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**“BROAD AND
CHRISTIAN IN THE
FULLEST SENSE”**

**WILLIAM RAINEY
HARPER AND THE UNIVERSITY
OF CHICAGO**

J O H N W . B O Y E R

XV
**OCCASIONAL PAPERS
ON HIGHER
EDUCATION XV**

**THE COLLEGE
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO**



William Rainey Harper, 1882, Baldwin and Harvey Photographic Artists, Chicago.

“ B R O A D A N D C H R I S T I A N
I N T H E F U L L E S T S E N S E ”

*William Rainey Harper and
the University of Chicago*

I N T R O D U C T I O N



e meet today at a noteworthy moment in our history. The College has now met and surpassed the enrollment goals established by President Hugo F. Sonnenschein in 1996, and we have done so while increasing our applicant pool, our selectivity, and the overall level of participation by the faculty in the College's instructional programs. Many people—College faculty, staff, alumni, and students—have contributed to this achievement, and we and our successors owe them an enormous debt of gratitude. I am particularly grateful to the members of the College faculty—as I know our students and their families are—for the crucial role that you played as teachers, as mentors, as advisers, and as collaborators in the academic achievements of our students.

The College lies at the intellectual center of the University, an appropriate role for the University's largest demographic unit. We affirm academic excellence as the primary norm governing all of our activities. Our students study all of the major domains of human knowledge, and they do so out of a love of learning and discovery. They undertake general and specialized studies across the several disciplines, from the humanities to the natural sciences and mathematics to the social sciences and beyond,

This essay was originally presented as the Annual Report to the Faculty of the College on October 25, 2005. John W. Boyer is the Martin A. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of History and the College, and Dean of the College.

drawing encouragement, inspiration, and confidence from several hundred brilliant faculty teachers as they go. The College is a strong force for the inter-relatedness of knowledge and a powerful agent to ensure the coalescence of the University's common purpose. It has served that function with growing authority and effectiveness since its creation as a separate faculty ruling body in November 1930, seventy-five years ago. The University's reputation for vigorous interdisciplinary practices owes a profound debt to the deep and enduring impact of the College's core curriculum over the past seventy-five years. In bringing together faculty from all of the arts and sciences and from many of the professional schools, in welcoming the contributions of many advanced graduate students participating in our educational programs, in drawing upon the advice and support of our alumni who, in many fields of professional success, testify to the vibrant, creative power of their liberal educations, and in inviting gifted and highly motivated undergraduate students to join our common endeavor, the College lies at the center of our collective community of learning and discovery.

In the 1960s, President Edward H. Levi often described us as one university, a complete university, as an institution that was not a “multi-versity” but one that was distinctly more than the sum of its parts. In our time, such a character of unity amid diversity, of common values and common excellence, is strongly defended by and sustained through the work of the College. The intellectual and the practical well-being of the University and its capacity to sustain the kind of unity so valued by previous generations of scholars and students depend on the College's academic accomplishments and on the cultural and social cohesion of our students. The College's welfare depends, in turn, on our capacity to educate our students in rigorous and imaginative ways, to create a welcoming and supportive community life for them on (and beyond) our campus,

to support their personal and professional success in all possible ways, and to stay in close touch with them once they have earned the high privilege of becoming our alumni.

My primary concern as Dean of the College at this moment in our history is to ensure that we have the human and material resources and the institutional structures in place to sustain the academic success of our students and the educational success of our faculty and to guarantee (as far as that is ever possible) that our success will continue in the generations to come.

All of us hope the work that we do with our students provides them with scholarly skills and the habits of mind that will stimulate and support an engaged and thoughtful life at the College and after graduation. We have an obligation as educators to provide the highest quality liberal education. We must do this not only because we promised that we would provide that kind of education when we recruited and admitted our students, but much more because, as I hope to show later in this report, imaginative teaching and learning is at the heart of the historic mission of this University. Our collective reputation as an institution with powerful teaching traditions is nothing less than remarkable in the history of American higher education. We have done well thus far in sustaining and protecting that reputation. But we must not lose our momentum nor imagine that because we have reached our enrollment goal we have done all we need to do to guarantee that the College of 4,500 students will continue to be excellent and continue to operate effectively.

The humanities and social sciences core courses are particularly important as signature elements of our curriculum. These small discussion classes, based largely on original texts, and functioning as true general-education experiences (none do double duty as introductions to disciplines) for all of our students, define our educational culture and set a standard

of rigor and engagement that our students and alumni value. All students in the College will take both the humanities and social sciences sequences during their careers. Insofar as it is still possible, given the current state of knowledge and the academic disciplines, these courses lie at the center of our ability to create a unified educational community and to provide a common liberal education. Evidently, the faculty must lead these courses and define their character if we are to remain a truly faculty-taught and faculty-governed institution. I believe that we need to do all that is possible to sustain current levels of faculty participation in teaching the humanities and social sciences core. I am deeply grateful to the many senior faculty members who, year-in and year-out, provide leadership for our core staffs and an ongoing commitment to teaching in the core. Your dedication to the practice of general education is one of the most vital activities that you undertake on behalf of our students and the larger University community.

We have also been extremely fortunate to have the extraordinary service provided by our postdoctoral Harper, Schmidt, and Graham Fellows who teach in our general-education programs and who have the rank of collegiate assistant professors. By selecting highly qualified young scholars with completed doctoral dissertations and strong research profiles who have performed well in a highly competitive national search, we recruit colleagues who are in a position to devote a great deal of their time to preparing the areas taught in the core that they did not cover in their graduate-school studies. The fellows help us maintain the character of the core as belonging to our faculty and to guarantee the across-the-board quality of these courses for all of the College students who take them. I am delighted that last year we were able to announce a gift from the estate of our alumna Katharine Graham to endow four of the collegiate assistant professorships. No greater need exists than to raise more such endowments to secure and to strengthen this wonderful program. We

need more such support, which directly benefits both young faculty and our College students.

When our students turn from core courses to their majors, they find themselves most frequently in courses taught by the tenured and tenure-track faculty. This is as it should be. Specialized knowledge based on the highest standards of original research reflects the great achievements of the various disciplines, and Chicago's reputation as one of the most distinguished research universities in the world should be and is visible in the work of our majors. It is vital that our third- and fourth-year students have a sufficient number of upper-level, faculty-taught courses available to them in their majors, and that students be able to work in close contact with the faculty in these programs. We need to do much more work to improve the research opportunities available to our students. Our students want these kinds of interactive relationships with the faculty, perhaps more than anything else.

The larger College has brought with it many challenges, most of which the faculty has admirably accomplished. It says a great deal about the high sense of responsibility of the Chicago faculty, and about how deeply most faculty members care about the educational mission of the College, that we have been so successful in assimilating an additional eleven hundred students. Some issues remain. For example, the problem of congestion of competing upper-level courses within and among the departments in a relatively small number of instructional time slots, largely on Tuesday and Thursday mornings and on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, is still a serious concern. But, for the most part, seen in the larger frame of our institutional history, the successful addition of over one thousand additional students within seven years is astonishing, a feat worthy of the high ambitions of the men and women who founded this University over a century ago.

The unique intellectual culture of the University of Chicago, and especially the unique culture of our College, has deep historical roots in the close links that we have always posited between our research and our teaching enterprises at all levels, forming together a community of learning and discovery that transforms each of its members, faculty and student alike. A different kind of university can perhaps thrive with a culture of research-only faculty members, sanctioning minimal expectations for faculty teaching of undergraduates. The College has never operated as that kind of institution. Rather, we have always aspired to joint excellence in teaching and research and to being a model of curricular integrity and faculty responsibility to our students. Recent focus groups of College alumni across several generations conducted this past summer by the development office have demonstrated in very powerful and graphic terms that the one thing that links all of our alumni is their memory of, and deep appreciation for, outstanding faculty teaching in the College, on the core level and in the majors. Our special identity as a learning community and our uniqueness as a national standard setter of academic excellence will not survive if we allow the erosion of professional teaching responsibilities in our community.

As we pass through a major transition in University leadership, I strongly hope that the faculty will reaffirm the importance of teaching as a fundamental value of the University and insist that the integrity of our community of learning and discovery depends on our willingness to engage with our communal educational work at all levels.

We have made huge progress in the last decade in improving a number of domains that affect college students: a more manageable and more effective curriculum; a huge new investment in international education (which both students and faculty greatly appreciate); dramatic increases in advanced language study driven in part by the Foreign Language

Acquisition Grants; innovative new curricula in many domains of the biological and physical sciences and mathematics; more effective academic and personal advising; more support for paracurricular and extracurricular work; a huge investment in our new internship programs; remarkable new residential housing facilities, with more new housing in advanced planning stages; and more support for student athletics and for health-related activities in general. At the same time, the Office of Career Advising and Planning Services is continuing to provide more and better services to our students than ever in our history. Although it still faces challenges, most of them not of its own making, our registrar's office is making continuous improvements to its technical and administrative operations.

We can all be proud of these achievements and of many more, which add up to nothing less than a revolution in the College. Forty years ago Edward Levi urged the faculty to consider opportunities for "meaningful service" for College students, and that "attention will be given also to the opportunities for cultural enrichment for students beyond the bounds of the formal curriculum." Last year our students formed 367 Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs), a 27 percent increase since 2000. We had fifty-five RSOs last year dedicated to social and community issues, and forty-nine others dedicated to politics and advocacy. Just over one thousand students were formally involved in service to Chicago-based social service organizations during the academic year, a *ten-fold* increase since 1995. During the same year nearly four hundred students participated in several successful tutorial programs in cooperation with local schools, and in 2005 we graduated the first nine College students with joint B.A./M.A.T. degrees in urban education, most of whom are going on to positions in the Chicago Public Schools. We have finally fulfilled Levi's challenge, forty years after the fact.

We have also engaged the world in remarkable ways. When I started as Dean in 1992, we had thirty-six students participating in international education programs. This year we will have almost six hundred students undertaking the study of language, history, and culture in foreign lands, embracing a kind of intellectually rigorous globalism that will surely be a hallmark of the new liberal education of our century. We have created exciting programs overseas that give our students the opportunity to fulfill their civilization studies requirement in courses taught by Chicago faculty in Athens, Barcelona, Cape Town, Oaxaca, Paris, Pune, Rome, Vienna, and, beginning in autumn 2006, Beijing. Working in a close and satisfying partnership with the Division of the Humanities, the College has also created (and, after one year, expanded) a stunning new center in Paris where over two hundred Chicago students will be studying language and literature, European civilization, art, philosophy, and international studies in 2005–06. The College has also invested in a direct-grant program for College students to undertake intermediate and advanced study of foreign languages abroad—approximately one hundred College students each summer study in intensive foreign-language programs overseas via the Foreign Language Acquisition Grant (FLAG) program.

Yet this transformation is not complete. The academic, administrative, and budgetary practices of the University need continuous investment, wise adaptations, and creative leadership if we are to be true to our ideals, to compete successfully for the most qualified and most highly motivated students and faculty, and to deliver to them what we promise. We need to provide the faculty with more support to enable them to develop innovative new courses, especially courses that translate the excitement of their own scholarly research while inviting them to place such research in broader and more accessible interdisciplinary frameworks. We need to target at least some new faculty appointments toward exciting new research

and teaching fields that are not easily integrated into the nineteenth-century disciplinary categories by which universities still organize themselves. And we need to help our faculty provide more systematic assistance to College seniors seeking to enter graduate schools or professional schools, not because this is an expedient thing to do but because it is the right thing to do. The College has already begun to develop some initiatives to respond to the latter problem, as Susan Art has mentioned. If we really believe in the value of a Chicago liberal arts education, we should want the free professions in our nation to be populated by thoughtful leaders who have had such an education.

We also need to pay continued attention to our physical landscape. To take but one prosaic yet vital issue, even with the construction of the new residence hall south of Burton-Judson, we will still have over 40 percent of our students living in what are essentially commuting relationships with the University. Our housing policy needs more coherent long-range planning. I personally believe that we should make a commitment to ensure that by 2010 at least 70 percent of our students are able to find suitable and appropriate housing in our residential system. Over the decades a series of enlightened faculty committees and faculty reports have highlighted the great importance of a stronger residential program for undergraduate students, beginning with the magnificent report of William Bradbury in 1951. We need a coherent vision for the future of the College's housing system, one that acknowledges that high-quality collegiate housing, located on or within walking distance of our campus, can be an enormous asset in engendering long-term positive relationships with and among our students and our alumni. A more strongly residential campus would be a real asset to the University, both by encouraging stronger communities among our students and reinforcing student morale and by encouraging greater alumni satisfaction with their experiences at the University.

In addition to all of this, we need to strengthen our bonds with our alumni. The alumni are essential and lifelong members of our community. Much has changed in the College over the last fifteen years, but many positive transformations are not well enough or accurately enough known among our own alumni, both of the College and of the graduate divisions and professional schools. We need communications vehicles and strategies that demonstrate not only that we remain a vibrant and rigorous community of learning and discovery, fully successful in fulfilling Chicago's educational mission, but also that we have created a much more dynamic student culture, so that we can rekindle in our alumni the kind of passions, pride, and positive feelings that the current students have about Chicago today.

Our fund-raising efforts in the coming year will focus on bringing the message of the transformation of the College to as many College alumni as possible. I continue to believe that our College alumni respond most warmly and generously to the University when we present ourselves as a vibrant learning community responsibly teaching young people and supporting their intellectual and cultural development, while also productively engaged in the life of our city, our nation, and our world.

The University is a very complex enterprise. It is invisible insofar as it consists in the work of the intellect, whether in the act of the scholarly pursuit of knowledge or the experience of learning. But it is also a visible enterprise, composed of people and buildings, payrolls, libraries, and furniture. The visible and the invisible University depend on one another. Both are necessary, and neither, alone, is sufficient, to embody our ideals or achieve our goals. The issues addressed and the questions raised in this report are in one sense simply about how to organize the essential interaction between the visible and the invisible University. No one person can manage such an enterprise, and not even at our founding

was the University simple enough for one person to direct it. But, having said that, I want also to insist that we were extremely fortunate in our founders. They brought remarkable energy, intelligence, and imagination to their work, and they imparted much of that force into the University that they built.

One person stands out in the founding generation of the University of Chicago for his capacious view of, and relentless engagement with, all aspects of the University, visible and invisible, scholarly, pedagogical, personal, financial, and political. The current academic year 2005–06 is the one-hundredth anniversary of William Rainey Harper's death. Harper was perhaps our greatest president, and the leader most responsible for shaping and defining the basic structure and culture of the University. An early faculty member in the Divinity School, Shailer Mathews, recalled the desolate, disorganized state of the campus when he arrived in the autumn of 1894, but this made little difference because "the air was charged with enthusiasm and hope." Mathews encountered a young University filled with brilliant people who were dedicated to sufficient common or shared values to make the experiment work.¹ Much of that enthusiasm and that cohesiveness was due to William Rainey Harper.

What Harper achieved was both extraordinary and astonishing. Harper engendered a sense of visionary movement while also constructing a record of pragmatic achievement. His brilliant successes came from a peculiar mixture of scholarly genius, civic courage, and obliviousness

1. Shailer Mathews, *New Faith for Old. An Autobiography* (New York, 1936), p. 53. I wish to thank Mihir Pandya for his excellent assistance on this report. I am also very grateful to Susan Art, Peggy Bevington, Ted Cook, Patrick Houlihan, Dennis Hutchinson, Susan Johnson, Michael Jones, Daniel Meyer, Richard Rosengarten, Peter Salovey, and Michael Silverstein.

to risk. Perhaps the range of his activities cannot (or should not) be duplicated in our era, but the principled quality of his leadership and his willingness to put enormous human effort behind the realization of ideals are worth remembering and celebrating.

To that end, on the eve of the centennial of his death in January 1906, I would like to devote the remainder of my remarks today to William Rainey Harper. I hope to illuminate some of the ways by which our first president generated the enthusiasm for and collective confidence in higher education that impelled the new University into the twentieth century.

H A R P E R ' S E A R L Y C A R E E R



William Rainey Harper was a nineteenth-century man.² He was born on July 24, 1856, in New Concord, Ohio, a small town of about eight hundred residents located about seventy miles east of Columbus.

Harper's parents owned a general store. The town was deeply Protestant, and Harper's parents were strict United Presbyterians,

2. The literature on Harper is large but of uneven quality. The best accounts of his role in the founding of the University are the excellent book by Richard J. Storr, *Harper's University. The Beginnings* (Chicago, 1966), and the fine dissertation by Daniel Meyer, "The Chicago Faculty and the University Ideal: 1891–1929." Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1994, which also provides a careful overview of administrative and institutional developments at the University during William Rainey Harper's and Harry Pratt Judson's presidencies. The memoir by Thomas W. Goodspeed, *William Rainey Harper. First President of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1928), was composed over a six-month period in 1927 at the request of then President Max Mason. It is a moving personal statement and understandably embellished in its presentation of Harper.

pursuing their religious practices with dedication. Harper's sister, Mary, later recalled that her father prohibited the reading of newspapers or secular books on Sundays, and Harper himself recounted to his students how his father, an elder in the local United Presbyterian church, had made him read the Bible through "again and again."³

Harper was known as a precocious child, much given to studying and reading, and who sometimes had to be compelled to go out and play. A childhood friend later recalled that "[i]n all my life I never knew a boy who was so bright and apt in learning and mastering difficult problems. In the years I was so closely associated with him, I would often go to him with my troubles and ask him to show me the way out. For a moment he would think, the[n] snap his finger and proceed to tell me what to do and what not to do. I would always follow his advice and the result was that everything worked out to perfection."⁴ Harper's other early love was music, and at one point in his career he thought seriously of becoming a professional musician, playing the cornet and piano.

Harper attended a town school and was tutored by his father. At the age of eight he matriculated in the preparatory program of the local college, called Muskingum College, which had been founded in 1837. Harper then began college work at the age of ten and graduated in 1870 at the age of fourteen, having propelled himself through the college's curriculum by doing extra work, a pattern of time economy that he would ultimately valorize in the new University via its four-quarter system. Among his favorite

3. Undated memoir by Harper's sister, Mary Harper, *Thomas W. Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12, Special Collections Research Center (SCRC), the University of Chicago Library. Unless otherwise noted, all archival sources cited in this report are located in the SCRC.

4. T. F. Gault to Goodspeed, August 20, 1927, *ibid.*

subjects were languages, especially Hebrew which he mastered to the point that he was able to deliver a short graduation address in the language. At this point in its history the college had less than a hundred students, most of them Presbyterians, who studied in a single building a few blocks from Harper's house.⁵ The president of the college, Dr. David Paul, was also the pastor of the local United Presbyterian Church. Harper's future wife, Ella, was David Paul's daughter, whom Harper had known from childhood.

After graduating college, Harper worked in his father's store to save money, taught a course in Hebrew on a part-time basis at the college, and continued to study ancient languages privately with a minister in Zanesville, Ohio. In September 1873, at the suggestion of Paul, Harper matriculated in the graduate program of Yale University. A fellow student later remembered him as a "somewhat unsophisticated country lad" who "seemed to us not very well prepared for the work we were doing." But Harper worked assiduously and soon earned his colleagues' full admiration.⁶ Ph.D. degrees were rare commodities at this early point in the history of American higher education, and the Yale program involved two years of course work, a final examination, and a thesis of some sort.⁷ Harper took classes from several Yale professors but was most influenced by William Dwight Whitney, a distinguished philologist of Sanskrit who had studied in Germany between 1850 and 1853. Harper's dissertation, "Some Problems Connected with Comparative Indo-European Philology," was clearly influenced by Whitney's mentorship.

5. F. W. Spencer to Goodspeed, September 6, 1927, *ibid.*

6. E. H. Sherman to Goodspeed, June 5, 1927, *ibid.*

7. See Edgar S. Furniss, *The Graduate School of Yale. A Brief History* (New Haven, 1965), p. 18. Yale awarded its first Ph.D.'s in 1861.

William Dwight Whitney was part of two generations of Yale humanists and social scientists, a group whom Louise Stevenson has recently termed the “New Haven scholars,” who assimilated German learning and methods and adapted them to American educational institutions and religious practices.⁸ The modern scholarly field of linguistics originated in Germany, and German or German-trained scholars dominated the field in the nineteenth century.⁹ Most modern academic disciplines began to take shape in the nineteenth century around conflicts about the scientific character of traditional forms of learning and competing ideas about the very nature of the scientific and the scholarly. In literary, grammatical, and linguistic studies the modern study of literature parted company with historical and comparative linguistics, and the linguists began to see themselves as the custodians of a new and unique scientific enterprise. As in other fields, professional organizations, learned journals, and international networks of scholars with common interests developed rapidly. W. D. Whitney was a leader of this movement in linguistics, wielding widespread influence over appointments in American universities and engaging in a remarkable international correspondence.¹⁰

8. Louise L. Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends. The New Haven Scholars and the Transformation of Higher Learning in America, 1830–1890* (Baltimore, 1986), esp. pp. 1–13, 37–38, 81.

9. R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (Bloomington, 1967), pp. 168–69.

10. Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 59, 125–58, 173, 182–83, 312.182; Julie Tetel Andresen, *Linguistics in America, 1769–1924. A Critical History* (London, 1990), p. 167; Michael Silverstein, ed., *Whitney on Language. Selected Writings of William Dwight Whitney* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), pp. x–xxiii, 1–6.

Whitney saw linguistics as an historical and moral science. In a way that he saw as linked to contemporary geology (his brother was a geologist on the Harvard faculty), he sought to understand the historical processes and mechanisms governing linguistic constructions and how those processes influenced changes over time.¹¹ Harper's love of grammatical structure and the way his teaching focused on grammar at the expense of literary feeling is partly a matter of temperament but clearly also an inheritance from Whitney and the contemporary scholarly milieu. As Laurence R. Veysey has shrewdly observed, Harper's love of grammatical order easily spilled over into a love of organizational planning, with fateful consequences for the new University in Chicago.¹² Whitney was the one who pointed Harper in the direction of Semitic studies as a promising field of research and teaching and who provided a strong professional role model for Harper.¹³ It is of some importance that Harper was not trained as a theologian.¹⁴ Harper thought as a philologist and a professional linguist, and he used these skills throughout his life to frame his encounters with several scholarly disciplines.

Following his stint at Yale, Harper took a one-year job in Macon, Tennessee, as the head of a small secondary school, and then landed

11. Andresen, *Linguistics in America*, pp. 70–71, 135–68.

12. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, pp. 370–71.

13. "It was Whitney who had pointed out to him that the Semitic languages were a very promising field for exploration by an enterprising man, both textbooks and methods here and abroad being antiquated, unscientific, and, in America, notoriously futile." Memoir of Charles Chandler, undated [1927], *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

14. Northrup to Rockefeller, January 1, 1889, *John D. Rockefeller. Correspondence of the Founder and His Associates, 1886–1892*, Box 1, folder 5. Hereafter cited as *Rockefeller and Associates*.

a position at a small Baptist college in Granville, Ohio, Denison University, in September 1876. Granville was only forty miles from New Concord, and Harper often spent his weekends visiting his family in his hometown. His job was to teach ancient languages in the secondary school program—grandly called an academy—organized by the college, and his energy quickly landed him the position of principal of the academy. This was an important experience for Harper, since it gave him a valuable training in teaching and mentoring high school students, and would have long-term ramifications in the way he later conceived of the systemic relationship between secondary education and the tertiary sector of higher education.

Denison was a strictly Baptist college, another small world of close and sometimes strained human relationships. Benjamin Andrews, whom we will meet again later in our story, had just become president of Denison, and brought to the school a desire to create a more open-minded intellectual atmosphere. Andrews took a liking to Harper, establishing a close friendship that would endure over the next quarter century. Harper was one of the first non-Baptist instructors ever hired on the small faculty. Whether a desire to conform to his new cultural milieu and seek the support of Andrews and others in his new surroundings also played a role in Harper's decision to join the Baptist church at Denison in late 1876 is impossible to say for certain.¹⁵ The details of Harper's so-called conversion

15. Charles R. Brown, who knew Harper in the early 1880s, later recalled the "reticence and self-distrust that distinguished him in that period . . . his clinging dependence upon his friends, and his confidence in the efficacy of their prayers." "William Rainey Harper as a Friend. An Appreciation," *The Watchman*, January 18, 1906, p. 9. Similarly, Paul Shorey suggested that as a young man Harper was "extremely susceptible to the influence of strong personalities among his teachers and friends." "William Rainey Harper," *Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume 8, pp. 287–94, here p. 287. Shorey's short essay is an elegant appreciation.

experience during a prayer meeting held at Denison have been described differently by various commentators. Thomas Goodspeed took it at face value, arguing that Harper suddenly rediscovered a personal religiosity that he had lost from childhood.¹⁶ Harper later recounted to his students at Yale that his early familiarity with the Old Testament and with Hebrew had led him during his college years to doubt the accuracy of much of the Bible, and that he became skeptical and critical of his faith until his time at Denison. Harper used this story in 1891 to argue that it was possible to reconcile a commitment to modern scholarship and personal faith, since the former had helped to illuminate the true meaning of sacred scripture.¹⁷ Certainly, Harper became a committed and loyal Baptist, so much so that his later embrace of scientific rationalism and the higher criticism presented him, at least initially, with serious emotional challenges.¹⁸ But both Clarence F. Castle and Charles Chandler, who were eyewitnesses to the event at Denison and later became faculty members at Chicago, also alluded to the possible role of social obligation and to Harper's need to fit into the specific denominational community in which he found himself. Chandler noted, "[t]he men in the faculty had always been appointed on the understanding that they were not only orthodox Christians but active workers in the Church and Sunday

16. Goodspeed, *William Rainey Harper*, pp. 35–36; and E. Benjamin Andrews, "The Granville Period," *The Biblical World*, 27 (1906): 168–69.

17. Willard C. MacNaul to Thomas W. Goodspeed, November 26, 1927, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

18. Lars Hoffman, "William Rainey Harper and the Chicago Fellowship," Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1978, pp. 68–70; William R. Hutchison, "Cultural Strain and Protestant Liberalism," *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971): 403.

School.” Chandler also reported that after this single remarkable event Harper rarely returned to religious services on the campus.¹⁹

In January 1879 at twenty-two years of age, Harper was recruited to teach Semitic languages and Old Testament literature at the Morgan Park Seminary, a small Baptist institution about twelve miles from central Chicago, which had been founded in 1867.²⁰ The seminary enrolled less than one hundred students each year, and Harper was given responsibility for all instruction involving the Old Testament. Harper proved to be a charismatic teacher, receiving praise for his enthusiasm in basic language teaching and his advanced course in the Messianic prophecies. A visitor’s report from 1885 observed that “Prof. Harper has led [the students] into a field heretofore very much neglected, and one that promises rich results to both ministers and churches.”²¹

Charles Chandler later recalled that Harper’s personal intellectual journey did not begin with the Bible and its literary or theological nexus. At Denison

19. For two eyewitness accounts, see C. F. Castle, “Memories of Dr. W. R. Harper,” November 20, 1927, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12; and the memoir of Charles Chandler, June 21, 1927, *ibid.* See also the article signed “G. F. M.” in *The Denisonian*, January 15, 1906, filed in *William Rainey Harper Papers*, Box 17, folder 4.

20. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *As I Remember* (New York, 1953), pp. 22–36 offers a charming portrait of life in this small suburb in the 1880s. The Seminary opened in Chicago in 1867 but moved to Morgan Park a decade later in 1876.

21. *Report of the Board of Visitors to the Baptist Theological Union, May 4–7, 1885, Baptist Theological Union*, Box 2, folder 13. An earlier report noted that Harper “has proved himself a highly accomplished and successful teacher.” *The Annual Report of the Board of the Baptist Theological Union Located at Chicago and of the Committees of Examination, Presented May 7, 1879*, p. 2.

in literature *as such* in any language, Harper showed not the slightest interest. I do not think that at any period in his life he read any appreciable amount of standard Eng. Literature except for some immediate practical use. His appreciation of the beauty of Hebrew poetry and the nobility of much of Hebrew prose came to him much later. Semitics appealed to him as a promising field for scientific work with modern methods. You know that one of his favorite theories was that Hebrew should be offered among the regular language courses in the literary department of all colleges, not being properly a theological subject at all. . . . I do not think there was much *spiritual growth* while in Granville. His work and interest, being then concerned with Hebrew grammar, and with the Hebrew text only as material for grammatical investigation and illustration, did not tend to spirituality. Appreciation of the O.T. as fine literature came later, and its spiritual power later still, in his study of the prophets, especially Jonah.²²

Harper's intellectual journey thus began with language and philology, focusing especially on Hebrew as one of the most fascinating of ancient languages. A former student at Yale recalled Harper telling his first-year Hebrew class, "[i]f it were possible for me to devote myself to the thing that I should most enjoy, I should make comparative philology my life work."²³ Harper became widely known for his "inductive method," of teaching Hebrew, which he also applied to the teaching of Latin and

22. Chandler memoir, undated [1927], *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

23. Willard C. MacNaul to Goodspeed, November 26, 1927, *ibid.*

Greek. Clarence Castle, who studied Xenophon's *Anabasis* with Harper at Denison and later served as a professor of Greek at Chicago, remembered him as a model teacher, sensitive to the learning accomplished by his students and able to generate both ardent enthusiasm and much hard work. Harper's "charming personality, strong character, power to inspire, and his success in those days of his first teaching were prophetic of greater things to come."²⁴

Harper's enthusiasm for the Hebrew language and his ambition to help "the brethren in the ministry become better acquainted with the Hebrew language" led him to launch a summer school at Morgan Park for the teaching of Hebrew in July 1881, and a Hebrew correspondence school for ministers and students in December 1880.²⁵ Both activities were put under the aegis of the American Institute of Hebrew in July 1882, and expanded rapidly over the course of the decade, creating a small business empire that earned the loyalty of thousands of eager participants, but that also put Harper on the edge of financial disaster. Beginning in April 1882, Harper launched a semipopular monthly journal called *The Hebrew Student*, in the first issue of which he announced, "[i]t is a fact which must be recognized that at the present time much doubt and uncertainty assail those beliefs which all have been accustomed to hold." But Harper seemed sure that his readers would be able to make intelligent decisions about the new methods of studying the Bible, and that his journal would be a fair and open-minded vehicle of such evaluations. He invoked his mentor W. D. Whitney as an example of someone who

24. C. F. Castle memoir, undated, *ibid.*

25. Kenneth N. Beck, "The American Institute of Sacred Literature. A Historical Analysis of an Adult Education Institution." Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1968, pp. 27–81.

"has probably done more than anyone else to encourage and stimulate this line of research in America."²⁶

Harper also began teaching Hebrew in the Chautauqua summer programs in 1883, and by 1892 he had become principal of the Chautauqua System of Education. Harper's involvement in the Chautauqua movement gave him a rich fund of experiences in nondenominational adult education upon which he was later to draw in designing the new University of Chicago. In October 1889, Harper consolidated his schools and journals under the aegis of a new American Institute of Sacred Literature, which published and circulated annually hundreds of thousands of pages of materials relating to the study of the Bible and religion for adults.²⁷ As Robert Carter has suggested, in changing the name of his semipopular periodical to *The Biblical World*, Harper signified his ever "broadening vision for adult religious education in America during a scientific age."²⁸

Harper's various projects generated a wide network of participants, giving Harper a huge reservoir of ministerial support in and beyond the Baptist church by the early 1890s. Shailer Mathews later observed that Harper "was the spiritual father of an entire generation of biblical teachers who are in the seminaries and colleges of the country." His widespread

26. "Editorial Notes," *The Hebrew Student*, April 1882, p. 11.

