from that of Johnson's.

Ennis's administration ended under pressure from the board after only three years. People in the denomination were disgruntled with the way that he re-appropriated funds

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[96] Gene A. Getz, *MBI: The Story of Moody Bible Institute* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969), 64.

[97] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1945-1946* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1945), 18.

[98] Ibid., 17. Johnson was a historian and therefore the disappearance of courses in ancient history can be explained by his absence.

[99] Ibid., 16.

given for other purposes during financial drive campaigns. Though theft was never a question, some were unhappy with these actions.[100] He also became unpopular with most of the student body, who voiced several mild accusations of misconduct to the board that were never substantiated.[101] Regardless, Ennis was asked to resign and the board invited Johnson to return for the 1947-1948 school year.[102] When he accepted, Johnson and the board agreed on a shift away from Ennis' approach to Christian education. In a concise reflection on this moment, Johnson wrote:

> About this time it became clear to me and the Governing Board that the institution should pursue the Bible college route instead of the more limited Bible institute program. This meant finding balance between biblical and liberal arts studies to give students a proper world view as well as training in biblical studies that would prepare them to proclaim God's word. This balance between liberal arts education and biblical studies has been maintained.[103]

This analysis collapses many incremental changes over the following thirty years. Nonetheless, Johnson clearly understood the commencement of his second presidency as a sea change. He intended to develop an educational system that presented a "combination of liberal arts and Biblical studies."[104] At this stage, Johnson probably was

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[100] J. O. Fort to Henry Melvin, November 21, 1946, Materials Concerning the Removal of L. R. Ennis, Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee, in Welch College Archive.

[101] See Materials Concerning the Removal of L. R. Ennis, Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee, in Welch College Archive.

[102] Ralph Lightsey to Clarence Bower, March 26, 1947, Materials Concerning the Removal of L. R. Ennis, Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee; Welch interview, January 3, 1983.

[103] Johnson, "Over My Shoulder: Part IV," 1979.

[104] Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

only thinking of adding enough general education courses to fulfill the requirements of a bachelor's degree, but this mentality would later allow the college to expand further.

Others may have perceived these possible changes. At the 1947 state associational meeting of Missouri Free Will Baptists, the state meeting "went on record as opposing any trend or movement toward our Bible College becoming a liberal arts or fully accredited institution."[105] This motion seems to have been made directly after the college's business manager, Henry Melvin, gave a report to the assembly, but what precipitated such a reaction is not recorded. Responses of this nature must have discouraged any immediate plans for fully incorporating the liberal arts. Further, Johnson was a self-consciously conservative leader, often cautioning against rapid changes.[106]

Despite his aversion to rapid change, the college catalog was modified soon after Johnson's return. In the 1948-1949 issue of the catalog the narrative additions to the college's history were removed.[107] Additionally, a bevy of new courses were offered. Courses on Johannine and Pauline writings, pastoral theology, prophecy, Christian philosophy, exegesis, and apologetics were added to the Bible curriculum. Two sections of College English replaced the Functional Grammar course; and English Literature

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[105] Marie Hyatt, "Highlights of the Mo. State Association," *Free Will Baptist Gem* 18, no. 9 (October, 1947).

[106] See L. C. Johnson, "The Free Will Baptist Bible College Observes Its Tenth Anniversary," *Free Will Baptist* April 9, 1952. L. C. Johnson, *Bulletin* 1, no. 12 (August, 1953); Johnson, "Over My Shoulder: Part IV."

[107] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1948-1949* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1948), 9-10.

returned, joined by World Literature.[108] These additions could just be the result of financial and enrollment growth, but the descriptions of some courses suggest development in the school's philosophy.

The English literature courses offered during Johnson's first administration laid "stress on those literary personages and works most related to the history of the Christian Church and to the history of the English Bible."[109] Five years later, the courses taught by newly hired Laura Thigpen provided an introduction "to the history of some of the poetic and prose writers and their writings in the field of English authors and their works."[110] Perhaps even more telling is the description of her World Literature course: "An outline study of some of the world masterpieces with a view of creating taste for and interest in the minds of the students for gaining a knowledge of the worthwhile literary gems of ancient medieval and modern masters."[111] These changes reflect a shift away from engaging literature as a way to simply better understand the Bible and toward cultivating aesthetic appreciation and cultural awareness. Johnson had drawn knowledge of the world back inside the college's purpose. The philosophical underpinning for this change of direction would come later, but the commitment to remain engaged with the knowledge of the world was an important benchmark.

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[108] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1948-1949*, 21-27.

[109] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1943-1944*, 10.

[110] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1948-1949*, 24.

[111] Ibid., 24.

New courses demanded a larger faculty with broader training. When Johnson returned he immediately began searching for a qualified speech teacher.[112] After consulting with his *alma mater* for eligible graduates, he reached out to a couple in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.[113] In 1948 Charles and Laura Thigpen were one year out of BJC and were pastoring a Southern Methodist church after Laura turned down an offer to remain at Bob Jones as a speech professor.[114] Johnson offered the couple an opportunity to teach speech, English, Bible, and Christian education courses in Nashville.[115] Although the board could hire adjunct faculty who were not Free Will Baptists, their general preference was for denominationally affiliated professors.[116] Therefore Johnson briefly explained Free Will Baptist doctrine to the Thigpens at their first meeting in Birmingham with the hope that once they became attached to the college they would shift denominations.[117] Even though Johnson made clear that they were not required to become Free Will Baptists, the Thigpens felt like they were doctrinally closer to Free

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[112] Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

[113] Charles and Laura Thigpen, interview with author, May 11, 2015, in Phillip T. Morgan's personal collection.

[114] Thigpen interview, May 11, 2015.

[115] Ibid.

[116] *Charter of Incorporation: Free Will Baptist Bible College* [1945], in Welch College Archive.

[117] Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

Will Baptists than to Methodism.[118] Once they moved to Nashville, they became members of East Nashville Free Will Baptist Church.[119]

The Thigpens made the course expansions of the 1948-1949 school year possible. Charles taught several of the Bible and Christian education courses, including Johannine and Pauline writings. Meanwhile, Laura's contribution teaching literature beginning in 1948 highlights the development of the college's educational philosophy. In these classes, beauty was not merely a servant of evangelism, but existed as a good thing to be studied on its own.[120] She also taught various Christian education and physical education courses, but the English and world literature courses were precursors of changes to come in the 1950s, many instigated by Charles.

By 1949 the educational needs of the Free Will Baptist denomination had expanded to the point that the college needed to transition from a two-year institution into a four-year college. As soon as the Thigpens arrived in Nashville, Charles approached Johnson about the possibility of adding two more years, because many of their students were going on to other schools to graduate with a four-year degree.[121] Johnson did not think the college could afford such a large expansion. In response, Charles devised a plan

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[118] Thigpen interview, May 11, 2015.

[119] Ibid.

[120] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1948-1949*, 24. Laura Thigpen's appreciation of art and beauty were not directly tied to evangelism, but she was a strong advocate for making evangelistic art works, especially dramas. Thigpen interview, May 11, 2015.

[121] Thigpen interview, May 11, 2015, 8:18 am.

wherein the school could add the third year in 1949-1950 and the fourth year in the following year.[122] In this way, the school would not need to expand radically.

Johnson took the plan to the board, and the college put it into action in the fall of 1949. Courses on the Minor Prophets, Daniel and Revelation, Romans and Galatians, and theology were added as third year offerings. This was followed a year later by more Bible and theology courses. *Koine* Greek and basic science further expanded the range of the college. Even though enrollment declined slightly from 80 students in 1948-1949 to 76 in 1949-1950, over the next three years, enrollment grew by 222 percent, totaling 169 students by 1952-1953.[123] The influx of students taking part in the four-year program confirmed that Free Will Baptists were no longer satisfied with the two-year Bible institute.

Just before opening for a tenth year, the college celebrated its achievements and pointed to the future at the 1951 national convention of the NAFWB. Welch, the chairman of the board, joined Johnson and business manager Melvin in a glowing report. They opened their presentation with a short message from eight students representing each of the college's graduating classes, save one (no student was present from the 1948

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[122] Ibid.

[123] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1949-1950* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1949), 34-36; *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1950-1951* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1950), 38-40; *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1951-1952* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1951), 39-40; *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1952-1953* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1952), 37-40; *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1953-1954* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1953), 36-39.

class). These students, most of whom were already prominent leaders in the denomination, shared their experiences at the college.[124]

The official report followed, highlighting the "outstanding . . . all-time high enrollment [of the previous year]—104 from 17 states—and the graduation of the first four-year class composed of four men and one woman upon which was conferred the B.A. degree with a major in Bible."[125] They argued that the college was "meeting a definite need in the life of our denomination in the training of our leadership."[126] This point punctuated the preceding parade of prominent graduates on stage. The report then turned to the future: "It is the plan of the Board of Trustees and Administration to expand the courses as rapidly as conditions will permit. This is based upon two major things: increased financial support and increased enrollment."[127] Importantly, no discussion of accreditation was presented at this juncture. However, despite the motion made in Missouri four years earlier, the college pushed strongly for expansion.

The college's first ten years were extremely important for setting an educational mold. The needs of the denomination guided how fast the college could expand their curriculum. Johnson pushed slowly toward expansion, and by 1952 the college was

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[124] "Proceedings: Wednesday Evening," *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists: 1951*.

[125] "Report of Free Will Baptist Bible College," *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists: 1951*. It should be noted that the college was still unaccredited at this time.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

offering a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree in biblical studies with an eye toward new degrees.[128] The Thigpens provided an extra incentive to push forward. They brought with them new academic subjects and a philosophy of education that aligned with Johnson, strengthening his position. The college had resisted Ennis's attempt to focus solely on evangelism and biblical instruction for church vocations. Instead, it overtly moved toward a curriculum as broad as resources could provide. As the school entered its second decade it had to pivot toward a challenger in North Carolina, advocating the Christian liberal arts education model. Mount Olive Junior College forced Free Will Baptist Bible College to reassess its goals and philosophy, solidifying the hybrid model of education in the process.

Mount Olive Junior College and the Solidification of the Hybrid Educational Model

Mount Olive Junior College was founded as a liberal arts institution by North Carolina Free Will Baptists ostensibly to educate their underserved students. However, the school was primarily used as a political tool to wrestle power away from the denominational center in Nashville. Philosophy of education was an easy way to set the new college apart from the denominational school. As Mount Olive syphoned off important resources from Free Will Baptist Bible College, Johnson and his faculty highlighted their role as ministry trainers for the denomination. Even so, they continued to gradually expand the curriculum.

Direct competition between the schools ended in 1962 when the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptists terminated its affiliation with the NAFWB and

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[128] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1952-1953*, 20.

became the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists (hereafter OFWB). Although the primary reason for this break was a matter of church governance, some of the hostility between the two parties concerned the perceived liberalization of Mount Olive. The North Carolina college was probably more conservative in those early years than its detractors recognized, but their suspicions were later confirmed by Mount Olive's gradual secularization until its affiliation with the OFWB became nominal. After the split, Free Will Baptist Bible College began formalizing its philosophy as a safeguard against liberalization. The result of their efforts was an Augustinian presuppositionalism that allowed them to remain orthodox while intellectually engaging academic subjects.

