Chapter 2

The Origins of the Fresno Pacific College Idea

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The 1964-1965 academic year began the third decade of Pacific College's existence. The year was climaxed by senior college accreditation and the graduation of Pacific's first senior college class. The transition from Bible institute to senior liberal arts college begun toward the beginning of the school's second decade was now complete. At this point the focus of the college shifted to issues of longer-term direction. What kind of college should Pacific become? This question motivated an intense period of master planning, which in its early stages led to the formation of the "Pacific College Idea."

The Idea of an Idea

"Idea" has been the favored word chosen by a variety of authors to signify a vision for a human activity. In higher education one might think of John Henry Newman's seminal nineteenth-century work, The Idea of a University,¹ or more recently Elton Trueblood's The Idea of a College,² or Arthur F. Holmes' The Idea of a Christian College.³
"The Pacific College Idea," originally written in 1966 and revised in 1982 and 1994, stands in this tradition. It is the vision for this particular college.

The Idea of an institution is really a coherent mix of ideas. It is a statement that reveals the center of an institution's identity, reason for existence, core values, view of communal order, and relationship to the world. Furthermore, an Idea is less a statement of present reality than a vision of the ideal. As such, it serves as a guide for the future, providing an anchor against aimless drift, a hedge against the fads of the moment. It is a dream of what might be, and so motivates continuing development and growth.

Institutions of learning need centers. Warren Bryan Martin, then a Research Educator at the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education at the University of California, observed in the mid-1960s:

There are not many colleges in America, and almost no state universities, characterized by values so distinctive as to really shape the life of the place. The value vacuum at the institutional center and the near anarchy with regard to norms and models everywhere else... leave the student either with no definite standard against which to test himself or with only the value presuppositions of various departments—unexamined within many departments and often conflicting among departments—out of which to devise some sort of total configurational awareness. The result is an identity crisis for the institution and a disintegrative learning experience for the student.

American universities have encouraged the exploration of ideological alternatives in the classroom. We know how to keep a lot of balls in the air at the same time. But the personal commitments of the faculties and administrators have seemed so malleable or so minimal that students have often concluded that a hierarchy of values is unnecessary or impossible. But a life without distinctions is boring, even as one without meaning is death. Men cannot live in a value vacuum any more than they can live in an oxygen vacuum.4

An institutional Idea, then, not only provides the center that is essential to the continuing renewal of life within the institution. It also enables the institution to most effectively realize its primary mission of teaching and learning.

In 1966, a few months after graduating its first senior class, the Pacific College faculty and administration embarked on a quest to form an Idea that would guide the further development of this
young college. This quest was motivated by a deep concern that the college be shaped not only through an adaptive response to the external needs of its environment and constituency, but most significantly by a center that reflected the core beliefs and values of its particular traditions. Though the results of the quest came to be called the “Idea,” it was not a Platonic or philosophical quest. Rather, it was a quest deeply rooted in the recognition that communities are fundamentally shaped by their “stories.” So the formers of the Idea returned to their key stories—the Christian story, the Anabaptist-Mennonite story, and the story of the Liberal Arts. They sought to articulate in the Idea a vision that integrated coherently the wisdom of these traditions from the perspective of Christ centeredness.

TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE FRESNO PACIFIC VISION

The Pacific College Idea of the mid-1960s was the culmination of several transformations in the vision of this changing school. Earlier visions can be deduced from statements of purpose and other related statements appearing generally in the Bible institute and early college catalogs. These serve as background to the formation of the Idea during the mid-1960s, and help to illuminate the continuities and discontinuities in the history of the institution.

The institution, since its beginning in 1944 as the Pacific Bible Institute, has consistently represented itself as a Christian and as a Mennonite Brethren-sponsored institution. Though church-related, it has also from the beginning represented itself as a non-sectarian institution embracing persons from various Christian traditions. The 1945-1946 bulletin, for example, contains the following statement:

The Pacific Bible Institute is a denominational school of the Mennonite Brethren Conference of the Pacific Coast District. The school as such, however, is not sectarian in its program of instruction, but it “earnestly contends for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” If there are doctrinal points in which our denomination differs from other groups of Believers, we do not in any way enforce our views upon them, but prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we examine the views in the light of the Scriptures.