27. Robert L. Carter, "The 'Message of the Higher Criticism': The Bible Renaissance and Popular Education in America, 1880–1925," Dissertation. University of North Carolina, 1995, pp. 94–147, here p. 107. Harper's business operations comprised a dozen or more employees. After George E. Robertson became Harper's secretary at the Institute in 1890, he reported, "I had charge of his check book for several years without his ever seeing it, and I furnished him and Mrs. Harper with all the cash that they required." "Reminiscences of My Relations with Dr. Harper," *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

28. Carter, "The 'Message of the Higher Criticism'," p. 107.

national influence was largely owing to his journals, schools, and correspondence work.²⁹ With his deep commitment to the continuing education of ministers and interested laymen, Harper also played a critical role in the extensive popularization of the Bible that took place among American Protestants in the 1880s and 1890s.³⁰ A former student of Harper's at Yale and later a colleague at Chicago, James H. Tufts, recalled Harper as

[a] zealous teacher of Hebrew [who], not content with its status as a language reluctantly studied in schools of theology and forgotten as soon as possible, had not only published grammar and elements in new and clear typography, but had entered upon a campaign for the study of Hebrew by correspondence in which hundreds were enrolled, and in addition was conducting no less than five summer schools for the study of Hebrew and cognate languages. I had occasion later to observe at first hand many of that teacher's activities, but I still think that even the organization of a great university was not more remarkable than the feat of enlisting nearly a thousand in the study of Hebrew by correspondence, and in bringing several hundred together for the summer schools.³¹

29. Shailer Mathews, "President Harper as a Religious Leader," *The Standard*, January 20, 1906, p. 10.

30. Virginia L. Brereton, "The Public Schools Are Not Enough: The Bible and Private Schools," in David L. Barr and Nicholas Piediscalzi, eds., *The Bible in American Education: From Source Book to Textbook* (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 52–58; *idem*, *Training God's Army. The American Bible School 1880–1940* (Bloomington, 1990), pp. 160–61.

31. James H. Tufts, "Graduate Study," p. 2, *James H. Tufts Papers*, Box 3, folder 11.

Harper's engagement with Hebrew led him to the Bible, and especially to the Pentateuch and the Prophets, and this led him to the immensely controversial questions about the historical development of the Bible raised by European higher critics like Julius Wellhausen, Franz Delitzsch, and others. In March 1884, he began publishing a second journal, *Hebraica*, which was more scholarly in nature. The lead article in the first issue of *Hebraica* was a defense of the higher criticism by a distinguished German scholar of the Old Testament, Hermann L. Strack of the University of Berlin.³² If Harper's main preoccupations in the early 1880s still centered on his editorial projects, his schools, and his publication projects (including his famous Hebrew grammar (*Elements of Hebrew by an Inductive Method* [1882])), after his return to Yale in 1886 he came into his own as a nationally recognized scholar of the Bible. He wrote regular editorials in the *Old Testament Student* (the new title of the *Hebrew Student*) defending his claims that the Bible was a legitimately historical document and that it had an authorial history that could be uncovered by scientific analysis.³³ As he put it in October 1889, "all that is of real value to us,

32. "The Higher Criticism, a Witness to the Credibility of the Biblical Narrative," *Hebraica*, 1 (1884–1885): 5–10.

33. This journal went through five different names: *The Hebrew Student* (1882–1883), *The Old Testament Student* (1883–1889), *The Old and New Testament Student* (1889–1892), and *The Biblical World* (1893–1920). It is still published as *The Journal of Religion* (1921 to the present). Harper's editorials are carefully surveyed in Maria Freeman, "Study with Open Mind and Heart: William Rainey Harper's Inductive Method of Teaching the Bible." Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2005. Another of Harper's colleagues Eri Hulbert later recalled of the Morgan Park period, "In after years Dr. Harper's vision broadened, but at this period he was chiefly a boundlessly enthusiastic Hebraist, with all the excellencies, and some of the defects, of such a character." Quoted in Goodspeed, *William Rainey Harper*, p. 46.

that may be obtained from Bible study, must be either the facts in its history and its contents, or else the inductions based upon these facts. . . . [F]or all knowledge of facts, and for all use of facts, the scientific method is confessed by all students to be the best. It is the great triumph and the great glory of modern thought.”³⁴

Harper remained an active scholar of the Bible to the end of his life. In addition to continuing to co-edit his journals, he also managed to write teaching guides for the study of the Bible and several monographic works on the prophets—the last, a magnificent commentary on Amos and Hosea published in 1905 just before his death. This book preoccupied Harper over many years, giving him “change, comfort, and courage” throughout the hard times of his presidency, and it confirmed his reputation as a scholar of national standing and reputation.³⁵ Tufts later

34. “Editorials,” *The Old and New Testament Student*, October 1889, p. 197. A junior colleague at Yale, F. K. Sanders, who later succeeded him as the Woolsey Professor of Biblical Literature, remembered, “It was during 1888 I think that Dr. H’s interest in Biblical Literature as a subject of teaching developed. . . . In the spring of 1888 (I think) Dr. H was asked to address the N. England meeting of Student YMCA’s (at New Haven) on Bible study. He demurred, bec[ause] he said he was unsympathetic with the type of study at that time (quite topical). They urged him to speak his mind and he did, setting forth his idea of sound historical Bible study. This led to a demand that he embody his ideas in a course to be printed in the ‘Intercollegian’ (I think) and circulated for the use of college (voluntary) Bible classes. I helped him prepare that course. . . . The outcome was a course on ‘Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon’, which set up a new type of Biblical study at once recognized as scientific, sane, fruitful, and truly reverential and religious.” “Memoranda relating to Dr. William R. Harper, written by F. K. Sanders,” n.d., *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

35. William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (New York, 1905), p. vii. This book was the first of what was supposed to be three volumes on the Minor Prophets. Harper hoped that the second and third volumes would “appear within the next two years,” but this was not to be.

recalled the excitement that Harper's scholarly forays into the Prophets generated at Yale:

The ferment of these new conceptions of Old Testament scriptures and religion, reinforced by the dawning sciences of anthropology and comparative religion, was just beginning to work on this side of the Atlantic. . . . Dr. Harper threw himself into the task of introducing the forward-looking among the younger generation to the challenging hypotheses. . . . At Yale and Vassar Harper's lectures and expositions commanded eager attention of large numbers. Conservative scholars saw in the critics' reversal of the traditional course of Hebrew history a menace not only to dogmas of inspiration but to any Christian faith.

Harper, in contrast, "rejected the conclusion that the change in perspective of Hebrew history necessitated a loss of spiritually valuable truth. The moral earnestness of Amos and the lofty idealism of Isaiah, he insisted, gained in significance when placed in relation to their times."³⁶

Harper's early career unfolded at a time when powerful intellectual currents began to challenge fundamental assumptions of American Protestants about the Bible and about God's relationship to human nature. New views of the Old Testament and of the relationship of science to history confronted traditional ways of understanding the sacred and profane worlds of the Bible (Julius Wellhausen's remarkable *The History of Israel* was first published in 1878 and in English translation in 1885; W. Robertson Smith's *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* in 1881). One crucial issue that divided conservatives and liberals was whether the

36. Tufts, "Graduate Study," pp. 4–5.

books of the Old Testament were given literally and directly by God via Moses, or whether a set of divinely inspired human writers, with all their imperfections, wrote and compiled the sacred stories using whatever materials were available in their particular historic times. The first position conveyed the Bible's absolute authority and even infallibility, the second allowed for margins of human error, misunderstanding, and subjectivity.³⁷ Adherents of older views rejected infusion of modern scientific approaches, arguing that the Bible was, as Mark Noll suggests, "the factually accurate Word of God."³⁸ Harper became an articulate proponent of the scientific analysis of the historical origins of the Old Testament. Yet he was a staunch defender of the idea that the Bible was divinely inspired, and was convinced that more scientific research would ultimately allow more people to understand and accept the real spiritual value of the Bible. Harper also believed that his audiences needed to grow accustomed to the methods and conclusions of modern scholarship in a gradual, progressive way, giving them the chance to think through controversial issues inductively and for themselves. This often led him to frame his analytic positions in cautious, nonconfrontational language, and led some commentators to accuse him of obfuscations or trimming.³⁹

Harper's differences with biblical traditionalists were publicly manifested in a debate on "the Pentateuch question" that he conducted with W. Henry Green in the pages of *Hebraica* between 1888 and 1892. A senior

37. Freeman, "Study with Open Mind and Heart," pp. 115–16. For an excellent overview of Harper's stance as Biblical critic, see James P. Wind, *The Bible and the University: The Messianic Vision of William Rainey Harper* (Atlanta, 1987), pp. 49–86.

38. Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (New York, 1986), p. 25.

39. Carter, "The 'Message of the Higher Criticism,'" pp. 185–220.

professor at the Princeton Theological Seminary, Henry Green was the author of a venerable, if dated, grammar of elementary Hebrew and a staunch conservative on matters of dogma and biblical interpretation. Green was one of many conservative Presbyterian opponents of the liberal theologian and biblical critic Charles A. Briggs, and Green played a central role in engineering Briggs's heresy trial in 1891–93.⁴⁰ Debating Green, however strict the ground rules, was a courageous thing to do.

Harper led off with a rigorous and detailed presentation of the case for multiple authorial sources in the Book of Genesis and for the role of an unknown Redactor who edited the divergent sources into a uniform narrative. Harper began by comparing the "two distinct accounts of creation" in the first twelve chapters of Genesis, arguing that differences in linguistic usage and word choice, style, arrangement of material, and theological assumptions made it fully evident that the reader encountered at least two distinctive narrative traditions (those of P and J), woven together by a final Redactor.⁴¹ In analyzing subsequent chapters, he discussed material from the E tradition, thus presenting what became and remains the classical documentary paradigm for the authorship of Genesis.

Harper insisted that these views were not merely theoretical; they implied the resolution of "many and important questions relating to the meaning and value of the sacred writings." Although most of his comments were confined to the technical linguistic analysis and comparison of key

40. See Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology. Imagining Progressive Religion 1805–1900* (Louisville, 2001), pp. 348, 360, 362; Marion A. Taylor, *The Old Testament in the Old Princeton School (1812–1929)* (San Francisco, 1992), pp. 233–38.

41. William Rainey Harper, "The Pentateuchal Question. I. Gen. 1:1–12:5," *Hebraica*, 5 (1888–1889): 18–73.

texts, Harper also injected occasional editorial glosses, which left little doubt of his de facto commitment to these positions. Of the biblical flood, he casually noted that modern science “has demonstrated the impossibility of supposing that a *universal* deluge ever took place,” adding that this by no means foreclosed an assumption that the ancient writer might have had that “the flood was absolutely universal.” Similarly, Harper left no doubt that “Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch,” which raised the thorny issue of whether those in the New Testament, Jesus included, who seem to suggest that Moses was the author, were “ignorant of the facts of the case, or knowing them, must have (1) consciously taught falsely or (2) accommodated themselves to the literary suppositions of their day.”⁴² In Harper’s view the Bible became a profoundly historical and historicized document, anchored in the culture of a time and place and by no means to be made morally equivalent to nineteenth-century civilization. Its literary manifestations (e.g., genealogies, conceptions of time, images) had to be subject to modern scientific scrutiny, but such investigations merely confirmed that “it was a child age. To find a far more perfect form of composition than existed when the nation had become civilized and cultured is inconceivable.”⁴³

Officially this was a dual reading of the same text—each author was to present a set-piece reading of Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy, and then draw interpretive conclusions—but in fact only Harper dutifully followed the method of stating facts first, then offering conclusions. His intervention was framed as representation of the positions of the higher critics, without Harper’s personal endorsement, and this was read by

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 45, 70.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 72. Harper’s contributions continued in *Hebraica*, 5 (1888–1889): 243–91 and 6 (1889–1890): 1–48.

some as Harper being overly cautious in the face of the potential acrimony that a radical liberal position might inflame. But any plausible reading of Harper's essays leaves no doubt that the analytic positions presented by Harper generally conformed to his own views, and conservative reactions at the time demonstrated that Harper was most certainly counted as a leader of the radical camp.⁴⁴

Green's intervention began on a different plane. Unlike Harper, whose text was replete with respectful citations to relevant German scholarship, Green launched his attack by invoking moral outrage: "There is something clearly wrong in a critical process which can take a history that in itself is quite consistent and entirely credible, and sunder it into distinct documents which are mutually repugnant and irreconcilable."⁴⁵ Green argued that the higher critics exaggerated slight or meaningless linguistic differences, invented textual discrepancies where there were none, and engaged in a kind of dangerous nit-picking that destroyed the beauty and the meaning of the sacred text. Green further insisted that Moses was the single author of these texts, although he did allow that Moses might have drawn on older, and sometimes discrepant oral accounts to compose his narrative. For Green the idea of Mosaic

44. See Carter, "The 'Message of the Higher Criticism'," pp. 274–77. Harper's colleague Francis Brown, while acknowledging this kind of argument, was forced to admit that Harper "probably knew his constituency better than any one else did, and on the whole, in view of the progress of the last twenty-five years, his editorial sensitiveness may be fairly said to have justified itself." Robert F. Harper, Francis Brown, and George F. Moore, eds., *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper* (2 vols., Chicago, 1908), p. xxvi.

45. W. Henry Green, "The Pentateuchal Question," *Hebraica*, 5 (1888–1889): 137–89, here 138.

authorship thus stood strong and unshaken, appropriate to “the soul of the ardent young Hebrew” who produced the narrative of the Pentateuch.⁴⁶

As debates about the Bible in the 1880s and 1890s went, this was a tame affair. Yet the essays were filled with competing convictions. Confident of the truthfulness of his approach, Harper deliberately avoided emotional interjections, ad hominem incursions, and arched statements about the sincerity or sanity of rival authors. In fact, more radical new critics like Charles Briggs were frustrated that he did not attack Green more forcefully.⁴⁷ Yet Harper’s soberness could hardly disguise his certainty that his way was the scientific way, and that to deny the facts was to misunderstand and misrepresent the sacred tradition from which they came. Green in contrast could scarcely contain his outrage over the higher critics’

46. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

47. Charles Briggs to Harper, February 29, 1888, *Harper Papers*, Box 1, folder 5. Briggs later blamed Harper for stirring up Presbyterian conservatives, who then targeted him, but this hardly seems like a plausible argument, since Briggs had a long history of tensions with his critics dating from the early 1880s. See Mark S. Massa, *Charles Augustus Briggs and the Crisis of Historical Criticism* (Minneapolis, 1990), pp. 53–78. Reactions to the Harper-Green debate were all over the denominational map. George Northrup urged Harper to undertake the debate, but to hold off on making premature conclusions until they had “assumed a clear and positive shape in your mind.” Northrup to Harper, April 13, 1888, *Richard Storr Papers*, Box 3, folder 26. Another correspondent, J. T. Beckley of Philadelphia, felt that the debate with Green was “hurting” Harper and was “unfortunate.” Beckley to Harper, April 10, 1888, *Harper Papers*, Box 1, folder 5. Still another, C. W. Currien of Winfield, Kansas encouraged Harper with the view that “I think you have done the courageous thing in proposing what you have. Many and many a man will ‘kick’ and say *sagely*, ‘I knew where it would all lead to and now Harper has gone over to the enemy’. It is hard for some men to see that a new opinion can have anything in its favor, or that an opposing view is deserving of the least attention.” Currien to Harper, March 12, 1888, *American Institute of Sacred Literature Records*, Box 4, folder 2.

wrongheaded methods, and sought to exorcise the specter of misguided writers who would unglue the Bible from its rightful past. What he could not disprove textually Green simply denied apologetically by invocations of common sense and the heavy weight of past conviction. For Green the Bible was "absolutely unique" in world literature because it preserved "in its primitive purity the true knowledge of God."⁴⁸ Liberal critics often called Green a heresy hunter and said he behaved more like a lawyer than a scholar. Ronald Numbers has recently observed that "by the 1890s, Green stood virtually alone as a major scholar opposing the higher criticism."⁴⁹

Harper's sometime mentor, the elderly John A. Broadus of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, rebuked him for engaging in this dispute with Green, arguing, "I am scared at the very idea of your undertaking such an advocacy. I dread it for the sake of what I believe to be vital truth."⁵⁰ Two worlds confronted each other here. Harper wished to sustain the living faith manifest in the Bible by reconnecting to the historical circumstances in which it originated. Harper's Bible was both the voice of God and the work of men. Green in contrast saw the Pentateuch as a timeless entity, authored by the most holy of holy men, who was the guarantor of a "true and veritable history." For

48. Green, "The Pentateuchal Question," p. 138. Green's contributions continued in *Hebraica*, 6 (1889–1890): 109–38, 161–211, 241–95; 7 (1890–1891): 1–38, 104–42; 8 (1891–92): 15–64, 174–243.

49. Ronald L. Numbers, "'The Most Important Biblical Discovery of Our Time': William Henry Green and the Demise of Ussher's Chronology," *Church History*, 69 (2000): 257–76, here 268. See also Taylor, *The Old Testament in the Old Princeton School*, pp. 238–39.

50. Broadus to Harper, February 17, 1888, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 3. On Broadus see Archibald T. Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* (Philadelphia, 1901).

Green, the fundamental credibility of Genesis hinged on it being anchored in the Mosaic age; otherwise, the text could evaporate into “fluctuating myths and legends.” Harper sought to separate divine inspiration from a point-to-point connection with the historic world of the Hebrew patriarchs. Green rejected the higher criticism not only because he did not like it, but also because he dreaded the end of certitude in the Bible as a literal historical document manifesting a “faithful account of God’s dealings with men from the beginning.” The new critical views were the work of “ingenuity” and “conjectures,” a world of fast and deeply unhistorical time, and Green did not use these words in a complimentary way.⁵¹

The Green debate was but one of Harper’s ways to engage denominational orthodoxies. His regular editorials in the *Old and New Testament Student* (in 1892 renamed *The Biblical World*) were equally insistent challenges to conservative orthodoxy, even if they generally adopted centrist positions, not seeking to inflame denominational opinion. Writing in July 1889, Harper argued that if newer methods of biblical study were not taught the churches would face a time “when intelligent men of all classes will say, ‘if this is your Bible we will have none of it.’”⁵² William Hutchison has rightly suggested that Harper’s *The Biblical World* was “the most important American vehicle of the Higher Criticism.”⁵³

Yet even in the midst of the debate, Harper felt compelled to assure his more sensitive correspondents that he was a conservative. He wrote to Augustus Strong in January 1889 assuring him that, in spite of what he wrote

51. Green, “The Pentateuchal Question,” pp. 138–41.

52. “Editorials,” *The Old and New Testament Student*, July 1889, p. 2.

53. William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), p. 194.

in *Hebraica*, Strong should still consider him a conservative.⁵⁴ This was not simply dissimulation, although Harper's critics often took it for that—dodging and weaving for political convenience. We might remember the shock waves generated by the heresy trial of Charles Augustus Briggs after 1891 among American Presbyterians to understand Harper's strong preference for easing public tensions and avoiding denominational bloodshed, but without giving any real concessions on matters of intellectual substance. When conservatives sought to embarrass the University in 1904 because of the work of the radical theologian George Burman Foster, Harper warned of the high costs of a public bloodletting, while also expressing private frustration at Foster's inability to gauge the audiences to whom he was speaking.⁵⁵

54. Harper to Strong, January 4, 1889, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 5. Green himself downplayed the charges of Harper's radicalism, saying that he never thought Harper was as radical as he came across in print and that he never doubted "the assurance you once gave me that your inward sympathies were against the critics of the extreme school, and that you would be pleased to see their theories demolished." Green to Harper, February 18, 1890, *ibid.* That Harper would have felt compelled to give Green such assurances came not from a lack of courage, of which Harper had a fully sufficient amount, but from a fear of public scandal. On this point see the careful arguments of Wind, *The Bible and the University. The Messianic Vision of William Rainey Harper*, p. 57.

55. To A. G. Slocum, President of Kalamazoo College, October 26, 1904, *Harper Papers*, Box 7, folder 14. Harper was peculiarly sensitive to the need for his colleagues in divinity not to rush in where angels feared to tread. When Foster engaged in acrimonious debates with conservative Baptists in 1903–04, Harper was astounded by Foster's habit of "putting his foot into trouble as rapidly as any man I have ever known. . . . Quite recently he has been carrying on correspondence with some Baptist ministers who belong to the narrowest set. He has overlooked the fact that he was writing to men who could not understand him, and consequently has given them a basis for attack which will be quite serious." Harper to Mr. and Mrs. John Stetson, February 29, 1904, *Presidents' Papers, 1889–1925*, Box 34, folder 2. Hereafter cited as *PP 1889–1925*.

The Harper-Green debates tell us much about Harper's character and intellectual personality, about his courage to confront "the facts" wherever they took him, about his dislike of gratuitous provocations and hard words, and about his love of the scholarly life. The latter facet was so essential to the man's nature that it can scarcely be exaggerated. Harper's university manifested the highest dedication to original scholarship because its first president lived and admired such a life, understanding no other way of being in the world. As we will shortly see, an almost morbid fear that he would have to abandon a personal, active involvement in the world of scholarship or that in accepting Chicago he would have to abandon his own truth-based intellectual beliefs were perhaps the most significant obstacles to his accepting the presidency of the new University.⁵⁶ Four years after accepting that job, Harper would still protest to a friend: "[M]y special business in the world is stirring up people on the English Bible. The University of Chicago is entirely a second hand matter."⁵⁷

Harper was consistent in his support for scientific approaches to biblical scholarship. By the end of his life, he was even more persuaded of the merits of a new, modernist theology, based on a belief in the historical evolution of the Bible and on the immanent work of God in the world,

56. Even after accepting the presidency, doubts continued to plague him. When a young scholar, Lincoln Hulley, wrote to him in 1895 asking advice about whether to accept the presidency of Colby College, Harper responded, "I think that you are too young in your scholarly career to assume such a handicap as the presidency of an institution. I am confident that every man who enters upon administrative work at an early age diminishes immensely his probable usefulness in life. I know that I have made a mistake and hardly a day passes that I do not feel it. I am anxious to have you go right forward in your work." Harper to Hulley, September 5, 1895, *Harper Papers*, Box 2, folder 17.

57. Harper to J. M. Taylor, September 18, 1895, *ibid.*

which would help men of good will make the Christian message more accessible and more socially meaningful.⁵⁸ Harper's university was to be, in the broadest sense, an instrument for the perfection of human reason, searching for social and ethical truth in a society that would become ever more Christian, more God-like, more providential. As Conrad Cherry has argued, "In his commanding messianic vision and his ambitious educational scheme Harper was a figurative embodiment of an era when modernist, ecumenical Protestantism sought to determine the values of the whole of American culture through education."⁵⁹ The University was a priest, a prophet, and an immanent agent of God working in the world. On the eve of his final operation for cancer, he wrote to Reverend G. D. Edwards of Nevada, Missouri,

I am glad to say that the acceptance of the New Theology in my own case has greatly increased my sense of the value of Christianity for all men. It seems to me that when presented from the point of view of the New Theology, Christianity is capable of reaching and mastering a far wider circle of men than ever before. The New Theology presents religion in a more attractive, simple, and acceptable form than did the old. It appeals to a larger number of men to whom the old made no appeal whatever, to whom indeed the old was absolutely repugnant. Many men who have been unable to accept the Bible on the old basis have come to see it when looked at from the new point of view a mine of wealth and have gone into its study with zest and derived therefore incalculable benefit . . .

58. For the New Theology of the 1890s, see Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse*.

59. Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying toward Zion. Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), p. 13.

whereas the old theology kept many men from putting themselves into an attitude where they might receive the experience necessary to salvation, the new would seem to me, on account of its reasonableness and breadth, will not act as a hindrance to these men to keep them from the true religion, but will tend to secure their confidence and create in them a hospitable attitude toward the fundamental truths and experiences of Christianity.⁶⁰

Yet when faced with the stark, crushing reality of his own premature death on January 10, 1906, a death that left so many plans and ambitions unfulfilled, Harper had to work to find consolation in this faith. In conversations with Ernest D. Burton and Albion Small, Harper rehearsed again and again his understanding of faith and hope for a life of grace beyond the grave. Burton in particular tried to reassure him about the growing goodness and progress of the world, about the slow, but progressive approach of human society ever closer to God, and about Harper's own important role in bettering that society. Here surely was a workable model of a liberal, modernist world view, a world of divine immanence in which "he who has come into fellowship with that spirit of goodness that is at the heart of things can never lose that fellowship, and so can never cease to be, and because that spirit of goodness is good, and because things are moving on toward the better, the fellowship beyond this life must be better even than that of this life."⁶¹ Yet Harper's inductive method would not so easily rest, and Harper kept searching for more

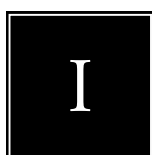
60. Harper to Edwards, February 11, 1905, *Harper Papers*, Box 7, folder 19.

61. Ernest D. Burton, "Memoranda of Conversations with President Harper in December, 1905," *Ernest DeWitt Burton Papers*, Box 2, folder 7.

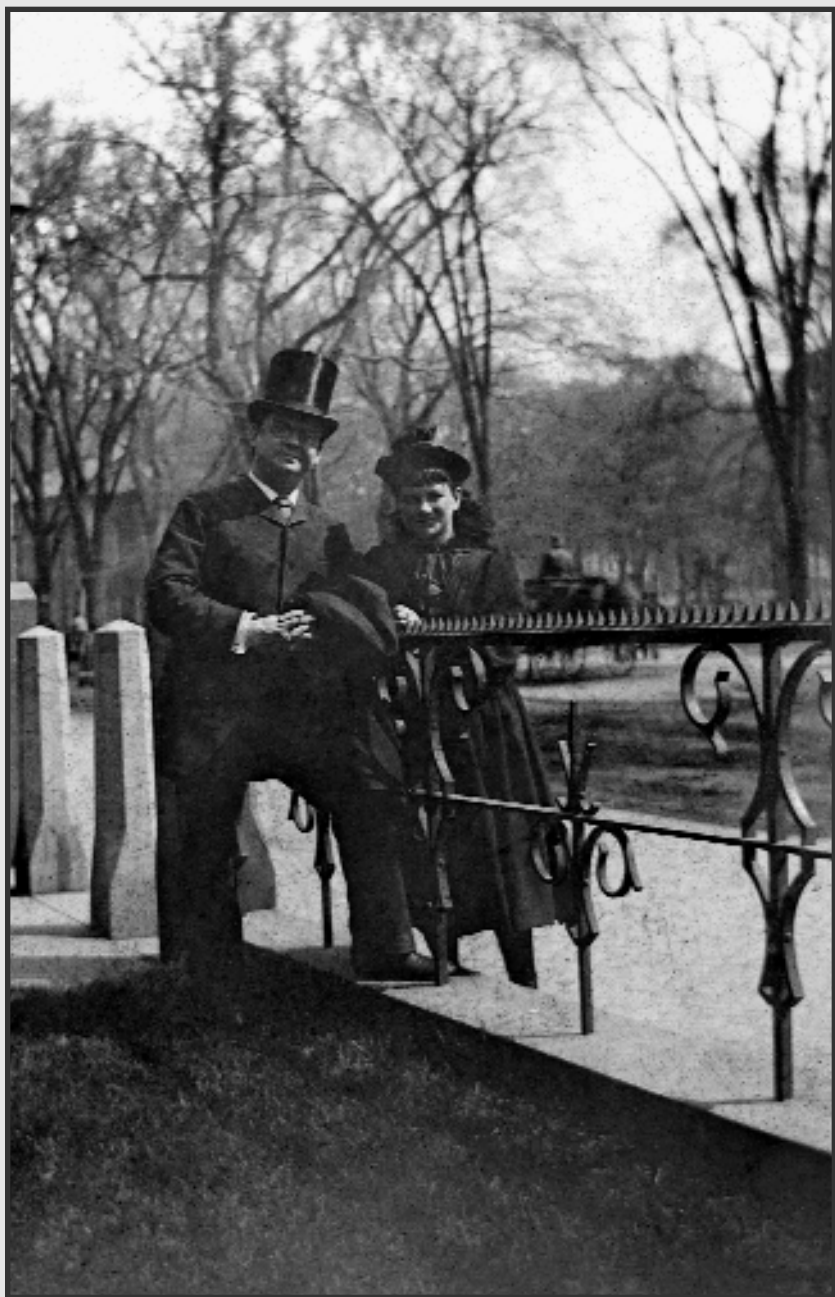
urgent and compelling reasons and facts that would dispel his fears of having lived an inadequate life, and more wretchedly, an overly ambitious life. Burton eventually appealed to the forgiveness of God, much like Harper as an earthly father would forgive a wayward son, and eventually Harper accepted his fate with greater confidence.

The scenes, as recorded by Burton immediately after Harper's death, read like a slow-motion graduate seminar in biblical criticism. Harper died as he lived, as a skeptic in search of the truth, but also urgently applying reason to struggle with uncertain realities, and as an irrepressible maker of plans. One of his last acts, after these weighty conversations about God and man, was to arrange for who would write the biographical statement that would be issued by the University after his death.

H A R P E R A N D T H E F O U N D I N G O F T H E U N I V E R S I T Y



n 1886, William Rainey Harper's career found its penultimate station when he was recruited to return to Yale University as a professor of Semitic languages. Harper admired Yale, felt at home there, and was respected by influential senior faculty members. He was particularly grateful that Yale was willing to take a chance on a young, relatively untested scholar. He wrote to his mentor William D. Whitney in June 1886 that "I desire to assure you that I look forward to my work in New Haven with much pleasure. I am diffident in undertaking the work because I feel how poorly I am prepared as compared with many others who hold chairs in Yale College but I am sure I shall do my best



Harper with his daughter Davida, Yale University, 1889.

to build up the Department." Build it he did, and Harper soon merited great loyalty and affection from his students at Yale.⁶²

During his tenure at Yale he also developed a remarkable popular lecture practice, giving public lectures on the Bible at many locations up and down the East Coast and netting considerable lecture fees to boot. His correspondence schools and journals flourished, at least intellectually, gaining him more notoriety. Thomas Goodspeed later claimed that the amount of Harper's daily mail at Yale was often larger than that received by the rest of the entire university.⁶³ Opportunities to move into academic administration did not seem to interest him; in 1888, Harper was offered the presidency of the University of Rochester, but rejected it, preferring to remain at Yale.⁶⁴

62. Harper to Whitney, June 12, 1886, *William D. Whitney Papers*, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Three weeks later Harper sheepishly promised Whitney, "I shall be pleased to adopt your suggestion viz., to take as much of the coming year as possible for study. I feel that I have made considerable progress in the languages which I am to teach, but I appreciate the fact that there is a large amount of work which I ought to do. I shall promise you not to organize any new Hebrew Schools, and while I am anxious to have my work get into definite shape as soon as possible, I shall with your advice take things leisurely." Harper to Whitney, July 2, 1886. The latter promise must have been of rather short duration. I am grateful to Cynthia Ostroff of Yale University Library for her assistance in obtaining copies of Harper's correspondence with Whitney. For Harper's success as a teacher at Yale, see James H. Breasted, "Some Recollections of Professor W. R. Harper's Last Days at Yale and his Sojourn in Germany during the Autumn and Winter of 1891," *Goodspeed Papers* [1927], Box 4, folder 12.

63. Goodspeed, *William Rainey Harper*, p. 97.

64. Philip A. Nordell urged Harper to reject the Rochester job given that "[y]ou are wielding an influence now immeasurably greater than you can possibly attain as a college president. There are many men who can fill that position respectably well. The man is not living who can take your place and do the work which the Lord has so manifestly laid upon you." Letter of April 28, 1888, *Storr Papers*, Box 3, folder 26.

When Harper was tempted to leave for Chicago in 1890, his Yale colleague Professor Thomas D. Seymour wrote to him,

My view remains strong, and grows stronger, that you throw away a marvelous opportunity by taking *any* position at the head of a college. And I feel more and more strongly that the presidency of a college is an exceedingly objectionable position. Doubtless every man who takes such a place thinks that he can avoid the rocks on which others have split, or that such rocks don't lie in his course. But the position is irksome and thankless. I presume you would not fail, but I do not believe you would satisfy your higher aspirations and ambitions nearly so well in Chicago as in New Haven.