The founders of Mount Olive used the college to shift the political landscape of the NAFWB away from its center in Nashville. Free Will Baptists trace their history in America back to Benjamin Laker who immigrated to Albermale, North Carolina, from England during the late seventeenth century.[129] This heritage has led some North Carolina Free Will Baptists to see themselves as more truly Free Will Baptist than those outside the state.[130] Michael Pelt, who taught in the humanities department and served as dean at Mount Olive for many years, described later movements in Free Will Baptists as overshadowing the historic Free Will Baptist faith.[131] After the NAFWB was formed in 1935, Nashville, as the denomination's most central geographic area, grew politically powerful. By the late 1950s the denominational offices and newspaper had joined the

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[129] Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, 23.

[130] Picirilli interview, April 21, 2016.

[131] Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, i.

college in middle Tennessee. Some North Carolina Free Will Baptists resented this shift.[132]

Pelt highlights this tension as it played out in the printing presses. The Free Will Baptist Press in Ayden, North Carolina, had provided the denomination's Sunday school literature since 1906 and the most widely read denominational newspaper, *The Free Will Baptist*, since 1873.[133] When the NAFWB began publishing *Contact* out of Nashville in 1953 and then Sunday school literature in 1957, North Carolinians took offense.[134] Free Will Baptist Bible College represented, for many in North Carolina, much of what they disliked about the NAFWB.[135] After a decade of strife, a significant number of North Carolina churches left the NAFWB in 1962 to form the OFWB, taking Mount Olive with them. Although, many factors led to this parting of ways, one of the primary issues was higher education.

Although Harrison argued that the Cragmont Minister's Conference in North Carolina during 1948 was the "seedbed from which Mount Allen (later Mount Olive) Junior College would sprout," tension over educational philosophies started much

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[132] Agnes Frazier, interview by Pat Thomas, Ashland City, Tennessee, June 11, 1982.

[133] Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, 172-174.

[134] Ibid., 257-258, 296-298.

[135] W. Burkette Raper, *A Short History of Mount Olive College: Volume One, Founding and Formative Years: 1951-1961*, 2nd ed. (Mount Olive, NC: Mount Olive College Press, 2011), 6; Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, 280-283, 299-301.

earlier.[136] While the National Education Board raised funds in 1940 to found Free Will Baptist Bible College, *The Free Will Baptist* ran Shugart's article recommending a philosophy of education that placed secular and religious subjects in separate categories.[137] In his view, Christians were only responsible for encouraging a "spiritual culture" when they engaged non-biblical subjects.[138] *The Free Will Baptist* placed this article in the same issue as the NAFWB Board of Education's article from Frazier, propounding a presuppositional approach to education.[139] Therefore, it seems that the general direction that the Board of Education was headed did not appeal to some Free Will Baptists in North Carolina.

The competition took a more direct turn a year later. At the 1941 district meeting of the Western Association of Free Will Baptists in North Carolina, the state Educational Committee recommended starting a college in North Carolina in spite of the national work toward establishing a school:

> We your committee on education beg to report we find nothing in the way of educational advantages for the F. W. B. church in North Carolina and nothing being done to further the education cause of the F. W. B. in our state. Now therefore, we your committee go on record not to interfere with the National Educational Board or their work, but to ask the F. W. B. denomination in all its Conferences and Associations of North Carolina to start a campaign to organize,

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[136] Harrison, "A Biography of Linton Carroll Johnson," 111. It is unclear why Harrison would makes this claim since the article he sites does not refer to plans to start a new college. See J. C. Griffin, "Notes and Quotes," *Free Will Baptist* June 30, 1948.

[137] Shugart, "Correlation of Forces in the Development of Youth."

[138] Ibid.

[139] Tripp, "The School Problem."

> build, construct, and maintain a Junior College for our own denomination; that this move be started right here in this sitting of the Western Association.[140]

This recommendation presented a clear challenge to the national work by stating that "nothing" was being done for North Carolina students. Therefore, funds that could go to the national work would be redirected to the formation of a state junior college. During the 1920s, junior colleges became popular as local schools that offered two years of liberal arts instruction, which could be transferred to four-year institutions further away from the local community.[141] J. R. Bennett, who served on the national education board, attempted without success to explain the national education program to those gathered.[142] J. C. Griffin, the editor of *The Free Will Baptist*, reported that this "great" resolution for a junior college "went over without an opposing vote" (Bennet and Ennis, both visitors, were unable to vote).[143]

The next week, the Eastern Association of Free Will Baptists in North Carolina "most enthusiastically" followed suit during their business meeting.[144] For some reason, this proposal was tabled. Writing in 1952 about the upcoming founding of Mount Olive, chairman of the North Carolina Christian Education Board David W. Hansley suggested that "the people of North Carolina wished to cooperate with the National Program" and

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[140] "Report of the Educational Committee," *Minutes of the Western Association: 1941*.

[141] Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 249-250.

[142] "Report of the Educational Committee," *Minutes of the Western Association: 1941*.

[143] J. C. Griffin, "Notes and Quotes," *Free Will Baptist* October 22, 1941.

[144] J. C. Griffin, "Notes and Quotes," *Free Will Baptist* October 29, 1941. See also, "Education Committee Report," *Minutes of the Eastern Conference (NC): 1941*.

therefore decided to "allow the College in Nashville, Tennessee, to become established" before they organized their own college.[145] If this was the way of things, philosophical and political concerns were set aside for a time, but the growing strength of Free Will Baptist Bible College prompted some North Carolina leaders to move forward with these early plans.

Two months after the 1951 NAFWB convention at which Free Will Baptist Bible College prominently celebrated its success and pointed to future expansion, the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptists passed a recommendation to found a competing junior college in their own state. While Hansley reported in *The Free Will Baptist* that the proposed school was meeting a great "opportunity," the proposal was defensive in tone.[146] The statewide Board of Christian Education recommended a "feasible educational program" be devised that would "more adequately meet the present and future needs of our people in general."[147] In this way, the board opened their recommendation by arguing that the college in Nashville was not meeting their needs.

To further preclude accusations of competition, the board recommended that "all funds received for Christian Education be divided fifty-fifty between the Free Will Baptist Bble [sic] College of Nashville, Tenn., and The Board of Christian Education of the State Convention of the Original Free Will Baptist of North Carolina."[148] Realizing

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[145] David W. Hansley, "Christian Education" *Free Will Baptist*, May 28, 1952.

[146] Ibid.

[147] "Report of Board of Christian Education," *Minutes of the North Carolina State Convention: 1951*.

[148] Ibid.

this would cut the North Carolina funds for the national college in half, they asked for the state to double its giving toward Christian education over the following year.[149] When Hansley reported on these proceedings in *The Free Will Baptist*, the defense of the motion became improbable. He suggested that "with forty thousand Free Will Baptists in the State of North Carolina, if each one would give one dollar to the cause of Christian Education, it would provide enough funds to operate both our Bible College in Nashville, Tennessee; and our College in North Carolina."[150] His assertion that $40,000 dollars could have supported both schools for the next year is probably correct, since Free Will Baptist Bible College's total income from gifts for 1950-1951 totaled $20,321.43.[151] However, such a plan would require North Carolina Free Will Baptists to increase their giving to Christian education by 684 percent in one year.[152] Even though Hensley and the rest of the board disavowed competitiveness with Free Will Baptist Bible College, they realized their success would detract from the work in Nashville.

The administration of Free Will Baptist Bible College responded to these early developments by fulfilling their immediate plans for expansion, but their progress was slowed by Mount Olive's presence. The school expanded the curriculum enough to offer

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[149] Ibid.

[150] Hansley, "Christian Education."

[151] "Report of Free Will Baptist Bible College," *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists: 1951*. Their gifts from North Carolina totaled $3,866.07.

[152] The total gifts received by the North Carolina Board of Christian Education during the previous year totaled $5,852.42. "Report of Board of Christian Education," *Minutes of the North Carolina State Convention: 1951*.

a four year B.A. degree in Bible with a Christian education minor in 1951.[153] While attending a college registrar course at George Peabody College for Teachers in 1949, Charles Thigpen's professor William Vaughn, who was the registrar at Peabody, signed a written agreement to accept all credit hours offered by Free Will Baptist Bible College.[154] After Peabody began accepting credits from the college, Thigpen was able to get the University of Tennessee to also accept full credit transfers; several other colleges and universities followed.[155] A large number of graduates from Free Will Baptist Bible College sought graduate degrees from Bob Jones University and Winona Lake School of Theology.[156] However, many schools, both Christian and secular, refused to accept any credit transfers from the college.[157]

The first two years of Mount Olive's activity had little effect on the college's enrollment, although the number of 1953-1954 students was nine less than the previous

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[153] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1950-1951*, 22.

[154] Thigpen interview, May 11, 2015. George Peabody College for Teachers became part of Vanderbilt University in 1979. This written transaction has been lost, but students transferred to Peabody as early as 1953 and received a Bachelor of Science degree within a year. See Mrs. Damon C. Dodd, "Alumni Association" *Bulletin* 1, no. 9 (May, 1953); Mrs. Damon C. Dodd, "Alumni Association News" *Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (August-September, 1955).

[155] Thigpen interview, May 11, 2015; Free Will Baptist Bible College Registrar Correspondence Concerning Credit Transfers, Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee.

[156] Mrs. Damon C. Dodd, "Alumni Association News," *Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (August-September, 1955); *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1955-1956* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1955), 7.

[157] See, Free Will Baptist Bible College Registrar Correspondence Concerning Credit Transfers.

year.[158] It is more difficult to judge the financial effect since Free Will Baptist Bible College's gifts for the fiscal year 1951-1952 were not reported to the NAFWB.[159] However, from the report of 1951 to the report given in 1953 the school's giving increased from $20,321.43 to $55,086.68, including gifts from the building fund.[160] The next year overall gifts increased by another $24,675.37 to $79,762,05.[161] Therefore, the financial effect was not immediately great. Yet Mount Olive was gaining support in North Carolina and in 1954 began to contend more directly with Free Will Baptist Bible College.

Even though the report of the North Carolina education committee in 1951 did not directly address educational philosophies, curricular and missional decisions made at that time carried philosophical repercussions. Hansley reported that "many leading ministers and laymen" throughout North Carolina were building a "College," which he said had been delayed because of the founding of the denomination's "Bible College."[162] North Carolinians needed a college that would "more adequately meet the present and future

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[158] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1952-1953*, 37-40; *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1953-1954*, 36-39; *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1954-1955* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1954), 37-40.

[159] "Report of Free Will Baptist Bible College," *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists: 1952*.

[160] "Report of Free Will Baptist Bible College," *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists: 1951*; "Bible College Report," *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists: 1953*.