We love Christian fellowship and extend a warm welcome to all students of other denominations who adhere to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, and are zealous in the promotion
of His Cause. Instruction is free (a small registration fee is charged of all students) to students of any denomination. 5

The statement reflects the traditional Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of faith as a voluntary rather than forced commitment. It also affirms the Scriptures as the authoritative guide to faith while opening the door to seeking truth together. It also invites like-minded persons into Christian fellowship across denominational boundaries. A form of this statement was included in subsequent annual catalogs of the institute. Later, a specific section on the non-sectarian nature of the college appeared in the Pacific College Idea.

With the transformation of Pacific Bible Institute into a liberal arts college, a deliberate decision was made to be not only non-sectarian, but to open the doors of the college even further to non-Christians. All students who wished to pursue an education in a Christian college, who met the academic requirements of the college and who were willing to commit themselves to the requirements of the community were welcome. This admission policy was viewed as consistent with the churches' mission of both evangelizing and discipling.

Educationally, the institution has moved through several transformations. It began as a Bible institute, evolving during the 1950s into a Bible institute/Bible college and then a Bible institute/junior college. In the early 1960s it was transformed to a junior college and later a senior college, and by the mid-1970s included graduate and professional education programs. In brief, these changes are mirrored in the statements of purpose put forward in the institute and college catalogs. The purposes and character of the original institute are suggested in the school's initial bulletin (1944) under the title "The Aims of the School":

1. To uphold a positive interpretation of the Scriptures.
2. To strive constantly to maintain a spiritual atmosphere which will tend to lead students into a fully consecrated life.
3. To develop a sincere love for mankind and an intense desire for their salvation.
4. To help each student acquire a skill in practical Christian work through a supervised program of personal work.
5. To uphold the principles of peace, separation from the world, simplicity of life, sanctity of the home, and diligent habits of industry.
6. To train and equip students for pastors, evangelists, S.S. workers, missionaries and personal soul winners.
The second year a seventh aim was added:

7. To instruct men and women in Christian thought, life and service and to hold in high regard the sacredness of the family institution.

These seven aims are repeated in each year's catalog through the 1949-1950 academic year. They represent evangelical Christian values and also the particular emphases on such matters as “peace, separation from the world, simplicity of life, sanctity of the home, and diligent habits of industry” that have been part of the larger Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of faith. Vocationally, they represent a Bible institute's narrower agenda of preparing workers for the church.

In 1950 several changes occurred. The seven earlier aims were reduced to five under the title of “Purpose of the School in General Terms”:

1. To give young people a thorough knowledge of the Bible, the Word of God.
2. To train them in the highest type of Christian living in whatever walk of life they may find themselves.
3. To prepare them for Christian service, in the homeland or mission fields abroad.
4. To fortify them against the various unscriptural philosophies of life.
5. To send forth sanctified Christ-like personalities, yielded and obedient to the Master.

This list is restated in each subsequent catalog through 1955-1956. As a more general summary of the earlier list of seven, this reformulated list deletes specific references to such historic emphases in the Mennonite tradition as “the principles of peace, separation from the world, simplicity of life,” and others identified particularly in the fifth aim of the earlier list. The fourth purpose in the new list—“To fortify them against the various unscriptural philosophies of life”—introduced for the first time a defensive tone into the statement of purposes.

The revised statement was amended with the addition of a two-year liberal arts curriculum in 1956-1957. The first purpose was revised as follows: “To give young people a thorough knowledge of the Bible, the Word of God, and a Bible based world and life view” (added words in italics). In 1957-1958 the fifth purpose was deleted.
The 1950s, in summary, represented a more generalized and yet narrower vision as judged from these public statements of purpose and curricular changes. The original purposes were reworked into more general statements, particular historic Anabaptist-Mennonite values such as peace were no longer specifically referenced, and a fortification purpose was introduced as a defense “against the various unscriptural philosophies of life.” These changes, together with the consistent decline in enrollment from a high of 190 students in the day program in 1949-1950 to a low of sixty-four in 1959-1960, suggest that by the end of the 1950s the institute was in both an identity and adaptive crisis.

The revisions of the statement of purposes in some ways paralleled a larger ideological narrowing that occurred in the country during the 1950s. It was the era of McCarthyism and the Cold War. The United States itself became a nation seeking to fortify itself against the larger evils of the world.