I believe, too, fully, that you would be more useful in New Haven. General education can take care of itself pretty well in our country. Whether boys are trained in a Baptist or Episcopal school or college, is of small amount. But the leading of the people to sound views on the Old Testament may save thousands from shipwreck of their faith; it may be (humanly speaking) the salvation of the church. You ought not to endanger this. . . . Now, don't weaken and yield good naturedly to those Chicago solicitations.⁶⁵

Another Yale friend from New Haven, Samuel H. Lee, was certain that “[h]ere you have a chance to throw the millions of Yale and all her prestige and power into the biggest and newest movement of the time—the semitic—and to run it so as to stand at the head of the liberal-conservative school of scholarship. . . . I do not believe you are going out of this cosmopolitan position, to shrivel up in the embryonic shell of

65. Seymour to Harper, July 20, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 10.

a necessarily crude denominational college that sets forth with no more odor of sanctity than the much abominated Standard Oil company can give it."⁶⁶

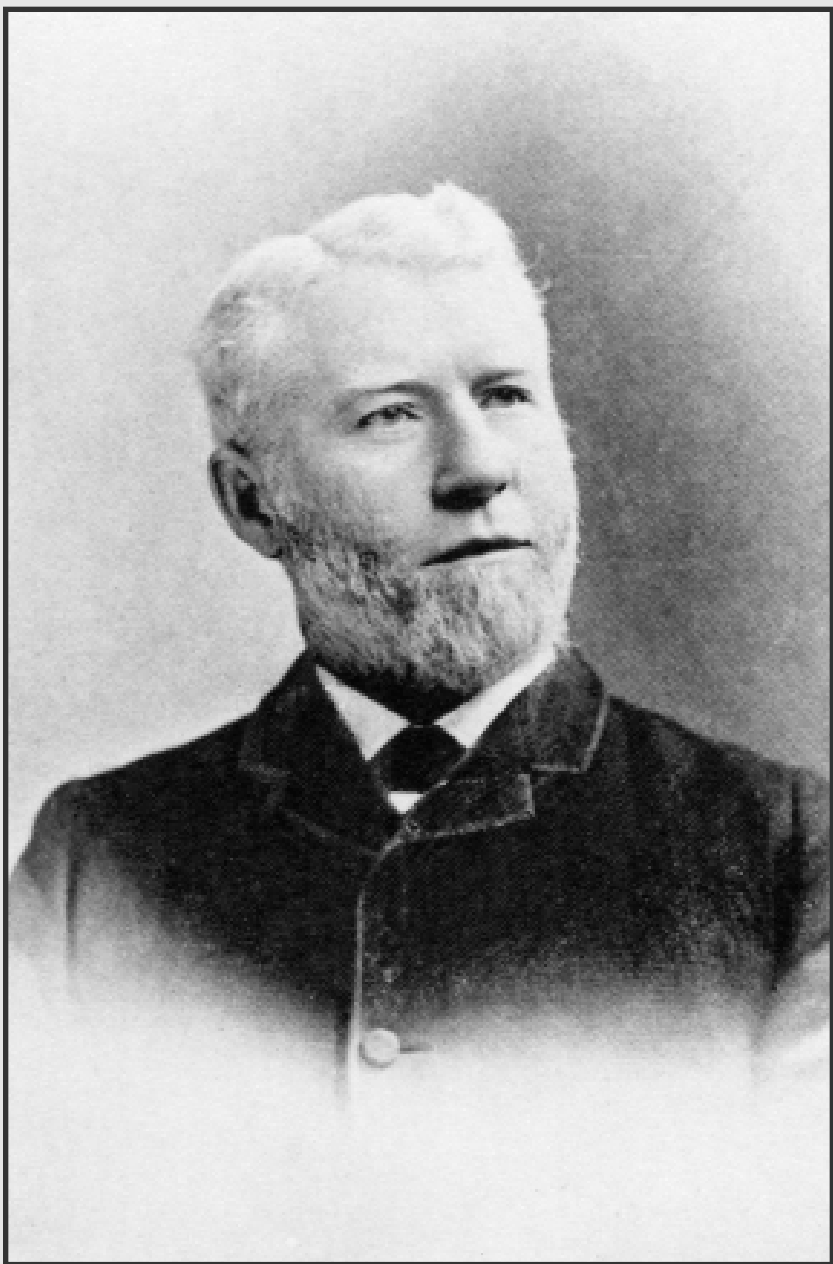
A contemporary of Harper's at Denison, Charles Chandler, later recounted that even while in Granville, Ohio, Harper was sure that he would return to Yale.⁶⁷ President Timothy Dwight so admired Harper that he raised a \$50,000 endowment to endow permanently a named professorship—the Woolsey Professorship in Biblical Literature—in honor of Harper to help finance Harper's various and sundry publication projects, thus persuading him to reject blandishments to return to Chicago to launch a new college or university.

Yet Harper's return to his long sought-after professorship in New Haven was soon interrupted by a complex set of negotiations relating to the revival of a Baptist university in Chicago. It is to that narrative we now turn.

The story of the founding of the University of Chicago is filled with many twists and turns, and not a few heroes. Harper was one of these heroes, but not the only one. In fact, the founding of the University was a drama starring five different actors, each of whom played both a critical and a unique role. It began with Thomas W. Goodspeed, an alumnus of the old University of Chicago. Goodspeed was a graduate of the Rochester Theological Seminary, the financial secretary of the Morgan Park Seminary, and a local Baptist minister and loyalist. Born in 1842 and thus old

66. S. H. Lee to Harper, September 5, 1887, *Storr Papers*, Box 3, folder 26.

67. "When he went to Morgan Park he remained still head of our Academy and returned in June to preside over Academy graduation exercises—a new thing with us. He was by no means sure of satisfying or being satisfied at that post. Evidently [he] thought the chances much against it; but he was *sure* he was destined to be a professor at Yale!" Chandler memoir, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.



Thomas Wakefield Goodspeed, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago, circa 1890.

enough to remember the Civil War, Goodspeed was a gentle, earnest man—not a natural leader of charismatic ability, but a talented agent and an eloquent spokesman for those who could provide visionary leadership. Although a perennial worrier, Goodspeed had great civic courage and an almost unshakeable conviction that he was doing the work of the Lord by trying to revive a Christian university in Chicago. All of these traits, together with a friendly demeanor and the remarkable trust that he naturally seemed to engender in those whom he met even casually, made him an ideal local agent for the new enterprise.

When the old University of Chicago collapsed of insolvency in the summer of 1886, Goodspeed led an effort to organize a temporary academy in rented space near the old University, using some former faculty members. The collapse of the old University had generated a huge level of shame among local Baptist leaders, and Goodspeed sought to capitalize on their frustration and humiliation by organizing a provisional committee to seek outside funding to relaunch the University. After consulting with several local ministerial colleagues, he approached John D. Rockefeller in early January 1887 with a long, detailed plea for support for the new institution and asked for \$50,000 to start an endowment drive.

John D. Rockefeller was the wealthiest Baptist in the United States and a loyal member of the denomination. Over the course of his life, he gave many millions of dollars to sundry charities and institutions.⁶⁸ Rockefeller had known Goodspeed since the late 1870s, and Goodspeed had more than once appealed to Rockefeller to support the seminary that the Baptists had transferred to Morgan Park, Illinois, in 1877. Rockefeller liked and respected Goodspeed, and this relationship of trust was crucial

68. By 1917 he had given \$275 million to charity. Ron Chernow, *Titan. The Life of John D. Rockefeller* (New York, 1998), p. 623.

to the events that were to unfold over the next four years, for Rockefeller was exceptionally careful in his judgment of potential donors.⁶⁹ Rockefeller would often defer a decision until he was persuaded of the virtue and the reliability of the man (or men) who would actually use the gift. Rockefeller's prevarications were always offered in the most cordial and polite terms, and this quality of tactical inscrutability—the result of what Frederick Gates later called “the extraordinary alertness of his mind and his skill in balanced phrasing”—sometimes led eager petitioners to read things into their conversations with him that did not conform to Rockefeller's own real intentions.⁷⁰

Goodspeed argued that the Baptists had no first-rate colleges in the West (by which he meant the Middle West as well as the American West); that a solid college was necessary to train an educated ministry; that an institution in Chicago would become the “greatest in our denomination”; and that the new college should be built adjacent to the Morgan Park Seminary so “the two institutions should be near each other.” Goodspeed's horizon of imagination was clearly modest, and he in fact was arguing for a revival of the old University, transferred to a new site and more solidly endowed.⁷¹

For Goodspeed and his colleagues, the most plausible way to reorganize the old University was to transfer it from its current site near 34th

69. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *As I Remember*, p. 34.

70. Editor's note attached to a transcript of Rockefeller to Goodspeed, June 14, 1886, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 1. Later in his life, Gates described Rockefeller's deflections of Augustus Strong's constant pleas as “as fine a disclosure here, as elsewhere, of his superb mastery of the art of fencing.” Gates to Goodspeed, March 17, 1914, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 1, folder 11.

71. Goodspeed to Rockefeller, January 7, 1887, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 1.

Street and Cottage Grove Avenue out to Morgan Park, where a local land development company had put together a proposal offering twenty acres of land and a small subsidy for the construction of a new building for the revived college, if the Baptists could raise \$100,000 in matching endowment to operate it.⁷² This initially became Goodspeed's plan.

Rockefeller was polite, but left little doubt that he had no interest in sinking money into the same swamp twice.⁷³ In fact, Goodspeed soon came to realize the failed image of the old University, which he himself called an "unmixed calamity," hung over his project like a curse.⁷⁴ He reported despondently to Harper in October 1888, "[o]ur ablest men feel that we need an institution founded on a broad and liberal basis and that we have not here the strength to found such a university. They look with distrust on the launching of a feeble and struggling enterprise and are not disposed to go into it."⁷⁵ As another Baptist minister, P. S. Henson, put it in describing the disorganization of the Chicago Baptists in June 1888, "[i]t has been next to impossible to rouse them to effort on account of the discouragement arising from past disaster and disgrace."⁷⁶

72. George W. Northrup to Harper, October 2, 1886, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 1.

73. "Your long letter with respect to the university I have read and re-read and think it is a very important question but have not been able to see my way clear to give you any encouragement. I will still further investigate." Rockefeller to Goodspeed, February 14, 1887, *ibid.*

74. Goodspeed to Rockefeller, June 16, 1886, *ibid.*

75. Goodspeed to Harper, October 15, 1888, *ibid.*, folder 3.

76. Henson to Rockefeller, June 4, 1888, *ibid.*

William Rainey Harper first entered the picture of university planning when the trustees of the old University offered him, in a last ditch effort, the presidency of that collapsing institution in April 1886 at a salary of \$2,000. Goodspeed even tried to involve Rockefeller in the negotiations, but Harper dismissed the offer and packed his bags for New Haven, beginning his professorship there at a salary of \$4,000 in the fall of 1886.⁷⁷ When Thomas Goodspeed submitted his new proposal to Rockefeller in early 1887, he encouraged Harper, now at Yale, to endorse the idea of a revived university in Chicago, which Harper loyally did. But Harper certainly had no interest at this time in returning to Chicago to lead such an institution.

While Goodspeed organized a local canvass among the much-chastened Chicago Baptists (he promised Rockefeller, “[w]e shall go slow and launch no new enterprise prematurely”), a third player joined the drama. This was Augustus Strong, the president of the Rochester Theological Seminary and the father-in-law of one of John D. Rockefeller’s daughters. Strong was a patriarchal figure among nineteenth-century Baptist theologians, an influential and respected church leader whose life work was his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, first published in one volume in 1886. In Grant Wacker’s estimation, Strong was in 1900 “one of the most visible churchmen in the United States,” although he is now more or less forgotten.⁷⁸ Over the course of the 1880s Strong had formulated a grand and highly expensive plan to create a new research university in New York City, to be bankrolled (so he hoped) by John D. Rockefeller. Throughout 1887

77. Goodspeed to Rockefeller, April 7, 1886, and April 22, 1886, *ibid.*, folder 1.

78. See Grant Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon, GA, 1985), p. 5.

and 1888 Strong inundated Rockefeller with appeals, urging his vision of a graduate theological faculty—to be expanded eventually to include arts and sciences graduate departments and professional schools of medicine and law—which would serve as the premier place of advanced education for Baptists in the United States. The price tag was steep, for Strong believed that the ultimate cost of such an institution would require at least \$20 million in endowment. Strong wanted Rockefeller to launch the scheme with an immediate \$3-million gift to be given by the end of 1887. Strong deliberately excluded undergraduate work from his model, arguing, “[W]e need an institution which shall be truly a University, where, as at Johns Hopkins, there shall be a large number of fellowships, where research shall be endowed, where the brightest men shall be attracted and helped through their studies, where the institution shall furnish a real society of people distinguished in science and art. And of such a University, the Theological School should be the centre; giving aim and character to all the rest.”⁷⁹ Strong’s plans owed much to his admiration of the German and English universities, about which he had assembled very detailed information. He insisted to Rockefeller that “[t]he true Universities are found only in Europe,” with the University of Berlin at the pinnacle of distinction.⁸⁰

In the autumn of 1887 Augustus Strong co-opted William Rainey Harper to join his venture, inviting him to review and comment on

79. Strong to Rockefeller, February 22, 1887, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 2.

80. Augustus Strong, “A University—What it is and Why we need one,” *ibid.* In October 1888, Strong gave a long lecture which presented his plan in considerable detail. *The Church and the University: A Detailed Argument and Plan* (Rochester, 1889), *American Baptist Education Society*, Box 1, folder 1.

Strong's plans and offering him a senior faculty position and the vice-presidency of his new university.⁸¹ Harper seems to have been flattered by Strong's attentions, and Strong immediately reported to Rockefeller that he had briefed Harper on "the main features of my plan for a University in New York. He thinks it in the whole and in its several parts not only a practicable plan, but a plan the carrying out of which would transform our whole denomination in ten years, both in New York and in the country. He says he would give his whole life to such an enterprise if he could further it."⁸² Strong described Harper as much valued by Yale, so much so that Yale intended (according to Strong) to raise \$2 million to endow a new school of graduate studies in Greek, Hebrew, Oriental languages, philosophy, and similar subjects, with Harper at the head. For Strong, Harper was "already famous all over the country." At the same time, Strong assured Rockefeller that Harper "feels so strongly that New York is so much superior to New Haven as a location, and that the work to be done for three millions of Baptists is so much greater, and that the need among us is so much more pressing for a University that he is willing to give up at New Haven and throw his whole soul into our new enterprise, if only it can be begun without delay."⁸³ A few days later, Strong insisted that "Professor Harper sees that there is no possibility of New Haven's competing with New York in University instruction and therefore jumps

81. Strong first contacted Harper in September 1887. See Strong to Harper, September 21, 1887, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 62, folder 10; Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong*, p. 61; and Hoffman, "William Rainey Harper and the Chicago Fellowship," pp. 34–41.

82. Strong to Rockefeller, September 24, 1887, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 2.

83. Strong to Rockefeller, September 25, 1887, *ibid.*

at the chance of carrying out my plan."⁸⁴ The surviving correspondence between the two men from late 1887 and early 1888 suggests that a robust collaboration and planning process did take place, with detailed discussions about budget arrangements and with Harper pushing for the creation of a "complete university" all at once.⁸⁵

Rockefeller decided to consult with Harper in late October 1887 about the plans of Goodspeed and Strong, with both men urging Harper to support their competing ventures.⁸⁶ Strong caustically dismissed the Chicago scheme as little more than a "great High School" that would be "planted in the mud. The surroundings are forlorn. The place is still like the backwoods."⁸⁷ Harper seems to have enthusiastically lobbied for the

84. Strong to Rockefeller, September 28, 1887, *ibid.*

85. Strong to Harper, October 4, 1887; October 11, 1887; October 17, 1887; October 25, 1887; October 26, 1887; November 2, 1887; November 7, 1887; November 12, 1887; November 17, 1887; November 26, 1887; December 9, 1887; December 5, 1887; December 9, 1887; December 19, 1887; February 16, 1888; February 26, 1888; April 23, 1888; April 26, 1888; April 30, 1888, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 62, folder 10; Strong to Harper, March 1, 1888, March 19, 1888, March 26, 1888, March 29, 1888, April 13, 1888, *American Institute of Sacred Literature Records*, Box 4, folder 1. It is telling that Harper was insistent on Strong launching the whole plan immediately, and not simply starting with a divinity school. See especially Strong to Harper, October 26, 1887, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 62, folder 10.

86. Strong went so far as to urge Harper not to confuse Rockefeller by even mentioning the Chicago project: "But it would not be wise to complicate the matter just now by asking Mr. R. to establish even a small institution in Chicago, much less to undertake the harmonizing of Baptist interests throughout the land. . . . [N]ow we must divide in order to conquer. One thing at a time. Like Napoleon, mass your forces at the critical point." Strong to Harper, October 26, 1887, *ibid.*

87. Strong to Rockefeller, February 15, 1887, and February 17, 1887, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 1. Henry Morehouse also reported to Frederick T.

Strong plan, and when Rockefeller postponed a decision about the New York scheme, he wrote to Rockefeller, "I cannot but be greatly disappointed and yet I am sure my disappointment is small compared with that of Dr. Strong. No greater service can be rendered the Baptist denomination and through that the country at large, than that which would result from such an enterprise as has been under consideration."⁸⁸ Harper's evident support for Strong's ideas would become a point of intense controversy itself in due time, since Strong soon came to feel that Harper had betrayed him.

The year 1887 thus ended with two plans on the table for Rockefeller's consideration, each checkmating the other. Strong had the more plausible and ambitious plan, but he was also pushy and abrasive and sought to take advantage of his (distant) family relationship with Rockefeller, which Rockefeller roundly resented. In Strong's own words, "[Rockefeller] turned red, and he looked very angry."⁸⁹ Whether because of Strong's assertive and sometimes abrasive personality or because of his excessive demands (Strong expected Rockefeller to provide the first \$3 million needed to launch the scheme immediately), Rockefeller felt

Gates that Strong "would like the influence of yourself and of myself if it could be used with Mr. Rockefeller to induce him to commit himself to this measure without delay." Morehouse to Gates, October 6, 1888, *Frederick T. Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 2.

88. Harper to Rockefeller, December 2, 1887, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 2.

89. Crerar Douglas, ed., *Autobiography of Augustus Hopkins Strong* (Valley Forge, PA, 1981), p. 249. Strong confessed to Harper, "I have a little fear that my last letter to Mr. R. may have been too plain. It was intended only to be honest. As many times before, I took my life in my hand to write it and risked a great deal." Strong to Harper, December 5, 1887, *PP 1889-1925*, Box 62, folder 10.

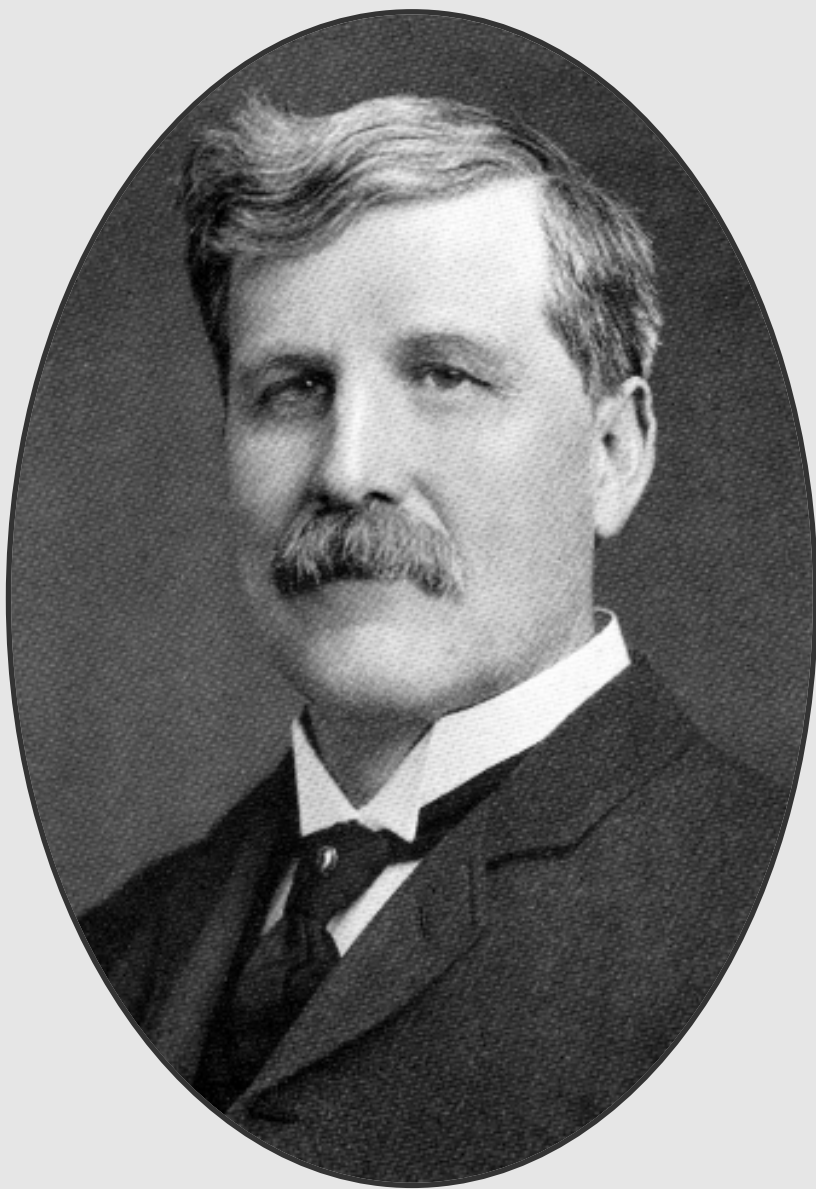
little enthusiasm.⁹⁰ Yet Strong's contempt for the Chicago scheme also had its effect on Rockefeller.

This gridlock changed radically over the course of 1888 because of the work of Frederick Taylor Gates, who was the fourth actor to join our narrative. He was a smart, quick-witted Baptist minister who became a self-appointed advocate of broadening and deepening higher education among western Baptists. Trained at the University of Rochester and the Rochester Theological Seminary, Gates served for eight years as a pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Minneapolis, but resigned in March 1888 to work as a fund-raiser for the Pillsbury Academy, a Baptist secondary school in Owatonna, Minnesota. Gates proved himself to be fearless and unflappable in the often-contentious world of Baptist denominational politics. He had a strong pragmatic streak and had little patience with theological squabbling, which gave him the agility to outwit intractable personalities and dodge vexing issues. He was also a shrewd and relentless fund-raiser.⁹¹

Gates entered the story of Chicago's rebirth when Henry Morehouse, a prominent Baptist pastor and the leader of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, proposed in May 1887 that the Baptists create an educational society to improve their secondary and tertiary educational institutions in the West and South of the United States. Morehouse's plan met with tough opposition from some eastern Baptist leaders

90. Strong eventually apologized to Rockefeller for his pushy, heavy-handed behavior. Strong to Rockefeller, December 23, 1887, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 2. Gates thought that Rockefeller "is not convinced that Strong's scheme is on the whole now the most needed thing." Gates to Morehouse, October 9, 1888, *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 2.

91. See Frederick Taylor Gates, *Chapters in My Life* (New York, 1977), esp. 77–121.



Frederick T. Gates, undated.

(including, not surprisingly, Augustus Strong) who feared a shift in denominational resources westward, but after much ardent politicking Morehouse gained overwhelming approval for the creation of the American Baptist Educational Society at a national meeting of Baptist leaders in May 1888.⁹² Morehouse then immediately hired Frederick Gates as the society's first full-time corresponding secretary. From the beginning of his tenure, Gates favored the creation of a university in Chicago that would draw upon a number of "academical feeders in adjacent states," that is, a network of Baptist secondary schools and smaller colleges.⁹³

Gates was to play a crucial role in organizing a public lobbying network within the Baptist denomination for the Chicago scheme, which gave Rockefeller the needed public cover and denominational legitimacy that he both demanded and expected.⁹⁴ Given his prior work in Minnesota,

92. The final vote was 188 to 34 in favor. "It was really a popular victory of the moneyless and educationally destitute West and South, over the moneyed and educationally well-provided Eastern and New England states." *Ibid.*, p. 91. The debates that led to the creation of the society are reprinted in *The National Baptist Convention and Organization of the American Baptist Education Society held in the Calvary Baptist Church at Washington, D.C., May 16 and 17, 1888* (Washington, D.C., 1888), esp. pp. 70–75

93. Morehouse to Gates, June 12, 1888, *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 1. Morehouse described Gates's early conceptions in the following way: "Your comprehensive view of the educational situation in the west shows that you have grasped the idea thoroughly and I hope you may live to see your plans realized, namely, a great institution at Chicago with academical feeders in adjacent states."

94. Gates later observed that Rockefeller "was not for his part prepared to lead off in such an undertaking until he could act on the unassailable ground of denominational authority and united denominational support. He was not prepared to act in favor of Chicago until he heard the voice of the entire Denomination calling upon him so to act and uniting with him in the work." Gates to Goodspeed, January 9, 1915, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 35, folder 3.

Gates was particularly partial to channeling new resources to the Middle West. During the summer and early autumn of 1888, Gates conducted confidential meetings with local Chicago Baptists to gauge their support for the Morgan Park option. He reported that he was initially very unimpressed with the solidity of the commitment of the Chicago brethren: “there was a certain lack of seriousness, a certain lightness of tone, on the part of most of the brethren that disappointed me.” He excluded Goodspeed and a few others from this reproach, but noted the

other brethren did not exhibit that sort of feeling out of which great things are carried to successful issue amid difficulty. Besides this, I felt constantly that there was a lack of perfect frankness. One could not be sure that the whole truth was being spoken. One felt that they might be slumbering volcanoes there[.] I did not observe any tendency to get right down to business and expose the bed rock facts. . . . The difficulties are these. The men of means among Baptists in and around Chicago are little interested in the question at best, and besides are exceedingly distrustful of any attempt to found a college. Some of them say that if it could start with a million or so they would give large sums, but to start with no more than is involved in the Morgan Park proposition does not appeal to their pride, and does not furnish them with the security they demand.⁹⁵

Gates persevered in his “quiet and underground” canvass of the more prosperous members of the Chicago Baptist community, however, negotiating with the local Baptists for the new Education Society to take

95. Gates to Morehouse, July 14, 1888, *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 1.

the sponsorship of their university project as an official campaign and quietly imagining a national communications strategy that would be “a lifting of the veil from many eyes.”⁹⁶ Gates carefully prepared a detailed report for a conference of Baptist ministers of Chicago on the chronic need for higher educational resources in the West. He presented this on October 15, 1888, and it constituted a vital step in mobilizing public opinion in a way that might persuade Rockefeller that the denomination as a whole—and not merely a small band of poor, if sincere, true believers led by Goodspeed—wanted a university in Chicago. Gates presented a series of dramatic arguments, all of which were based on the premise that demography favored Baptists in the Middle West and West against those living in the East, and that these growing numbers of faithful needed an infusion of new academic resources. The current state of Baptist educational institutions to serve this population was one of “destitution,” marked by poorly endowed institutions often located in “small obscure towns” distant from major population centers. But it was Gates’s second argument that was critical and that had long-range implications. Gates thought what was needed was a systematic, national approach in which Baptist academies (secondary schools) would feed Baptist colleges, which in turn would draw encouragement from a larger Baptist university:

Such an institution would immediately give stimulus and inspiration to all our preparatory schools, and we have no schools that are not chiefly such. Before its walls were reared, before its foundations could be laid, the mere assurance of such an enter-

96. Gates to Morehouse, July 29, 1888, and August 23, 1888, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 3.

prise made certain by means provided would lift up the heads of our colleges and clothe them with renewed vigor and larger influence.

Gates was certain that the only logical place for such a Baptist university was Chicago, the “centre and heart” of the West. He insisted that

this city is the most commanding social, financial, literary, and religious eminence in the west. It will lift so far aloft a Baptist college as an intellectual and religious luminary, that its light would illumine every state and penetrate every home from Lake Erie to the Rocky Mountains. The Old University in '82–83 when moribund and ready to drop into its grave attracted students from sixteen states. Chicago is the heart of the west, the foundation of western life. In that fountain should be placed our Christian college. Chicago is quickly and cheaply accessible from every part of the west. All roads lead to Chicago, all cities, all rural homes face Chicago. Already the chief seat of western learning, the educational supremacy of Chicago is becoming every year more marked.

Thousands of young Baptists would go to Chicago who would be otherwise lost to the denomination. Chicago would be “a boon to the cause of Christ in the west.” What would attract them would be a major institution of learning with an

endowment of several millions, with buildings, library, and other appliances equal to any on the continent, an institution commanding the services of the ablest specialists in every

department, giving the highest classical as well scientific culture and aiming to counteract the western tendency to a merely superficial and utilitarian education, an institution wholly under the Baptist control as a chartered right, loyal to Christ and his church, employing none but Christians in any department of instruction, a school not only evangelical but evangelistic, seeking to bring every student into surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord.⁹⁷

As he formulated this bold plan, Gates came to a second critical decision: the Morgan Park scheme was fatally flawed; and the new institution had to be located in or near central Chicago and had to be completely different from the old University. He insisted to Henry Morehouse, "[W]e can get ultimately hundreds of thousands of dollars from moneyed men [who are] not Baptists for the ONLY institution in the city, where we would get tens of thousands with the location out at Morgan Park, a suburb seldom or never visited by wealthy men, and almost unknown to the wealth of the city. Chicago, the CITY, is the true fulcrum for our lever."⁹⁸

Gates later described his ultimate goal as wanting "a complete educational system . . . graduated from the home upward, symmetrical in its extension and broad enough to cover the whole land, the parts being related logically if not indeed organically to the whole."⁹⁹ The western Baptists would be encouraged to convert many struggling colleges into academies,

97. "The Need of a Baptist University in Chicago, as Illustrated by a Study of Baptist Collegiate Education in the West," *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 2.

98. Gates to Morehouse, October 23, 1888, *ibid.*

99. Gates to Morehouse, October 9, 1888, *ibid.*

and move their regional colleges to larger cities, such as Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Minneapolis. At the center of this system would stand a “great and overshadowing” college “planted in Chicago.”¹⁰⁰ Leaving aside the narrowly denominational impulse of Gates’s early plans, which he was soon forced to modify to encompass greater financial participation by Chicago business elites, Gates’s bold impulse to systematic planning must be kept in mind to understand the genesis of Harper’s later 1891 plans for the University of Chicago.