[161] "Bible College Report," *Minutes of the National Association of Free Will Baptists: 1954*.

[162] Hansley, "Christian Education."

needs" of their people.[163] Therefore, they wished to found an institution that would offer high school, college, and seminary courses.[164] The college would offer courses in English, Science, Language, history, and "electives," while the seminary would teach Bible, doctrine, church administration, evangelism, homiletics, and music.[165] Knowledge of the world was placed in the college while knowledge of God and ministry were placed in the seminary. Even at this early juncture, studying the Bible was separated from studying the world.

After two years of marginal operation, Burkette Raper took over the administration of Mount Olive and began actively competing with the Free Will Baptist Bible College. Minister Lloyd Vernon led the college from 1952-1954 when the school primarily offered high school instruction and night courses.[166] Vernon taught courses in what Hansley called the "Bible Institute department," while A. B. Chandler, who attended Free Will Baptist Bible College from 1946-1948, taught business education and advanced English.[167] Raper, a young graduate of Duke University and Duke Divinity

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[163] "Report of Board of Christian Education," *Minutes of the North Carolina State Convention: 1951*.

[164] Hansley, "Christian Education."

[165] Ibid.

[166] David W. Hansley, "Mt. Allen Junior College to Open," *Free Will Baptist,* September 3, 1952.

[167] Hansley, "Mt. Allen Junior College to Open;" David W. Hansley, "News of Mount Allen Junior College," *Free Will Baptist* 68, no. 1; *Lumen 1946-1947* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1947), 29; *Lumen 1947-1948* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1948), [18].

School, became the college president during the summer of 1954 and immediately improved its media coverage.[168]

Before Raper, very few articles about the college appeared in *The Free Will Baptist*. In contrast, the September 1, 1954 issue presented a full page advertisement with notices of business, general academic, and "religious" courses to be offered in the coming year.[169] The editorial for the same issue admitted that Free Will Baptist Bible College was doing "marvelous work….training our ministers, missionaries, and full-time Christian workers for service."[170] However, the new college would "serve the host of our Free Will Baptist young people who are not planning to enter full-time work for the Lord."[171] The editor, J. O. Fort, argued that when these students attended public universities they were "receiving just a part of the training" they needed. This was because while they were "getting well founded in the secular," their "spiritual" knowledge was neglected or "mocked."[172] For Fort, the knowledge of the world did not require knowledge of God. According to him, the problem with public institutions was that they were not "stressing" religion.[173] Mount Olive was intended to fill this gap by providing a two-year accredited introduction into secular education while also requiring

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[168] *Mount Allen Junior College Bulletin: 1955-1956* (Mount Allen, NC: Mount Allen Junior College, 1955), 11.

[169] "Mount Allen Junior College," *Free Will Baptist*, September 1, 1954.

[170] J. O. Fort, "Editorial," *Free Will Baptist*, September 1, 1954.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

daily chapel attendance and one religion course per quarter for every student.[174] From this point forward Raper kept Mount Olive in the spotlight of the *The Free Will Baptist*. New hires were given prominent biographical sketches in the paper and Raper took every opportunity to talk about philosophies of education.

Raper's educational philosophy was subtly situated against that of Free Will Baptist Bible College. In presentations, Raper emphasized regional accreditation, intellectual freedom, and Christian atmosphere. Only months after becoming president, Raper presented the board of directors with a plan for reaching accreditation with the North Carolina State Department of Education.[175] In his remarks to the board he lamented "that the Free Will Baptist denomination [had] remained content so long without a single accredited institution of higher learning."[176] He reassured the board and the public that accreditation would not place the college under state control, but would only ensure that the college met with "certain basic standards which are generally approved by other recognized institutions of higher learning."[177] These statements indirectly set Mount Olive against the Nashville school since it was not accredited by any agency.

Free Will Baptist Bible College responded to these volleys by emphasizing their ability to train students for Christian ministry, but Mount Olive attacked even this

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[174] Ibid.

[175] "This is the Board of Directors, Mount Allen Junior College," *Free Will Baptist*, October 27, 1954.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid.

strength. Davidson, serving as trustee of the Nashville college, rebutted Raper's indirect challenges from the previous year in a report before the 1955 North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptists. He argued that Free Will Baptist Bible College was the only Free Will Baptist "institution wholly dedicated to the training of talent for spreading the gospel at home and abroad."[178] He then claimed that much of the denominational work performed in recent years was a direct result of the college's influence, including the organization of "a Christian education institution in any state."[179] Davidson closed his report by highlighting increased enrollment and "the call for expansion of the institution in every way."[180] Thus, Davidson affirmed Free Will Baptist Bible College's focus on training the leaders, ministers, and missionaries for the denomination, while simultaneously suggesting that the college should expand.

In response to this statement, the next year Raper intensified the competition between the colleges by arguing before the convention that accreditation was "absolutely essential" not only for training in secular vocations, but also for training "foreign missionaries."[181] Further, he said that the "entire denominational program of foreign

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[178] J. R. Davidson, "Report of Free Will Baptist Bible College," *Minutes of the North Carolina State Convention:* 1955, 14.

[179] Ibid.,15. Although Davidson provided no evidence for such a claim, for the year 1953-1954, forty percent of the General Officers of the NAFWB and nearly fifteen percent of all NAFWB board positions were held by Free Will Baptist Bible College alumni.

[180] Ibid.

[181] W. Burkette Raper, "Report of Mount Olive Junior College for the Fiscal Year Ending August 31, 1956," *Minutes of the North Carolina State Convention: 1956*, 11.

missions is in serious jeopardy unless we develop an accredited program of higher education."[182] How accreditation would so drastically affect missionary training, Raper did not explain. The foreign missions department of the NAFWB did not place such stipulations on its candidates at that time.[183] Yet Raper had presented Mount Olive as a more effective ministry training institution than Free Will Baptist Bible College, thereby undercutting their recognized educational niche.

By 1957 the distinction between the two colleges had become blurred. That January, *Contact* released a special issue on higher education. Almost every article in the paper that month was about Free Will Baptist Bible College.[184] Johnson explained in his article that the college's curriculum consisted of "liberal arts and seminary courses in about a 60/40 ratio, respectively."[185] This balance provided "the student not planning [for] graduate work…the most effective curriculum possible."[186] Johnson admitted that a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible most directly met the needs of students headed into ministry vocations, but he also pointed out that other students could earn the equivalent of a junior college degree in the liberal arts before transferring to another school.[187] The

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[182] Ibid.

[183] See Raymond Riggs, *The Call: Standard Requirements and Appointment of a Free Will Baptist Foreign Missionary* (Highland Park, MI: The Board of Foreign Missions of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, 1950), in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[184] Mount Olive was unmentioned.

[185] L. C. Johnson, "Bible College Curriculum Based on Practical Denominational Needs," *Contact* 4, no. 3 (January, 1957).

[186] Ibid.

college was already offering minors in English and music, and would add majors in English and nursing in 1960.[188] Because both schools were now offering ministry training and liberal arts education, philosophy and emphasis became the distinguishing factors.

Although the Bible offerings of Mount Olive were often recognized in published articles by supporters of the college, the main focus early on was liberal arts. One month after Raper's report on accreditation was published in *The Free Will Baptist*, he wrote an article that promised the college would supply the "spiritual leaders" of the churches through the religion department.[189] In addition, Pelt wrote in March of 1955 that the Bible courses along with daily chapel provided a "Christian atmosphere" that differentiated Mount Olive from secular institutions.[190]

Three years later, Raper gave a report to the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptist Churches stating that the college's "two basic curricula" were the liberal arts, which was "preparatory for almost any vocation," and business education.[191] Further, he was convinced that these subjects must be pursued freely. Eschewing "narrow

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[187] Ibid.

[188] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1960-1961* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1960), 28. See *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1953-1954* and *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1954-1955*.

[189] William Burkette Raper, "The Need for Mt. Allen College," *Free Will Baptist*, November 24, 1954.

[190] Michael Pelt, "Christian Education for the Layman" presented at College Conference at Mount Allen Junior College March 16, 1955 and published in *Free Will Baptist* 70, no. 13 (March 30, 1955).

[191] Raper, "Report of Mount Olive Junior College to the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptist Churches, September 17, 18, 1958."

concepts of dogmatism that would enslave men and defeat the true purpose of education," Raper argued that the college encouraged "free inquiry and the development of precise thinking…among students and faculty."[192] Here Mount Olive's philosophy of education is most clearly seen. The college's Bible course and daily chapel requirements provided a Christian atmosphere in which reason could safely but autonomously seek universally agreed upon truth. Knowledge of the world and knowledge of God were important but ultimately separate pursuits. Mount Olive had essentially rewound American higher education history one hundred years and returned to the Thomistic "two-tiered" worldview.[193] Like the founders of American colleges prior to the Civil War, Raper, Pelt, and the college's board of directors assumed that reason would always objectively confirm the Christian understanding of the world.

The North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptists broke fellowship with the NAFWB in 1961 over matters of church governance, but Mount Olive and alumni of Free Will Baptist Bible College also played a role. The debate over church government revolved around a church split in Edgemont Free Will Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina.[194] The pastor, Ronald Creech, was an alumnus and strong supporter of Free Will Baptist Bible College who took over the pastorate of the church in 1957.[195] Three

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[192] Ibid.

[193] George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 131.

[194] Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, 308.

[195] *Challenger*, October 2, 1957; Ronald Creech, "Concerning Free Will Baptist Bible College," *Challenger*, November 24, 1958.

years later, twenty of Edgemont's congregants accused Creech of irregularities in doctrine and tried to have him deposed by the local association.[196] The ensuing struggle ended up in court and drew the entire denomination into the matter.[197] In the end, the North Carolina State Convention split, some staying with the NAFWB and the rest forming the OFWB.

Although Billy Melvin, the executive secretary of the NAFWB in 1961, clearly stated that church governance was at the center of the controversy, Raper argued that this was "only a pretense" for disagreements over "educational philosophy."[198] Raper claimed that Johnson had expressed opposition to Mount Olive when Raper was invited to speak at Free Will Baptist Bible College in June of 1954.[199] In addition, he pointed out that the dean of the Nashville college, Charles Thigpen, had made the motion from the floor of the 1961 NAFWB business meeting that resulted in five men connected with Mount Olive being removed from denominational office and replaced by five men closely tied to the Bible college.[200] However, Johnson never spoke publicly against Mount Olive and each of the men removed from office had signed a legal document committing them to a form of church government incompatible with the statement of faith of the NAFWB.

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[196] Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, 308-309; Ronald Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, August 29, 1960.

[197] Pelt, *A History of Original Free Will Baptists*, 311-317.

[198] Billy A. Melvin, "A Statement," *Contact* Vol. 8, 10 (August, 1961); W. Burkette Raper, "A Statement," *Contact* Vol. 8, 10 (August, 1961).

[199] Raper, "A Statement."

[200] Ibid.