The 1960s, however, began on a different political note. Tapping into a reservoir of latent American idealism, President John F. Kennedy brought his 1961 inaugural address to a rousing climax with a strong challenge to the nation: “And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you: Ask what you can do for your country.” The foremost concrete expression of this idealism was the Peace Corps. When the idea of the Peace Corps was first put forward by Kennedy at the University of Michigan during a campaign stop in the fall of 1960, Richard N. Goodwin, one of Kennedy’s assistants at the time, reported that “seven hundred students... signed up for service in the nonexistent agency” within the first two days.

At Pacific College, a new idealism also was taking hold in 1960. This was a year of major transition in the life of the institution. In February of 1960 Arthur J. Wiebe became Director of the Institute and Junior College. In March Wiebe introduced a series of new initiatives to the Board, including the renaming of Pacific Bible Institute and Junior College to Pacific College. Other actions followed. As a result, enrollment increased in the fall of 1960 by roughly 40 percent and continued to increase in subsequent years. After a decade of declining enrollments, a new direction was established.

Change came quickly in the early 1960s. With movement toward a senior college program a new statement of purposes for the college was needed. On December 2, 1963 the faculty adopted a new statement proposed by faculty members Peter J. Klassen, Dalton Reimer
and John E. Toews. This statement reflected the culmination of the progressive transformation of the institution from a Bible institute to a senior Christian liberal arts college:

Pacific College is a church-related college of the arts and sciences. As a Christian college it encourages a personal commitment to Christ which is expressed in a life of discipleship. Believing in a basic unity of all truth, Pacific College is committed to the meaningful pursuit of truth in the various areas of knowledge and experience.

It is therefore the purpose of Pacific College:

1. To give the student an understanding and appreciation of the principal areas of human knowledge and of the arts and a sense of the proper place of these disciplines in the universe of knowledge.
2. To help the student form a system of spiritual, intellectual, social, and aesthetic values consistent with basic principles of historic Christianity.
3. To foster a vital concern for the religious and secular communities and encourage meaningful participation in these communities.
4. To assist the student in realistic self evaluation and the development of mature attitudes toward others.
5. To encourage the development of creative thinking, thoughtful investigation, and critical evaluation.
6. To train the student to communicate effectively.
7. To equip the student with adequate undergraduate training for his chosen area of service.

This statement was the immediate precursor to the Pacific College Idea. In reaffirming “a personal commitment to Christ which is expressed in a life of discipleship,” it followed the basic declaration of Christian faith as understood in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. The final statement of the preamble asserted the “basic unity of all truth” and so established the base for the larger agenda of a Christian liberal arts college. The seven purpose statements then expressed an integration of central Christian values with the expansive agenda of a liberal arts education.

MASTER PLANNING THE FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE

At the beginning of its life as a four-year college in the mid-1960s, the administration and faculty joined in a collaborative, comprehen-
sive master planning process to define the future of the college. It was a moment of opportunity. Having navigated a series of transitions and having successfully acquired senior college accreditation, attention now shifted to the longer-term future of the place. What kind of college should this become?

Creating a master plan for the future of the college was the immediate motivation for the development of the Idea. Conversation about academic master planning had begun in the Academic Committee in the fall of 1965. On February 2, 1966 the Academic Committee formally established a Master Planning Committee with the appointment of John Redekop (social sciences), Dalton Reimer (humanities), and John E. Toews (Biblical studies) as its members. Arthur J. Wiebe as President, Elias Wiebe as Dean of the Faculty, and Vernon Janzen as Dean of Students were ex-officio members of the Committee. Arthur J. Wiebe (administration) and Toews (faculty) were appointed as Co-Chairs.

In its first meeting on February 15, 1966, the new committee formed three subcommittees: a subcommittee on philosophy and objectives with Toews and Reimer as members, a subcommittee on programs with Redekop and Elias Wiebe as members, and a subcommittee on organization with Arthur Wiebe and Janzen as members.

With this structure in place the work of Master Planning the future of the college began. The summer of 1966 was a particularly intensive time for work. Co-chairs Wiebe and Toews attended a summer conference on academic planning sponsored by the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges (CASC). The subcommittee on philosophy and objectives led in formulating what during the process became the Pacific College Idea. John E. Toews served as the principal writer. At the end of the summer, on August 31 and September 2, an intensive workshop of the Master Planning Committee occurred. Several subcommittee reports were reviewed during these days, including a draft of the Idea. The Committee resolved to forward some of these reports to the faculty, including a revised Pacific College Idea. At the Faculty Workshop of September 8, 1966, the Pacific College Idea was first introduced to the faculty.