Gates’s report was well received by the Chicago ministers, and word of it soon galvanized the denomination as a whole. He reported to Morehouse that the ministers “were ‘all torn up’ over it. They were astonished, astounded, confounded, dumfounded, amazed, bewildered, overwhelmed.”¹⁰¹ In the midst of Gates’s various machinations, Harper was waiting patiently in New Haven. Perhaps because he sensed that Strong had alienated Rockefeller and had no chance of success, Harper quietly abandoned his efforts on behalf of Strong’s plan during the summer of 1888; he instead became a strong advocate of the idea of a new university in Chicago, but one on a more ambitious scale.¹⁰² He secured several interviews with Rockefeller in October and November of 1888 at which he carefully rehearsed the arguments that Goodspeed had formulated on the need for an institution in Chicago but expanded the vision to include the establish-

100. Gates to Rockefeller, January 21, 1889, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 35, folder 3.

101. Gates to Morehouse, October 16, 1888, *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 2.

102. As late as April 1888, Harper was still advocating Strong’s scheme to Rockefeller. See Harper to Rockefeller, April 28, 1888, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 3, and the correspondence from late March and early April 1888 in the *American Institute of Sacred Literature Records*, Box 4, folder 1.

ment of a research university and not merely a college.¹⁰³ Harper's interviews with Rockefeller gave him great hope that the latter might be persuaded to act. He wrote to Gates in mid-November 1888, "You will be interested in knowing that quite a movement has been made toward the university in Chicago by Mr. Rockefeller. What I tell you must be regarded as strictly confidential. He is coming to see the necessity of the thing and will be ready within a short time to make a definite proposition to the denomination as a whole. I am aiming to have him make this proposition to the denomination through the National Education Society and think I shall succeed. I have spent several days with him during the last four weeks and there is constant progress."¹⁰⁴

Harper also secured a personal interview for Goodspeed with Rockefeller in early November, and the combination of Gates's systematic, national vision and Harper's enthusiasm led Goodspeed to vastly expand his imagined goal. Writing to Rockefeller on November 13, 1888, Goodspeed now proposed that Rockefeller give \$1.5 million to create a real

103. Harper to Goodspeed, October 13, 1888; Goodspeed to Harper, October 15, 1888, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 3. Goodspeed sent Harper a copy of Gates's report in late October, requesting that Harper send it on to Rockefeller, which Harper did on October 30. Goodspeed was amazed that "[t]he thing that seems to me to make the paper extraordinarily impressive is this. It is not the view of a Chicago man, or of a man who has any interest in Chicago, but in the first place, of a stranger to this city. . . . It is the result to which he has come after profound study of the entire educational situation." Goodspeed to Harper, October 25, 1888, *ibid.*

104. Harper to Gates, November 13, 1888, as well as Harper to Goodspeed, November 5, 1888, *ibid.*, folder 4. Later in his life, Gates reflected that Harper's reports of these conversations were likely to have been exaggerated and overly optimistic. See Gates to Goodspeed, December 13, 1926, *PP 1889-1925*, Box 35, folder 1; and *Chapters in My Life*, p. 100.

university, and that Rockefeller further agree to give an additional \$200,000 for every \$100,000 that could be raised locally, up to a total of \$4 million within ten years. Goodspeed imagined a university of “the first order” and the enlistment of the denomination “on a large scale.”¹⁰⁵

Harper’s embrace of the Chicago scheme, Gates’s powerful intervention, and Goodspeed’s new dream of a \$4-million university led Augustus Strong to write a blistering denunciation to Harper on November 18, 1888. Strong reacted bitterly against Harper’s change of heart, insisting that the Chicago scheme would lead to a “mongrel institution . . . which is neither fish nor fowl,” combining undergraduate and graduate work that would be bound to fail.¹⁰⁶ Late in his life, in a private autobiography written for his family, Strong accused Harper of treachery in stealing his plans for a new research university:

I had a long interview with Dr. Harper in New York, and he promised to cooperate with me in the effort to induce Mr. Rockefeller to found a university in New York City. But soon after, the Chicago people . . . got wind of my plan and resolved to leave no stone unturned to secure the university for Chicago instead of New York. Here I must accuse Dr. Harper of unfaithfulness to his agreement. He no longer cooperated with me,

105. Goodspeed to his sons, November 11, 1888; Goodspeed to Rockefeller, November 13, 1888; November 22, 1888, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 4. Gates too now bought into the idea of a university in Chicago with an endowment of “four to ten millions.” Gates to Harper, November 26, 1888, *ibid.* To Morehouse he advocated not a college but a “university in the highest sense of the term.” Gates to Morehouse, November 26, 1888, *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 3.

106. Strong to Harper, November 18, 1888, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 62, folder 10.

but, without giving me notice and without explaining his action, he threw his influence with Mr. Rockefeller in favor of the Chicago project. . . . After all I had done for fifteen years, my New York University was gobbled up and transferred to Chicago.¹⁰⁷

In the face of Strong's bitter demarche to Harper, Goodspeed backtracked and urged Harper to put as much rhetorical distance as they could between Strong's \$20-million university project and their plan for Chicago by gearing their rhetoric back down towards a four-year college. This strategy of trying to fly under the radar screen of Strong's animosity led Goodspeed to argue that Harper should try to "disarm" Strong by stressing that the \$4-million institution in Chicago would be in the first place a "College of the very highest class" that would only gradually grow into a full university.¹⁰⁸ Goodspeed's model was in fact Yale, for a week later he insisted to Harper, "[W]e want a first-class College with certain graduate departments, a western Yale. A University in the American sense, but not according to Strong's understanding of the word." And, innocently, Goodspeed then confessed that "[t]o tell him [Strong] that the University he has in mind is to be transferred to Chicago would be to deceive him and gratuitously engage him in active hostility. I may

107. Douglas, ed., *Autobiography of Augustus Hopkins Strong*, p. 250. This manuscript was written after 1896 for the private use of Strong's family. It was only published in 1981.

108. "You must tell him [Strong] that if you conveyed the impression that his great University was to be built in Chicago, it was a mistake, or the matter has taken a different shape, that we have in mind a very different sort of institution and such a one as he approves for Chicago." Goodspeed to Harper, November 24, 1888, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 4.

myself be altogether deceived, but I do not understand that Mr. R. has it in mind to build here that New York University.”¹⁰⁹

Harper responded quickly to Goodspeed’s cautious maneuvering that he had no interest in mollifying Strong, and he challenged Goodspeed with the observation that “if the thing you are wanting in Chicago is only a college, I have been working upon a wrong track.” If all they asked Rockefeller for were a college, “the result will be that a college is all that we shall get. This would be very sad, indeed, for it is not a college, but a university that is wanted. I can hardly think that anything but a straightforward, definite line of action will be successful.”¹¹⁰ Harper sensed that Strong was “desperate. Gates will probably visit him and try to mollify him, but it is really impossible.”¹¹¹

Harper was more correct than he could possibly imagine. In early December 1888, the Board of the American Baptist Education Society met in Washington, D.C., and, on Frederick Gates’s recommendation, agreed to take over from Goodspeed’s ad hoc committee the campaign to create a new institution of higher education in Chicago. Harper was present at this meeting, and “intimated to the Board in a semi-confidential way his reasons for believing that Mr. Rockefeller was deeply interested in the movement and would take an active part in the establishment of the institution.”¹¹²

109. Goodspeed to Harper, November 30, 1888, *ibid.*

110. Harper to Goodspeed, November 28, 1888, *ibid.* Of Rockefeller he wrote, “We want to keep him up to high-water mark, and when we see that there is danger that he is going to throw up the whole thing we can come down, and not until then.”

111. Harper to Goodspeed, December 5, 1888, *ibid.*

112. Editorial note by Gates, on a report of the decision of the board, dated December 13, 1888, *ibid.*

This decision pushed Augustus Strong over the edge, and his anger toward what he clearly viewed as Harper's betrayal may explain the irrational behavior that followed. Strong now tried to bomb the Chicago project by launching a direct *ad hominem* attack on Harper's orthodoxy as a scholar of the Bible. In a letter to Rockefeller on Christmas Day 1888, Strong reported that his daughter had attended a series of Bible lectures given by Harper at Vassar College that suggested that Harper "has departed from the sound faith as to inspiration and prophecy, and is no longer trusted in his teachings."¹¹³ Although Strong couched his intervention as that of a concerned Christian parent and a Vassar trustee forced by conscience to do an unpleasant deed, Harper complained to Goodspeed that "[h]is purpose was, of course, to injure me, feeling sure that in injuring me he would injure the chance of this university in Chicago, else why should he write to Mr. Rockefeller concerning this matter?"¹¹⁴

Harper met with Rockefeller several days after Strong's letter, and found him "a little less ready now than before."¹¹⁵ Harper frequently exaggerated or misread Rockefeller's willingness to accede to requests, and it is difficult to reconstruct exactly what Rockefeller thought he might do at this point in time, except wait. It seems improbable that Rockefeller was worried about Strong's particular accusations, but Rock-

113. "Prof. Harper, whom I have greatly admired and from whom I have hoped great things for the service of our denomination, has I fear departed from the sound faith as to inspiration and prophecy, and is no longer to be trusted in his teachings. . . . His surroundings at New Haven have not been favorable, and he has unfortunately made much progress in the wrong direction, so much so that I cannot have any further responsibility as respects the continuance of his teaching at Vassar." Strong to Rockefeller, December 25, 1888, *ibid.*

114. Harper to Goodspeed, December 28, 1888, *ibid.*

115. Harper to Morehouse, December 28, 1888, *ibid.*

efeller was deeply concerned that whatever he did in Chicago have the strong backing of the denomination, and given Strong's prestige among the Baptists nationally, the latter's attack on Harper's orthodoxy certainly had the potential to muddy the denominational waters.¹¹⁶ As conversations swirled and rumors abounded, events stalled for the first three months of 1889, with Rockefeller still undecided about what he would do in Chicago. Harper feared more than once that Goodspeed and he may have overplayed their hand.

Goodspeed was able to mobilize prominent Baptists, notably President George Northrup of the Morgan Park Seminary, to announce their enthusiastic support of Harper's theological respectability, thus countering Strong's diatribe. Northrup especially was eager to calm tempers before a public scandal ensued.¹¹⁷ Gates thought that Strong was a "melancholy, a profoundly unhappy and disappointed man, I fear almost desperate." Gates also worried about Harper's state of mind when he reported to Morehouse that "I hope the result of this latest attack will be to fix Rockefeller more firmly to

116. "As matters stand today Mr. Rockefeller still has confidence in me and he is waiting simply to see whether the brethren will stand by me or whether—accepting Dr. Strong's charges—they will brand me as a heretic and throw me overboard." Harper to Goodspeed, December 28, 1888, *ibid.*

117. "I have no doubt that you could 'make it hot for him', nor have I any doubt that he could 'make it hot for you', by inaugurating a newspaper war and awakening doubt as to the soundness of your theological views which could not fail to damage you in many ways. As a result of all this you would feel constrained to sever your connection with our denomination; Mr. R. would become disgusted with the miserable contentions and abandon his magnificent educational projects." Northrup to Harper, January 1, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 5. Northrup wrote the same day to Rockefeller, assuring him that Harper's "intellectual abilities are of the highest order, his scholarship is accurate, thorough and wide; he possesses a remarkable genius for organization, has extraordinary power of creative enthusiasm, and is a born leader of men." *Ibid.*

Harper. But I fear its effects on Harper himself. He is timid and in doubt about his position with the denomination at large."¹¹⁸

It was Frederick Gates who was finally able to get things back on track by two interventions. First, he suggested bluntly to Morehouse and Harper that if they had any hope of getting funding from Rockefeller in the near future, the Chicago lobby would have to return to the idea of creating a "very high grade college" and drop the idea of a university, at least for the foreseeable future.¹¹⁹ Gates later reflected that "Dr. Harper's influence on Mr. R while well meant was well suited to cause the delay, postponement, and well-nigh abandonment of the project which subsequently occurred. Harper was too ambitious and exacting in his ideas. It was not until less ambitious counsels prevailed that Mr. R was again brought to the point of action."¹²⁰ Gates then proposed in late February 1889 to Rockefeller that he, Gates, create a high-level committee of distinguished Baptists to evaluate the necessity and plausibility of the Chicago scheme (that is, a college in the Chicago area).¹²¹ Rockefeller quickly assented to the formation of this committee.¹²² This nine-man group, to which Harper was appointed, met in mid-April and approved

118. Gates to Morehouse, January 3, 1889, *ibid.*

119. Gates to Morehouse, January 6, 1889; Gates to Goodspeed, January 11, 1889; Gates to Goodspeed, Northrup, and Smith, January 12, 1889; Harper to Rockefeller, January 13, 1888, *ibid.*

120. Gates to Goodspeed, October 8, 1914, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 1, folder 11.

121. Gates to Rockefeller, February 23, 1889; Harper to Rockefeller, February 25, 1889, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 6.

122. Rockefeller to Gates, February 26, 1889, *ibid.* "When I first met Mr. Rockefeller [in early 1889], introduced by Dr. Harper, I found him unprepared to

Gates's revised plan for a "well-equipped college, leaving any desirable further development to the natural growth of time," to be located "within the city limits of Chicago."¹²³ This gave Rockefeller the final public justification that he needed to make a plausible decision in favor of Chicago and against the various other calls he received to support educational enterprises.¹²⁴

The next big hurdle was overcome when Frederick Gates was able to persuade John D. Rockefeller on May 12, 1889, walking up and down the sidewalk in front of his house on 54th Street in New York City after breakfast, to put up a \$600,000 matching gift to establish a college in Chicago, provided the Baptists generated an additional \$400,000 within one year.¹²⁵

commit himself to Chicago. . . . I guessed from his conservatism that if a clean, definite programme were presented by denominational leaders, which among conflicting voices would point out the path which must approve itself to disinterested Baptist educators and which would represent the needs and wishes of the denomination, much light might be thrown on his path as would enable him to advance." Gates to Goodspeed, March 6, 1914, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 1, folder 11.

123. "Report of Committee on Proposed Institution of Learning in Chicago, April 12, 1889," *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 7.

124. Harper visited Rockefeller in late January, and reported that Rockefeller had been approached by Broadus of the Louisville seminary for \$50,000 as well as by Gilman of Johns Hopkins, Welling of Columbia, and several others. Rockefeller was also "more tired than ever" of Strong's New York plan. Harper to Goodspeed, January 27, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 5.

125. Gates's own account is the best one: "I told Mr. R. we must act *now* or lose a year, disappoint hopes and possibly lose the momentum for the movement. We then discussed terms. He proposed to give \$400,000 towards a million. I said we could not raise it. He would have to give at least \$600,000 to turn the balance toward success. Then he offered \$500,000. I declined to undertake it even on that and insisted that nothing but a generously preponderant subscription could win. We were walking to and fro in front of his house. This he finally accepted." Editor's Note, March 12, 1914, attached to a copy of a letter of Rockefeller to Gates, May 11, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 7.

This was a far cry from the multi-million dollar extravaganza that Augustus Strong had envisaged, and quite distant from what Thomas Goodspeed and Frederick Gates had wanted six months earlier. Perforce, Rockefeller had only agreed to a four-year undergraduate college, with no commitments to professional or graduate components.

Gates made the dramatic announcement of Rockefeller's pledge at a meeting of the American Baptist Educational Society in Boston on May 18, 1889. After universal acclaim and genuine rejoicing among the protagonists of the Chicago project had subsided, Goodspeed and Gates were forced to spend the next twelve months campaigning for the missing \$400,000. This canvass was surely one of the most remarkable fund-raising ventures ever undertaken in the history of American higher education. Goodspeed was hired as a full-time fund-raiser, and Gates ended up devoting most of his time to the cause as well. Together they trooped the streets of Chicago in search of subscriptions, "working together first rate without friction and best of all successfully."¹²⁶ Goodspeed was at first hopeful that the target would be met within a few months, but it soon became apparent that local Baptists had neither the capacity nor the enthusiasm to generate \$400,000 from their own ranks. By February 1890 Gates was gloomily reporting to Henry Morehouse that

Dr. Goodspeed and I work very hard and sometimes get into the depression of overwork. With few exceptions we have spent the whole day of every day in Chicago and returning at night, we spend the evenings and often far into the night in correspondence. We walk many miles every day in the streets of the city. Our delays and difficulties are astonishing. We find not over 2/5ths

126. Goodspeed to Harper, June 22, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 8.

of the men we seek to see when we call. There are men in this city whom we have called upon twelve times, and between their absences and postponements have not yet secured their subscriptions. Our letters are treated in the same dilatory way. . . . I will not conceal from you my profound anxiety, as man after man delays or evades in other ways our pressing appeals.

Still, Gates was confident of ultimate success: “[W]e shall push it through *somehow* and make a big rumpus.”¹²⁷ This diligence for funds led Gates to move beyond the local Baptists, a strategy made both urgent and difficult because of Protestant interdenominational rivalries. Gates reported to Harper,

The fact is that the other denominations have waked up and passed the word around that we must not be encouraged. At least it begins to appear that way. Sectarian!! Sectarian!! Baptist!! Baptist!! That is the eternal cry in nearly every office and our utmost endeavors on the street and in the papers are powerless to arrest the note of alarm. I do privately believe that Lake Forest and Evanston are quaking, and that the whole Pres[byterian] and Meth[odist] denominations since the [Marshall] Field gift [of ten acres of land in Hyde Park], have come to fear Baptist supremacy in this city and the west educationally, and have rallied their friends against us. The tremendous lever this institution will give the Baptists is now clearly seen and dreaded.¹²⁸

127. Gates to Morehouse, February 2, 1890, *ibid.*, folder 9.

128. Gates to Harper, February 17, 1890, *ibid.*, folder 9.

Gates and Goodspeed worked hard to dispel the bogeyman of sectarianism, and that meant in the first instance decoupling it from the old University of Chicago that had been run into the ground by local Baptists. Gates noted bluntly to Harper that "we have been importuned by our largest givers and ablest men not to commit ourselves in any way to any part of the old affair. We have been obliged frequently to disconnect this movement bag and baggage from the old in order to get a respectful hearing. Only today Drs. Goodspeed and Lorimer [were] in conversation with C. L. Hutchinson, President of the Commercial Club (who promises our cause a hearing before the club next month), [who] inquired anxiously if this had anything to do with the old institution in any way. Their assurance that it had *not* unlocked him and the Commercial Club."¹²⁹

Slowly, Gates and Goodspeed built up trust among wealthy non-Baptists. Gates reported eagerly to Harper in November 1889, "[O]ur largest hope is from the rich outside men. Armour says he will help us out and use his influence with other rich men of his acquaintance. Mr. Higginbotham, Marshall Field, Mr. Potter, Mr. Munger, and in all about a dozen of that class have given us their promise to help us out. We have secured the names of a hundred or more men and firms each worth from \$500,000 up to many millions, whom we are going to see. With one or two exceptions *every one* of the big men has received us with marked courtesy and encouragement, several saying that this must not by any means be allowed to fail and promising not only to do their full share, but to work for us. We have been promised by Mr. Charles Hutchinson the Pres[ident] of the Commercial Club a hearing before that venerable

129. Gates to Harper, October 23, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 8.

body on the last evening of this month.”¹³⁰ Hutchinson’s help was particularly critical, since it set off a dynamic chain reaction that led not only to more gifts but also to the involvement of Martin A. Ryerson in the cause. I have discussed Ryerson’s crucial leadership role as chairman of the board of trustees for the early University elsewhere, but the relevant point here is that Ryerson was not a Baptist, and his personal involvement as a widely respected young businessman who was not part of the denomination was of immense symbolic value among Chicago civic elites.¹³¹ The spring of 1890 saw a renewed effort to make more contacts beyond the Baptists and netted many successes, including the gift of a \$25,000 subscription by local Jewish businessmen offered in April 1890. All of these gifts confirmed that the new institution would not have a strictly denominational identity.¹³²

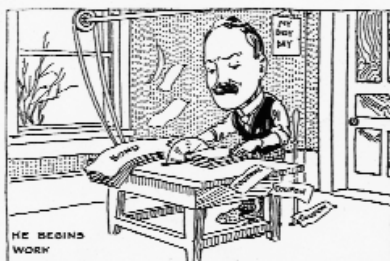
Finally, having exceeded the target by slightly more than \$2,000, Gates was able to telegraph Rockefeller on May 23, 1890, that the necessary \$400,000 had been raised. Rockefeller accepted the pledges the next day, and the new University of Chicago was about to become a reality. With the challenge fulfilled, Frederick Gates initiated the process by which

130. Gates to Harper, November 12, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 8.

131. See John W. Boyer, *Building for a Long Future. The Role of the Early Trustees in the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 2001), esp. pp. 33–37.

132. On the gift from the Jewish businessmen, see Goodspeed to his sons, April 20, 1890, and Gates to Morehouse, April 25, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 9. The gift from the Jewish businessmen originated in a meeting that Goodspeed had with Mr. B. Loewenthal, a local Jewish banker. He offered to use his contacts and also suggested that Goodspeed contact Rabbi Emil Hirsch, who would do likewise. Goodspeed to his sons, February 23, 1890, *ibid.*

DAYS WITH PEOPLE—MR. ROCKEFELLER.



"Days with People," February 1900, cartoonist and newspaper unknown.

the American Baptist Education Society would transfer control of the authority over to the new institution and all of the assets assembled to a newly constituted board of trustees, consisting of twenty-one men, seven of whom were not Baptists.¹³³ This board held its first official meeting on July 9, 1890, to organize itself and elect officers. The University was officially constituted as a not-for-profit corporation under the laws of the state of Illinois on September 10, 1890.

In the midst of the canvass, the question of the location of the new University resolved itself almost magically. Everyone had given up on Morgan Park, and no one wanted to return to the site of the old University at 34th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue, which embodied too many distasteful memories. In early December 1889, Goodspeed and Gates approached the Chicago department store magnate Marshall Field; and after much back and forth they secured in mid-January 1890 a commitment for ten acres of land in the village of Hyde Park, which had

133. Goodspeed was wildly enthusiastic about three of the non-Baptists on the board, Ferdinand Peck, Charles Hutchinson, and Martin Ryerson: "Ryerson it seems to me is the man. He is worth \$4,000,000. He is himself liberal and is very near to all the wealthiest men here. His standing is A 1. He is a level headed and capable man. He has abundant leisure. I do not see why he should not be worth half a million to us during the next five years. If we make Peck the chairman of the Finance Committee we shall have in the responsible financial positions three of the leading young business men of the city, Ryerson, Peck, and Hutchinson, and we shall then have a pull on the wealth of Chicago that we can get no other way. Those three men can raise more money than any other three men in Chicago. Their positions of responsibility will emphasize the liberal spirit of the institution, so that it will command universal sympathy and confidence." Goodspeed to Harper, October 5, 1890, *ibid.*, folder 12.

just been incorporated into the city.¹³⁴ Field also gave the society the option to buy an additional ten acres at a discounted price. Gates was particularly enthusiastic that "[t]he territory of the south side and especially that for several miles in every direction from the site is residence property and forms the location of the higher middle and aristocratic classes. No manufacturing will ever be possible in the neighborhood."¹³⁵

Once the \$400,000 had been secured, the issue of the leadership of the new institution assumed the highest urgency. The question of who would run the new college thus came into sharp focus in June 1890. William Rainey Harper's official position from the time of his final repudiation of Strong's option in the fall of 1888 was that he had made no overt or covert commitment to serve as President. His situation was complicated still further in early 1889 when President Dwight of Yale offered Harper a generous financial package, including a salary increase, time off with salary to travel in Europe, money to cover the debts generated by his publications, new facilities for his department, and a personal research assistant to help him in his many ventures in return for a commitment

134. Goodspeed to his sons, January 12, 1890; *ibid.*, folder 9. Field was first approached by George Lorimer in early November 1889, but made no commitment. Goodspeed to his sons, November 10, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 8. Goodspeed sent Field a detailed proposal on January 8, 1890, and Gates and Goodspeed met with him a week later on January 15. Field claimed that he was influenced by Rockefeller's example and by a letter that Harper had also sent to him: "He had not fully made up his mind when we went in, but the thing that brought him to *time* seemed to be our desire to telegraph Mr. Rockefeller his favorable answer." Gates to Harper, January 15, 1890, *ibid.* The estimated market value of both plots together was \$500,000, so Field's gift was significant in scope. See the original gift documents in *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 6.

135. Gates to Morehouse, January 17, 1890, *ibid.*, Goodspeed to Harper, June 1, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 10.

to remain in New Haven an extended period of time.¹³⁶ Harper insisted to Rockefeller, "I have refused absolutely to consider the question of going myself to Chicago."¹³⁷ So consistent was this rhetoric that Gates and Goodspeed were left for some months of 1889 trying to put together optional leadership strategies which involved Harper remaining in New Haven for a number of years, one of which had Goodspeed serving as chancellor (a kind of acting president).¹³⁸

In early June 1890, both Goodspeed and Gates had formally appealed to Harper to acknowledge his interest in and willingness to accept the presidency.¹³⁹ The board also genuinely wanted Harper, and, equally important, they had no plausible alternative. This gave Harper a huge advantage in the negotiations that now commenced. Harper's shrewdness and his genuinely conflicted sense of motives now converged to give him the upper hand. His opening bid in the game that followed

136. Harper to Gates, January 7, 1889; Harper to Goodspeed, January 8, 1889; Goodspeed to his sons, January 13, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 5. The letter of Goodspeed to Harper, February 18, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 6, suggests that Harper had given Yale a six-year commitment to stay in New Haven.

137. Harper to Rockefeller, January 13, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 5. Morehouse wrote to Gates that "[h]e has peremptorily declined to take the presidency of the proposed University of Chicago and says he has told Mr. Rockefeller so." Morehouse to Gates, January 4, 1889, *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 4.

138. Gates to Morehouse, January 6, 1889; Harper to Goodspeed, January 19, 1889, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 5.

139. Goodspeed to Harper, June 1, 1890; Goodspeed to Harper, June 8, 1890; Gates to Harper, June 9, 1890, *ibid.*, folder 10. Gates's name was also in play among some Baptists for the presidency, but he assured Harper, "I know of no cable on earth big enough or strong enough to haul me into that position. . . . You are the only man I have ever seriously thought of for that position."

was that he could accomplish much as a full-time scholar at Yale. Why should he leave? We have several commentaries on his frame of mind in these months.

George S. Goodspeed, who knew Harper at Yale, recorded in late May 1890,

I found to my great surprise that he was quite favorably inclined to Chicago. Six months ago when we talked about it he was entirely opposed to the whole thing, as he himself acknowledged. But some experiences which he has had in entering the academical faculty here and observing the working of things has seemed to entirely alter the state of his mind. I do not think that he *wants* to go to Chicago—he does not want the position, but I think that he would be willing to consider the matter and more than that I know that he has even gone so far as to formulate clearly certain conditions on which he would go if asked.¹⁴⁰

But when Frederick Gates saw him two months later, Harper seemed more uncertain than ever:

I pity Dr. Harper. He seems in real and deep distress of mind. The fact is (as he explains it) that I was seen with him on the streets of New Haven and my mission guessed. Dr. Fisher and other Yale men in New Haven gathered round him with entreaty

140. George S. Goodspeed to Thomas W. Goodspeed, May 26, 1890, *ibid.*, Box 1, folder 10. The negative currents at Yale that Goodspeed refers to very likely involved the strident reaction of President Dwight to Harper's toying with the idea of leaving New Haven. Dwight considered Harper's behavior as bordering on the unethical.

and argument. A supper was made for him by Yale men in New York at which with the most strenuous insistence he was urged to remain. On the other hand, there are our interests and the great work possible at Chicago. The prestige of his position at Yale he values much, his associations there are inspiring as well as congenial, his life work he has regarded as Biblical Study, he is in love with his classes, they are large and eager, his evangelistic work there appeals to the highest motives.¹⁴¹

John D. Rockefeller wrote to Harper in early August 1890, hoping that Harper would accept the job and stating, "I agree with the Board of Trustees of the Chicago University that you are the man for president and if you will take it I shall expect great results. I cannot conceive of a position where you can do the world more good; and I confidently expect that we will add funds, from time to time, to those already pledged, to place it upon the most favored basis financially."¹⁴² Harper was touched by this assurance, but found Rockefeller's vague formulation about future support unacceptable.¹⁴³ In response, Harper made it clear that he would not leave a university—Yale—for a liberal arts college in Chicago: "The denomination and indeed the whole country are expecting the University of Chicago to be from the very beginning an institution of the highest rank and character. Already it is talked of in connection with Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, the University of Michigan

141. Gates to Rockefeller, July 28, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 10.

142. Rockefeller to Harper, August 6, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 11.

143. "This, I suppose, means a good deal for him but is, of course, not very distinct." Harper to Gates, August 9, 1890, *ibid.*

and Cornell. . . . Naturally we ought to be willing to begin small and to grow, but in these days when things are done so rapidly and with the example of Johns Hopkins before our eyes, it seems a great pity to wait for growth when we might be born full-fledged."¹⁴⁴

More resources would have to be added to expand the concept of the new institution into something that more closely resembled the ambitions that Augustus Strong had put in play and that Harper seems to have found compelling. Earlier in 1889, Thomas Goodspeed had written to his sons complaining that Strong "has got it into his head that we want his university here, but we don't want anything like it. We should have no use for purely post-graduate and professional University for many years to come. He sets up a man of straw to knock down in order to defeat the whole Chicago movement." Yet, viewed from Harper's negotiating politics a year later, Augustus Strong was more correct than Goodspeed could possibly have imagined. When Harper showed Strong his plan for the new University in late 1890, Strong responded correctly, "To carry it out fully would require no less money than I wished for a University in the City of New York."¹⁴⁵

Finally, in an effort to break the logjam, Frederick Gates intervened once again and met with Harper in Morgan Park in mid-August for a long negotiating session. Gates appears to have been acting as an agent of Rockefeller, exploring the terms that Harper would accept. Gates's subsequent account from 1915 is lucid and revealing:

Dr. Harper spent the Sunday, August 17th, with Mr. Gates at Morgan Park—a day of crisis and decision happily fateful for

144. Harper to Rockefeller, August 9, 1890, *ibid.*

145. Goodspeed to his sons, April 28, 1889, *ibid.*, folder 7; Strong to Harper, December 23, 1890, *ibid.*, folder 12.

the new institution. The day was beautiful. We spent the afternoon in the open air. We visited the grave of Harper's child. He was in a tender, fruitful mood, making a momentous life decision. The fundamental question was how could he become President of a university in Chicago and at the same time not practically renounce his chosen life work of Old Testament research, criticism, and instruction. Gradually, the following plan unfolded itself. 1. The Theo. Seminary to be removed to the campus of the University. 2. The Seminary to become an organic part of the University (it subsequently became contractual only). 3. The present Seminary buildings at Morgan Park to be used for a University academy. 4. Equivalent or better buildings for the Seminary to be erected on University [of Chicago] campus. 5. Instruction in Hebrew and Old Testament criticism to be transferred to University chairs. 6. Dr. Harper to be head Professor with salary and full authority over department. 7. Mr. Rockefeller to give \$1,000,000 as a new unconditional gift, a part of which would go for aid to the Seminary in carrying out the programme. 8. Dr. Harper to visit Mr. Rockefeller and to agree to accept the Presidency on this programme.¹⁴⁶

Harper insisted that the University must aspire to professional and graduate education or he would not accept the presidency. The breakthrough came with the fate of the Morgan Park Seminary. The aged president of that small, deficit-plagued institution, George Northrup, desperately wanted it to be moved to the new campus in the city and to

146. "Editor's Note," [1915], attached to the letter of August 5, 1890, in *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 11.

become affiliated with the new University. Northrup was convinced that "the Seminary ought to be an organic part of the University."¹⁴⁷ Gates and Harper used Northrup's demarche to create a stunning precedent. They skillfully merged the college that Rockefeller had just launched and the graduate seminary that Northrup wanted to attach to that college in order to create the political momentum and the structural preconditions for persuading Rockefeller of the logic of a full research university. Semitic Languages and Literatures were to become a separate department in a graduate school apart from the Divinity School, and Harper was to be contractually connected to that department as its first head (or chair). As for the transformation of the seminary into a new Divinity School, Harper strongly preferred the merger done in a way to eliminate the Baptist Theological Union from any residual control; but Northrup and his colleagues resisted that concession, and Harper was compelled to accept a continuing role for the union in the management of the new Divinity School.¹⁴⁸

This agreement opened the way for an additional commitment from John D. Rockefeller to give the University another \$1 million to endow

147. See Northrup to Harper, December 3, 1888, and December 6, 1888, *ibid.* For the state of the seminary in the 1880s, see *The Baptist Union Theological Seminary. Morgan Park, Ill. A Great Opportunity* (Morgan Park, IL, 1885).