Filling the board vacancies with Free Will Baptist alumni and faculty does suggest an ulterior motive. That said, as most of Mount Olive's supporters were in active conflict with the NAFWB, they would not have been likely candidates for any position of denominational power.

Raper and Creech's mutual hostility played a larger role in the matter. Raper claimed that Creech's status as president of the alumni association had influenced the NAFWB to stand against the North Carolina State Convention.[201] Creech had been hostile toward the North Carolina school on several occasions, primarily relating to what he considered lax social regulations on campus.[202] However, he was also concerned that Mount Olive would follow in the footsteps of the colleges that joined the merger in 1911.[203] These fears resulted from several vague signs of liberalization, including movie attendance, inviting a Rabbi to speak on campus, and dedicating a school yearbook to a Roman Catholic.[204] Further evidence of the school's liberalization, he claimed, could be found in a purported conversation with Raper in which he told Creech and a group of other pastors that perspective faculty were not asked "if they were saved."[205] Instead, Raper said he asked if "they had made a commitment of their lives to Christ."[206] Creech

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[201] Ibid.

[202] Creech, "The Pastor Says," February 8, 1960.

[203] Ronald Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, August 1, 1960.

[204] Creech, "The Pastor Says," September 4, 1961.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ronald Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, September 25, 1961.

interpreted this difference as reluctance on Raper's part to align with conservative Protestant evangelicalism.[207]

Creech's evidence for signs of modernism and liberalism were rather weak, but the school's subsequent history suggests he may have seen the beginning of a long process of liberalization. By the mid-1970s the college presented itself as a "church-related college" with voluntary worship services and extracurricular religious organizations.[208] Thirty years later, the college's "affiliation" with the OFWB had become largely nominal.[209] Religion courses were no longer required of every student and at the Spring Convocation service in 2009, long time Mount Olive professor Kathy Best spoke on the value of higher education in explicitly secular terms.[210] Raper considered Creech a "narrow sectarian" with a "rigid and militant fundamentalist mentality," who "confused education with indoctrination."[211] In turn, Creech though of Raper as an egocentric academic who was enamored with modernism.[212] Both men

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[207] Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, September 25, 1961.

[208] Promotional Pamphlet, "Mount Olive College: The College that Cares" (Mount Olive, NC: Mount Olive College, [1975]) in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[209] The relationship between the college and denomination was close and friendly, but separate. The denomination had become a supporter of the college rather than a controlling body. "Free Will Baptist Denomination Shows Support to Mount Olive College at Day of Prayer," *Free Will Baptist*, April, 2000.

[210] *Mount Olive Undergraduate Catalog: 2005-2006*; "Best Speaks on Value in Higher Education at Spring Convocation."

[211] Raper, *A Short History of Mount Olive College*, 6; Raper, "A Statement."

[212] Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, September 4, 1961; Creech, "The Pastor Says," *Challenger*, September 25, 1961.

exaggerated the faults of the other, but each also made some valid observations in their assessments.

Regardless of whether Mount Olive was truly liberalizing in the early 1960s, Free Will Baptist Bible College was determined to avoid being drawn away from orthodoxy by broadening their curriculum. Therefore, as the college continued to expand its offerings, a more finely tuned philosophy was needed. Over the 1960s, Johnson and the faculty developed a philosophy of hybrid Christian education that was founded in conservative Protestant theology and embraced presuppositional epistemology. Free Will Baptist Bible College published a short pamphlet by Leroy Forlines in 1964 explaining what he called the "Bible college approach to Christian education."[213] Since Forlines and long-time fellow professor and friend Robert Picirilli often developed and honed each other's ideas, Picirilli's 1971 paper entitled "How Broad the Umbrella?" should be considered in concert with Forlines' 1964 work.[214]

Forlines wrote that the primary duty of Bible colleges was to "prepare students both in heart and mind for the carrying out of the Great Commission."[215] Picirilli grounded Forlines' position in the low church concept of the priesthood of all

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[213] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1964-1965* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1964); F. Leroy Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, [1964]).

[214] For information on the relationship of Picirilli and Forlines see Robert E. Picirilli, "F. Leroy Forlines as Colleague and Friend," in *The Promise of Arminian Theology: Essays in Honor of F. Leroy Forlines* eds. Matthew Steven Bracey and W. Jackson Watts (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2016).

[215] Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 11.

believers.[216] According to him, since Free Will Baptists minimize the hierarchical relationship of clergy and laity and expect all believers to evangelize, a true Christian college would provide intense biblical and theological instruction for all students along with opportunities to put their ministerial training into practice.[217] Thus each student would be expected to develop a full theology grounded in the "fundamentals of the faith" that would be applied in weekly ministry requirements.[218] However, the theological framework developed in Bible and theology courses was meant to do more than prepare for personal evangelism and works of charity. Once such an intellectual construct was in place, students would have the ability to apply it to the "whole of life and thought."[219] Ideally, professors outside the Bible department would exhibit the process of worldview application as they taught their subjects from Christian presuppositions.[220]

When it came to non-biblical subjects, Forlines and Picirilli determined that understanding presuppositions was key to remaining orthodox. Forlines argued that the Bible college approach to education taught every subject in light of the fundamentals of

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[216] Robert E. Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?" (Nashville, TN: Unpublished, [1971]), 4, Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee.

[217] Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?" 4.

[218] Forlines' detailed list of the "Fundamentals" entailed: the creation of man by God, humanity's depraved sin nature, justification by faith in Christ, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the Lordship of Christ over the believer, and personal evangelism. Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 2-3.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?" 2.

the faith listed above.[221] As Picirilli noted, this approach went far beyond just teaching "creationism instead of evolution."[222] Instead, each subject would be taught from within a theological framework and compared with the secular approach.[223] Of course, this process required faculty to have an above average knowledge of theology and the Bible to apply to their respective specialties.[224] However, when done properly, Picirlli thought this system would bring students "face to face with the 'great gulf' that separates the Biblical philosophy of life from the whole heart and core of most secular educational philosophy."[225]

While Picirilli admitted this presuppositional approach to education was theoretically what Christian liberal arts institutes were intended to do, the minimal Bible and theology requirements for students short-circuited the effort.[226] In Forlines' words, Christian liberal arts institutions exhibited a "friendship toward the authority of the Bible," but ultimately "tr[ied] to give a Bible-centered education without putting the Bible in the center of the curriculum."[227] Thus, requiring a full Bible major and hiring only faculty who could adequately apply the Christian worldview to their specialties

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[221] Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 2-3.

[222] Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?" 2.

[223] Ibid. ; Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 9, 14.

[224] Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?" 2; Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 8.

[225] Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?" 2.

[226] Ibid., 3.

[227] Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 8, 17.

differentiated their approach from the Christian liberal arts movement.[228] Presuppositionalism was the key to the program, but the theory was facile without the heavy emphasis on Biblical and theological instruction.

Conclusion

Fulfilling the many educational needs of Free Will Baptists required a philosophy of education that would protect orthodox conservative Protestant beliefs, while simultaneously offering higher education in a broad assortment of degree programs. With calls for denominational leaders, pastors, and missionaries, Johnson understood that the college had a responsibility to provide excellent Christian vocation instruction. Yet others, like Agnes Frazier, appealed for a broader curriculum. This was Johnson's inclination also. Even though Ennis turned the school directly toward training for Christian vocational work, when Johnson returned he and the board began to plot a course for the hybrid model.

The competition that Mount Olive provided during the 1950s slowed the process of expansion, but it also encouraged Johnson, Forlines, and Picirilli to formalize the educational philosophy of the college. To keep the college from following the secularizing path of many American institutions, Forlines and Picirilli developed an Augustinian and Kuyperian epistemology that grounded all knowledge in faith in Christian fundamentals. Yet neither Christian thinker is mentioned in their work. Later books and papers by the two Free Will Baptist Bible College professors did directly engage epistemological developments in Christian philosophy and provided a more

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[228] Ibid., 17.

complex and developed defense of the hybrid approach to Christian higher education.[229] Thus, formalizing Free Will Baptist Bible College's educational philosophy led Forlines and Picirilli to develop and then pass on to over three decades of students an evangelical mind that does not conform to Mark Noll's description.

[229] For information on the development of Forlines' worldview thinking see Phillip T. Morgan, "Worldview and Culture in the Thought of F. Leroy Forlines," in *The Promise of Arminian Theology: Essays in Honor of F. Leroy Forlines*, eds., Matthew Steven Bracey and W. Jackson Watts (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2016). To examine the development of Picirlli's worldview thinking see Robert E. Picirilli, "Toward a Model for Integrating Faith and Learning," " (Presented at faculty meeting, Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, February 22, 1983), in Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee; Robert E. Picirilli, "Introduction to Worldview Thinking," [1994?], Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee; and Robert E. Picirilli, *Worldview Thinking: The Christian's Introduction to Philosophy* (Nashville, TN: [Free Will Baptist Bible College], 1998), Welch College Archive, Nashville, Tennessee.

CHAPTER THREE
THE PROMISE OF THE SECOND EVANGELICAL MIND

In many ways, Mark Noll accurately describes the evangelical mind of the twentieth century in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994). Conservative Protestants maintained their strong attachment to the inerrancy of the Bible and its accuracy in matters of history, science, and geography. This commitment complicated the common-sense synthesis of faith and reason. Dispensationalists who maintained the world was ending imminently often struggled to engage history and current events meaningfully. Those committed to the scientific accuracy of six-day creationism sometimes refused to even consider their opponents' arguments. Separatism provided these groups with a sense of purpose and confirmation, which often solidified their ideological stances.

The touchstones of the evangelical mindset were biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism. The resulting evangelical mind divided the world into an active, immediate, spiritual world fraught with tension and a static, doomed, material world. Knowledge of both could be pursued empirically with the expectation that discoveries would always confirm the Bible. Further, this modern Thomist synthesis was inculcated by conservative Protestant institutions that cordoned off study of nature from study of the Bible. However, Noll's analysis suffers from a lack of in-depth study of the philosophical underpinnings and intellectual developments of conservative Protestant colleges and universities where a second evangelical mind can be found. Free Will Baptist Bible College's approach to the hybrid Christian education

model shows that the very evangelical doctrines that Noll posits inhibit the life of the mind can produce an Augustinian approach to knowledge, in which reason responds to and is guided by faith.

The Evangelical Mind

Noll's much lauded *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* provides an excellent analysis of American evangelicalism. He argues that the evangelical mind was held hostage by evangelical doctrine during the twentieth century, optimistically holding onto a nineteenth century common-sense synthesis of faith and reason that George Marsden terms a modern Thomism.[1] This approach to knowledge argued that the natural world could be known accurately through observation and reason alone, always assuming that the results would confirm the Bible. As modern science and philosophy first questioned and then rejected the old orthodoxies one by one, this synthesis became impossible to faithfully maintain.

