



Building for the Future: *Draft Proposal for ICL*¹

Ted Ward

Present: Ted Ward, Margaret Ward, Martin Bush, James Worthington (S.P.U.), Glenn Van Wyhe (P.L.U.), Jerry Lerum (P.L.U.), Evelyn Coombe (P.L.U.), Arthur Roberts (George Fox), Ralph Nell (Northwest Nazarene College), Dale Orkney (George Fox), and LeVon Balzer (S.P.U.)

General Purpose: The creation of basic guideline documentation (draft form) to share with the colleges and individuals involved in the project with the understanding that the documents may be (should be) critiqued, amended, edited.

Opening Remarks: Ted Ward

The possibility of a group of institutions of this sort effecting the very shape and form of American higher education—having some say about the quality of life in America—is certainly not outside the realm of possibility. We should start with that kind of a broad theme. I have been party to a number of single institution and small consortium attempts to develop curriculum that would have a more substantial promise for the future. Many of these are very worthwhile in that they lead through an institutional soul-searching to some kinds of renovation, change, or transformation, some of which becomes emblematic. The problem is that there is a whole culture out there of higher education, and in a sense there is a whole culture of Christian higher education. To some extent that culture itself is stronger than the transforming power of any given institution. And if one looks at it sociologically one is inclined to argue that the pressures on the institutions individually, because of what the institutions are collectively, is so strong that it must be addressed by a broad front. In some respects there is a kind of change that needs to be made—a frontier that needs to be broken in Christian higher education—and any one institution attempting to do that may indeed be in jeopardy. But the collective, I believe, has greater hope.

When I speak of change and transformation, I certainly do not speak out of a sense of criticism, and definitely not hyper-criticism, but out of concern which I'm certain is equivalent to concern in your minds and hearts. We have found in this consortium that the willingness to address the questions of what is an adequate, indeed, a fitting Christian higher education has been such that it has been able to be an open question, and we have been willing to address it with a sense of possibility of change and development.

One of the parts of the motive for this project is the awareness of where we are in this century. You have probably noticed a kind of furor of futurism (1976, 1979, etc.), a concern about what the future will hold.

¹ Building for the Future: Draft Proposal for ICL. Seattle, Washington, July 28 – August 1, 1983. This document led to “Building for the Future: Statement of Philosophy, the Institute for Christian Leadership (ICL). Portland, February 21-22, 1991” in the Document Archives.

Almost since WWII there has been this kind of preoccupation. This may come to a peak in 1989, as people begin to speculate on what the decade of the 90's will bring. That decade may very well be a whole decade of almost obsessive concern for not just the century change, but the millennial change because humankind has yet seen with a great deal of consciousness of the calendar a millennial transformation. If you think about it, it is a kind of startling thing. It is one of those things which typically would hit us, and we would say, "I wish we would have thought about this, we could have been ready to say something." There is a sense in which this project has no less a vision than using the remainder of the 80's to create a clearer vision for the contributions of Christian higher education to scholarship and to moral, ethical, and intellectual thought in this whole society, so that a voice might be made clear in the decade of the 90's. Even if it were not that point in the century and, indeed, in the millennium, I think there would be justification for what we are about. But given that extra possibility it strikes me that we are in a very exciting moment with just exactly enough development time to really be ready to make an intensive statement and illustrate lifestyle, and illustrate a recapturing of intellectual vitality and a grounded moral ethical philosophy that would be something better than simple patriotic flag-waving; that would be something better than negative religion; that would be indeed the positive voice of Christianity at the end of the millennium.

Regardless of your eschatology you can recall that the wisdom of the watching women was reflected in their carrying extra oil lest indeed their timing system was off. And those who carried only the oil for the lamp because they were convinced that within that much oil the bridegroom would come. He referred to them as foolish. I would think, then, that regardless of your eschatology you would be wanting to find yourself among the wise, and that "wise" would suggest that we would prepare with great diligence for the potential of a longer wait. I am committing myself as a scholar and educator to a concerned platform-building activity between now and the year 2000. The potential exists for people to do reflective soul-searching. This is a great time for people to take seriously what they are really coming to as a society; and those of us who are committed to a positive voice for Christianity and for an academic and scholarly base for the activities of the Christian community certainly must be inspired by such a potentiality.

Now what do we do at a practical level? The first thing we attempted to do was to isolate a number of areas of concern in Christian higher education—especially here in the Northwest—other than those of a highly pragmatic, business management (how do we keep the institution afloat) kind. Our purpose was not, somehow, to reform the front office. Our concern was the scholarly concern about what goes on in the educational community; what it is to be engaged as a faculty and as a student in Christian liberal arts education. What of the clichés about liberal arts education needs to be critiqued and updated? What of the clichés about *Christian* higher education needs to be critiqued and brought up-to-date and projected into a more productive future? What within our institutions needs to be taken more seriously, because of its effect on the quality of the experience? What of the old rhetoric of faith and learning needs to be retooled to make it a more constructive and less of a remedial kind or a process? Those of you who have observed the last two decades of the faith and learning movement know that it tends to be largely remedial, and tends never quite to come to grips with what causes the problem. It takes for granted that somehow faith and learning are two facets of life that tend to fall into a dualism, and you tend to carry, as it were, water in both buckets. Is there really a condition of two buckets: Faith and Learning? Should this not be thought of in terms of a unity? Our Christian theology is certainly explicit on such matters, and our practice as Christian educators quite often falls shy of our theological understanding. These are hard matters because the Christian community has not been in the habit of producing its own high-level scholarship. There are in the United States few, if any, institutions which would qualify as Christian graduate schools of