148. "Dr. Northrup's difficulty was that in one form or another Dr. Harper was insistent upon destroying the Theo. Union behind the Seminary and which owns and controls it or if not that to *compel* the Union to elect certain men (all Baptists on Univ. Board) as Trustees. Harper wanted an (illegal) organic union. Northrup wanted Sem. forever kept under the Baptist thumb. I sided with Northrup. He was not as you have been informed seeking personal ends. . . . Harper yielded and the autonomy of Seminary is rightly preserved, as you will agree." Gates to Henry Morehouse, February 7, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 1.

graduate and professional instruction. Gates reported Harper's expectations to Rockefeller on August 25, 1890. Conferring with Harper on September 5 in Cleveland, Rockefeller then agreed to Harper's terms as discussed with Gates (but not until after he spent the better part of a day trying to get Harper to agree to payment via installments), and specifically offered an additional \$1 million, \$200,000 of which was to be devoted to the new Divinity School.¹⁴⁹ At its first official meeting on September 18, 1890, the board officially voted to make William Rainey Harper the offer of the presidency, giving him a six-month deadline to make a final decision.

Harper used the following months to articulate his plan of organization for the University, acting publicly as if he had already accepted the offer of the trustees. Yet, he held off issuing a final acceptance; and in early 1891 he stunned Gates and Goodspeed by hesitating once more over the issue of his relationship with the conservative Baptists. Harper wrote to Rockefeller that he had been weighing his relationship to denominational conservatives for some months, and that the issue remained a deeply troubling one. Letters of congratulations like the one he received from John Broadus, in which Broadus insisted, "I hope you will see fit to prefer in all cases men who incline to conservative views about biblical inquiries and about the relations between Christianity and critical science. . . . I trust also that the theological seminary connected with the University will always be distinctly and decidedly Baptist," must have given Harper pause.¹⁵⁰ Uneasiness among conservative eastern Baptist leaders like Dr. Edward Bright toward Harper's plans remained

149. Harper to Goodspeed, September 6, 1890; Harper to Morehouse, September 10, 1890; Northrup to Harper, September 10, 1890, *ibid.*, Box 1, folder 11.

150. Broadus to Harper, October 13, 1890, *ibid.*, folder 12.

obvious.¹⁵¹ Augustus Strong's bitter personal animosity continued to trouble Harper, and he reminded Rockefeller that his views of the Bible "differ considerably" from those of Strong and other leaders of the denomination. Harper reported to Rockefeller,

When in Morgan Park Christmas week, I had three hours conversation with Dr. Northrup. . . . I indicated to him my opinions, my thorough belief in their correctness, and my conviction that it was my duty to promulgate these opinions. I also indicated to him my fear that the promulgation of such opinions, though absolutely true, would bring down upon my head and upon the University the indignation of some of the Baptist denominational papers. I further indicated to him my reluctance to accept a position in which I should feel that my mouth was closed. I cannot but believe from the results connected with my teaching of the Bible, that it is the will of God that I should teach it in the way in which I have been teaching it. I cannot, therefore, consent to accept a position which that privilege will be denied me. On the other hand, I do not wish to enter into the position and thereby bring upon the institution the distrust of the denomination. The views which I hold can be taught here at Yale not only without condemnation but with constant

151. "Dr. Goodspeed and myself have written to Dr. Bright asking him to discontinue [their subscription to] *The Examiner*. I have no use for a paper that deliberately ignores such a magnificent gift to denominational education as that of Mr. Rockefeller. The hostility to Chicago is too manifest. . . . I rejoice in the thought that the new University will be so powerful as to defy such arbitrary, tyrannical, and brutal papers. They are a curse to the denomination." Northrup to Harper, October 15, 1890, *ibid.*

and hearty encouragement on the part of the President and the theological faculty.

It has been suggested to me that, under all these circumstances, I ought carefully to lay before you and any friends whom you would like to have consider it the exact situation, before any further steps are taken.¹⁵²

This episode might be discounted simply as yet another sign of Harper's hyperscrupulosity. Gates thought so, suggesting that the letter was the result of Harper's "morbid brooding on his heresies real or supposed" and the result of Harper being "overworked, worn out, and physically sensitive and weak in proportion." Gates was both shocked and confused, not in the least because he was convinced that Harper handled his modernist theological positions diplomatically: "Having heard Harper and knowing his work I must say that as for me I am rather pleased than otherwise with his teaching. I should not be surprised if God knows that Harper is right and useful and tradition both erroneous and harmful. He created a fine impression here on professors students and preachers, as being a needed mediator between the Higher Criticism and Orthodoxy."¹⁵³

152. Harper to Rockefeller, January 8, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 1.

153. Gates to Morehouse, February 6, 1891, *Gates Correspondence*, Box 1, folder 8. Gates's frustration over Harper's intellectual acrobatics was evident: "Is there not danger that in announcing your iconoclastic views, you will sow doubts which you can by no means destroy? I have been more and more concerned to observe your tendency to 'speak out'. I can understand how a desire to be honest, and candid, and particularly not to deceive the public, now calling you to a lofty office, seems to you to demand frankness of speech on these points. You have stated your views to the leading brethren. That is enough it seems to me." Gates to Harper, January 11, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 1.

Goodspeed was also frightened by Harper's maneuver, insisting that "[t]he points in which you differ from others are not worth a theological war" and that the only result of Harper's belligerence would be that "the world will stand around and say 'See these Baptists fighting again over the University.'" ¹⁵⁴

But Harper's panic was in fact more serious. The specific context was likely Harper's fear that he had not heard the last of Strong's venomous attacks as well as Harper's anxieties that his failure to eliminate the Baptist Theological Union from a role in the governance of the Divinity School had given hostages to an uncertain future in which conservatives might try to blackmail the University (which in fact was precisely what happened in 1904 in the case of George Burman Foster). It is also possible that Harper had in mind the growing controversy surrounding the publications and speeches of the liberal theologian Charles A. Briggs that was being fought out among American Presbyterians, a battle that reached its first climax in 1891. Harper had published several articles by Briggs in his journals, and as a liberal biblical scholar and an ex-Presbyterian who knew the folkways of his former denomination, Harper would certainly have been sensitive to Briggs's predicament. As Mark Massa has recently noted, Harper was among the "brightest lights in the liberal firmament" who rushed to congratulate Briggs when the New York Presbytery dismissed charges of heresy brought against him in early November 1891. ¹⁵⁵

154. Goodspeed to Harper, January 14, 1891, *ibid.*

155. Massa, *Charles Augustus Briggs*, p. 99; as well as Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology. Imagining Progressive Religion 1805–1900*, pp. 335–65. Harper telegraphed Briggs, "Accept my most sincere congratulations on the result of Tuesday's work," November 7, 1891, *Transcribed Ledger Books*,

What Harper was saying to all concerned was that if he accepted the new position, he could not allow the constraints of the presidency to suppress or distort his own scholarly ideals and values. After taking the presidency, the burdens of the office naturally forced him into a more guarded mode. But the restatement of the basic principle itself was important, and Harper was clear about what was at stake. He wrote to Henry Morehouse, "My conscience, however, is free. I have told 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. I am ready to go to Chicago; in fact my resignation is now in the hands of Pres. Dwight and at such time as it may seem best I shall place my acceptance in the hands of the Chicago Board. I do so, however, with the understanding that the platform is broad and free; that everybody has known beforehand my position and my situation, and that I am free to do in the way of teaching what, under all circumstances, seems to me wise."¹⁵⁶

Rockefeller refused to take the bait. Henry Morehouse was authorized to respond to Harper that

Vol. 8, p. 266, *Charles Briggs Papers*, Series 31, Box 4, Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary. I am grateful to Ruth Tonkiss Cameron of the Burke Library at UTS for sending me this information. After Harper's death, Briggs referred to him as "my lamented friend." Robert F. Harper et al., *Old Testament and Semitic Studies*, p. 68.

156. Harper to Morehouse, February 7, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 1. The prominence of denominational politics for Harper during this crucial period is reflected in Harper's deep interest in the specific language that the merger document between the seminary and the University would contain, and by his notation to Gates on February 16 that he should "Be prepared for trouble from Boston. The Orthodox element is up in arms against the American Institute of Sacred Literature. Joseph Cook and his battalion will make a most severe attack, at least this is the well founded rumor." Harper to Gates, February 16, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 1.

Mr. Rockefeller has neither the time nor the inclination to decide mooted theological questions and to assume the responsibility of saying what you teach. . . . It certainly would be unwise, after all that has been done, after all the expectations that have been raised, after the great momentum that has been obtained, to plunge the enterprise into confusion, to arrest progress, to destroy the bright hopes of the hour, by declining to give in your formal acceptance until somebody should determine what would be best in such a case. This may be left to the logic of events. The wisdom of introducing new complications at this critical stage in the enterprise will be questioned by your best friends.¹⁵⁷

This was checkmate. Morehouse essentially told Harper that, having led the board of trustees, John D. Rockefeller, and the Baptist denomination as a whole for six months to believe that he would accept the presidency, he had no wiggle room left. Having put a stake in the ground in defense of his own academic freedom, William Rainey Harper notified the board on February 16, 1891, that he accepted the presidency of the new University of Chicago, effective July 1, 1891. Harper later reflected on how difficult the decision had proven for him, writing to W. D. Whitney in March 1892, "I need not tell you that there are many hours during which I look back to the days at New Haven, and sometimes I wonder whether I ought not to have remained. But in general I suppose that I did the right thing, and although it was done with much sacrifice, nevertheless I feel that it was duty."¹⁵⁸

157. Morehouse to Harper, February 2, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 1. This letter was written with Rockefeller's explicit approval.

158. Harper to Whitney, March 21, 1892, William D. Whitney Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

A SACRED PLACE:
HARPER'S VISION OF
THE UNIVERSITY

The Logic of the Plan



During the early autumn of 1890, even before he officially accepted the presidency, Harper sketched out his plans for the new University. In his autobiography, Edgar Goodspeed recounts the story of Harper composing key parts of the plan as the two journeyed by train from Chicago to New York in mid-September.¹⁵⁹ To Rockefeller in late September, Harper recounted that “[o]n my way from Chicago the whole thing outlined itself in my mind and I have a plan which is at the same time unique and comprehensive, which I am persuaded will revolutionize university study in this country; nor is this only *my* opinion. It is very simple, but thorough-going.”¹⁶⁰ Before making a formal presentation to the board of trustees in late December 1890, Harper shared his ideas with a number of colleagues and he received their strong approbation. Professor Lewis Stuart’s reaction was typical:

You have out-Harpered Harper. ‘Unique and revolutionary’ by no means adequately represent the situation. You give a three years’ course without lowering the standard and provide for those who cannot keep up average work. You solve the problem

159. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *As I Remember*, p. 54.

160. Harper to Rockefeller, September 22, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 11.



Formal Portrait: William Rainey Harper, 1903, J. E. Purdy, Boston, Photographer.

of non-resident work, and provide for that large class, especially in our great cities, who want a broader outlook or special training. In a word, you set forth the ideal 'University' in the old and in the new meaning of that much abused word, 'all knowledge for all men'. Such a plan could only be originated by you and can be organized and carried forward by you alone. I wish you most sincerely the glorious success you deserve and for myself to see arise out of the ashes of the old U. of C. the greatest university in the world.¹⁶¹

James H. Tufts later recalled that Harper "reveled in planning. If he had entered business life he would have delighted in organizing complicated processes. If he had chosen a military career he would have found congenial activity in strategy and tactics for all variety of campaigns."¹⁶² Harper's preoccupation with plans extended even to his relationships with his children, who were constantly encouraged to engage in planned activities or to undertake small enterprises based on plans.¹⁶³ Harper's self-appointed task was to create a plan sufficiently innovative yet pragmatic to enable him to generate the kind of ardent enthusiasm and acclaim that he would need to attract leading scholars and highly intelligent students to a yet untested enterprise. Harper's plan was bold in its capacious goal of encompassing all sectors of society,

161. Prof. Lewis Stuart to Harper, November 28, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 12.

162. Tufts, "A University with a New Plan," p. 3, *Tufts Papers*, Box 3, folder 14.

163. Samuel N. Harper, *The Russia I Believe In: The Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 1902-41* (Chicago, 1945), pp. 1-3.

including adult students and nontraditional learners. This is what gave the plan its élan and force—its high ambition for the University to become a center of cultural life and the central station of ideas and cultural impulses, far exceeding on-campus teaching and research.

Harper thought of his plan as nothing less than a revolution in American higher education. He assured Henry Morehouse, "I have a plan for the organization of the University which will revolutionize College and University work in this country. It is 'bran splinter new', and yet as solid as the ancient hills."¹⁶⁴ He conceived of a University encompassing undergraduate and graduate instruction, and supporting aggressive program of original research. The first installment of the plan was issued as the *Official Bulletin No. 1*, January 1891, with the notation that although Harper had been offered the presidency, his "acceptance of this position will be made known during the coming spring."¹⁶⁵ The "work of the University" would encompass the university proper, including academies; several undergraduate colleges (including one for business and practical affairs!); affiliated colleges elsewhere in the city and the nation; and graduate schools (both arts and sciences and divinity), with the creation of a law school, a medical school, a school of engineering, and schools of pedagogy, fine art, and music to be organized as soon as

164. Harper to Morehouse, September 22, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 11.

165. *University of Chicago. Official Bulletin No. 1, January, 1891* (Chicago, 1891), p. 6. The plan was presented to the full board of trustees on December 15, 1890, having been earlier approved by the board's Committee on Organization and Faculties. On December 26, 1890, the plan was officially adopted, and on December 27, 1890, it was decided to issue the plan in a series of bulletins, the first to be published in January 1891. For a good overview of the plan, see Meyer, "The Chicago Faculty and the University Ideal," pp. 66–80.

reasonably possible. Undergraduate instruction would be evenly divided between the first two years, termed “academic,” and the second two years, which were designated “university.” The academic program was marked by prescribed curricular distribution requirements, whereas in the university years third- and fourth-year students would have more elective opportunities as well as chances to specialize in specific disciplinary research areas.¹⁶⁶

In addition to the university proper, the university extension would offer evening courses for adults in various locations around Chicago; correspondence courses for students “residing in parts of the country whose circumstances do not permit them to reside at an institution of learning during all of the year”; a program of public lectures, also in Chicago; and special courses in the study of the Bible, to be organized by University instructors “at times which shall not conflict with University work.” Finally, the university publication work would include the printing and publishing of books authored or edited by the faculty and of journals or reviews also edited by members of the University faculty.

Equally revolutionary were the general regulations that would manage the pace and flow of academic work. The University would be organized into four equal academic terms, or quarters, each lasting twelve weeks, and each quarter would be in turn divided into two six-week segments.

166. This scheme may have reflected in part Harper’s local experience at Yale, which had a curriculum in the 1880s that involved high levels of compulsion in the first two years, followed by significantly enhanced elective opportunities in the second. See George W. Pierson, *Yale College. An Educational History 1871–1921* (New Haven, 1952), pp. 73–94, 708. George Goodspeed reported to Thomas Goodspeed in May 1890, “I am surprised at his clear grasp of great university problems. He has been closely studying Yale for the past year.” Letter of May 26, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 10.

This would permit the institution to operate year-round and also allow students to begin their degree programs at any time of the year and graduate as quickly as they desired. Faculty too gained in flexibility since they were granted one quarter off with pay as a research leave, and could teach extra courses to gain additional credits for more sabbatical time. Courses were divided between majors (which met for ten to twelve hours a week) and minors (which met for four to six hours a week). Each student would normally take one major and one minor each six-week segment, thus allowing for in-depth learning and avoiding the superficiality of coverage that Harper despised.

The rhetorical structure governing the whole arrangement was highly systemized. Each part was assumed to be an integral component of a larger whole—from high schools to undergraduate colleges to professional and graduate schools to part-time courses taught by graduates of such advanced units for working adults to correspondence courses for working adults who did not live near a college or university to a very ambitious publication system to put forward the scholarly research of the faculty across the nation and around the world. As an ensemble, the logic was nothing less than breathtaking, especially since the new university was to be created all at once, in a fully unified format, the parts of which would reinforce or at least relate to each other. The logic of Harper’s plan operated on two distinctive, but convergent, levels. On one hand, each of the elements was intrinsically related to all of the other parts of the plan within the organizational machinery of the University. But each element also had far-reaching national policy implications for improving American higher education in more general terms. The University’s unity of spirit and action—what Edward H. Levi would later refer to as the University’s oneness—was enabled in part by the systematic self-understanding and the structural logic of the plan itself. Harper thus made it

conceptually and organizationally possible for the University to consider itself a unified whole, or as Levi put it, a “complete university.”¹⁶⁷

At the end of the *Official Bulletin No. 1*, Harper listed twenty-six advantages of his new scheme of organization. They ran the gamut from enhancing the concentration of students to giving more freedom and flexibility to students by allowing them to study during the Summer Quarter to preventing students from taking too many subjects at time. Harper even argued that his system would “[m]ake it possible for students to take, besides the regular subjects of the college curriculum, such practical subjects as book-keeping, stenography, etc.”¹⁶⁸ But it was particularly remarkable that so many of Harper’s imagined advantages had to do with his urgent, almost fanatical, desire to help students and faculty to maximize time and to achieve efficiency, discipline, and economy. Harper’s ideal world was one in which every minute was accounted for, and no day properly concluded without a bounty of productive work. His son, Samuel, recalled Harper’s conviction that “his work, the building of a new university, had to be done rapidly in order to be well done. Dawdling along was contrary to his temperament and, he believed, inimical to the success of any job.”¹⁶⁹ He was a figure straight out of Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic*.

167. Edward H. Levi, “The Critical Spirit,” *University of Chicago Magazine*, October 1965, pp. 2–5. Each generation after Harper has had to confront the challenge of sustaining and infusing pragmatic meaning into this fundamental, but often intractable norm. For Harper, the teaching of students—young and old, undergraduate and graduate, full time and part time, on campus and off—and the integral membership of students and alumni in our community were part of the logic underpinning the unity of his new university.

168. *University of Chicago. Official Bulletin No. 1, January, 1891*, pp. 15–16.

169. Samuel N. Harper, *The Russia I Believe In. The Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 1902–1941* (Chicago, 1945), p. 5.

The plan privileged flexibility for both students and faculty and a serious expansion of the range of instructional opportunities. Students could enter and leave the University with more flexibility than under a standard two-semester paradigm. Instead of long summer vacations, which Harper thought a waste of time, students would be able to accelerate their academic programs. The summer would be especially attractive to teachers from high schools who wished to obtain advanced instruction to boost their careers. The four-quarter system and especially the use of the summer as a regular academic term had a powerful impact on the subsequent culture of the University. Dean James R. Angell would later argue that these innovations have "done more to capitalize at something like their full value the educational resources of the colleges and universities of the country than any other one thing that has occurred in this period."¹⁷⁰ The major/minor system was also a component of efficiency, since Harper was convinced that the intensive study of a few subjects, rather than loose engagement with many, would eliminate what James Tufts called the "policy of 'scatter' which had crept into university programs as a greater variety of subjects had come forward to lure both teachers and students."¹⁷¹

All this was also set in a normative milieu that, in Harper's mind, should privilege performance over rank and class background and that was fundamentally democratic in the sense that no one could claim special dignities as forms of entitlement. To again quote his son, Samuel, Harper despised any kind of snobbish or presumptuous behavior, even when he saw it among his own faculty colleagues. When plans for a new faculty

170. Angell to Goodspeed, April 14, 1915, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

171. Tufts, "A University with a New Plan," p. 8.

club were discussed, Harper insisted that it be open to all faculty and not merely to those “who were inclined to look on themselves as the chosen social leaders because of their former relation to famous eastern schools.”¹⁷² Harper’s aversion to the social practices of the eastern universities may have reflected his own deep Midwestern roots and his pride in having surmounted a very humble personal background to gain success at Yale, but on his own terms.¹⁷³

Two other features of Harper’s original plan deserve mention. Harper’s long experience as a journal editor and textbook author was a prelude to his support for the University Press with its learned journals and books. As an editor, Harper was in his element—playing mediator and coach, enjoining and cajoling, and encouraging novelty and creativity, but also insisting on firm deadlines and high-quality work. For Shailer Mathews, Harper was a “born editor,” a “purist in style.”¹⁷⁴ He viewed his journals as crucial agents in public education and professional scholarship that would, in Shailer Mathews’s words, “get people to study the Bible by historical methods and to build up in their hearts a religious faith born of biblical study.” Knowledge would lead to virtue, and virtue to God. Harper’s general intellectual project for the new University was defined by these expectations, and the press thus became a core agent of the spread of enlightenment on and off campus. By 1902, the press had

172. *The Russia I Believe In*, p. 3. Harper argued elsewhere that western universities (including Chicago) were more likely to manifest the “modern democratic spirit” and to make “the student and the professor brothers in the pursuit of knowledge.” “Higher Education in the West,” *The North American Review*, 179 (1904): 585–86.

173. I owe this insight to Dan Meyer, Associate Director of the SCRC.

174. Shailer Mathews, “As an Editor,” in *The Biblical World*, 27 (1906): 205–8.

published nearly two hundred books and pamphlets and also issued ten journals, most of them scholarly but others more popular or for professional practitioners (e.g., *The Biblical World*, *The School Review*).

Harper viewed his new extension programs as vehicles to infuse higher levels of quality in the nation's chaotic educational system. In spreading scientific knowledge among the citizenry, they encourage an appreciation of such knowledge among the adult public: "[t]he work of diffusing scientific knowledge and creating a desire for a higher and better intellectual and aesthetic life is no less important than the advance of scientific knowledge itself by original investigation and discovery. Indeed, one may say that the latter will not find the fullest support and the most satisfactory field of progress, except in a community in which interest in a higher education is widely spread."¹⁷⁵ Harper wanted to generate "in the community at large that demand for the best of everything in the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral world which is at once the evidence of, and the surest means towards, the higher civic life."¹⁷⁶ Just as his Hebrew correspondence courses in the 1880s helped local Protestant ministers improve their linguistic and historical skills, the new extension system of the University would be particularly useful to urban and rural teachers who could, in turn, better prepare more students to go on to college- and university-level study: "Our idea is that if you as teachers will undertake this kind of work for one another the young people who come to the university to us will be far better prepared to prosecute the work provided by the university curriculum." Educating teachers would, over time, enable them to help more of their students to enter a college or university. Harper was convinced that

175. *University Record*, 2 (1897–1898): 13–14.

176. *University Record*, 1 (1896–1897): 6.

the city of Chicago did not send enough students to college and that “[t]his university is here to help the people of Chicago, and especially those in position to receive the more definite character of aid we are able to render. We are here to assist teachers, students, businessmen and women, and particularly those whom circumstances have deprived of educational opportunities once eagerly sought.” This would be done by university extension, working with school administrators and teachers.¹⁷⁷

What were the precedents for this plan? Augustus Strong believed that Harper had stolen many of his ideas about a national research university and simply shifted the site from New York to Chicago. As noted above, there is a remarkable convergence of some of Harper’s and Strong’s ideas, and Harper was clearly influenced by Strong’s passions and general conceptions, if not by all of his organizational specifics. Frederick Gates’s ideas about a national system of education linking secondary and tertiary levels may have also left an imprint on Harper’s imagination. But Harper had other sources to draw upon, several of which were frankly autobiographical. His University would be a late nineteenth-century German university, as experienced by his mentor W. D. Whitney, with elements of Oxford and Cambridge added for good measure (particularly English university models of adult extension programs). But it would also be a western revival of Yale, a latter day Chautauqua, a Chicago version of the Denison preparatory academy, and a transformed and enlarged version of Harper’s Hebrew correspondence school and summer programs from

177. *Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1894, p. 13. Between 1892 and 1902, nearly 87 percent of those who had enrolled in correspondence courses were classified as “educators.” See *The President’s Report. Administration. The Decennial Publications. First Series, Volume I* (Chicago, 1903), p. 314.

Morgan Park, all thrown together.¹⁷⁸ In spite of a strangely hybridic quality, Harper was deeply confident that his University, unlike many eastern institutions, would have "a life that forms a complete whole."¹⁷⁹ When he completed his study trip to Europe in the early autumn of 1891, Harper wrote to Gates, "Give me America and American institutions." In its capacity for radical experimentation and innovation, in its reshuffling of traditional academic boundaries, in its melding together of collegiate and graduate education to the advantage of both, and in its appeals for support from the wider civil society, the new University was very much an American institution, in spite of the neo-Gothic historicism of its buildings. The Harvard historian Albert Bushnell Hart once suggested that Chicago's success became the success of Northwestern and the large and distinguished public universities of the Middle West, as those institutions sought funds "to compete with Chicago. Every good neighbor has prospered because of the rise of the new University."¹⁸⁰ That it so easily became a competitive model and a standard setter for the other great Midwestern universities demonstrated, more than anything else, that Harper's vision was a uniquely American venture.

178. Harper to Gates, October 3, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 4. The European issue is of special interest. Harper did not study at a German university, although his mentor at Yale had done so. It was only after his plans were published that he set off on a study tour of English, German, and French universities in the late summer and early autumn of 1891. Harper was particularly interested in the extension activities organized by British universities.

179. *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1903, p. 1.

180. Albert Bushnell Hart, "William Rainey Harper," *Boston Evening Transcript*, January 11, 1906, p. 11.

The plan was operationalized quickly and on the move. The first and most urgent set of decisions had to do with recruiting the first faculty. Harper was initially frustrated in his early offers. He complained to Gates in late December 1891 that he was “completely discouraged. We have not a head professor after nine months of constant work” and that “[t]he only thing that I can see is 999 unfinished deals. Everything is unfinished; nothing seems capable of being finished and this uncertainty is crushing.”¹⁸¹ But by the summer of 1892, he had lured some significant senior recruits such as: William Gardner Hale and J. Laurence Laughlin of Cornell; William I. Knapp of Yale; Hermann von Holst of Freiburg; Thomas C. Chamberlin and Rollin D. Salisbury of Wisconsin; Albert A. Michelson, Charles O. Whitman, and John U. Nef of Clark; Albion W. Small of Colby College; Paul Shorey of Bryn Mawr; and Eliakim Hastings Moore of Northwestern. Harper thought that quality of the early faculty was outstanding. His intense pride in assembling a “stronger and nobler body of men” also raised the bar of his own expectations about what he was actually doing. J. Laurence Laughlin later recalled, “[O]ne of the things which affected my decision was the policy of President Harper in trying to call the strongest men he could find, whether in Europe or America. This policy undoubtedly affected the acceptance by [Hermann] von Holst, as it did that of many others, no doubt.”¹⁸²

The rush to hire senior faculty and to sustain the kind of distinguished departments and programs that those scholars expected soon

181. Harper to Gates, December 26, 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 4.

182. J. Laurence Laughlin, “Recollections of the Founding of the University,” *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12. For an excellent survey of the early faculty of the University and the arrangements for their appointments, see Meyer, “The Chicago Faculty and the University Ideal,” pp. 81–130.

led Harper into chronic patterns of deficit spending and ongoing appeals to Rockefeller for budget relief. Eventually, by 1903, Rockefeller decided to end these practices, and Harper was left in the cold. His last two years as President, beset by illness and personal anxiety, must have been more miserable because of the humiliation of being forced to apply budgetary stringencies to a University unaccustomed to such discipline.¹⁸³ Did Harper intentionally run deficits, knowing that he could manipulate Rockefeller for yet more resources? Opinions have differed. His son, Samuel, later recounted Harper's telling him that in administering the University "much of what he had done he had accomplished on sheer bluff."¹⁸⁴ Late in his life, Frederick Gates looked back on Harper's financial practices and saw in them a deliberate cunning to manipulate Rockefeller:

I thought at the time that the policy of Dr. Harper looked like compulsion, but was not intended to be compulsion. I may have been right and I may have been wrong in either of those conclusions, but my personal conclusions, right or wrong, are no part of the history of the University. . . . I stated at the time that it looked like compulsion, but I did not think compulsion was intended. From what I *now* know, from what I have heard *since*,

183. "There was a tragic incident when the Trustees themselves unitedly, here in New York, refused to back up Harper in his request for another million dollars. The Trustees were polled, and each individual, from Ryerson down—and there were five or six of them present—declined to back Harper in any further requests for money until the University could demonstrate its ability to live within its budgets. This was the origin of the long barren period. It was faithfully adhered to by both sides. No further money was given. Meantime, Harper sickened and died." Gates to Goodspeed, June 11, 1915, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 1, folder 21.

184. *The Russia I Believe In*, p. 5.

I could not say with the same assurance that on Dr. Harper's part compulsion was not intended. There is much since which has led me to think that it *was* intended and that the compulsion was deliberate.¹⁸⁵

In contrast, Emery Filbey, a veteran administrator during the Hutchins and Kimpton eras and a skilled budgeter in his own right, thought that Harper was a victim of his own disorganization: "Harper was a genius who would not recognize obstacles, including money. He did not run deficits deliberately to put pressure on Rockefeller, but [he] just let U[niversity] men do things and run bills on their own uncentralized ordering. Deficits were made up of unpaid bills, the extent of which no one had knowledge until the end of the year. This was not a planned budget deficit."¹⁸⁶ Filbey's insight about Harper's administrative style makes sense in light of Harper's earlier practices in operating his journals. They inevitably ran deficits, and he would scramble to cover his debts, sometimes even with his own meager resources.¹⁸⁷ Once Harper was convinced of the importance of an initiative, he virtually willed it into existence regardless of financial consequences. Thomas Goodspeed later criticized this mode of action, but Harper could understand no other way—either for the University or for his own family. Samuel Harper once recalled that his family's budget operated just like the University budget, "always with a deficit," with Harper borrowing on his life insurance policies and

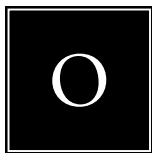
185. Gates to Goodspeed, May 22, 1915, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 1, folder 21.

186. Interview of Richard Storr with Emery Filbey, May 7, 1954, *Storr Papers*, Box 6, folder 8.

187. Shailer Mathews, "As an Editor," pp. 204–205.

giving all-too-generously to charities and the local Baptist church.¹⁸⁸ He was a man literally on a mission, and no new idea that would enhance or enrich his university could be denied a chance of success.

Undergraduate Education and the System



f all of the challenges raised by Harper's plans, the fate of undergraduate education was the most fascinating and also the most problematic. A recent essay by Willard Pugh on Harper's administration argues that while Harper may have intended to privilege graduate education, by the end of his career he had essentially created a large undergraduate college, much to the distress of some of his senior faculty colleagues who viewed their job expectations as having evolved in different ways from what they had been promised.¹⁸⁹

It is certainly true that Harper's private or semiprivate rhetoric about the early University highlighted the putative prominence of graduate education and research. At the first meeting of the faculty in 1892, he indicated his hope that "the time will come when the Academy College work may be transferred to some other place, and the higher work be given all our strength on this campus."¹⁹⁰ In his unpublished annual

188. Handwritten but unpublished note for Harper's memoir, *The Russia I Believe In*, *Samuel N. Harper Papers*, Box 75, folder 11.

189. Willard J. Pugh, "A 'Curious Working of Cross Purposes' in the Founding of the University of Chicago." *History of Higher Education Annual*, 15 (1995): 93–126, esp. 116–120.

190. *Minutes of the Faculty of Arts, Literature, and Science*, October 1892 to February 1896, pp. 1–2.

report on the University in the fall of 1892, Harper raised the rhetorical stakes considerably by arguing, "It is now expected by all who are interested that the University idea is to be emphasized. It is proposed to establish not a College, but a University, and it was with this thought in mind that the selection of the Faculty has been made."¹⁹¹ This report was never published, perhaps because some of the rhetorical formulations would have been misunderstood by donors who thought they had been contributing to an undergraduate college. Thomas Goodspeed himself challenged Harper on this issue when he argued, "I am sure you will make a magnificent undergraduate school. You can't help it," and urged him to state publicly that it was the intention of the University "to say that we are going to do as good work for undergraduates as they can get anywhere in the world."¹⁹² Interestingly, Harper alluded to one salient reason for his privileging of graduate education when he mentioned that "[a] large number of professors have been selected with the understanding that their work is to be exclusively in the Graduate School."¹⁹³ Harper was probably not the first, nor (sadly) the last, university leader to attempt to recruit senior faculty with overt or covert promises that they would not have to teach undergraduates, but his words are striking nonetheless. One qualification needs to be added, however: Harper always considered the last two years of college work—quite literally the University College—to be part of the larger graduate mission of the University.