Protestant liberals accepted the findings of empiricism and adjusted their doctrines accordingly, thereby allowing empiricism to control their view of all of life. Conservative Protestants maintained their strong attachment to the inerrancy of the Bible and its accuracy in matters of history, science, and geography. Because they saw themselves as set apart from the world that was headed for imminent destruction, it was easier to simply reject the world's claims and hold to orthodoxy, without engaging their opponents intellectually. They continued to practice a confined empirical approach to the

[1] George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 131.

world from which certain conclusions were banned by fiat. This effectively shut down any meaningful reflection on non-theological subjects.

Noll admits that a small intellectual renaissance began among conservative Protestants after World War II, but he contends that evangelical theology did not contribute meaningfully in this revival.[2] Instead, these positive intellectual steps came from budding relationships with conservative Protestant immigrant groups like the Dutch Christian Reformed Church (hereafter CRC) and reclamations of historic theology via Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards.[3] According to Noll, conservative Protestants' commitment to biblical inerrancy and authority worked in tandem with their emphases on separation from worldliness and evangelism to inhibit the Christian life of the mind, especially in the context of dispensationalism. Theological reflection about the world did not correspond with these doctrinal emphases.

Noll argues that the Thomist synthesis was ingrained in twentieth-century conservative Protestant higher education. He commends the depth and excellence of theological development carried out in conservative seminaries after World War II.[4] However, conservative Protestants' theological acumen was not applied to knowledge of the world taught in Christian liberal arts colleges and universities.[5] These two categories

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[2] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 237.

[3] Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 237.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 20.

of knowledge were institutionally separated in order to protect orthodoxy; however, the "divided structures of evangelical learning have nurtured a divided evangelical mentality."[6] Therefore, he concludes that conservative Protestant higher education inculcated the Thomist synthesis maintained by Biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, dispensationalism, and evangelism. However, Noll's analysis suffers from a lack of in-depth study of the philosophical underpinnings and intellectual developments of conservative Protestant colleges and universities.

Most conservative Protestants embraced the Thomist divide in knowledge described above. Some, like E. Y. Mullins, the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, intentionally embraced the division. In order to protect supernatural Christianity, he argued that "religion should be held separate from both philosophy and science."[7] Others adopted the division because they did not perceive the incongruity of their "premodern beliefs" with "humanistic" education except when it dealt directly with evolution.[8] In both cases, as Virginia Brereton has noted, conservative Protestants "were not interested in the process by which one sought knowledge, but in the end product."[9]

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[6] Ibid., 21.

[7] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 216.

[8] Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 182.

[9] Virginia Lieson Brereton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880-1940* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 34.

Regardless of how it came to be, the Thomist synthesis dominated the evangelical mind for most of the twentieth century.

Much of evangelical higher education reflected this synthesis. Bible institutes, seminaries, and Bible colleges across the country offered training in theology and evangelism.[10] Revivalists founded many of these institutions, including Albert B. Simpson (Nyack Bible College) and Dwight L. Moody (Moody Bible Institute).[11] Moody famously likened the world to a sinking ship from which God had called him to save sinners.[12] This mentality characterizes the overall Bible college movement that was so strongly influenced by his school.[13] Once these schools gathered enough resources to expand their curriculum, many began to include enough general education courses to offer accredited bachelor's degrees, usually in biblical studies, missions, Christian education, church music, or other ministry-related fields.[14] However, non-biblical

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[10] Brereton, *Training God's Army*, 35-36.

[11] Larry J. McKinney, *Equipping for Service: A Historical Account of the Bible College Movement in North America* (Fayetteville, AR: Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges, 1997),79-80; William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 155.

[12] Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 94-95.

[13] Brereton, *Training God's Army*, 78-79.

[14] Ringenberg, *The Christian College*, 164.

subjects were primarily valued as aids to evangelism.[15] Training in Christian ministry was the only goal of these institutions. Other schools were left to teach secular subjects.[16]

Conservative Protestant liberal arts colleges and universities took the opposite tack, but accepted the same Thomist synthesis. Until the 1980s this synthesis was usually both practical and theoretical. By requiring very few, if any, Bible and theology courses, these institutions communicated a practical separation of knowledge of the world and knowledge of God.[17] For most of the century, they backed their practical synthesis with theory. Many agreed with Mullins at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary that theology should be kept separate from other academic disciplines.[18] These colleges usually followed the same path of earlier denominational colleges, liberalizing slowly and freeing themselves from religious moorings as soon as it was financially feasible.[19] During the 1980s, conservative Protestants began emphasizing theological integration in their liberal arts institutions.[20] In fact, Joel Carpenter and Kenneth Shipps suggest this

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[15] The Moody Institute of Science led by Irwin Moon provides an excellent example of this approach to non-biblical subjects. Gene A. Getz, *MBI: The Story of Moody Bible Institute* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969), 314-321.

[16] Brereton, *Training God's Army*, 36.

[17] Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps eds., *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1987), xv.

[18] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 216; Edwin Mims, *Chancellor Kirkland of Vanderbilt* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1940), 319.

[19] Ringenberg, *The Christian College*, 131-135.

[20] Thomas A. Askew, "The Shaping of Evangelical Higher Education Since World War II," in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of*

theological turn was the result of interaction with the Bible college movement.[21] However, the influence of the evangelical renaissance and the Dutch Reformed tradition could also account for these changes.

The Influence of Abraham Kuyper and the Evangelical Renaissance

Noll argues that what little evangelical intellectualism emerged during the twentieth century was derived from reconnecting with Reformation thinkers. Abraham Kuyper provided that connection at the end nineteenth century. Princeton theologians such as Charles Hodge and Warfield defended orthodox Calvinism well, but they had limited its influence to matters of biblical inerrancy, ecclesiology, and theology.[22] Speaking at Princeton during his 1898 visit to America, Kuyper called for a holistic Calvinism that went far beyond Hodge and Warfield's wildest dreams. He saw Calvinism as a "life system" founded on Reformed theology.[23] Although Warfield lambasted these lectures, Kuyper's legacy has informed much of the conservative Protestant thought of the twentieth century through Calvin College, Wheaton University, and Eerdmans Publishing.

According to Kuyper, the sinfulness of humans hampered their ability to perceive the world properly because the world could only be known truly in right relation to its

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Evangelical Colleges in America, eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1987), 149.

[21] Carpenter and Shipps, *Making Higher Education Christian*, xv.

[22] James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2013), 263.

[23] Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, 263.

creator.[24] God's common favor on Christians and non-Christians alike allowed science to "blossom" in all lands.[25] However, once someone became a Christian and was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, their ability to understand the world and to think began to be reordered.[26] Intentionally applying the Bible (through the interpretive lens of Calvinism) to all areas of knowledge was the practical working out of this change.[27] The result was a Christian worldview that theologically engaged all of life, founding reason on faith. Here Kuyper was not only recalling Calvin, but Augustine. For all three, knowledge was pursued in light of faith and purified by God's word present in the Bible.[28]

Kuyper provided many conservative Protestants with the theological and philosophical ammunition necessary to develop a Christian life of the mind. Intellectual leaders like Carl F. H. Henry, Edward J. Carnell, and Harold Ockenga were influenced by Kuyper to begin reclaiming an Augustinian epistemology during the 1940s.[29] This movement was known as the evangelical renaissance. Henry's *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) proved particularly effective in drawing conservative

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[24] Abraham Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder: Common Grace in Science and Art*, eds. Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (1905; trans., Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2011), 50-51.

[25] Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder*, 52-53.

[26] Ibid., 52.

[27] Ibid., 79-80.

[28] Augustine of Hippo, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39

[29] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 72.

Protestants into more sustained reflection about their engagement with the world.[30] Beyond ethical engagement, this work introduced many conservative Protestants to worldview thinking.[31] Later in the century, Francis Schaeffer provided a more detailed, lay application of Kuyper's approach to worldview thinking.[32] Through these thinkers, Augustinian epistemology began to remake the conservative Protestant intellectual landscape. However, this was not the only source of intellectual revitalization.

The Free Will Baptist Mind

Kuyper's thinking mediated through Henry and Schaeffer has proven very effective for developing sustained theological reflection among evangelicals, however for some their work only confirmed and enhanced a process already in motion. Despite Noll's dour analysis of evangelical doctrine's inability to stimulate a Christian life of the mind, some evangelicals have used it to develop a deeply theological understanding of the world. Embracing biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism did not always result in a continuation of the Thomist synthesis.

Free Will Baptist Bible College shows how a Christian life of the mind developed from evangelical theology. Admittedly, Noll's evangelical mind describes several aspects of Free Will Baptist higher education, especially during the 1940s and 1950s. However,

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[30] Richard J. Mouw, "Foreword," in Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947; rep., Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), xi.

[31] Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947; rep., Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 44.

[32] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 108.

the theologically integrated approach to education developed by L. C. Johnson, F. Leroy Forlines, and Robert E. Picirilli complicates Noll's thesis. Although the works of Henry and Schaeffer influenced these men, their arguments for holistic theological application are founded on evangelical doctrines.

L. R. Ennis's tenure at Free Will Baptist Bible College fits the mold of Noll's model of evangelical thinking. Ennis's concept of higher education was limited to biblical instruction and training in ministry. This approach reflected his training at Moody Bible Institute.[33] During his brief presidency, Free Will Baptist Bible College offered no courses that were not directly applicable to ministry and evangelism. The few general education courses offered were taught as aids to biblical knowledge or communication of the gospel.[34] He undergirded these changes by reorienting the school's founding narrative to focus on evangelism.[35] In addition, he specifically limited the school's purpose to practical evangelism and "efficient Christian service" in his 1945 *Lumen* article.[36] Under his administration, Christian education did not include thinking about the world.[37] The college was a place only for practical Christian training in

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[33] L. C. Johnson, interview by Paul Vernice Harrison, October 25, 1983.

[34] See *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1945-1946* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1945) and *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1946-1947* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1946).

[35] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1946-1947*, 9.

[36] L. R. Ennis, "The Purpose of the College" *Lumen 1944-1945* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1945), 2.

[37] "Christian Education," *Lumen 1944-1945*, 6.

evangelism, ministry, missions, and church administration.[38] Ennis exhibited all the traits of Noll's evangelical mind, but under Johnson's administration the college went in a different direction.

When North Carolina Free Will Baptists founded Mount Olive Junior College, they aimed for general education in a religious atmosphere. This college was started largely for political reasons.[39] However, the result was a school that intentionally set itself against the college in Nashville.[40] From the start, Mount Olive offered a much wider range of courses, focusing on the liberal arts.[41] This difference was highlighted under the leadership of Burkette Raper. Free Will Baptist Bible College offered training for Christian ministry; Mount Olive offered training for the rest of the denomination.[42] Raper set "Free inquiry" against the "narrow" and dogmatic education offered in Nashville. Daily chapel and a few required religion courses offered the necessary religious "atmosphere" that secular institutions had forsaken.[43] Thus, Mount Olive also adhered to the modern Thomist synthesis that Noll describes as the evangelical mind.

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[38] Ennis, "The Purpose of the College"; "Christian Education"; Johnson interview, October 25, 1983.

[39] Robert E. Picirilli, interview by author, Hermitage, Tennessee, April 21, 2016.