The master planning process itself was carefully defined from the beginning. Nine "working principles" for master planning were articulated. The first of these placed responsibility for this planning centrally in the community itself: "It is fundamentally assumed that the development and implementation of the college master-plan is the responsibility of the entire faculty" [italics in original]. The second principle announced freedom for "individual faculty mem-
bers, faculty committees, board members, or other individuals invited" to "initiate proposals or statements." Then "as each part of the plan is finalized by the committee it will be presented to the faculty and to the members of the board of education for evaluation, and to the student council as it seems appropriate."

The working principles recognized the importance of individual initiative, but also the ultimate primacy of the community. Independent thinking was important. Rodin's sculpture of a single seated man, bent over with elbow on knee and chin resting on hand, with gaze downward in deep thought, captures well the hope of the Master Planning Committee for significant independent thinking and reflection. But interdependent thinking was ultimately intensive, rigorous and determinative. Interdependent thinking entailed community, and community has been a central tenet of the Fresno Pacific Idea since its inception. Community did not negate independent thinking, but placed independent thinking in dialogue with other thinking. The community became the arena for testing, shaping and refining ideas. Some ideas merited discarding, others enhancing. The hermeneutic of community is one of "unfolding" rather than "imposing," to use Martin Buber's image. In the end, communities that participate in creating an idea will more likely own the idea.

To call attention to the importance of the community in forming the Idea is not insignificant. Institutions originate and change in different ways. They are sometimes the creation of single, strong leaders. But the way of the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition is to create through community. This did not negate the importance of strong leadership. President Arthur J. Wiebe was such a leader. Rather, it reflected an ideological commitment to a particular way of creating in which the President together with others still led, but the community was involved in a partnership that allowed for the full exercise of giftedness within the community.

THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY OF THE MID-1960S

A college is in reality several primary sub-communities, including students, faculty, staff, administration, and board of trustees. Each sub-community is important and contributes in unique ways to the life of a college. In the larger history of the institute and college, the vision, dedication and commitment of the early boards and leaders was exemplary. The forward looking and innovative disposition of the unified Mennonite Brethren Board of Education that came into
being in 1954 was particularly critical in making the developments of the 1960s possible.

But the administration and faculty of the mid-1960s assumed special responsibility for leading in master planning and creating the Pacific College Idea. Sixteen fulltime faculty and teaching administrators are listed in the 1965-1966 college catalog, the academic year that master planning officially began. Of these only two had joined the faculty before 1960. Essentially a new faculty had been built since the transition in 1960.

This faculty consisted of bright, young Mennonite Brethren who had pursued undergraduate studies in both the institutions of the church and secular colleges and universities. They had pursued graduate studies in seminary and major American universities. They were intellectually equipped to pursue other opportunities, but they chose to return to their Mennonite Brethren roots. Except for the President and the Academic Dean, all had earned their bachelor degrees during the 1950s and early 1960s. In age they were mostly in their late twenties and early thirties. They were generally fresh out of seminary or university master's or doctoral programs.

While loyal to the Mennonite Brethren Church that had nurtured them, they were also in contact with other worlds. Key leaders among the faculty had connected along the way with this century's renaissance of Anabaptist studies. For them the theological roots of the Mennonite Brethren were found in the larger Mennonite and Anabaptist tradition. For some, Harold S. Bender's summative mid-century statement of "The Anabaptist Vision" became a kind of confession. Albert Keim, contemporary Mennonite historian, has called Bender's statement, originally the 1943 presidential address to the American Society of Church History, "the most influential Mennonite speech of the 20th century." Bender set forth three core truths as the essence of the Anabaptist vision: "First, a new conception of the essence of Christianity as discipleship; second, a new conception of the church as a brotherhood; and third, a new ethic of love and nonresistance."