His fear that the new institution would be flooded with undergraduates led Harper to insist that entrance standards be set at a very high level.

191. *The First Annual Report. President Harper, 1892*, p. 147, unpublished, SCRC.

192. Goodspeed to Harper, December 7, 1892, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 7.

193. *First Annual Report*, p. 147.

In his unpublished first annual report, he attributed this partly to an instrumental desire to hold down college enrollments so that graduate work might be emphasized. But the "chief reason" was his hope that "we may better prepare students for the graduate work we wish to emphasize here," again emphasizing the systemic connection between advanced undergraduate and graduate work that, Harper hoped, would become a hallmark of the new institution. To Gates and others, Harper argued that upholding high standards was also vital for the reputation of the University and thus a good thing in and of itself. He wrote to Gates in September 1892,

People are beginning to realize that we are aiming to establish a high grade Institution. Certainly over two hundred men had been turned away because we would not receive their certificates. . . . The number of undergraduate students might easily have been tripled. We are all more than satisfied. We shall certainly have a magnificent set of men and women. There has been a great temptation, of course, to admit students unprepared, according to our standards, but we have constantly held ourselves in restraint, and while many men doubtless have been disgruntled, because of our refusal to admit their sons, we have felt that it was the only wise thing to do.

You have no idea of the pressure which has been brought to bear to admit the sons of certain men, but I have determined that we shall be as impartial or as heartless if you will, as Harvard or Yale. Most of the Board of Trustees uphold me in this policy. Some, I am inclined to think, would rather have seen the bars let down. The fruitage will appear another year.¹⁹⁴

194. Harper to Gates, September 26, 1892, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 7.

Harper was insistent from the first that only the most able students would be admitted to undergraduate work at Chicago, even if this ruffled the feathers of contributors who thought they had bought their sons or daughters a place in the class. The initial use of entrance examinations was also a point of controversy on and off campus, especially among principals of Midwestern high schools, and Harper eventually had to modify Chicago's expectations by creating procedures under which the graduates of cooperating high schools would be precertified in specific subjects for admission to Chicago.¹⁹⁵ But the point to remember was his fundamental commitment to individual merit as a sign of high academic quality. A year later Frederick Gates would proudly inform the members of the American Baptist Education Society that "the requirements for admission to the College have been made more severe than those of Yale or Harvard or any other College in the country, and this fact will operate, and is designed to operate, to diminish the attendance in this department."

Gates's allusion to restrictions on undergraduate enrollments followed logically from his candid admission earlier in the same report that there had been a substantial change of orientation in the mission of the new institution since the heady days of May 1890. Then the idea was a college, but now, three years later,

[t]he institution has developed with unprecedented rapidity; and with this development has come an enlargement of plan, and not an enlargement only, but a change in the essential idea of the institution. The College which we created as the nucleus of the institution is no longer its nucleus, but an appendage.

195. James H. Tufts, "A University with a New Plan," pp. 13–15, *Tufts Papers*, Box 3, folder 14.

University as distinguished from College work, graduate as distinguished from undergraduate instruction, along with investigation on the outer limits of knowledge, is now the essential idea of the institution. . . . The College has become subordinate and incidental to the main purpose of the institution. In the purpose of the management the graduate instruction will be made so attractive as to invite College graduates from every part of the country in generous numbers. . . . The College, on the other hand, is designed in the ultimate purpose of the management to supply chiefly a local demand for undergraduate instruction in and about Chicago, a demand which cannot be overlooked, either for its own sake, or for the sake of the local interest and benefaction on which the University must itself largely depend. The College will indeed derive great internal strength and wide attractiveness by virtue of its relation to the University.¹⁹⁶

Harper's rhetoric about the identity of his new research university was not formulated in a vacuum of professional self-indulgence or myopic privilege. It was always shaped by Harper's consistent fascination with the classic dilemma (still relevant in our time) of how to connect high school to college and college to university in the most efficient ways possible. Harper's early designation of the first two years of undergraduate study as the "academic college" was a direct bow to the tradition of secondary education undertaken in nineteenth-century academies. Students in these years would complete the preparatory work begun in the high

196. "Report of the Executive Board," *Fifth Annual Meeting of the American Baptist Education Society held at Nashville, Tenn., May 11th, 1893* (New York, 1893), pp. 22–23.

schools.¹⁹⁷ The second two years logically became the “university college,” so named to signify that students had completed all preparatory learning and had gained the skills and maturity necessary to do university-level work, that is, work conducted on an advanced level and undertaken with the exercise of the most advanced scholarly standards. On paper this division seemed shrewd and novel, but in practice the boundary line between the first two years and the second became more and more fluid as the years passed. Some students arrived at Chicago with sufficient credits to begin higher-level work immediately, and others who transferred to Chicago still needed to undertake subjects taught only in the junior college. As James H. Tufts subsequently recalled, “[i]n actual practice it was not possible to conduct work for the two colleges in separate buildings because there was but one building. And the general policy of flexibility tended to weaken the other barriers set between the two. . . . The distinction between the colleges tended to become what John Locke called a ‘nominal essence.’”¹⁹⁸

The challenges raised by Harper’s scheme of academic (or junior) and university (or senior) colleges and their relation to the graduate schools must be seen as a part of the quest for efficiency and economy in higher education that was at the heart of Harper’s original plan. In a speech delivered in Chicago in July 1894, Harper observed, “[w]e believe the time will come when the work of the freshman and sophomore classes will be carried on away from the university grounds.”¹⁹⁹ The University

197. *President’s Report July, 1897–July, 1898, with summaries for 1891–97* (Chicago, 1899), pp. 77, 85.

198. Tufts, “A University with a New Plan,” p. 23.

199. *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1894, p. 3.

would place special emphasis on graduate work, but Harper immediately modified that notion by also insisting that work of the third and fourth undergraduate years in the senior college were “so closely connected with graduate work that the two are inseparable.” Ideally, the University with its senior college and graduate school would eventually be ringed with academic (junior) colleges on the West, North, and South Sides of Chicago, with curricular and instructional standards set by the University that would then feed the University’s more advanced programs in Hyde Park: “The University has believed from the beginning that it is possible to save time of students if the preparation for college is undertaken at an early period and if the University could direct their work at an early period.” To complete the cycle, Harper also wanted the University to involve itself in a similar set of standard setting affiliations with selected secondary schools, which would either feed well-trained students to his new academic colleges or send them directly to the University itself: “We shall never it seems to me accomplish the best work in the higher lines until we have interested ourselves, as some other institutions have done, in the lower work. It is the first three or four years of a man’s work that counts. Habits are formed in these years, and if the work is not of a high character it is almost impossible to change it by subsequent work.”

As the University took root and the basic features of his plan gained traction and credibility, Harper was eager to comment on their wider national policy implications and especially on the importance of systematic thinking and planning for national reform. Two speeches that he delivered in 1895 illustrated these ambitions. In early January 1895, Harper defended the practice of universities mandating entrance examinations for applicants from secondary schools. He argued that since American secondary schools were so variable in quality—with no uniform standards and often with poorly trained teachers and badly organized

curricula that stressed too many subjects in too superficial a way—universities could not possibly precertify the credentials of their students. Given the uneven preparation available to many students in American high schools, Harper posed an intriguing question: “Why not regard the freshman and sophomore years as a great clearing house and make entrance to the junior year the real university entrance instead of entrance to the freshman class?”²⁰⁰

The full implications of this essay were presented more clearly in a speech Harper delivered in the same year at a meeting of the National Education Association in Atlanta. Speaking on the subject of “Ideals of Educational Work,” Harper argued that education in America was in a woeful state and fully uncompetitive with the best European systems because of chronic disorganization and lack of coordination and association between different levels of institutions.²⁰¹ This was compounded by rigid curricula that sought to cover everything and ended up providing little real training in anything. Harper advocated, in contrast, a national systematic perspective in which university reform and school reform would dovetail. Critical to this reform process would be a recognition that the needs of individual students should drive the system, and that students should be given as much flexibility and opportunity as their individual talents could profitably use. Real structural changes had to come in more carefully delineating the relationship of the high schools to the colleges and of the colleges to the universities working with these individual students.

200. *Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 1895, p. 3.

201. William Rainey Harper, “Ideals of Educational Work,” *National Educational Association. Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, Session of the Year 1895* (St. Paul, 1895), pp. 987–98.

Harper believed that many smaller colleges were, in fact, little more than glorified academies and that there should be a frank assessment of their real potential. Perhaps some could become more ambitious high schools. Others could profitably undertake the first two years of college instruction, serving as "colleges of lower rank," and leaving the final, higher work to the stronger colleges and to the universities.

Harper was elusive on where the dividing line would come between the smaller colleges and the universities, but at a conference for affiliated institutions in November 1902 he proposed the idea of a six-year high school that would encompass the last two years of primary instruction, high school, and the first two years of college, all this in the name of reducing formal education by two years, thus (in the words of a reporter attending the conference) saving "time in a student's schooling without losing anything of value from the curriculum."²⁰² He repeated this argument in a broad-based essay on trends in educational reform in the same year where he argued that "the high school is rapidly coming to be a rival of the smaller college itself. . . . The time is coming when, in every State, the leading high schools will carry the work to the end of the Sophomore year of college."²⁰³ Clearly, in Harper's mind the future fate of many small colleges involved either becoming super high schools or ceding the last two years of their programs to the larger universities and

202. *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 1902, p. 35, as well as November 5, 1902, p. 16.

203. William Rainey Harper, "The Educational Progress of the Year 1901-02," *Educational Review*, 24 (1902): 252.

becoming junior colleges. Harper's neo-Darwinian, survival-of-the-fittest rhetoric may have raised hackles among small college presidents, but he was convinced that at least 25 percent of the institutions calling themselves colleges "are doing work of a character only little removed from that of an academy."²⁰⁴

Harper was also interested in encouraging more lateral movement of students among larger colleges and universities. In a letter to the president-elect of Brown University, William P. Faunce, Harper suggested in April 1899, "Why should some arrangement not be made by which Brown might remain a college and be related in some way to the University of Chicago? And by which we should send a great number of our Chicago boys to the east for at least part of their college training? I am confident that such a plan could be worked out with perfect success. I believe that it would be excellent for many of the Brown men to come west for a portion of their training. There is more education in a thousand miles of travel than a year of college work."²⁰⁵ What Harper likely meant was that universities like Chicago would privilege and take responsibility for the last two years of college, giving their students real university work, but only in the context of a national system that carefully prepared students elsewhere in the first two years (in this case, at Brown). Harper had once floated to Rockefeller in 1888 the idea that the new university in

204. See Harper's "The Situation of the Small College," in his *The Trend in Higher Education* (Chicago, 1905), p. 377. Similar evolutionary discourse is found in Harper's "Higher Education in the West," pp. 584–90.

205. Harper to Faunce, April 4, 1899, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 25.

Chicago might serve as the central lynchpin of an "educational trust" incorporating many other colleges, and this imperialistic impulse did not diminish throughout the 1890s.²⁰⁶

Harper admitted to Faunce that his musings were mere "dreaming," and it would be a mistake to take his urgent quest for greater efficiency within the structure of American higher education as an attenuation of his commitment to undergraduate teaching as opposed to research and graduate instruction. Quite the contrary, when E. H. Moore of the mathematics department raised in March 1899 the issue of differential valuations to be attached to undergraduate and graduate education, Harper firmly rejected any attempt by senior faculty to prioritize graduate over undergraduate teaching: "With some of the propositions which your letter contains I agree. With some of them I do not agree. The first is not correct. The undergraduate work is essential and as important as the graduate work. I would not say that the undergraduate work is primary and the graduate work is secondary, nor, on the other hand, would I say that the graduate work is primary and the undergraduate work secondary. They are of equal importance."²⁰⁷

This normative sentiment made sense given Harper's fascination with and enthusiasm for curricular innovation on the one hand and his

206. "Why should not this university erected at Chicago include as an organic part of it besides the theological seminary also various colleges throughout the West. What better name than the University of the West? And let it be a university made up of a score of colleges with a large degree of uniformity in their management; in other words, an educational trust." Harper to Rockefeller, November 15, 1888, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 4.

207. Harper to Moore, March 1, 1899, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 24. He also disagreed that all professors needed to be scholarly producers: "In my opinion, it is as important to have good teachers as to have good producers, and in my opinion there are good teachers who are not good producers."

devotion to excellence in teaching on the other. In her autobiography, Professor Elizabeth Wallace described how an excited Harper summoned her to his office in 1901 and announced a new scheme to send Chicago women undergraduates to Paris for a year of study, for which they would receive regular University credit.²⁰⁸ This plan, the first foreign-study program in the history of the University, failed to gain traction because of student financial problems, but it illustrated Harper's bold engagement with new forms of modern-language learning. Curricular experimentation paralleled a deep personal commitment to teaching. Shailer Mathews remembered, "[H]e taught as much, if not more, than any other man on his faculty. For years, in addition to two or three regular courses during the week, he taught a Sunday morning class composed largely of undergraduates. I never saw him so enthusiastic as after one of these Sunday morning sessions, for above all else he loved to teach the Bible to college students."²⁰⁹ A former student of Harper's at Chicago, J. M. Powis Smith described him as having "abounding enthusiasm . . . so deep-seated and over-powering that it became contagious and students quickly found themselves fired with a similar zeal."²¹⁰ Harper's distinguished colleague Albion Small later observed that one of Harper's most original conceptions was the idea that teaching was yet another way of discovering new knowledge. Small argued,

208. Elizabeth Wallace, *The Unending Journey* (Minneapolis, 1952), pp. 96–97, 144–45; *Chicago Tribune*, June 9, 1901, p. 1; May 25, 1902, p. 15.

209. Shailer Mathews, "William Rainey Harper: An Appreciation," *The Sunday School Times*, January 20, 1906, p. 40. For Harper's views of such teaching, see his "The Study of the Bible by College Students," *Report of the Fifth Annual Conference of the Young Men's Christian Associations of New England Colleges* (New Haven, 1887), pp. 28–35.

210. J. M. Powis Smith, undated memoir on Harper, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

[Harper] wanted all the teachers to do their teaching with the ambition, in the first place, to find out by means of their teaching experience something that had not previously been understood about the mental workings of pupils at the stage of growth with which each teacher was particularly dealing; and second, with the aim of discovering better methods of furnishing that stage of growth with the precise kind of exercise which would advance it most normally to its next stage of growth. This was the reason too why Dr. Harper was interested in discouraging the idea that the teacher of graduate students was necessarily more 'scientific' and entitled to higher academic rank than teachers of primary or secondary grades. He thought of all instructors as investigators in the broad field of pedagogy, whether they were investigating in any other field or not. . . . [O]f all the ideals about which Dr. Harper expressed himself to me, this is the one which impressed me as most distinctive, and at the same time as most central in his entire plan.²¹¹

In spite of Harper's various musings about displacing younger students and the austere predictions of Frederick Gates in 1893, Harper did end up presiding over a large undergraduate program that was significantly larger than the arts and sciences graduate program. This is clear from the student enrollment and graduation statistics of the early University over its first ten years. Each year the number of undergraduate students increased at a rate more rapidly than that of their graduate counterparts. In Autumn Quarter of the 1893–94 academic year the University had 232 graduate students and 357 undergraduates enrolled in arts and sciences

211. Small to Goodspeed, August 2, 1915, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

programs. By Autumn Quarter of the 1901–02 academic year, the number of graduate students had increased modestly to 346, but the number of undergraduates had mushroomed to 1,522. Clearly, a revolution was taking place, and in his decennial report in 1902 Harper himself openly predicted that “[o]n any reasonable calculation it seems certain that the number of undergraduate students, and especially of junior college students, coming to the University in the next ten years will be largely increased.”²¹² If Augustus Strong thought that Harper had stolen his plans in 1892, the argument was no longer relevant by 1902. There was no place for undergraduates in the original Strong scenario, but apparently there was a considerable role for them in the pragmatic evolution of Harper’s plans.

But Harper also managed by 1902 a rather distinctive undergraduate program, quite unlike the typical constituency of a four-year eastern college. Because Chicago afforded such flexibility and possibilities for acceleration, the early University immediately attracted a large number of transfer students from other institutions, in addition to students who enrolled as freshmen in the junior colleges. Between 1898 and 1902, the number of students receiving baccalaureate degrees from Chicago who had taken at least some work at another institution of higher education grew from 56 to 72 percent.²¹³ In some respects, the problem that Harper had sought to address in his early pronouncements—displacing the work of the first two years off onto other institutions—became an operational feature of the University simply by virtue of the competitive structure of the admissions marketplace. The substantial share of transfer students among undergraduate baccalaureates remained a feature of

212. *The President’s Report*. Administration. The Decennial Publications. First Series, Volume I (Chicago, 1903), pp. cv, 11.

213. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

Chicago's student demography well into the interwar period. By 1929, almost 60 percent of the baccalaureate degrees awarded by the University of Chicago were given to undergraduate students who had one or more quarters of transfer credit.²¹⁴

As the years passed and the numbers of undergraduate students (and alumni) continued to grow, Harper became more sensitive to the needs of the undergraduate educational programs at Chicago. As Willard Pugh has noted, Harper began issuing public statements on teaching as a fundamental part of the mission of the University.²¹⁵ Harper presented a proposal on the eve of his death to divide the students in the first two years at Chicago into eight administrative and curricular groups to be called "colleges" (within the larger framework of the junior college) that would be no larger than 175 students. Students would thereby gain more of the advantages of attending a small college that was set within the wider framework of the University as a whole. Men and women in the first year of undergraduate work were to be enrolled in separate groups, in parallel with Harper's ambivalent Victorian sensibilities about the social externalities of coeducation.²¹⁶ The "colleges" were to be "distinctive in their character, each representing a thematic stream of college work, for example, one laying stress on the classical curriculum, another upon the

214. See Floyd W. Reeves and John Dale Russell, *Admission and Retention of University Students* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 79, 129.

215. Pugh, "A 'Curious Working of Cross Purposes' in the Founding of the University of Chicago," pp. 116–17.

216. For the (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to segregate some classes in the junior college by gender, see Janel M. Mueller, "Coeducation at Chicago—Whose Aims?" in John W. Boyer, ed., *The Aims of Education* (Chicago, 1997), pp. 107–147, esp. 123–124; Storr, *Harper's University*, pp. 324, 338, and Harper's arguments in *The President's Report*, pp. cviii–cxi.

scientific curriculum, another upon that of commercial and industrial life, still another upon modern literature.” Students would take approximately half of their course work in the first two years with their college group and the other half in the University at large.²¹⁷ Harper believed that this structure would afford younger students “some of the benefits which are found in a small college with the resources and cosmopolitanism of a great institution.”²¹⁸

What is most intriguing, however, is that the plan also assumed the future construction of a series of residence halls in which each group of students would be housed, or, if commuters, to which they would be attached: “The students of each college should ultimately form a residential community with an assignment to each college of a building for class rooms and offices, and likewise buildings for dormitories. The latter should include special suites for groups of students whose homes are in the city.”²¹⁹

Richard Storr suggests that this plan must be seen in the context of a fascination for Oxford and the English collegiate system that intrigued the trustees after 1900 (e.g., the design of Hutchinson Commons, the construction of the Reynolds Club).²²⁰ But it also demonstrated Harper’s

217. The files on this plan are in *PP 1889–1925*, Box 28, folder 11.

218. *University Record*, 10 (1905–6): 15, as well as 68–70.

219. Harper, “To the Trustees of the University of Chicago,” 1905, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 28, folder 11.

220. Storr, *Harper’s University*, pp. 320–27. Storr notes that Dean George E. Vincent brought the new book by John Corbin, *An American at Oxford* (Boston, 1902), to Harper’s attention in February 1903. Corbin called for the American universities to combine English residential colleges with the German university spirit, and thus to produce “the most perfect educational instruction in the history of civilization,” p. 309.

interest in expanding the University's residential system for undergraduates and his intense engagement with the social presence of undergraduate life on the campus of the University in the last stages of his presidency.²²¹ In this context, the subsequent plan of President Ernest D. Burton, Harper's close friend and confidant, to build a series of undergraduate residence halls south of the Midway in the mid-1920s was a clear attempt to push such a scheme to fulfillment, aiming to construct "not mere dormitories, but places of humane educational residence." As Burton put it in 1923, "I am thinking of a time when on our quadrangles there will be a group of colleges, perhaps eight or ten or twelve, each with its own buildings, each with its own distinctive character, but all with this common characteristic that each will afford opportunity for closer contact of student with student, and of student with teacher than is possible in a college of three thousand students ungrouped except in classes that are organized for three months and then reorganized." Burton then added, "It will not be a medieval Oxford; modern Oxford has moved far beyond that."²²²

Harper's plan was implemented in the autumn of 1905, but lack of proper facilities, changing student academic interests, and administrative

221. Harper had called for a substantial expansion in University residential facilities as early as October 1896. See *University Record*, 1 (1896–97): 382; and James Westfall Thompson, "The House System at the University," *The President's Report*, pp. 387–95, esp. 394–95.

222. Ernest D. Burton, *The University of Chicago in 1940* (Chicago, 1925), pp. 29–30; "An Address Delivered by Acting President Ernest DeWitt Burton Before the Chicago Alumni Club, May 31, 1923," *University Development Campaigns, Part 1: 1896–1941*, Box 5, folder 3. It should be remembered that in the same year (1925) that Ernest Burton published his manifesto, James R. Angell, his former colleague at Chicago and now president of Yale University, formulated his plan for a residential college system at Yale that Edward S. Harkness eventually bankrolled in the 1930s.

fatigue led the plan to falter by the time of World War I. Robert Lovett noted in 1909 that “[u]nder the present conditions of crowded buildings even the inadequate rooms originally assigned to the colleges have been taken for classroom purposes. If the small-college system is to be maintained, it must be considered in the architectural development of the University.”²²³ Serious instructional and curricular challenges facing quality undergraduate education remained, and would do so until the late 1920s. Some faculty cherished Harper’s older idea of simply pushing the first two years of undergraduate work off campus, as did Harry Pratt Judson in 1908 when he asked if it might not make sense for secondary schools to take responsibility for “the work now done in the first two college years,” which would leave the University to accept “students at the point at which real university work begins, in other words with the Senior Colleges.”²²⁴ Four years later, Judson was even more blunt: “The best thing to do with the Freshman year is to abolish it.”²²⁵ Wiser heads would prevail, but the question of how to achieve high-quality undergraduate education continued to perplex the faculty until the leadership of Dean Chauncey Boucher and President Robert M. Hutchins resolved the issue in 1929–30 with the development of the New Plan.

223. *The President’s Report, July 1907–July 1908* (Chicago, 1909), p. 97.

224. *Ibid.*, p. 14; *The President’s Report, Covering the Academic Year Ending June 30, 1914* (Chicago, 1915), p. 9. (“The day cannot be far distant when the work which belongs to the secondary school will be done so completely and so efficiently that the colleges, at least those which are connected with universities, may be free from the necessity of doing such work, and may devote their time to higher education in a real sense.”)

225. *The President’s Report, Covering the Academic Year Ending June 30, 1912* (Chicago, 1915), p. 10.

On a personal level Harper was remarkably supportive of all students, undergraduate as well as graduate. He was known to loan money to impoverished students, to write reassuring letters to parents of sick students, and to invite graduating students to visit him so that he could get to know them. When faced with undergraduate rowdies Harper reacted sternly, but he also claimed that he was sensitive to the "old college spirit."²²⁶ By July 1896, he took satisfaction that "[t]he more important traditions of student life may be regarded as established."²²⁷ He quickly became an ardent enthusiast of nonprofessional collegiate athletics run, in the person of Amos Alonzo Stagg, by a fully professionalized college coach. Working with Stagg, Harper imposed faculty control over the athletic program, which heretofore in many institutions had been left in the hands of students and alumni.²²⁸ Harper's personal engagement as a leading booster of Chicago intercollegiate football, which developed intensively over the 1890s, was an unambiguous sign of a broader rapprochement with the popular culture of undergraduate student and alumni life.²²⁹ Harper became, in Robin Lester's words, an "evangelist of the gridiron gospel" and an "athletic entrepreneur," exploiting the University's new-found

226. *Chicago Tribune*, February 22, 1894, p. 8; December 18, 1894, p. 3; December 5, 1895, p. 1.

227. *University Record*, 1 (1896–1897): 256.

228. "I am inclined to think that a university ought to control the department of physical culture and athletics, just as it does the department of Latin." Harper to D. E. Brown, April 20, 1899, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 26.

229. This story is wonderfully told in Robin Lester, *Stagg's University. The Rise, Decline, and Fall of Big-Time Football at Chicago* (Urbana, 1995), pp. 1–65.



*President Harper with the University of Chicago Band,
undated photograph by Allen Ayault Green.*

athletic prowess to cultivate wider civic and alumni support. Harper's admiration for his "boys" and his deep loyalty to Stagg led him to defend Stagg's practices against a significant group of faculty who believed by 1900 that "the present increasing interest in athletics in the University is undesirable."²³⁰

Like other senior faculty members, Harper initially had ambivalent feelings about allowing fraternities on campus but eventually concluded that "[t]he facts show that their presence in the University has been a source of great advantage rather than of disadvantage. In almost every case the Fraternities have contributed each its share, not only to the social life of the institution, but to its general welfare."²³¹ When it came to the choice of his son, Samuel, Harper and his brother Robert debated vigorously whether Samuel should join the Psi U or the Alpha Deltas, which was Harper's own preference, since "it would be better for the family to be represented in two societies than to have the whole representation in one."²³²

The growth of his children may have also played a role in Harper's thinking about undergraduate education. The presence of his daughter, Davida, and his son, Samuel, in the College—the one matriculating in

230. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 48–50, 81–86.

231. *The President's Report*, pp. cxxxi–cxxxii; *Chicago Tribune*, February 25, 1894, p. 39. The second and third meetings of the faculty in the fall of 1892 were devoted to the fraternity question, with opinions all over the map. Eventually the board of trustees decided, with the agreement of the faculty, to allow fraternities subject to their accepting such regulations as the University deemed appropriate. See *Minutes of the Faculty of Arts, Literature, and Science*, October 1892 to February 1896, pp. 4–10.

232. Harper to his daughter, Davida, December 23, 1897, *Harper Papers*, Box 3, folder 21.

the Winter Quarter of 1896, the other in the Autumn Quarter of 1896—gave Harper a more vivid and deeply personal insight into the impact of the University on youthful minds. Davida's and Samuel's programs of studies ran the gamut of many departments, and in both cases even included early examples of study abroad, since both students managed to transfer credits (nine for Davida, seven for Samuel) from time spent studying in Paris toward their Chicago A.B. degrees.²³³ Samuel, in turn, brought his creative powers to bear in celebrating his father within the specific milieu of undergraduate social life. At a concert of the Glee and Mandolin Clubs at the Studebaker Theater in March 1902, attended by many members of the fraternities and women's clubs, Samuel led his fellow students in genially roasting his father and other faculty members. The most popular song of the evening had the following refrain:

A million more. He's after a million more, more, more.

He thinks he needs it for U. of C.

If he misses it how he will roar.

A million more. He's after a million more, more, more,

His purpose is plain, just as plain as can be.

He's after a million more.²³⁴

Harper was too shrewd to take his early, graduate-school-primacy rhetoric too literally when it came to cultivating the loyalties of the alumni and the wider public. He dutifully spoke at undergraduate

233. *The Russia I Believe In*, p. 8. The transcripts for both students are on file in the microfilm collection of the Registrar's Office at the University of Chicago.

234. *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 1902, p. 4; March 6, 1902, p. 9.

alumni gatherings, using these occasions to stress the University's high standards for undergraduate admissions and to nurture pride in the new University and its students as part of that great experiment.²³⁵

In the end the University offered a rigorous liberal education to all undergraduate and graduate students willing to engage in the process, and the flexible curricular structures that Harper created seemed to attract students who had the intellectual capacity and stamina to take advantage of them. Harper was particularly proud of the strong sense of individuality and the capacity for hard and disciplined work of the Chicago students. In 1902, he confidently asserted that

[i]t has been a subject of general comment that the chief characteristics of the student body have been steadiness, sturdiness, strength, strong individuality, high ideals, and clear purpose. Members of the Faculties of eastern institutions have been struck with the individual strength and character of the student body. The student constituency does not perhaps equal in outward polish that of one of the larger institutions of the East, but in ability to organize work, in skill of adaptation of means to end, in determination of purpose to win, in readiness to make sacrifice for the sake of intellectual advancement, no body of students ever gathered together in this country, or in any other country, has shown itself superior to the student body of the University of Chicago.²³⁶

235. *Chicago Tribune*, February 22, 1894, p. 8; April 9, 1901, p. 5; December 6, 1903, p. 1; January 29, 1905, p. 8.

236. *The President's Report*, p. xxxiii.

But there were also costs to Harper's revolution of flexibility and efficiency. For one thing, the organization of the quarter system, the ability of students to matriculate and graduate whenever they wished, the fluidity of boundaries between the junior and senior colleges, and the large number of transfer students meant a loss of class identity among graduating seniors and, thereafter, among the alumni of the University. This, in turn, created serious problems for future success in development and fund-raising. That so many students who received baccalaureate degrees were transfer students from other undergraduate institutions led the Dean of the senior colleges, James H. Tufts, to insist in 1902 that "it is certainly desirable, in the interest of the cultivation and education which come from intimate association, through a long period of undergraduate life, that the proportion of students who do all, or nearly all, of their work at the University should be larger than it is."²³⁷ In his unpublished memoirs, Tufts subsequently observed:

Efforts to cultivate class acquaintance and class spirit under such conditions were not fruitful. To some members of the faculty, this loss of class unity and class spirit seemed of negligible importance. They inclined to look upon a whole set of such activities as had been cherished in older colleges, including Greek letter fraternities, social clubs, athletic sports, and class organizations, as weeds in the intellectual garden, or as childish things which serious students should put aside. Others thought that there was a genuine loss in throwing out the baby with the bath. For one thing, Amherst College was finding in class

237. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

organization the agency for raising annually an alumni fund of no mean total.²³⁸

The Dean of the Faculties, James Angell (who later became a highly successful president of Yale University during his term from 1920 to 1937), would admit that by 1913 that University's preoccupation with research had sometimes gone too far at the expense of teaching, and "[m]any an instructor has looked forward to the time when he might be freed from the labor of instruction to give his entire time and energy to research."²³⁹ Others saw things differently, namely, that Harper had allowed the University to become a big undergraduate college. The head of the Department of Chemistry, John U. Nef, complained in December 1906, "[I]t is generally understood that the development of the University in undergraduate numbers during the past 10 years has been made at the sacrifice of research and of the graduate schools. Research work at the University has simply been tolerated, but never recognized as its highest function."²⁴⁰ Self-interest here collided with professional ideals, and both were in tension with the social world in which the University lived. The distinguished geologist and former president of the University of Wisconsin, Thomas Chamberlin, was probably right in suggesting in 1916 that "[a]lmost of necessity, at the outset, this University, like other universities

238. Tufts, "A University with a New Plan," p. 19.

239. James R. Angell, "Excerpts from a Report to the President by the Dean of the Faculties of Arts, Literature, and Science," *University Record*, 1 (1915): 35.