[40] "Report of Board of Christian Education," *Minutes of the North Carolina State Convention: 1951*.

[41] David W. Hansley, "Christian Education" *Free Will Baptist*, May 28, 1952.

[42] J. O. Fort, "Editorial," *Free Will Baptist*, September 1, 1954.

[43] Michael Pelt, "Christian Education for the Layman" presented at College Conference at Mount Allen Junior College March 16, 1955 and published in *Free Will Baptist*, March 30, 1955; Fort, "Editorial."

Both of these educational approaches confirm Noll. During his presidency, Ennis turned Free Will Baptist Bible College directly toward ministry instruction to the exclusion of all else. For him, "Christian education" was about evangelism; let secular institutions teach the knowledge of the world. On the other hand, Raper led Mount Olive Junior College to be an institution unfettered by dogma and sectarianism. Instead, he advocated intellectual freedom in all areas of thought, assuming that objective investigation would confirm traditional Free Will Baptist beliefs. Both Ennis and Raper tried to hold onto the same modern Thomist synthesis worked out over a hundred years earlier.

The Free Will Baptist Bible College Mind

Despite Ennis's intentions, Free Will Baptist Bible College, under the leadership of Johnson, developed into an institution with much broader aims. Although Johnson and his leading faculty were deeply committed to biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism, they did not approach education and the world the way that Noll describes. Although the difference could be ascribed to Carl Henry's influence on Forlines or Arminian theology, this is not the case. The college's defense of the hybrid education model did not draw directly from the Reformation or the evangelical renaissance. Rather, they emphasized every evangelical doctrine that Noll argues failed to produce a Christian life of the mind.

According to Noll this theologically integrated approach to knowledge and the world should have resulted from insights provided by the Reformation directly or through the evangelical renaissance. However, Forlines and Picirilli were developing their position from conservative Protestant foundations. Both men took a readings in Jacobus

Arminius course under Johnson while pursuing their undergraduate degrees.[44] Here, all three were engaging the thought of a theologian only slightly removed from classic Calvinism.[45] No doubt, this course affected each man's thinking.[46] Forlines and Picirilli became staunch advocates for classical Arminianism.[47] Picirilli even suggests this could be when they began to develop their Augustinian epistemology.[48]

On the other hand, one could argue that their thinking was derived from the followers of Kuyper. Carl Henry influenced Forlines' thinking in many ways. In 1968 Forlines wrote a small book entitled *Issues Among Evangelicals* that engaged Henry directly and in detail.[49] Forlines used Henry as a guide and conversation partner while

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[44] Robert E. Picirilli, "F. Leroy Forlines as Colleague and Friend," in *The Promise of Arminian Theology: Essays in Honor of F. Leroy Forlines*, eds., Matthew Steven Bracey and W. Jackson Watts (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2016), 278.

[45] Arminius is usually portrayed as a modern proponent of Pelagian heresy. However, Matthew Pinson has shown that Arminius was actually aligned with Reformed theology in almost every way; the exception being an adjusted understanding of predestination. See J. Matthew Pinson, "Jacobus Arminius: Reformed and Always Reforming," in J. Matthew Pinson*, Arminian and Baptist: Explorations in a Theological Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2015).

[46] Picirilli, "F. Leroy Forlines as Colleague and Friend," 278.

[47] See Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will: Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2002) and F. Leroy Forlines, *Classical Arminianism: A Theology of Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2011).

[48] Robert E. Picirilli, "The Legacy of F. Leroy Forlines and the State of Free Will Baptist Theology" (panel discussion presented by the Commission for Theological Integrity for the National Association of Free Will Baptists, Welch College, Nashville, TN, October 25, 2016).

[49] F. Leroy Forlines, *Issues Among Evangelicals* (Nashville, TN: The Commission on Theological Liberalism of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, 1968).

considering the inspiration of Scripture, evolution, the social gospel, and cooperative efforts among evangelicals. The two often agreed, but Forlines also readily disagreed with certain aspects of Henry's work.[50] Thus, it is tempting to argue that Forlines' thoughts on epistemology (and through him Picirilli's) were developed from his engagement with Henry and the evangelical renaissance.

However, Forlines and Picirilli were working creatively from their own background. Distinctive Arminian theological frameworks and terms were not employed as a foundation or defense of their work. Henry was never mentioned even though Safara Witmer's *The Bible College Story* (1962) was.[51] Twenty-five years later, Forlines admitted that his thinking on the Bible college movement was not completely formed in 1964.[52] However, during that time he began to have an "awareness of the problem of dealing with world-view thinking, though [he] did not use the term."[53] He related that during the 1980s he fully developed these earlier ideas.[54] By then, he was quoting Henry

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[50] Specifically, Forlines disagreed with the breadth of Henry's ecumenism and his approach to church-state relations. W. Jackson Watts, "Building a Forlinesean Ethic," in *The Promise of Arminian Theology: Essays in Honor of F. Leroy Forlines*, eds. Matthew Steven Bracey and W. Jackson Watts (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2016), 177-178.

[51] F. Leroy Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, [1964]), 1-2.

[52] F. Leroy Forlines, "The Responsibility of the Bible Department as it Relates to World View Thinking" (Nashville, TN: Unpublished paper presented to the faculty of Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1989), 2, in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[53] Forlines, "The Responsibility of the Bible Department as it Relates to World View Thinking," 2.

[54] Ibid.

at length, and both he and Picirilli were communicating a much more detailed Augustinian presuppositionalism.[55] However, during the 1960s these men were developing their epistemology on the foundation of their conservative Protestant commitments.

The school's ties to ultra-conservative Protestantism were strong. Johnson, Charles and Laura Thigpen, Picirilli, and a significant number of other faculty members all studied at Bob Jones University (hereafter BJU). Like many twentieth century evangelists, Bob Jones Sr. started his own educational institution to provide a safe haven from the "atheistic drift in educational institutions."[56] BJU was designed to provide a high-quality education while simultaneously protecting orthodox conservative Protestantism.[57] In order to fulfill this goal, the school emphasized Biblical inerrancy, evangelism, and separated holy living.[58] Each of these themes were central to the development of the Augustinian epistemology at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

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[55] See Forlines, "The Responsibility of the Bible Department as it Relates to World View Thinking"; F. Leroy Forlines, "On A Christian Worldview" (Presented at faculty meeting, Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, January 24, 1983), in Welch College Archive; and Picirilli, "Toward a Model for Integrating Faith and Learning."

[56] Melton Wright, *Fortress of Faith: The Story of Bob Jones University* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1960), 44.

[57] Wright, *Fortress of Faith*, 44-45.

[58] Mark Taylor Dalhouse, *An Island in the Lake of Fire: Bob Jones University, Fundamentalism and the Separatist Movement* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 31-32.

Free Will Baptists who were deeply concerned with preserving orthodoxy founded the denominational college.[59] Matching the denomination's desire, Johnson wrote in 1943 that the school was founded to fill an "orthodox" educational gap.[60] This meant that the Bible's authority and inerrancy for all subjects was central to their philosophy and curriculum.[61] The college published a short booklet in 1957 developed from chapel sermons by Picirilli and Forlines, arguing that the complete inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible was an essential orthodox doctrine.[62] The Bible's authority, they wrote, extended beyond doctrines to facts about history, science, and geography.[63]

This point was the foundation of the rest of their thought because for them "it is what God has said that matters."[64] They maintained that sin had corrupted humanity's ability to reason and understand without the assistance of God through the Bible.[65] This

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[59] Mrs. J. E. (Agnes) Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine," *Free Will Baptist*, January 24, 1940; George D. Dunbar, "The National Educational Program," *Free Will Baptist*, Dec. 14, 1938; Winford Davis, "Shall We Have A School?" *Free Will Baptist Gem*, April, 1940; Clyde C. Flannery, "The Need of Education," *Free Will Baptist*, February 14, 1940.

[60] L. C. Johnson, "Personal Word," in *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1943-1944* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1943), 5.

[61] Johnson, "Personal Word," in *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1943-1944*, 5.

[62] Leroy Forlines and Robert Picirilli, *Orthodoxy, Modern Trends, and Free Will Baptists* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1957), 12-13.

[63] Forlines and Picirilli, *Orthodoxy, Modern Trends, and Free Will Baptists*, 13.

[64] Ibid., 14.

[65] Ibid., 40-41.

firm doctrinal stance was worked out in both men's defense of the hybrid model of education. Both saw the infallibility, inerrancy, and centrality of the Bible as necessary for real Christian education.[66] All subjects needed to be addressed from this perspective in order to form a complete Christian philosophy of life.[67] Thus, from their commitment to orthodoxy and the inerrancy of Scripture, Forlines and Picirilli developed a modern Augustinian epistemology.

Many Free Will Baptists based their appeals for founding a college, at least in part, on evangelism training.[68] As Agnes Frazier suggested, well-educated Christians were needed to share the gospel in an articulate and intellectually honest way with the increasing numbers of educated Americans.[69] Johnson, in turn, committed the school to "spiritual fervor" for winning "lost souls."[70] Revivalism and evangelism were the

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[66] Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 2; Robert E. Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?" (Nashville, TN: Unpublished, [1971]), 2.

[67] Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?," 2; Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 3.

[68] Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine"; R. E. Tripp, "The School Problem," *Free Will Baptist*, Jan. 4, 1939; J. R. Davidson, "The Why of a National School," *Free Will Baptist Gem*, May, 1939.

[69] Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine."

[70] Johnson, "Personal Word," in *Free Will Baptist Bible College Bulletin: 1943-1944*, 5.

foundations of church growth for him.[71] Without these, churches were simply social organizations.[72]

Sharing the faith with unbelievers was also extremely important for Picirilli and Forlines. Both argued that spreading the gospel was one of the key reasons for jealously guarding orthodoxy.[73] One aspect of Picirilli's argument for incorporating any subject into Christian education was evangelism. He was "convinced that the secular world….need[ed] to see men and women on [sic] the work-a-day world who are living a Biblically-oriented life, who see their lives as a 'ministry' for Christ."[74] Forlines also realized the "responsibility of every Christian to contribute" to evangelism and argued that the hybrid approach best equipped men and women for that purpose.[75] Therefore, personal evangelism contributed to Free Will Baptist Bible College embracing a wider curriculum.

Although strict dispensationalism did not take hold among the majority of twentieth century Free Will Baptists, holy, separated living was emphasized by the denomination and the college. Various pastors such as Lizzie McAdams and B. F. Brown

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[71] L. C. Johnson, "From My Desk…," *Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (October-November, 1957).

[72] Johnson, "From My Desk…," *Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (October-November, 1957).

[73] Forlines and Picirilli, *Orthodoxy, Modern Trends, and Free Will Baptists*, 20-21.

[74] Picirilli, "How Broad the Umbrella?," 4.