any degree and breadth and with reference to the whole matter of the graduate school. In liberal arts areas there are pieces and parts here and there, and as total composites of true universities, hardly any. So therefore, the people who come into higher education are trained at least partly in secular society where if they themselves are not integrated people they become dualistic. Many of our faculty people today in our institutions are dualistic, trying somehow to reconcile two worlds they have learned to cope with so long as those two worlds do not present themselves at the same moment.

Most of us are very well aware that there is a better way. But there is not yet a clear-cut literature to support such transformation. Some of us fear and attempt to rush to a public with new messages about the urgency of intellectual integrity in the Christian community before we get our house in order. We fear rushing to that community, to that population of onlookers, before we have really done the homework that is necessary within the professional academic communities of scholarship within the institutions. That is why we are here. We are not attempting at this point to put in front of the public any particular noise of what needs to be done, or what we are trying to do. The worst thing at this point would be to engage in that kind of propagandistic ballyhoo, whether it gets into the popular press or into *Christianity Today*, or any of the rest of the insiders journals. This would create premature spectacle. We should treat this problem as scholars recognizing that there is tough homework to be done first.

This project has developed a vision for a series of topical problems. Among these topical problems we have asked for institutions individually to rate priorities in terms of their own institutional concerns and there is some degree of unanimity. Further, there are institutional needs that can be defined in terms of these problem areas, and institutional leadership people saying, "We would like to have some interaction and dialogue with other institutions that are working on these same problems, and participate in a larger community of scholarship."

That is why, tonight, we are not from one institution, but from five. We are at a position in this point of the project to start one major, high priority cluster activity. I am proposing that the shape and form of that cluster activity begin with some hard careful thinking that is put on paper. Whether it is put on paper at this point in any kind of polished final form, whether it is ready to be sent to a publisher next Tuesday seems to be a very secondary kind of question, though it would be nice to think in terms of having something ready to do some sharing around before too long. Our purpose now is not public publication, but the creating of basic guideline documentation that can be bounced back and forth, as it were, in a kind of round-robin critique and commentary for further contribution among our several institutions.

The fact that five institutions are represented here is the product of some deliberate decision that we would attempt first of all to focus on particular starting points and ask for participation from the institutions that had people to particularly offer to help on those key problems.

I am presuming that if we can set a pattern that gets something moving here we can take another area and organize yet another panel and get moving on that. This will probably represent some of the other institutions in a cluster. Thus we ultimately might have two or three working panels. I don't see the individual working panels working for a long period of time. We're asking to see what can be done in just a five day intensive this summer, and then hopefully some of you will find enough motivation and enough commitment and conviction on your own parts in this to follow through on some of the things that we are starting to move in the next few days, and that you will

find yourself thus represented in a round-robin document that moves around the institutions for interaction and consultation. We are also presuming that out of these dialogues and panels will come sets of people that can go to other institutions in a consultative role. It is presumed that there is a need for the inter-institutional sharing of expertise. Further, we are assuming that in some institutions there will be divisions or departments that are willing to take some development into curriculum change, experimental programs and new and innovative ways of getting at some things. Out of this documentation which we are going to start creating here will come some sense of clarity, some indicators of quality, and some sense of urgency about some things which ought to be tried; and some of you respectively may go back into your own institutions and see about it, encouraging some piloting of a given faculty in a particular thrust area that comes up out of this, and then share back into the consortium about what the consequences are and let that be evaluated in terms of its value and potentiality as a model for transformation and change in other institutions.

Institutional change takes time. There are very few good things which happen from accelerated, imposed structural change. The real things of consequence occur because people, over a period of time, deliberate them carefully, reflect on them evaluatively, and with a high degree of motivation move securely and steadily toward a change process. Institutions are transformed because people within it crave, desire and want. I believe that within the kinds of institutions you represent, there is, in the United States, one of the most honest sets of motives held at deep commitment levels that you will find anywhere. I am eager to see it thoroughly turned on, not from outside, but from inside.

What we propose to do is to see if in the next few days we can take the one main area of concern which has been defined in the language of the October Conference as “The Intellectual Substance of the Educated Christian” (The Nature of the Educated Christian). The issue of educational excellence and the major threats to intellectual integrity in American society are a part of this undergirding of the intellectual substance of the educated Christian. What I am hoping we can do is approach this from our several interest areas and disciplines. I would hope that we would not deal in generalities, but deal from the beginning in the concrete realities of your own disciplinary concerns as your frame of reference. We need to identify some of our greatest concerns within our disciplines.