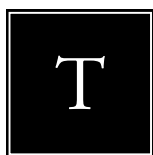
240. Handwritten statement, dated December 1906, in *John Ulrich Nef Papers*, Box 1, "Correspondence 1902–1906" folder.

in America, was dominantly collegiate. The college factor took precedence; the university factor was rather an embryo than a complete organism. But from the very outset the collegiate training in things determinate was given a trend toward a later training in research and creative work. The ideal of the true university was ever present, shaping the collegiate substructure to serve as a secure foundation for the university superstructure that was to rise upon it.”²⁴¹ Even with its large endowments, the University of Chicago was not alien to the civic world in which it lived, and most people in that world inevitably saw the University through the prism of its undergraduate students and their activities and programs, and through the professional success of those students after they left the University. James Angell saw this clearly when he observed that “no institution can be wholly free, either morally or practically, from the obligations entailed by its immediate surroundings. If it builds upon ideals too remote from those accepted in the community where it is established, it simply fails to leave its impress. This is a truth that bears directly upon our own case. We are in the midst of one of the world’s great commercial and industrial centers, surrounded by communities of high average intelligence, but saturated with ideals that demand that educational institutions turn back into the common life young people trained and fit to meet the practical demands of a practical age.”²⁴²

241. Thomas C. Chamberlin, “On Behalf of the Faculties of the University,” *The Quarter Centennial Celebration of the University of Chicago, June 2 to 6, 1916* (Chicago, 1916), pp. 197–98.

242. Angell, “Excerpts from a Report,” p. 36.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE NEW UNIVERSITY



he role of religion in the University has been the subject of considerable debate, then and now. The current self-understanding of the University as a collective community is a resolutely secular one, in spite of many religious groups active on campus. Yet our origins are rather different, and Harper's conception of the role of religion was deeply formative of the long-term value structure of the institution, about the way it thought and spoke about itself and its cultural ambitions in the city and the world.

Harper's colleagues spoke of his nomination to the presidency and his plans for the new University as being directly given by God. Henry Morehouse insisted, "I believe the adoption of this plan, and its publication will be the educational sensation of the time. . . . Now, as the Lord has given you the plan, so you must attend to its execution."²⁴³ L. A. Crandall of Cleveland was sure that "to no educator of this century has God given such an opportunity to advance the cause of Christian education, as to you."²⁴⁴ When Frederick Gates tried to persuade John D. Rockefeller to give yet another huge gift to the nascent University in February 1892, Gates wrote, "I stand in awe of this thing. God is in it in the most wonderful way. It is a miracle. . . . Think of the significance of that. Harper, Goodspeed, and myself, as we look into the great future of this land and consider

243. Morehouse to Harper, December 12, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 12.

244. Dr. L. A. Crandall to Harper, September 24, 1890, *Storr Papers*, Box 3, folder 26.

what seems certainly to be the great part God is raising up this institution to fill, uncover our heads and walk very softly before the Lord.”²⁴⁵ For the young Frederick Gates, the creation of the University was a work so remarkable, so positive, and so powerful that it must have been the work of God. It would be a mistake to read such statements as empty or inflated rhetoric. Rather, the men most concerned with the founding of the University thought of it as a genuine gift from God to humans.

Harper himself confirmed this legacy when he argued, “The name University will be a misnomer if any other spirit than a broad one is allowed to characterize it. There is but one thing in the Universe sacred aside from God; that thing is truth. Searching for truth is searching for God. Investigation must not be hampered. It should be honest and sincere, cautious and reverent, but it should also be broad; and the truth wherever and however found must be accepted at any cost.” He insisted that: “[i]f our work is not done for Christ, better it were left undone. If in it the Christ is forgotten the work will be a failure; yea, more, a source of injury, for we are thereby arming against ourselves a powerful enemy. If we are to succeed, the spirit of the Christ must pervade and regulate and dominate it all. . . . In all and above all and under all, the University of Chicago, whatever else it may be, by the grace of God shall be Christian in tone, in influence, and in work.”²⁴⁶ The University’s Baptist identity was an appropriate entry point to undertaking this larger ecumenical and providential

245. Gates to Rockefeller, February 1, 1892, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 5.

246. William Rainey Harper, “Some Features of an Ideal University,” in *Third Annual Meeting of the American Baptist Education Society, held with the Southern Baptist Convention, Birmingham, Ala., May 8 and 9, 1891* (Chicago, 1891) pp. 49–60, here 58, 60. For Harper’s religious values and the University, see Wind, *The Bible and the University*, pp. 133–46.

work: "To be sure it will be a Baptist institution, under Baptist control, because we are Baptists. But we are also men, and men desirous of adding to the store of knowledge; and for this we shall make the University of Chicago broad and Christian in the fullest sense."²⁴⁷

How was this putative legacy to work its way in the world of the South Side of Chicago? Although the Baptists had founded the new institution, Gates's and Goodspeed's pragmatism had led them to seek vital outside support. Both men realized that the Baptists needed to downplay any claims that the new institution would be a proprietary university. Such sentiments were expressed candidly by Thomas Goodspeed in September 1890 when he learned that Harper was thinking of constructing a building for the Divinity School ahead of other buildings on campus: "If we begin with the Theological Seminary, erect its buildings first and open it first on our campus, we cannot but convey to the public the idea that we are sectarianizing the entire enterprise. They will say, this is Baptist and nothing but Baptist, sectarian all the way thro', and if we let this impression go abroad we destroy ourselves."²⁴⁸ Goodspeed preferred that Harper talk about the University as having a broadly Christian identity, and

that tho' one denomination proposed the enterprise and has provided a very large part of the initial fund, the University is to be in no sense a sectarian institution, the charter being one of the broadest and most liberal in its spirit ever devised. The denominational character of the Divinity School will be preserved and abundantly protected under a separate Board of Trustees, but it

247. *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 1891, p. 2.

248. Goodspeed to Harper, September 9, 1890, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 1, folder 11

is understood by all that the other departments of the University are to be unsectarian in their motives and methods, while they remain Christian in the highest and best sense of that word. You come to a university that is designed for no one section but for all the people and it will be your aim to so administer its affairs as to win for it the confidence of the public.²⁴⁹

Goodspeed's conception of the University as one that was "Christian in the highest and best sense of the word" allowed the institution to function in many and diverse roles under the direct and beneficent hand of God. Harper shared Goodspeed's sensibilities on this issue, and he found many ways to inscribe his own broad understanding of Christianity as an urgent aspiration of the University in varied ways.²⁵⁰ When he spoke at the cornerstone laying of Haskell Oriental Museum in July 1895, a hall which Caroline Haskell donated to function as a museum of antiquities but which would also house Harper's own Department of Semitic Languages and Literatures and a general faculty assembly hall, Harper observed,

The thought that this building has been given by a generous Christian woman in order to make possible the broader and deeper study of the world's sacred scriptures, and especially

249. Goodspeed to Harper, February 16, 1891, *ibid.*, Box 2, folder 1.

250. "The University always will be a Christian institution, and will stand for the great principles of broad Christianity. But the University is not Baptist. It is not kept up by Baptists alone. It is not attended by a majority of Baptists. Its professors are elected without regard to their religious beliefs." *Chicago Tribune*, January 28, 1904, p. 12.

those of Christianity, is still more significant and inspiring. But most significant and most inspiring of all is the simple Christian faith and the generous Christian heart which prompted this magnificent gift for the cause of science and of truth. May this significance, and the inspiration of this deed impress the heart of every man and woman within the reach of my voice, of every man and woman who in the centuries that are coming shall look back upon this beautiful structure.²⁵¹

Religion also informed Harper's public rhetoric about the larger mission of the University, as is plainly the case in his famous "The University and Democracy" address delivered in March 1899 at the University of California at Berkeley.²⁵² This speech and the resulting pamphlet was one of the more robust statements of Harper's political thought, and revealed an overt linkage to religion and especially Christianity. The speech and its earlier preview in Chicago in mid-December 1898 came at the end of the Spanish-American War, and its patriotism was surely influenced by Harper's desire to put himself and his university on the upward tide of what he felt to be a positive democratic imperialism that would spread around the world. Harper's title was fully suggestive, for what he wished to do was to couple a specific institution, the university, with a specific social and political way of life, democracy. He began by drawing a portrait of the university that would have been reasonably

251. *PP 1889–1925*, Box 38, folder 1.

252. "The University and Democracy," in *The Trend in Higher Education*, pp. 1–34. Harper gave a similar address in Chicago at the winter baccalaureate service of the University on December 18, 1898. See *Chicago Tribune*, December 19, 1898, p. 4.

familiar: the university was an historic corporation of near equal (and thus democratic) members in search of truth. To exercise this mission the corporation upheld certain rules and values, above all freedom of thought and of expression, and an urgent willingness to spread new knowledge. In the past (and present), universities had been threatened by political and ecclesiastical control. But the modern university would tolerate neither, for it needed total freedom to undertake its search for truth. Truth might be messy and controversial, but it was inexorably better than ignorance. Man's highest nature demanded that he (or at least those capable of doing so at a university) move ever closer toward its comprehension and its distribution to a wider society. Harper did not define "ecclesiastical," but this surely referred to religious confessions with an explicit hierarchy of institutionalized authority (like the Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans).

Democracy was also a familiar term, although Harper loaded it with enormous ethical freight in that this modern and almost providential way of life was now fated to encompass more and more of the earth—if only society could generate proper leadership structures to guide the people in their achievement of effective self-governance, self-policing, and self-moralizing. Here then was where a specific and enormous role for the university opened. The democratic people, although virtuous in many ways, were not always capable of making wise choices in the process of self-rule. This meant that someone or something had to provide enlightened leadership. It fell to the university to do just this, for the university was "the agency established by heaven itself to proclaim the principles of democracy. . . . It is the University that, as a center of thought, is to maintain for democracy the unity so essential for its success." Harper did not stop with democracy as a gentle, elite-run institution of beneficent assistance in securing practical self-administration and self-rule in the Progressive Era. He insisted that democracy was the highest and

most perfect form of human organization, that it had in fact all of the appurtenances of a religion, since it called its adherents forth to rise to ever more challenging levels of ethical and moral behavior, both toward themselves and toward each other. Democracy was "the highest ideal of human achievement, the only possibility of a true national life, the glorious and golden sun lighting up the dark places of all the world."²⁵³ As a system of strong ethical and moral affects, it needed democratic prophets who would proclaim its virtues and its righteousness, democratic priests who would ensure its cultic efficacy and collective mediation, and democratic philosophers who would help guide its theoretical self-understanding. The modern university was in fact well fitted to play all three roles via its strong commitment to truth telling and wisdom, its cultic expertise and dedication to reasoned dialogue and debate, and its ethos of disciplined inquiry. Hence, the university was the priest, prophet, and philosopher of democracy.

This late nineteenth-century tract was in many respects pure Midwestern Progressivism. Educated, refined, and morally uplifted elites would lead the democratic masses, and their cultural values would shape mass society. But it was also a crucial statement of Harper's conviction that the most essential religious attribute of the University was its commitment to the pursuit of reason, knowledge, and truth. Harper thus offered a fascinating attempt to move beyond the concept of strict denominational identity as a marker for the institution's religious worthiness to search for a more ambitious way to link religion and the University by defining the latter as a corporate community of knowledge and reason, seeking the highest ethical good. In Harper's words, "the university is the prophetic school out of which come the teachers who are to lead democracy in the

253. "The University and Democracy," pp. 1, 19.

true path. . . . The university is the prophet who is to hold high the great ideal of democracy, its mission for righteousness; and by repeated formulation of the ideal, by repeated presentations of its claims, make it possible for the people to realize in tangible form the thought which has come up from their deepest heart.”²⁵⁴ For some conservative critics this path was and remains very disturbing, ending up in a kind of pietistic “solo Christianity” based on individualistic rationalism and on an explicit or implicit denial of the church as an organized communion or congregation essential to salvation.²⁵⁵ Harper was clear about what he was doing, however, and if there were tensions, he was fully cognizant of them. His convictions reflected his own personal experience that censorship and a priori rules governing scholarship and teaching were destructive of authentic and creative scholarship.

In this scheme, the University would drive society not only forward but also upward. Grace flowed downward, but it also arose from the quotidian practices of the disciplined, enlightened scholars and students who dedicated themselves to a life of knowledge seeking democratic ends. Grant Wacker has argued that one common trait of all Protestant liberals was their belief that “God’s self-revelation is mediated through the flow of history.”²⁵⁶ For Harper this godly flow of history would be shaped by the flow of knowledge and truth, the agent of that process

254. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

255. Among many voices, see especially the recent book by James T. Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light. The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), pp. 842–51, here p. 846. From a different perspective, see also D. G. Hart, *The University Gets Religion. Religious Studies in American Higher Education* (Baltimore, 1999, pp. 54–56, 250–251.

256. Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong*, p. 11.

being the modern—and in his case Christian—university. The university that he created would not only be religious in a new way but also through that new way it would enhance the scientific study of religion as a way of enhancing the role of professional theology in urban, mass society. As Clark Gilpin has rightly noted, the image that liberal Christian theologians imputed to the universities as powerful agents of the immanent work of the kingdom of God in the world also transformed and enhanced the roles of modern divinity schools embedded within such universities: "[t]hey also shared the conviction that the rise of the modern university was, simultaneously, both the most visible symptom of America's cultural transition and the key to theology's successful adjustment to the emerging new society. . . . The university-related divinity school—Harvard, Yale, Chicago, or Union Theological Seminary—became the liberal paradigm for contemporary theological scholarship, and during the first three decades of the twentieth century they regarded it as a pivotal institution for religion's leverage on American society."²⁵⁷

This kind of discourse played well with those who opposed the assumption of a rigid denominational identity by the new University. The *Chicago Tribune* insisted that Harper disliked sectarianism, and that "[i]t is an open secret . . . to those who know Dr. Harper best that it is his desire to wholly divest the university of its threatened sectarian interference, and that he thoroughly believes denominationalism and a university of the cosmopolitan character he wishes it to acquire to be incompatible."²⁵⁸ This interpretation of Harper's motives was doubtless shared by many among Chicago's civic elites, and Goodspeed and Gates did nothing to

257. W. Clark Gilpin, *A Preface to Theology* (Chicago, 1996), p. 90.

258. *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1894, p. 4.

publicly oppose it. Charles Hutchinson, for example, was ruthlessly clear to the young Baptist fund-raisers that his support for their venture came at the cost of their abandoning any idea of trying to make the new institution strictly sectarian. In Hutchinson's mind, sectarianism had killed the first University of Chicago, and he and his fellow capitalists had no desire to be tarred with the shame of a second such debacle. When negotiating for the gift from the William B. Ogden estate to create a graduate school of science, Harper was forced to assure Andrew Green, the executor handling the negotiations, that "the denominational complexion of the Board of Trustees will not affect in any way the broadest platform of study and the freest admission to the proposed school of students and professors alike of any shade of religious opinion or of none."²⁵⁹

The rapid evolution of the University into a community of scholars and students, many of whom had no explicit affiliation with a Baptist church, angered some of Harper's fellow denominationalists. As a parting shot in his feud with Harper, Augustus Strong cautioned him in December 1890 that "I see no provision for securing the theological orthodoxy or religious character of the teachers in the Institution. This to me is the most vital point of all. I do not know why Baptists should concern themselves about education at all, unless they aim to establish institutions which fill a totally different place from those founded on a secular basis by individuals or the state. . . . What I desire is a University on a different model from any existing one—a University in which Christ is nominally and really the cornerstone, and rationalism, at least so far as the teachers are concerned, is kept out."²⁶⁰ Harper, of course, flatly rejected most of the implications of

259. Harper to Andrew H. Green, January 1891, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 1.

260. Strong to Harper, December 23, 1890, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 62, folder 10.

the perspective, but it remained a live issue in denominational circles nonetheless. Denominational consciousness died hard among local Baptist ministers who felt the new institution was indeed theirs. When Trustee Charles Hutchinson expressed an interest in 1892 in raising money for the construction of a university chapel, several local ministers who served as Baptist Theological Union trustees were outraged that a Universalist like Hutchinson might dare to build a sacred space at a Baptist university.²⁶¹

In April 1896, one of the most charismatic Baptist pastors in Chicago, P. S. Henson of the First Baptist Church at 31st Street and South Park Avenue, went public with a stunning attack on Harper's management of what, in Henson's mind, should have been a truly Baptist university. For Henson, Harper was a remarkable "hypnotist" who had conned Rockefeller into supporting a university with many senior professors who were agnostics and pantheists, and worst of all "thorough-paced evolutionists." The implication was that Harper treated Rockefeller like a puppet on a string while Harper subverted any genuine Baptist identity for the University. Henson concluded, "I think possibly that Dr. Harper and his staff believe they are doing God's service, but I honestly believe they are as grossly mistaken as was Saul of Tarsus before his conversion."²⁶²

261. Harper to Gates, May 18, 1892, *Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 6. Frederick Gates, ever the solid pragmatist, told Rockefeller that if "our Baptist Brethren" were so worried about the Universalists building the chapel, "let them bestir themselves to raise the funds, if possible to build it." Gates to Rockefeller, May 21, 1892, *ibid.* Hutchinson changed his mind, eventually funding the commons that is named in his honor.

262. *Chicago Tribune*, April 26, 1896, p. 4.

Henson's diatribe gained little traction, and Harper refused to be dragged into a street fight. But tensions among Baptists over the theological direction of the Divinity School and the University in general continued while Harper lived, and they grew worse after his death. Robert Carter has argued that Harper became increasingly impatient and even strident with conservative opponents of modern biblical criticism during the 1890s, abandoning his early editorial cautions and blaming ill-educated clerics for hindering effective Bible study by laypersons.²⁶³ Harper's calls in 1898 and 1899 for a reform of Baptist seminary education to meet "the requirement of modern times" by integrating it more closely with the work of the universities followed directly from his concerns about the educational impoverishment of many ministers trained in small denominational seminaries.²⁶⁴ The presence of the radical theologian and Nietzsche expert George Burman Foster in the Department of Systematic Theology of the Divinity School led to further tensions with the Baptist Theological Union, which peaked in October 1904 when Harper found himself forced to broker a deal with moderate and conservative Baptists on the union's board of trustees under which Foster would be moved from the Divinity School to the Department of Comparative Religion in the arts

263. Carter, "The 'Message of the Higher Criticism,'" pp. 209–10.

264. *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1898, p. 7; William Rainey Harper, "Shall the Theological Curriculum be Modified, and How?," *American Journal of Theology*, 3 (1899): 45–66, and the outside responses, in *ibid.*, pp. 324–43.

and sciences.²⁶⁵ This deal was announced at a meeting of one hundred Baptist ministers and laymen in Chicago in December 1904. Harper so feared this meeting might get out of control that he urged more liberal Baptists to attend the meeting, worrying that "[i]t is quite certain that

265. On Foster in general, see Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology. Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900–1950* (Louisville, 2003), pp. 151–81. For this collision, see Edgar A. Towne, "A 'Singleminded' Theologian: George Burman Foster at Chicago," *Foundations*, 20 (1977): 36–59, 163–80. The Divinity School created an advisory group in January 1904 of one hundred prominent Baptists from around the nation, called the Advisory Committee of One Hundred. Trustee Andrew McLeish was the chair. McLeish evidently feared that the group would make an issue of George Burman Foster's radicalism, but Harper headed him off by telling McLeish that he was willing to transfer Foster to another unit, but that he would refuse to do so under public pressure from the pastors and laymen who made up the Advisory Committee. See Harper to McLeish, October 31, 1904, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 65, folder 15. Ernest Burton took an even tougher stance, fearing an abrogation of faculty freedom and self-respect ("We are standing for a principle of great significance. Now is the time to stand pat. . . . Do let us stand firm."), Burton to Harper, November 5, 1904, *ibid.* Harper managed the conflict by shifting Shailer Mathews from the Department of New Testament to the Department of Systematic Theology in October 1904, and then issuing a detailed statement before a meeting of the One Hundred in December, in which he both defended Foster's academic freedom and also confessed, "Lately, as is well known, the situation has been further complicated by the existence of a wide spread feeling that the theological opinions of Professor Foster were not in accord with those generally held by the Baptist denomination. To such an extent has this dissatisfaction proceeded, that the question has arisen in the minds of the members of the Board whether a faithful discharge of the trust committed to them did not require them in some way to modify the situation." See "Official Statement of the President of the University to the Baptist Advisory Committee," *Baptist Theological Union Records*, Box 1, folder 8. The deal was then papered over with a public statement after the December meeting bleakly observing, "Among the Announcements made to

the meeting will be an important one. The ultraconservative members of the committee are determined to make an issue and to make it strong. Unless there are present some of the most distinguished gentlemen who are members of the committee whose position and influence are very strong, I fear a calamitous thing will happen, one which as Baptists we should all greatly deplore.”²⁶⁶ F. L. Anderson, a Baptist pastor in Minnesota, commented to Dean Eri Hulbert in March 1904 about the “considerable suspicions as to the ‘soundness’ of the professors” of the Divinity School

the Committee the most important was that of the appointment of Professor Shailer Mathews of the New Testament Department to a professorship in the Department of Systematic Theology. This transfer is made with the view to increasing the efficiency of the Department of Systematic Theology, in preparing men for the work of preaching, and to conserving that freedom of teaching in the Divinity School which it has always enjoyed in common with the other schools of the University and which is necessary to the prosecution [of] the investigative side of its work.” “The Advisory Committee of the Theological Union,” December 20, 1904, *Divinity School Records*, Box 9, folder 2. In his autobiography *New Faith for Old*, pp. 67–69, Shailer Mathews glosses over crucial details, making it seem as if Foster’s transfer in February 1905 was at his own request. In fact, Harper had decided the issue three months earlier. Foster initially resisted the transfer, but Harper was determined to proceed. See the exchange of letters between Foster and Harper, December 14, 1904, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 34, folder 2. Eventually, Foster claimed that he was grateful for the resolution of the case, which doubtlessly relieved him of much anxiety. See Foster to Harper, February 15, 1905, *Harper Papers*, Box 7, folder 19. It is clear from correspondence between Harper and John Stetson that Harper was thinking about moving Foster out of the Divinity School as early as February 1904. See Harper to Mr. and Mrs. John Stetson, February 29, 1904, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 34, folder 2.

266. Harper to A. G. Slocum, President of Kalamazoo College, October 26, 1904, *Harper Papers*, Box 7, folder 14.

in some quarters of the denomination.²⁶⁷ Harper himself admitted to Andrew McLeish in 1905 that arguments were circulating in Baptist circles to the effect that the University was having trouble raising the \$250,000 needed to build a Divinity School building because of the liberal character of the faculty: "It is suggested that we have failed because of our liberal position."²⁶⁸ In the aftermath of the theological crisis provoked by Foster's *The Finality of the Christian Religion* (1906), the unhappiness of more conservative and fundamentalist Chicago Baptists with the Divinity School grew so acute that a secessionist movement led to the founding of the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago in 1913.²⁶⁹

267. Anderson to Hulbert, March 28, 1904, *Divinity School Records*. Box 9, folder 2. This was in response to Hulbert's invitation to join the new Advisory Committee. Another pastor, David H. Cooper of South Bend, Indiana, greeted the creation of the new committee as a step that might "clear the atmosphere of certain misconceptions prevalent concerning the School." Cooper to Hulbert, March 10, 1904. Similar sentiments were expressed by Pastor Frank Cooper of Minneapolis, who noted, "[y]ou know as well as I do that there are a great many very good people who have their suspicions of a brand of theology which is labeled 'Chicago'." Cooper to Hulbert, March 2, 1904, *ibid*. But another pastor, Edward Braislin of Colorado Springs, warned Harper to avoid allowing the committee to interfere with the school's academic freedom since "I am only too certain also that any 'denominational' interference with normal wholesome intellectual freedom will as surely bring trouble as progress brings light. . . . To submit any vital thing to the judgment of the 'dear brethren' is to get upon the live coals—prevent it all you can, for Truth's sake, as well as for the sake of your own long suffering heart." Braislin to Harper, November 4, 1904, *ibid*.

268. Harper to McLeish, March 16, 1905, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 65, folder 15. Copies of the subscription form for the building drive are in *Divinity School Records*, Box 9, folder 2.

269. Warren Cameron Young, *Commit What You Have Heard. A History of the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary 1913–1888* (Wheaton, IL, 1988), pp. 10–15;

For some liberal Baptists, this division probably came as a relief. In 1914 Frederick Gates, now with the experience of almost twenty-five years of philanthropic work with the Rockefellers under his belt, wrote to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., urging that the Baptists should face facts and relinquish all formal control over the University.

The Baptist denomination could now do in no way so great, so far reaching a service to mankind as publicly to emancipate the University from denominational control. Nothing could so forward denominational comity, nothing so tend to break down trivial distinctions between sects, nothing would so tend to promote Christian union throughout the world, nothing would so tend to exalt the true spirit of Christ among all Christian peoples as

Perry J. Stackhouse, *Chicago and the Baptists. A Century of Progress* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 169–70, 187–88. In 1907–08 the board of trustees of the Baptist Theological Union reviewed the status of the Divinity School, finding that the number of non-Baptist students who attended the Divinity School was about equal to the number of Baptists. Facing the option of making the Divinity School “a wholly Baptist school,” which would have meant relinquishing the school to the Baptist Theological Union and cutting all ties with the University, or maintaining the school as a “branch of the University,” which implied that “it must be carried on with University ideals of freedom of investigation and teaching,” the board voted that the second option should be followed. This meant in practice that the school would be authorized to appoint non-Baptist faculty “if suitable qualifications seem to make it desirable.” *The President’s Report, July 1907–July 1908* (Chicago, 1909), pp. 14–20. The result, for conservatives, was deeply unhappy. Thomas E. Stephens of Chicago wrote to George E. Vincent in 1909: “[s]everal of my friends have attended the University of Chicago, and I have noticed with deep regret that in almost every instance they have left the school with their faith in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion seriously undermined, with nothing but doubt and uncertainty to take its place.” Letter of June 22, 1909, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 34, folder 2.

for the Baptist denomination, which has hitherto been one of the most narrowly sectarian of Christian bodies, to unloose its hold upon an institution with forty millions of money and seventy-five hundred students, and with the supreme desire that truth and its ultimate triumph send forth this institution, free from every shackle on its great mission to humanity.²⁷⁰

Four days earlier, Gates had assured Thomas Goodspeed, "Most of the leaders in the denominational movement which carried the founding of the 'College at Chicago' to success, and firmly anchored the institution to the Baptist denomination have, doubtless, as has The Founder [John D. Rockefeller], under the influence of the Spirit of the Times, attained far higher and broader ideas of Christianity, and of Christian Service, than they then had."²⁷¹ Gates's invocation of "the supreme value and the ultimate triumph of truth" as the primary residual marker of the religious identity of the University had appropriate Harperian overtones. Although he loathed public conflict with his fellow Baptists, Harper was consistent throughout his career in his conviction that the University was most Christian—most religious—when it authorized and empowered the freedom of individual students and faculty to seek truth and knowledge. On the highest level, moreover, Harper felt that the impending liberal-democratic evangelical transformation of the world was a supremely Christian and Baptist project, one to which his University would mightily contribute.

At the same time, conservative fears about the collapse of institutional religious practice at the University may have been exaggerated. Before

270. Gates to Rockefeller, March 10, 1914, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 1, folder 21.

271. Gates to Goodspeed, March 6, 1914, *ibid.*

World War I, the University did not undertake a religious census of its students on the grounds, as Dean James Angell put it, that the results would be “at best an approximation of the facts,” and perhaps also because Harper did not want data circulating that might cause him trouble with his conservative denominational brethren.²⁷² But there is no reason to believe that the state of affairs that Charles R. Henderson described to Frederick Gates in late 1892—“We have a body of students who are evidently in earnest. . . . [A] very large majority are from religious homes and are sincerely attached to the Christian faith”—was not sustained during Harper’s administration.²⁷³ In 1919–20, a survey of undergraduate student behavior was undertaken by Theodore G. Soares, a theology professor, and a precocious young college student by the name of Harold D. Lasswell. As part of this larger survey on student life, Lasswell and Soares examined the patterns of religious affiliation of undergraduate students.²⁷⁴ Of the 2,800 college students registered in the academic year 1919–20, they surveyed the 2,505 students who were not excused from weekly chapel attendance, and received valid answers from 2,065 (73.5 percent of the total number of students). They discovered widespread membership in a religious group or confession, and relatively widespread attendance patterns at church services. Of the 2,065 students, approximately 67 percent self-identified as belonging to a Protestant denomination, 12.5 percent declared themselves Jewish, 8.1 percent were Catholic, and 11.8

272. Angell to Harry Pratt Judson, December 7, 1911, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 62, folder 3.

273. Henderson to Gates, December 20, 1892, *ibid.*, Box 55, folder 2.

274. Theodore G. Soares and Harold D. Lasswell, “Social Survey of the Undergraduates of the University of Chicago,” *PP 1889–1925*, Box 61, folder 14. The survey was conducted among students enrolled in the 1919–20 academic year.

percent identified themselves as belonging to other groups like the Mormons, the Greek Orthodox, or the Confucians. Divided by gender, men and women self-identified as Protestants and Jews at roughly similar rates (66.2 percent and 13.2 percent for men, 67.6 percent and 12.3 percent for women), but a significantly larger percentage of men than women were Catholic (10.3 percent as opposed to 4.7 percent). Only one student identified himself as an atheist, and only two declared themselves agnostic. Further, over 90 percent of these students reported that they regularly attended a church service (exclusive of chapel) at least once a month, and about 45 percent attended weekly services. Smaller proportions regularly participated in a class involving religious education at least once a month, taught Sunday school, or served as officers or agents of a religious organization.

Such survey data were (and still are) but a very crude estimation of real religiosity, and the authors were quick to point out that this data could at most be taken as a "preliminary effort to get together certain isolated facts" about student behavior. Nor did this survey capture the intensity of religious feelings or the structure of theological beliefs held by the students who were affirming a religious affiliation. But it is instructive and fully intelligible that a great majority of our student body in the years between 1890 and 1920 seems to have had religious orientations of some kind. If anything, the student body of the early Harper era would have been even more Protestant with connections to specific religious groups in the neighborhood and in the city at large. Harper did not create a strictly Baptist university, but as late as the early 1920s, he had created a university in which involvement with religious institutions was still widespread among the student body, and most likely, among a majority of the faculty as well.²⁷⁵

275. An informal survey of 187 faculty in 1923 resulted in 122 listing a religious affiliation, 63 listing no affiliation, one listing agnostic, and another listing

H A R P E R ' S P U B L I C S :
C H U R C H , N E I G H B O R H O O D ,
A N D C I T Y



Harper's scholarly work overflowed into the larger contexts of the neighborhood and the city. His work as a public educator, a Christian missionary, and a social critic intermingled in these efforts. The neighbors within the community of Hyde Park with whom Harper most profitably and comfortably engaged were the evangelical Protestants who read the Bible and who felt a responsibility to understand it as a guide for moral living. Harper's closest outreach point in Hyde Park was thus the one that was most congenial to his temperament and religious convictions: his local Baptist church.

The Hyde Park Baptist Church at 56th and Woodlawn became an outpost for Harper's vision of a saintly urban community. The congregation of Baptists in Hyde Park dated from 1874, but until the early 1890s it was a very modest group, numbering less than a hundred members and operating out of a small wooden church at 54th and Dorchester. The coming of the University led to a substantial increase in membership, with the congregation growing from 158 to 300 between 1890 and 1895.

"none," the latter word underscored several times. Again, it is important not to overinterpret such data, but it is interesting that 65 percent of the faculty apparently expressed some personal religious affiliation. See "Committee on Religious, Moral, and Social Welfare of Students. Conference, March 15, 1923," *PP 1889-1925*, Box 46, folder 28. Frederick Gates had attempted a similar distribution of faculty religious affiliation in December 1892, and had discovered that of the faculty members then on staff, 44 were Baptists, 24 Congregationalists, 10 Presbyterians, 7 Lutherans, 7 Unitarians, 6 Episcopalians, 3 Methodists, 3 Jews, and the rest scattered among other groups. See Gates to Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, December 22, 1892, *ibid.*, Box 55, folder 2.