[75] Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 3.

advocated for dispensationalist interpretations of the Bible.[76] However, most Free Will Baptists took a more moderate view.[77] And many, like Forlines, rejected the system directly, while still looking for the imminent return of Jesus.[78] Johnson held a moderate position, writing occasionally about the inevitable decline of society and the end of the age, but never dogmatically proclaiming specific schedules.[79] Regardless, dispensationalism did not play a significant role in the college's history.

Pure living separated from the sins of the world was still important.[80] Forlines and Picirilli argued that obedience to Scripture was essential for all true followers of Jesus.[81]

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[76] See Lizzie McAdams, *Go Tell That Fox: or Seven Keys of Prophecy* (Ayden, NC: Free Will Baptist Press, n.d.), in NAFWB Historical Collection; J. C. Griffin, "Notes and Quotes" *Free Will Baptist*, (April 30, 1941); and B. F. Bowen, *Earth's Prophetic Week* (Purdy, MO: Self-published, 1975), in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[77] See Damon C. Dodd, *The Book of Revelation: A Study Guide* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1973); Douglas J. Simpson, *The Book of Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1974); Douglas J. Simpson, *The Apocalypse: A Premillennial Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1975).

[78] See Matthew McAfee, "Forlinesean Eschatology: A Progressive Covenantal Approach," in *The Promise of Arminian Theology: Essays in Honor of F. Leroy Forlines*, eds. Matthew Steven Bracey and W. Jackson Watts (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2016).

[79] See L. C. Johnson, "From My Desk…" *Bulletin* 6, no. 5 (April, 1958) and L. C. Johnson, "From My Desk" *Bulletin* 14, no. 10 (June, 1966).

[80] M. B. Hutchinson, "St. Claire Bible Class" *Free Will Baptist*, April 30, 1941; Agnes Brinkley Frazier, "The Choice Before Us," *Free Will Baptist*, June 11, 1941; W. R. Spurlock, "A Living Sacrifice," *Free Will Baptist Gem*, September, 1942.

[81] Forlines and Picirilli, *Orthodoxy, Modern Trends, and Free Will Baptists*, 13-14. For later, more detailed articulations of this emphasis see F. Leroy Forlines, *Cheap-easy Believism* (Nashville, TN: Commission on Theological Liberalism of the National

Although the first written standards of conduct appeared in the college catalog during the Ennis years, Johnson expected strict adherence to "clean and holy living" throughout his presidency.[82] A strong moral code was enforced, as well as directives in personal spirituality and refinement.[83] Although sin was to be avoided, this did not mean that the physical world was evil or unimportant. Rather, for them, Christians were to remain pure in their faith and practice no matter whether it was publicly popular or not.[84]

Before the college opened, Frazier called for an institution that would teach all subjects from a Christian worldview so that Free Will Baptists would be able to save civilization.[85] Johnson incorporated non-biblical subjects into the curriculum from the start. Laura Thigpen's literature courses presented literature as a worthy object of consideration upon its own merits.[86] More directly, Forlines argued that being a student of the world was important because humanity had been given dominion over creation by God in Genesis 1:26.[87] Being a good steward of creation demanded serious study of

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Association of Free Will Baptists, 1975) and Robert E. Picirilli, *Discipleship: The Expression of Saving Faith* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 2013).

[82] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Student Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1976-1977), 4.

[83] Ibid., 4-8.

[84] See Forlines and Picirilli, *Orthodoxy, Modern Trends, and Free Will Baptists* and F. Leroy Forlines, "Free Will Baptists and Theological Separation" (unpublished paper, 1970), in NAFWB Historical Collection.

[85] Frazier, "Your Opportunity and Mine."

[86] *Free Will Baptist Bible College Catalog: 1948-1949*, 24.

[87] Forlines, *A Look at the Bible College Approach to Christian Education*, 3-4.

God's gifts.[88] Therefore, men and women were called by God to enjoy creation by studying and ruling it. Thus, a firm commitment to the authority of Scripture, holy living, and evangelism led Forlines, Picirilli, and the college to embrace studying the world. This does not match Noll's assertion that these doctrines led to disengagement with the world.

Instead, over the next four decades Free Will Baptist thought exploded. Forlines and Picirilli set the pace for thinking theologically about a whole host of subjects. Under their guidance, Free Will Baptist theological understanding and articulation became much more complex and pointed.[89] This developed theology was applied to philosophy focusing on worldview thinking and presuppositionalism.[90] Forlines developed a biblical approach to ethics that engaged the whole person and subjected moral decisions to theology.[91] He also became interested in psychology and worked to apply theology here.[92] The intellectual heirs of Forlines and Picirilli have applied their theological

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[88] Ibid., 4.

[89] See F. Leroy Forlines, *Systematics: A Study of the Christian System of Life and Thought* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 1975); F. Leroy Forlines, *The Quest for Truth: Answering Life's Inescapable Questions* (Nashville, TN; Randall House, 2001); Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will: Contrasting Views of Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2002); J. Matthew Pinson ed., *Four Views on Eternal Security* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002); and F. Leroy Forlines, *Classical Arminianism: A Theology of Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2011).

[90] See F. Leroy Forlines, "Dealing with the Influence of Epistemological Atheism" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity Theological Symposium, Nashville, TN, October 25, 1996); and Robert E. Picirilli, *Worldview Thinking: The Christian's Introduction to Philosophy* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1998).

[91] See F. Leroy Forlines, *Biblical Ethics: Ethics for Happier Living* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 1973).

grounding even more broadly. Some developed a presuppositional approach to apologetics.[93] Historical theology developed as an important study, focusing primarily on the Arminian and Baptist traditions, but also extending into the medieval and early church.[94] Historical theology sometimes tied in with theological studies of ecclesiology.[95] While many of these works focused on uniquely Free Will Baptist interests, others were broader in nature engaging cultural trends.[96] Thus, their influence spread not only into the

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[92] See F. Leroy Forlines, *A Theological Approach to Personality* (Nashville, TN: Free Will Baptist Bible College, n.d.).

[93] See David Fite, "Can We Prove Our Faith?" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity Theological Symposium, Moore, OK, October 24-25, 1997); and F. Leroy Forlines, "Contrasting Evangelism and Apologetics Under Modernism and Post-modernism" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity Theological Symposium, Moore, OK, November 4-5, 1999).

[94] See Robert E. Picirilli, "Arminius and the Deity of Christ" *Evangelical Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (January, 1998): 51-59; J. Matthew Pinson, "The Diversity of Arminian Soteriology: Thomas Grantham, John Goodwin, and Jacobus Arminius" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity Theological Symposium, Nashville, TN, November 6, 1998); Kevin L. Hester, "The Sources and Content of Late Medieval Pastoral Care and its Implications for Today" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity Theological Symposium, Nashville, TN, November 6, 1998); and J. Matthew Pinson, *Arminian and Baptist: Explorations in a Theological Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2015).

[95] See J. Matthew Pinson, "Reforming Worship: Historical and Theological Reflection" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity Theological Symposium, Moore, OK, November 4-5, 1999); Robert D. Hidde, "Reforming Worship: Historical and Theological Reflection" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity Theological Symposium, Moore, OK, November 4-5, 1999); and J. Matthew Pinson ed. *Perspectives on Christian Worship: 5 Views* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009)..

[96] See Gene Robertson, "Postmodernism and Culture" (paper presented at the National Association of Free Will Baptists Commission for Theological Integrity

college and students, but into the denomination and broader conservative Protestant world.

As Free Will Baptist Bible College sought to meet the educational needs of the denomination, it developed a second evangelical mind. The possibility of limiting the college's curriculum to ministry training was rejected when Johnson returned in 1947. Seeing that the old Thomist synthesis had failed their Free Will Baptist forbearers at the old colleges and contemporaries at Mount Olive, the faculty of Free Will Baptist Bible College set about constructing a new epistemology from their core doctrines. The inerrancy of Scripture provided their foundation. Since it was authoritative in all matters of doctrine, science, history, and geography, they trusted it to provide them with the base assumptions upon which to build a philosophy for all of life. The Bible's authority also demanded that the world be taken seriously as a gift that must be responsibly overseen. Because they believed all Christian were called to evangelize lost sinners, they argued that all Christians should be trained to evangelize and think "Christianly" about their vocations.

The Johnson Bible College Mind

While Free Will Baptist Bible College's approach to education is not shared by most conservative Protestant institutes of higher education, it is certainly not alone. Johnson Bible College (formerly The School of the Evangelists) in east Tennessee also developed a hybrid approach to education, but their reasoning was slightly different.

Theological Symposium, Moore, OK, October 24-25, 1997); J. Matthew Pinson, Mathew Steven Bracey, Matthew McAffee, and Michael A. Oliver, *Sexuality, Gender, and the Church: A Christian Response to the New Cultural Landscape* (Nashville, TN: Welch College Press, 2016).

Other colleges that take a similar approach suggest an even larger swath of conservative Protestants that do not fit Noll's thesis.

Johnson Bible College (hereafter JBC) was founded by Disciples of Christ evangelist Ashley S. Johnson as a school for evangelists. Johnson was born in 1857 in Knox County, Tennessee, and was educated to be a teacher and lawyer.[97] At the age of twenty he became a Christian during a Baptist revival and started preaching the next week.[98] Johnson was highly intelligent and wrote extensively, producing periodicals, Bible encyclopedias, Bible commentaries, hermeneutical and doctrinal studies, devotional literature, and an autobiography.[99]

Johnson saw a need for a school to train evangelists and began with a correspondence school in 1886 that enrolled nearly three thousand students over the next twenty-six years.[100] In 1893, Johnson founded a physical college in Kimberlin, Tennessee, making it the fourth oldest Bible college in America.[101] It was intended for poor southern preachers who were unable to afford a college education.[102] The college

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[97] L. Thomas Smith, Jr., *Above Every Other Desire: A Centennial History of Johnson Bible College, 1893-1993* (Kimberlin Heights, TN: Johnson Bible College, 1993), 19-20.

[98] Smith, *Above Every Other Desire*, 21.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., 26-27.

[101] Ibid., 24.

[102] Ibid., 24-25.

began with 42 students and a threefold focus: training evangelists, a Bible-centered curriculum, and cheap education for the poor.[103] The school grew rapidly. When Johnson died in 1925, nearly 4000 students had enrolled and 200 had graduated from the evangelist's college.[104]

No denominational entity owns and operates JBC. However, Johnson limited the board of trustees to Church of Christ men, two-thirds of whom had to be graduates of the school.[105] Revivalism and evangelism were central to the Restoration Movement led by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone.[106] Campbell and Stone started independently during the Second Great Awakening of the nineteenth century to restore Christianity to its New Testament roots. They emphasized strict Biblicism, holy living, and Christian unity. From their work the churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, and Christian churches were born, broadly referred to as the Restoration Movement. Historian Thomas Smith states that a "concern for education appeared as an important sidelight to this era of revival."[107] Evangelism was indeed central to the school's mission, which was "molded" during a time of intense revivalism.[108]

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[103] Ibid., 44, 54.

[104] Ibid., 57.

[105] Ibid., 84.

[106] Ibid., 22.