The "Anabaptist vision" took hold at the college during the early 1960s. With the coming of Peter J. Klassen in 1962, with a Ph.D. in Reformation-Anabaptist history, the course in Mennonite History (as distinguished from the narrower Mennonite Brethren History) was re-introduced into the curriculum. Persons from the larger Mennonite community spoke in college chapels. The Mennonite Graduate Fellowship under the leadership of John E. Toews met on campus. During the intensive period of master planning itself from
1966-1968, Albert J. Meyer, a resourceful expert and guide in Mennonite higher education, was brought to campus for consultation. But faculty members were also in contact with worlds beyond the larger Mennonite world. They were schooled in their particular disciplines and in touch with their appropriate disciplinary professional communities. College membership and active participation in the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges (CASC) brought faculty and administrators in contact with small colleges across America, as well as resource persons in American higher education. Participation in the Federal Government's Title III Developing Institutions program beginning in the mid-1960s created yet another set of contacts. Through frequent accreditation visits in the 1960s the college also benefited from the insights of visiting team members and leaders in the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

While connected to multiple worlds and eager to learn from these worlds, there was nevertheless a strong spirit of nonconformity and independence. Trends and currents in American higher education received intensive scrutiny, but in the end the focus was on growing a college that would contribute to the larger good by bearing witness to the distinctive tradition in which it was rooted. Little interest existed in growing another generic Christian college. The faculty sought to insure that Pacific College as a Mennonite Brethren institution would remain faithful to its particular theological heritage. The spirit was analogous to that of the founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church itself just over a century before. While charting a new course as a renewal movement in nineteenth century Russia, the founders made it clear that they were still children of Menno Simons and so were intent on pursuing a faith rooted in a serious commitment to following Jesus in all of life.

The Shape of the Idea

The original Idea of 1966 was organized in seven sections. Each section captured a key characteristic of the college:

- Pacific College is a Christian College
- Pacific College is a Community
- Pacific College is a Liberal Arts College
- Pacific College is an Experimental College
- Pacific College is an Anabaptist-Mennonite College
- Pacific College is a Non-Sectarian College
- Pacific College is a Prophetic College
Three sections speak particularly to the identity of the college, its reason for existence, and its core values. These sections locate the college at the confluence of three major streams of history: Christian, Anabaptist-Mennonite, and Liberal Arts. As a post-classical institution it is a liberal arts college; as a post-Judaic institution it is a Christian college; as a post-Reformation institution it is an Anabaptist-Mennonite college. The historical conversation among these traditions has shaped the interpretive center of the institution.

The vision for community growing out of the confluence of the Christian, Anabaptist-Mennonite and Liberal Arts streams of history is articulated in the section on community. The college's self-understanding of its relationship to the world is expressed in the three remaining sections: non-sectarian, prophetic, and experimental.

The sections of the Idea are not mutually exclusive. They overlap and interact with each other. Together they form a picture of the whole. They portray the character of the college.

The self-understanding of the Idea itself is expressed in the opening and closing sentences:

"Pacific College is a deliberate and continuous attempt to realize a certain idea through theory and experience." (opening sentence)

"The Pacific idea is only a partially realized idea. But it is the idea that gives Pacific reason for existence, courage for growth, and stimulus for adventure." (closing sentences)

Thus, the assumption of the Idea was that the college will deliberately and intentionally become the particular place envisioned in the Idea. It will never perfectly realize the Idea, but the Idea provides the compass that points the direction.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IDEA

The intensive period of master planning that produced the Pacific College Idea began in February of 1966 and ended at the conclusion of the 1967-1968 academic year. At that time John E. Toews, who had co-chaired the master planning process with President Wiebe, returned to graduate school for further studies. John Redekop, a member of the Programs Subcommittee, left to teach in his native Canada. Master planning continued, but now in a lower key. The Pacific College Idea, meanwhile, took on a life of its own. It appeared for the first time in the college catalog for 1969-1970, though
in a truncated version. In 1972 the Idea took its place at the center of the college catalog in its full version. It has appeared in every college catalog since.

In 1973 the visiting accreditation team from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, chaired by John Cantelon, then Academic Vice President of the University of Southern California, began their final report on the college as follows:

Pacific College constitutes a small but vital example of genuine pluralism in American higher education. Because of its size but more because of the dedication of its faculty and administration, the institution has been successful in incarnating significant elements of what it terms "the Pacific Idea" throughout the academic life of the College. The ideals of the Mennonite Brethren are alive and well at Pacific.\(^{10}\)

The team concluded their report with a strong affirmation of the Idea: "The evaluators also share a strong feeling that the Pacific Ideal is something of unique value which should be preserved and nourished in the American educational scene."\(^{11}\)

Others apparently agreed with the accreditation team's assessment. At about the same time, Christianity Today found the Idea of sufficient larger interest to feature the college in an article entitled, "Creative Learning—'The Pacific College Idea.'"\(^{12}\)

In 1982, and again in 1994, the Idea was revised. In this way, the Idea has taken on a life of its own. It has served as the institutional center, an anchor for the college. It has sparked innumerable conversations, stimulated debate, served as a base for questioning, and otherwise enlivened the community. The Idea remains the vision against which both present realities and future possibilities are tested, and provides the motivation for continued growth and development.