[107] Ibid., 23.

[108] Ibid., 19, 24.

Johnson was clear from the beginning that the Bible was central to the college's curriculum.[109] This reflected the Restoration Movement's "strong commitment to the authority of the Bible."[110] Smith suggests that Johnson was especially influenced by the strict biblicism of Campbell, whom he admired greatly.[111] Highlighting the Restorationist approach to the Bible, Johnson emphasized biblical instruction even over ministry training.[112] As the school expanded, this commitment remained strong. The Bible was the "lens through which Christians view the world."[113] It was the foundation of the curriculum.

From the school's founding, JBC offered liberal arts education, but only as a supplement to the Bible courses. The Bible courses provided one fourth of the course work during the early years.[114] The general education course were offered because of their "value to the mind."[115] Yet these subjects were to remain separate and subservient to

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[109] Ibid., 30.

[110] Ibid., 49.

[111] Ibid., 49-50.

[112] Jeffery G. Campbell, "A Comparative Study of Curriculum Development of Johnson Bible College and Moody Bible Institute" (master's thesis, Emmanuel School of Religion, 1970), 11.

[113] *Johnson Bible College Undergraduate Catalog: 2000-2002* (Knoxville, TN: Johnson Bible College, 2000), 3.

[114] Smith, *Above Every Other Desire*, 50.

[115] *Annual Announcements of the School of the Evangelists* (Kimberlin Heights, TN: Johnson Bible College, 1906), 6 in Campbell, "A Comparative Study of Curriculum Development of Johnson Bible College and Moody Bible Institute" (master's thesis, Emmanuel School of Religion, 1970), 50.

Bible study.[116] Therefore, the college adhered to a modern Thomist synthesis of knowledge at first. By the end of the twentieth century, however, the college cultivated Christian worldviews.[117]

Over the years a small number of female students attended the college, even though the Restoration Movement did not allow women to preach.[118] Smith argues that during the 1960s their presence eventually led the college to shift its focus to preaching and "teaching" the gospel.[119] However, degree offerings expanded during the 1950s, including a Masters of Theology and Bachelor's degrees in Sacred Music along with an education and secretarial minor.[120] Beginning in the 1970s, the Restoration Movement embraced the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which gives all Christians the responsibility to minister to the world. This forced the college to further broaden its mission, though it remained dedicated to direct Christian ministry.[121] Ten years later the college expanded to include several non-ministerial degrees, including nursing and special education, but each student was required to take thirty hours of Bible and

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[116] Campbell, "A Comparative Study of Curriculum Development of Johnson Bible College and Moody Bible Institute," 50-51.

[117] *Johnson Bible College Undergraduate Catalog: 2000-2002*, 2-3.

[118] Smith, *Above Every Other Desire*, 91.

[119] Ibid., 116-117.

[120] Ibid., 115.

[121] Ibid., 148-149.

theology to graduate.[122] By the end of the century, Johnson's purpose was adjusted to include training for Christian leadership and community service, which could be interpreted broadly enough to include nearly any academic subject.[123]

Teachers in non-biblical fields were expected to have the same theology in the classroom as in church.[124] Or, as Johnson had put it, teachers were expected to be "competent and faithful exponents of the Word of God."[125] These statements suggest a protean Augustinianism that assumed Christians would apply their theology to all of life. In practice, the Thomist synthesis may have dominated. During the last decade of the twentieth century, the college shifted to a presuppositional epistemology. In 2000, teaching Christian ministry demanded that cultivating worldview thinking become a key component of the school's purpose.[126] All subjects were taught through the lens of Scripture.[127] It is not clear what led JBC in this direction. Perhaps they were influenced by the evangelical renaissance, but their description links worldview thinking directly to evangelism and biblicism.[128]

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[122] Ibid., 156.

[123] *Johnson Bible College Undergraduate Catalog: 2000-2002*, 2.

[124] Smith, *Above Every Other Desire*, 114.

[125] Campbell, "A Comparative Study of Curriculum Development of Johnson Bible College and Moody Bible Institute," 95.

[126] *Johnson Bible College Undergraduate Catalog: 2000-2002*, 2.

[127] Ibid., 3.

[128] *Johnson Bible College Undergraduate Catalog: 2000-2002*, 2.

A Second Evangelical Mind

Most histories of conservative Protestant higher education are too broad in nature to deal with the underlying philosophies of individual schools. Witmer, Brereton, and McKinney have all provided excellent overviews of the Bible college movement. However, the breadth of their work limited their ability to engage specific purpose statements and philosophical backgrounds. Ringenberg has similarly focused on larger subjects and therefore papered over detailed analysis of conservative Protestant higher education institutions individually. In these larger studies, the hybrid model of education has been described as a unique approach sought by only a few institutions.

The hybrid schools that have received attention are anomalies in themselves. Calvin was founded by the CRC and reflects their Reformed and Dutch background more than American evangelicalism.[129] Wheaton's development of a theologically integrated curriculum was derived directly from Calvin in the 1960s, and it is supported by a broadly evangelical constituency.[130] Neither of these colleges are normative for conservative Protestants or the hybrid education model.

In-depth, critical studies of conservative Protestant institutions have been rare. Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (1995) provided good insights into how fundamentalists began working toward a robust intellectualism during the 1940s. The next year, Dalhouse's *An Island in the Lake of Fire:*

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[129] Ringenberg, *The Christian College*, 100-102.

[130] Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religions Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 105-106.

Bob Jones University, Fundamentalism, and the Separatist Movement showed how "ultrafundamentalists" approached education and engagement with the world. And Adam Laats' forthcoming *Fundamentalist U: Keeping the Faith in American Higher Education* (2017) should offer more detailed analysis of several prominent conservative institutions. However, as Askew suggested in 1987, until detailed comparative studies are made of these institutions, it will be "difficult to generalize about intellectual trends with any confidence."[131] The histories of Free Will Baptist Bible College and Johnson Bible College highlight Askew's point.

Both institutions complicate Noll's thesis by suggesting that a life of the mind founded on evangelical doctrines began among some conservative Protestants as early as the 1960s. Free Will Baptists were very concerned about the Bible and holiness, but in order to protect those very doctrines, the school's faculty worked out a theologically integrated approach to education. The inerrancy and authority of Scripture required all knowledge to be subjected to its claims. However, this same doctrine also suggested to Forlines that humans had a responsibility to God to study nature. Because all Christians were called to share the gospel message with the world, he and Picirilli argued that every student should be taught to evangelize and think "Christianly" about their vocation. In the process, they developed a modern Augustinianism that founded reason on faith. This work provided the impetus for exponential intellectual growth among Free Will Baptists over the rest of the century.

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[131] Askew, "The Shaping of Evangelical Higher Education Since World War II," 140.

Johnson Bible College started sixty years earlier than the Free Will Baptist college, but only began speaking of worldviews after a century. Once the college did engage presuppositionalism, it did so from a uniquely evangelical perspective. JBC was started for one purpose—to train evangelists and preachers. Such a narrow mission would have allowed a vocational approach to education, but Johnson was committed to educate the whole person by including the liberal arts. Even though the school adopted the modern Thomist synthesis for its first century, they were able to hold on to their orthodoxy. When the school did begin to engage worldviews and presuppositionalism, they did so primarily in the context of their historic purpose. Worldviews were important for reaching the lost with the gospel. The college's commitment to the inerrancy and authority of Scripture eventually led them to adopt a modern Augustinian approach to knowledge as well, speaking of the Bible as the lens through which they understood the whole world.

These colleges suggest Noll's description of the evangelical mind needs to be reassessed. Certainly, the Thomist synthesis of faith and reason was carried into the twentieth century by many conservative Protestants. Ennis and Raper and their respective institutions provide two excellent examples for Noll. However, Free Will Baptist Bible College under the administration of Johnson and Johnson Bible College suggest a more complex evangelical mind developing over the twentieth century.

Conclusion

Conservative Protestants have carried on a contentious relationship with higher education and the life of the mind since the eighteenth century. Historians have suggested that much of this dysfunction is the result of revivalism and the synthesis of faith and

reason. Revivalism turned a well ordered Protestantism toward fervent piety focused on emotional experiences. When Baconian science fell out of favor in the late nineteenth century and evolutionary thought began to call into question the fundamentals of the faith, conservative Protestants did not have the intellectual ammunition to defend themselves. Therefore, they embraced their separatist tendencies, held tightly to their orthodoxy, and left the modern world to its own devices.

Mark Noll nuanced this narrative nicely by drawing out the intellectual uniqueness of conservative Protestantism. He argued that revivalism's emphasis on immediate personal decisions and anti-traditionalism were quickly wedded to democratic ideas of personal liberty. Religious freedom encouraged competition among these groups, who competed for potential converts. Applying Baconian science to their theology engendered a utilitarianism aimed at winning souls through formulaic revivals. By the end of the nineteenth century, these factors resulted in a conservative Protestant doctrinal emphasis on biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism. Noll argued that these doctrines short-circuited the evangelical mind, leaving them unable to apply theology to other realms of knowledge. Thus, when conservative Protestants' began building new higher education institutions, they separated knowledge of God from knowledge of the world. Retaining the old Thomist synthesis, the Bible college movement focused on Christian ministry training, excluding the liberal arts in an effort to protect orthodoxy. Liberal arts colleges, on the other hand, suffered from a lack of theological reflection and adopted modern modes of thinking about the world.

While Noll's argument is satisfying and explains many aspects of conservative Protestant public engagement over the twentieth century, it is not the whole picture.

Conservative Protestants were developing theological approaches to the world based on precisely the doctrines he posits were inhibitive. Colleges that were committed to the hybrid model of education provided the impetus for working out a new relationship between faith and reason. Too many times, conservative Protestants had seen the liberalizing effects of empiricism and modern thought on orthodoxy.

They concluded that the best way to protect orthodoxy without shutting out the world, was to approach knowledge of the world theologically. Commitment to biblical inerrancy and authority demanded this solution, because starting elsewhere undermined the authority for doctrine. Approaching every subject from a biblical perspective allowed them to build a Christian philosophy for all of life. This was also important for evangelism, since all men and women needed to be able to witness to the modern, educated public. Theological training would help them to remain orthodox in the face of the world's philosophy. From this foundation, Free Will Baptists began to write works that theologically engaged a wide array of subjects. Thus, from the conservative Protestant doctrines of biblical inerrancy and authority, separation from worldliness, and evangelism, the old Thomist synthesis was replaced by an Augustinian presuppositionalism that embraced all knowledge theologically.

Historians need to reassess the conservative Protestant mind of the twentieth century. The old narratives described a static mode of thinking that only changed with the introduction of classical Reformation theology. While this does describe aspects of their history, conservative Protestants were developing new modes of thinking from their own tradition, as well. After the denominational battles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most conservative Protestant groups were left without intellectual

leaders. Therefore, most had to build their own from the ground up. A detailed study of the philosophical underpinnings of individual hybrid institutions should provide new intellectual vistas showing forth the second evangelical mind.

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