WILL THE CENTER HOLD?

The origin of an idea is one story. The future of an idea is another. Thus, the key question is: Will the center hold? Centers have a way of not holding with the passage of time. As William Butler Yeats poignantly observed in his poem, "The Second Coming": "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold."

It is a truth well known that the center did not hold for America's first colleges. The first mottoes of Harvard, "Christo et Ecclesiae" and
"In Christi Gloriam," are hardly descriptive of today's Harvard. Ideological anarchy may be closer to the truth. But Harvard is not alone. At the outset of the decade that produced the Pacific College Idea, Yale historian Sydney Ahlstrom observed that a "major fact about American higher education is that, regardless of other shifting attitudes and practices, it has for three centuries been continually, remorselessly secularized." He went on to describe his view of the status of the church college in America at the time:

In the vast majority of cases its existence [as a church college] is nominal rather than real. Only in a relatively few Church bodies is its vitality a matter of primary concern. And if by "Church college" we mean an institution which has its intellectual life devotedly rooted in the "apostolic succession" of Christian learning and which has a connection with the Church that is living, active, and strong, we may go still further to say that it has become a rarity.\(^\text{13}\)

Ideas rarely exist in isolation. They exist in a marketplace where alternative visions compete for attention. This is true of the idea of a church college. In the same year that the Pacific College Idea was written, the Danforth Foundation published its comprehensive study of Church-Sponsored Higher Education in the United States.\(^\text{14}\) This study was based on extensive data collected from church colleges across the country. Four types of church colleges emerged from the data: 1) the "defender of the faith college," characterized by a narrow purpose of preparing persons for leadership ("lay or clerical") in a particular church group with faculty, administration and students being mostly members of that group; 2) the "non-affirming college," characterized as a secularized college with diminished concern for faith issues and a loose relationship to the sponsoring church; 3) the "free Christian college," characterized as a faith affirming college that sees faith as a matter of informed and voluntary choice and seeks to create a dynamic mix of "academic excellence and religious vitality"; and 4) the "church-related university," characterized as an urban institution exhibiting multiple characteristics of diversity. Within this marketplace of church colleges, the creators of the Pacific College Idea envisioned a faith-affirming college resembling the Danforth Foundation's third option.

Choosing to be a faith affirming college, however, is not sufficient in itself. The religious marketplace offer many varieties of faith. No single understanding of Christian faith exists. One inevitably must choose. The options have been labeled in different ways: fundamen-
talism, conservatism, evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy, liberalism, civil religion, the social gospel, the health and wealth gospel, to name but a few. The creators of the Idea chose to avoid the customary labels. Rather, they chose to remember their own particular spiritual parents, who had been labeled as "Anabaptists," meaning rebaptizers. This label stuck, but its surface meaning masked a deeper understanding of faith. For the Anabaptists, the Christian life was an intentional commitment to seek the Kingdom of God as modeled and taught by Jesus, without regard for compromises proposed by civil or religious authorities.

The choice to be a faith-affirming college in the Anabaptist tradition did not win universal endorsement in the sponsoring church in the 1960s, nor has it now. For some in the church, memory of their own faith tradition has faded. Newcomers have often not learned the story, and thus have no memory at all. For others, alternative options within the religious marketplace have simply been more attractive. Some have shied away from this understanding of faith because they perceive that it does not sell well in the marketplace. But here it is that the creators of the original Idea boldly centered the college. And others too have caught the vision.

Will this center hold? While history is not encouraging, a college that clearly articulates its center and continues actively to nurture this center in its thought and life will more likely remain true to its historic mission. To reframe an old saying, ironically once offered by a retired general: Ideas don't die, they just fade away. They rarely suffer dramatic deaths. More often they die from neglect and drift. Though the destiny of the original Idea in the life of the college has not always been certain, the fact that the Idea remains and has retained its essence through two revisions bears witness to its ongoing importance for Fresno Pacific College.

NOTES


6. It is interesting to note that the course in Mennonite History (as distinguished from a narrower Mennonite Brethren History) was dropped from the curriculum at about this same time, further evidence that the institute was departing somewhat from its historical theological moorings.


11. Ibid., 7.