By 1900 the church had over six hundred members and was "more prosperous financially than it has been in any previous period of its history."²⁷⁶ The clerk of the church, George E. Robertson, reported in 1893, "All branches of our church have grown and prospered and our numbers have increased. We have felt the responsibility of our position in being located as we are not only in the Exposition district, but also the natural center of the population connected with the University of Chicago. We have felt the touch of the influence of the University and receive great help from many connected with it."²⁷⁷ Harper and many of the University's top administrative leaders soon made their presence felt in the growing faith community. In March 1893, Harper was instrumental in persuading the congregation to build a more capacious and beautiful church, eventually designed by James Gamble Rogers. Rogers's initial plans for a neo-Gothic edifice proved too costly, and a stately, but more economical, Romanesque design was substituted. The new church was dedicated in the same month as Harper's death in January 1906.²⁷⁸ To aid in the financing of the new building, Harper and Goodspeed solicited a \$15,000 gift from

276. *Record of the First Baptist Church of Hyde Park, April 1, 1896–April 29, 1903*, entry for November 28, 1900. Archive of the Hyde Park Union Church. I am deeply grateful to Rev. Susan Johnson for making these materials available to me.

277. *Record of the First Baptist Church of Hyde Park, October 1, 1890 to April 1, 1896*.

278. "J. M. Jackson reported on behalf of the Advisory Committee on the recommendation of Dr. W. R. Harper in reference to a church building. The report recommended that immediate and decisive steps be taken towards [the] building." The motion was adopted. Entry of March 1, 1893, *Record of the First Baptist Church of Hyde Park*.

John D. Rockefeller in 1901. As Charles Arnold has observed, until Rockefeller Chapel opened in 1928, the building at 56th and Woodlawn functioned as “the” University Church.²⁷⁹

William Rainey Harper’s most decisive contribution to the Hyde Park Baptist Church came in April 1897, when he was elected superintendent of the church’s Sunday school. Harper had long called for reforms to improve the effectiveness of the American Sunday school system, using the American Institute of Sacred Literature and his journal *The Biblical World* to advocate pedagogical approaches to the history of the Bible that were “comprehensive and connected.”²⁸⁰ In September 1895 he complained that “[n]ine-tenths of the teaching in the Sunday schools is, as teaching, a farce. The work of many of these so-called Sunday school teachers, if judged upon the standard of ordinary principles of pedagogy, is ludicrous and at the same time criminal. It is ludicrous to call such work teaching.”²⁸¹ Harper seized upon the Hyde Park Baptist Church as a laboratory where he could test many of his reformist ideas, throwing himself into this task with the same energy and ardor with which he had organized the University or spread the Bible study movement for adults. Harper restructured the school’s curriculum, giving the students inductive, graded introductions to the developmental history of the Bible and requiring quarterly written examinations to ensure their

279. Charles H. Arnold, *God Before You and Behind You. The Hyde Park Union Church Through a Century 1874–1974* (Chicago, 1974), p. 28.

280. See Harper’s comments in *The Biblical World*, 3 (1894): 307–8; as well as Carter, “The ‘Message of the Higher Criticism,’” pp. 113–19, 135–37, 218–19.

281. “Editorial,” *ibid.*, 6 (1895): 164.

mastery of the material presented.²⁸² He reported that his plan of organization employed a "division of labor, special duties being assigned to selected individuals with the hope of securing the best results by utilizing talents of varied kinds."²⁸³ Ever the entrepreneur, Harper produced textbooks with his colleagues Ernest Burton and Shailer Mathews as part of a series entitled *Constructive Bible Studies* for the use across America, published by the University of Chicago Press.

The Hyde Park Baptist Church became a kind of silent partner with the University in advancing practical religion in one neighborhood, as a potential model for other churches in other neighborhoods, with many of the prominent administrative and academic leaders of the University also being devoted supporters of the local church. Harry Pratt Judson, Thomas Goodspeed, Albion Small, Ernest DeWitt Burton, Benjamin Terry, Trevor Arnett, Nathaniel Butler, Shailer Mathews, Gerald Birney Smith, Shirley J. Case, Charles R. Henderson, Theodore Soares, Andrew McLaughlin, N. C. Plimpton, F. W. Shepardson, F. J. Miller, Emery Filbey, and many other University faculty and senior staff were members; many taught Sunday school, served as deacons, were members of its building and finance committees, and participated in other functions. Many of these men were also among Harper's closest friends.²⁸⁴ Together they, and their fellow congregants, formed a web of neighborhood sociability that

282. Copies of Harper's annual printed reports are filed in the handwritten minutes of the church, the *Record of the First Baptist Church of Hyde Park, April 1, 1896–April 29, 1903*.

283. "Report of the Hyde Park Baptist Sunday School, Year Ending March 31, 1898," *ibid*.

284. Arnold, *God Before You*, p. 62; Thomas W. Goodspeed, *A History of the Hyde Park Baptist Church 1874–1924* (Chicago, 1924), p. 28.

was distinct from, but overlapped with, the professional circles of the University—anchoring the University in the neighborhood through the routines of ecclesiastical, social, and charitable activities. Congregations like that of the Hyde Park Baptist Church and similar churches in the neighborhood were intimate social worlds, rather like the worlds of the small Ohio town in which Harper had grown to manhood and the small town-based college where he had gained a first taste of higher education. It is likely that such intimate networks of informal sociability and friendship among University leaders and others within neighborhood institutions and beyond their official institutional roles contributed to the fabric of unity enjoyed by the University in its early decades.

If Harper's relations with the neighborhood and his local church were congenial and usually well received, his relations to the wider city and the political nation were more complicated. Harper's public image among the well-to-do elites and the educated classes in the city at large was, on balance, a positive asset to the early University. Press coverage often focused on the steady stream of gifts that he conjured up for the University, with the *Chicago Tribune* tagging him as a "Jupiter Pluvius who evokes the plenteous showers" of money.²⁸⁵ But his immense energy, charisma, and constant proclivity to innovation and change also made for good copy. A long article in the *Tribune* in January 1896 described Harper as a mesmerist and magician, "perhaps the most striking figure today among contemporary Americans." He was a man of "enthusiasm, originality, and practical skill" who overflowed with new ideas and energy to implement them. He attended all baseball and football games, which gave him the image of the common man. Open and friendly to all, he never forgot names. No one was too high or low to fail to gain

285. *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1900, p. 6.

Harper's interest and attention. He was a great fund-raiser because of "the fascination of his personal enthusiasm and the foresight and originality with which he projected the plans of the University." Even Harper's attire while riding a bicycle was closely observed; he was reported to have special riding clothes—"tight fitting black jersey suit, knee trousers, jockey cap, long stockings, and bicycle shoes." Another writer insisted that Harper was "the greatest pedagogue of his generation," using the inductive method, never presenting his own opinion—but instead presenting the facts and allowing students to reach their own opinions. With approval, Harper was compared to a modern railroad executive, and a third writer upped the ante by calling him "the Napoleon of higher education."²⁸⁶

This portrait of a modest, earnest, and friendly (but slightly self-conscious) man, who was deeply generous but also endlessly eager to secure funds, became part of the aura of the early University. Harper's love of pageantry, satisfied in quarterly convocations with processions of faculty with robes and brightly colored hoods and marching bands, drew more press attention to his personal idiosyncrasies.²⁸⁷ Yet Harper disliked much of his public portrait. He took special offense at cartoons and essays that portrayed him as a craving petitioner of funds and as a sometime puppet and sometime manipulator of Rockefeller.²⁸⁸ He went

286. "How Dr. Harper Wins," *Chicago Tribune*, January 19, 1896, p. 26; "Dr. Harper's Rapid Rise," March 8, 1897, p. 9; Hollis W. Field, "How W. R. Harper Works," *ibid.*, October 30, 1904, p. E2; George T. B. Davis, "The Career of a Great Educator. The Rapid Rise and Remarkable Achievements of William R. Harper, President of the University of Chicago," *Our Day*, 17 (1898): 387.

287. Wallace, *The Unending Journey*, p. 97.

288. See especially John D. Rockefeller, *Random Reminiscences of Men and Events* (New York, 1909), pp. 179–80.

[illegible]

*Hutchinson Tower Cartoon: "All Ready for John D. Santa Claus at the University of Chicago,"
Ralph Wilder, Chicago Herald Record, December 2, 1902.*

so far in 1900 as to deny that he ever asked anyone for money for the University, a statement that must have left his audience truly astonished.²⁸⁹ At the end of his life, in January 1906, he complained that his scholarly reputation had been vastly and unfairly overshadowed by the public image of a fund-raising huckster:

When I left my work in New Haven to come to Chicago, I was laying greatest emphasis on the scholarly side. Up to that time I had given myself largely to scholarly work. On coming to Chicago I had to turn aside for the next ten or twelve years to secure money for the University and in doing this, I was compelled to throw myself into that side of the work. The consequence is that Chicago and the Northwest think of me as a 'money getter', and that is the reputation I have everywhere—[a] reputation which is hardly fair in view of my antipathy for this kind of work and my love for the other. I have had some measure of success also in the scholarly work. I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the commentary on Amos and Hosea. . . . This book represents more hours of work than I have spent altogether in the administrative work of the University of Chicago in fourteen years. . . . The thing that troubles me is that I seem to stand in the West for something that I do not really represent, and the thing which I represent is not appreciated or understood, or even known by the great majority of the people who are familiar with the working of the University.²⁹⁰

289. *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 1900, p. 3.

290. *Chicago Tribune*, January 11, 1906, p. 1; also reprinted in J. M. P. Smith, "President Harper as the Christian Scholar," *The Standard*, January 20, 1906, p. 10.

Harper also resented the intense press coverage of his personal life. In 1897, when ill over the Christmas season, Harper complained to a friend that “[y]ou must remember that when I have a bad cold the Chicago newspapers make it out [to be] something worse. I am to be pitied that I cannot even be sick without the matter being exploited in the newspapers.”²⁹¹

On the national political front, Harper was a liberal Republican from a small town in Ohio, who was presiding over a major urban university in a metropolis that was riven by ethnic, religious, class, and gender rivalries. This made public opportunities where Harper could stand for national comity all the more welcome. During the Spanish-American War, for example, he easily slipped into the role of a public patriot—a defender of the nation in time of war, the giver of the University’s first honorary degree to President William McKinley in mid-October 1898, and the host to Colonel Theodore Roosevelt during the latter’s visit to Chicago in April 1899 after his return from Cuba.²⁹² Harper also engineered an honorary degree for Roosevelt in April 1903, the ceremony filled with fulsome patriotic invocations and pageantry. Harper took special delight in Roosevelt’s reelection in November 1904, indicating his strong allegiance to Roosevelt’s ideals and to the Republican Party: “Tuesday evening I received returns at the Auditorium but honestly after the first fifteen

291. Harper to Rev. W. J. Stewart of Canton, IL, December 24, 1897, *Harper Papers*, Box 3, folder 21.

292. The honorary degree to McKinley was proposed by the Departments of Political Science, History, Political Economy, and Sociology. *Minutes of the University Senate*, September 20, 1898.

minutes, the figures were so overwhelming that Republican as I am, I was almost more sorry for the Democrats than I was glad for myself."²⁹³

Who ended up in the White House was not a matter of indifference to Harper. Harper wrote to his son, Samuel, after the 1900 Presidential elections that "[p]rogress on the new buildings is being made. The committees are working in good shape and we hope to start everything in the spring. McKinley's election means everything in financial circles. If Bryan had been elected we could not begin the buildings for five years."²⁹⁴ Yet, patriotism and institutional self-interest notwithstanding, Harper usually went to great pains to keep the University out of the crossfire of partisan politics, a stance that fit well with the ideal of many Progressives who advocated nonpartisanship in the governance of major civic institutions. When a few faculty members, led by historian Hermann von Holst, dared to oppose American imperialism in 1898–99, Harper

293. Harper to Leo F. Wormser, November 11, 1904, *Harper Papers*, Box 7, folder 14. He also wanted to attend TR's inauguration: "Let us plan to go to the inauguration of Roosevelt. I have never seen a president inaugurated. I wish to be present on this important occasion. Can we not make up a little party from Chicago? What do you say?" Harper to Herman H. Kohlsaat, November 30, 1904, *ibid.*, folder 15. Of course, Harper did not share Roosevelt's views of John D. Rockefeller, but he admitted that the attacks were having an impact on the University: "There is no question that the public feeling has been greatly aroused within the last six months against the Standard Oil and monopolies in general. This has resulted in part from President Roosevelt's attitude and is the outgrowth of the magazine articles. It has shown itself in many ways. . . . It is hurting the University very seriously." See Harper to Ryerson, April 18, 1905, *Harper Papers*, Box 15, folder 13.

294. Harper to Samuel N. Harper, November 8, 1900, *Samuel N. Harper Papers*, Box 1, folder 2.

walked a careful line between defending faculty academic freedom and asserting that the University was “all right,” that is, that it stood solidly on the side of McKinley and the nation at war.²⁹⁵ Harper himself was convinced that war with Spain was justified (“most of us feel it [McKinley’s policy toward Spain] is in the right direction”), but he was forced to protect the right of faculty who dissented.²⁹⁶ To C. F. Linzee he wrote in May 1899, “I am quite sure that the statements which have been published in the papers are much worse than the facts in the case. At the same time, we must remember that this is a free country and every man must have the privilege of expressing his opinions. I do not think that it will ever bring the University into disgrace to have it known that in the University a man has the freedom of an American citizen. I agree with your position, and sincerely wish that all men might look at these matters as we do. As a matter of fact, there are many men who differ with us and we must give these men an opportunity to differ with us.”²⁹⁷

Harper was a supporter of the reformist Municipal Voters League in Chicago, and he was so interested in modern urban reform that he ensured that our university’s library became the repository for a com-

295. “A few of our professors do not think that the war ought to be continued in the Philippines. This is all they have ever thought, or have ever said. You may be sure that the University of Chicago is all right.” Harper to P. H. Ellsworth, May 9, 1899, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 27; *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1898, p. 10; September 20, 1898, p. 6. Holst gave a stirring condemnation of American imperialism in remarks before the Junior College Assembly on February 6, 1899. See his “Some Lessons We Ought to Learn,” *University Record*, 3 (1898–1899): 299–304.

296. Harper to Ryerson, April 15, 1898, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 5; *Chicago Tribune*, April 2, 1898, p. 6; September 19, 1898, p. 7; May 1, 1899, p. 2.

297. Harper to C. P. Linzee, May 9, 1899, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 27.

prehensive collection of administrative and political reference materials from large cities around the world.²⁹⁸ But Harper's practical involvement in urban politics came via the public schools. His involvement with public education and the schools tested the limits of nonpartisan university reformers in a city known for its tangled politics, bringing him significant frustrations and eventually short-term failure. Harper established early on in his presidency a strong interest in improving city schools. This was part of his larger commitment to social service on the part of the new University. Harper believed that

it is our duty to come into contact with the people and we already feel the influence of our work among them. We know we have been helped quite as much as we have helped in the work of disseminating knowledge through University extension. I know of no better way to bring a college into larger sympathy with the people than by this work in whatever way it may be interpreted. I maintain that University men and women owe something as an institution to the people who are without its walls. Our obligation does not cease when we give instruction to those who come to us; it is our business to go beyond just as far as our means and opportunities permit. To do a higher work not hitherto undertaken in this Western country and to extend all educational privileges possible to the people are the two aims to which our efforts are most earnestly devoted.²⁹⁹

298. Harper to Ferdinand Peck, February 21, 1901, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 47, folder 11.

299. *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1894, p. 3.

As Robert McCaul has demonstrated, Harper reached out to professional associations, teachers' groups, and local educational and political leaders to encourage conversations about the state of the public schools and the University's possible role in effecting improvements.³⁰⁰ Harper encouraged his faculty colleagues to bring teachers to campus for discussions about pedagogical methods and for regular professional meetings, as well as sponsoring public lectures by prominent educational leaders. Harper spoke at many of these gatherings, which often involved hundreds of people. Harper also created a Department of Pedagogy under the aegis of the Department of Philosophy, and he lured the young John Dewey away from the University of Michigan in 1894 to run both. In response to a remark in 1896 by Trustee Andrew McLeish about why the University would publish a scholarly journal called *The School Review* that, McLeish felt, was below its dignity, Harper replied, "As a University we are interested above all things else in Pedagogy. Especially are we interested in the questions which deal with the preparation of students immediately for college."³⁰¹ In part this profile reflected Harper's genuine intellectual commitments—he believed urgently in the impact of teaching for improving urban society—but it also demonstrated once again the systematic quality of his larger educational ideals—upgrading Chicago high schools would be a small, but significant step in advancing his larger plan of a general integration of secondary and tertiary education in the Middle West, under the leadership of the new research university. By 1896–97, Harper's goal of securing a network of affiliated or cooperating high schools had

300. Robert L. McCaul, "Dewey's Chicago," *The School Review*, 67 (1959): 258–80.

301. Harper to Andrew McLeish, April 7, 1896, *Harper Papers*, Box 2, folder 24.

gained reality. According to McCaul, no less than fifty-four public high schools and a dozen private schools had formal relations with the University, with the University setting examination standards in many of these schools via a system of deputy examiners, as well as holding biennial teachers conferences on campus in November and in March to discuss current issues of practical interest.³⁰²

Harper's challenges grew greater the more he became involved in the murky realities of late nineteenth-century Chicago school politics. As a university president and a progressive Republican, it was inevitable that Harper would be co-opted by the local civic elites to serve as a spokesman on urban educational issues. In so doing, Harper gained a status that set him at odds with labor and union movements in the city. The Civic Federation, a bastion of business-dominated elites, chose Harper to be the chair of their committee on education, and in 1896 Mayor George Swift (who was a Republican) nominated him for a two-year term on the board of education. Several of Harper's trustee friends advised him against taking such a politically complicated assignment: D. G. Hamilton told Harper that "it would lead you into a whirlpool that your tastes and finer instincts would lead you to avoid. The entanglements, disappointments and labor would do more to break you down, than all the work you have done at the University. . . . You cannot handle dirt without soiling your

302. Robert McCaul, "Dewey's Chicago," pp. 263–64. By 1900 the University had affiliation agreements with Des Moines College, Kalamazoo College, Stetson University, Butler College, Bradley Polytechnic Institute, Morgan Park Academy, Frances Shimer Academy, South Side Academy, Harvard School, Princeton-Yale School, Kenwood Institute, Wayland Academy, Rugby School, Chicago Manual Training School, Culver Military Academy, Elgin Academy, Dearborn Academy, Burlington Institute, and University School for Girls. See *The Annual Register*, 1900–1901, pp. 152–66.

hands,” and Trustee Andrew McLeish warned him that the job would be “an unwise and undesirable step” and would work against the interests of the University.³⁰³

Harper ignored such counsels and accepted the assignment in July 1896, responding to McLeish, “I am persuaded that I could perform a service for the cause of education in Chicago that would be of very great importance to the University.”³⁰⁴ Seats on the Chicago School Board were politically coveted jobs that controlled a considerable level of job patronage. Harper quickly found himself petitioned by various friends and acquaintances to intervene on their behalf. One acquaintance, a principal of a local school, wrote asking for positions for his sister and a male friend, as well as a salary raise for himself.³⁰⁵ Another University supporter sought Harper’s help in promoting his niece to a full-time permanent teaching job from a provisional assignment.³⁰⁶ Harper himself nominated several candidates for teaching posts, despite his dislike for the system itself. Yet the visibility of the job also raised Harper’s profile

303. Andrew McLeish to Harper, April 15, 1896, and D. G. Hamilton to Harper, March 13, 1896, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 9, folder 3.

304. *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1896, p. 5; Harper to McLeish, April 18, 1896, *Harper Papers*, Box 2, folder 24. Harper wrote to A. F. Nightingale, the superintendent of the high schools, that he was surprised at the opposition he was encountering from his friends: “I should have thought that the general results gained by the presence of a University man in the Board would have been of a character to please all institutions, but I suppose the world is yet narrow.” Harper to Nightingale, April 18, 1896, *ibid.*

305. E. L. Rosseter to Harper, January 16, 1897, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 9, folder 4.

306. A. A. Sprague to Harper, January 10, 1898; Albert G. Lane to Harper, March 28, 1898, *ibid.*

among potential enemies, who feared his connections with the Rockefeller oil wealth and resented the intrusion of the University into their customary worlds of school organization and labor politics. Harper's public pronouncements about the desirability of reconciling and coordinating the work of Chicago public high schools with university admissions standards soon gave rise to accusations that the University was trying to take over the public schools and to make appointment as a teacher contingent on a college degree.³⁰⁷ His allies in the school administration insisted that "No subversion, no radical changes of the High School curriculum are at all necessary," but critics like those of the local Socialist Alliance attacked Harper as being the "chief cook and bottle washer of the Standard Oil University."³⁰⁸ When considering whether to reappoint Harper to a second term on the school board in July 1898, Mayor Carter H. Harrison sent Harper a candid letter reporting that he had encountered much opposition against Harper: "You know, of course, the old charges: that the public schools are being made a feeder of the Chicago University, that graduates of the University are given positions as teachers in preference to ordinary applicants, and that the schools are drifting away from the class of instruction for which they are intended. While the investigations I have made of the these charges show them to be absolutely unfounded, the impression is abroad in the public mind and will not [go] down."³⁰⁹

Harper did have enough influence with Harrison, however, to lobby successfully for the appointment of E. Benjamin Andrews as the new

307. *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 1899, p. 7.

308. Statement of A. F. Nightingale, April 17, 1896, in *Harper Papers*, Box 2, folder 24; *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1897, p. 5.

309. Harrison to Harper, July 8, 1898, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 9.



"Unfrenzied Finance," R. Edgren, *The New York World*, December 25, 1904.

reformist superintendent of city schools in July 1898.³¹⁰ Andrews was the president of Brown University, and more importantly from Harper's perspective, Andrews was also the sympathetic president of Denison when Harper was on the faculty in the 1870s. Further, Andrews had been a constructive member of the ad hoc committee of Baptist leaders that Gates had summoned in April 1889 to persuade Rockefeller to bankroll a new institution of higher education in Chicago. Harper had tried to recruit Andrews to Chicago in the spring of 1893 for the position of chancellor and as a head professor of the philosophy department, essentially to serve as Harper's number-two administrative man, who could spell him when he was on research leave.³¹¹ The scheme collapsed when Andrews balked, but Andrews's and Harper's similar views about the proper limitations of religious orthodoxy in a university context and on the need for radical educational reform of the public schools kept Harper interested in Andrews's career.

Once in Chicago, Andrews had a difficult time making the transition from college president, where he held great power, to city superintendent,

310. *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1898, p. 5. Anti-Harper sentiment was expressed by a board member who thought that Andrews's nomination was yet another effort to make the public schools "subservient to the University of Chicago" and "an adjunct to a private enterprise." Harper was not reappointed to the board in July 1898) largely because Harrison was under pressure from those who feared Harper was trying to take over the schools. *Ibid.*, July 12, 1898 p. 7. Harper wrote to Andrews in June 1898 urging him to take the job on the grounds that "[t]he time is ripe. With the Mayor back of us we can introduce a great number of reforms." Harper to Andrews, June 16, 1898, *PP 1889-1925*, Box 6, folder 22.

311. "Memorandum of proposition to E. Benjamin Andrews from Univ. of Chicago," *ibid.* [undated, but most likely spring or summer of 1893]. Harper seemed to suggest that he and Andrews would each run the University for six-month intervals, spelling each other in a regular cycle. See also Meyer, "The Chicago Faculty and the University Ideal," pp. 110-12.

which required endless political negotiations and compromises. Andrews styled himself as a tough, no-nonsense administrator, but this style of leadership led to charges of autocracy and pretentiousness. His enemies tagged him “bulletin Ben” for his habit of issuing summary commands to his subordinates, including an order that teachers must live within the city limits and a warning to teachers against criticizing their superiors in the school system. His close personal connections with Harper were another source of discontent.³¹²

Harper’s greatest impact on the schools came not during his abbreviated term on the school board but in a related venue. In January 1898 Mayor Harrison, seeking to placate reformist Republicans in the business and professional community, appointed Harper to a special eleven-man commission charged with recommending reforms to improve the Chicago public school system; he selected Harper to be the chair of the commission.³¹³ Under Harper’s intellectual leadership the commission worked assiduously

312. See “Dr. Andrews’s Unpopularity,” *The Chicago Teacher and School-Board Journal*, 1 (1899): 377–78: “It is many years since a superintendent of schools in Chicago so completely lost the good will of teachers and trustees.”

313. For Harrison and the Union League Republicans, see Marjorie Murphy, “From Artisan to Semi-Professional. White Collar Unionism among Chicago Public School Teachers, 1870–1930,” Dissertation, University of California at Davis, 1981, pp. 38–39. Harper requested that his group be called a “commission” instead of a “committee,” since “[t]his conveys a little stronger idea.” Harper to Carter H. Harrison, December 18, 1897, *Harper Papers*, Box 3, folder 21. For the other members of the commission see John C. Pennoyer, “The Harper Report of 1899: Administrative Progressivism and the Chicago Public Schools.” Dissertation, University of Denver, 1978, pp. 5–7. Pennoyer notes, “What is striking about the composition of the Harper Commission is how closely it resembles [David] Tyacks’s profile of administrative progressives. With the exceptions of [Simon] McPherson and [Joseph] Stolz, all the members were either businessmen or attorneys.”

for almost a year, issuing *The Report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago* in early 1899.³¹⁴ Harper eagerly accepted this challenge, since he was confident that "[a]fter working on the Civic Federation for a little while I saw clearly the necessity of having a closer connection with the authorities. That has been secured. We are a Commission appointed by the Mayor. He is, I can assure you, open minded in the matter. It is an opportunity of a quarter of a century for Chicago."³¹⁵ The document that Harper and his colleagues produced was true to character and was in most respects but a logical extension of Harper's previous thinking on educational reform in America. Harper confronted a politicized school system that suffered from a variety of ills—overcrowding; lack of professional training for many teachers; political patronage in the appointments process; inadequate physical facilities to meet the needs of the burgeoning population of school-aged youth; an antiquated tax structure that barely provided sufficient resources to maintain the status quo, much less undertake needed improvements; day-to-day governance by committees of the board rather than by a strong executive leader; and many other ills. Harper judged the administration of the school system "largely defective" and in need of "radical improvement."

314. Harper to members of the commission, undated [January 1898], *Harper Papers*, Box 3, folder 23.

315. Harper to Rev. Dr. S. J. McPherson, January 5, 1898, *ibid.* McPherson was also asked to serve on the commission, but tried to beg off on the grounds that he was too busy. Harper dismissed such arguments, noting, "The commission as named is made up of men all of whom are busy. I think it can be managed so that we shall not interfere with our regular work. If you knew how hard it was to get the Commission—if you knew how one strong man after another had refused, you would, I am sure, appreciate the effort which I have made to get a little common sense with the consideration of some of the school problems."

Many of report's recommendations were both uncontroversial and salutary—increasing the pace of new school construction, providing for more public kindergartens and for vacation programs, reducing student-teacher ratios in the classroom, creating more free evening lecture programs for adults, enforcing stricter attendance regulations to get more students in the schools, strengthening vocational training programs, allowing the use of school yards for community purposes, and so forth—but several were politically explosive. First, Harper proposed a radical reform in the governance structure of the schools, replacing the current twenty-one-member school board with an eleven-member board appointed by the mayor to four-year terms, and restructuring and strengthening the central administrative leadership of the system by creating two professional appointees: a school superintendent who would have vast power over the appointment, promotion, and dismissal of teachers, as well as over the structure and implementation of the curriculum; and a business manager who would be in charge of all financial affairs and who could hire and supervise all nonteaching personnel in the schools (e.g., janitors, engineers). Harper further proposed that both of these positions be given six-year terms with high salaries (\$10,000) comparable with executive positions in the business world, so as to recruit men of the highest administrative skill and eliminate political pressures. Finally, Harper proposed that the school board have exclusive power to acquire property and construct buildings without review by the city council.

In a city in which political (as well as ethnic and religious) input over appointments and political influence over contracts were already something akin to a tribal tradition, the creation of two non-political administrative czars was bound to raise objections from those who profited from the then current system of board management of all school personnel issues. Eliminating the authority of the city council over construction

contracts, in turn, created another source of friction. For the teachers, the report was a mixed blessing in that Harper advocated a clear upgrading of training and professional development of the teaching corps and urged the hiring of teachers who commanded "broad culture and thorough professional training," which he proposed to achieve by adding an additional year of training onto the curriculum of the Chicago Normal School. He proposed a requirement that all those applying to the school have high school diplomas (or the equivalent) and encouraged the hiring of more college-trained teachers for the high schools. Although these changes may have been worthy and desirable, they seemed to convey a negative assessment of the work of the current teachers, who were seen to be lacking an "incentive to good work."

The general structure of the report, replete as it was with expert testimonies from Harper's fellow presidential school-reformer Nicholas Murray Butler (in New York) and other university-trained authorities, conveyed a kind of other-worldly utopianism, as if Progressive rationality, scholarly knowledge, and administrative expertise could sweep away both human nature and Chicago-style patronage politics. When Harper argued that only the "best forces of the community" should find representation on the new school board, there were many cynics in the huge metropolis of 1900 who automatically associated "best" with "wealthiest," giving the report a timocratic tinge despite Harper's intentions to the contrary.³¹⁶ As John Pennoyer has rightly observed, the report also had a powerful

316. See Pennoyer, "The Harper Report of 1899," esp. pp. 255–71; Murphy, "From Artisan to Semi-Professional," pp. 34–54; David J. Hogan, *Class and Reform. School and Society in Chicago 1880–1930* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 197; Steven J. Diner, *A City and Its Universities. Public Policy in Chicago, 1892–1919* (Chapel Hill, 1980), pp. 81–86; Robert L. Reid, "The Professionalization of Public School Teachers: The Chicago Experience, 1895–1920." Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1968, pp. 44–57, and Julia Wrigley, *Class Politics and Public Schools. Chicago 1900–1950* (New Brunswick, 1982), pp. 92–104.

totalizing image, privileging the city as a whole and working against the autonomy of individual neighborhoods and ethnic groups.³¹⁷

Once the Harper report was finalized, Andrews decided to lobby the state legislature in Springfield to implement the plan. This set off a firestorm of protest from the Chicago Teachers Federation and the Chicago Federation of Labor. The latter denounced Andrews as a “creature of Rockefeller,” whose purpose it was “to promote Rockefeller’s ideas. He talks about outsiders in the schools. The outsider he refers to is the child of the proletariat.”³¹⁸ Harper was accused of trying to “take over” the public schools for the advantage of the University, with the idea of restructuring them so that a small, elite group of students would profit by gaining admission to the University.³¹⁹ Mayor Harrison, facing angry school teachers and other aggrieved interest groups, waffled in his support of Harper, urging that the “Publication of the bill, annexed to the report of the Educational Commission, has aroused a good deal of unfavorable criticisms among the teachers in regard to some of its provisions. I have no doubt that there are features in the bill which can be eliminated with advantage.”³²⁰ Facing vociferous attacks from teachers and labor circles, the Harper bill went down to defeat in the General Assembly in early March 1899.³²¹

317. See Pennoyer, “The Harper Report of 1899,” pp. 90–92.

318. *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1899, p. 3.

319. Reid, “The Professionalization of Public School Teachers,” p. 53.

320. Harrison to Harper, February 15, 1899, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 9, folder 5.

321. “The excitement over the bill of the Education Commission seems to grow greater and it looks as if it might be a very important element in the politics of the spring campaign. You probably see the papers and know the drift of the situation.” Harper to Martin A. Ryerson, February 21, 1899, *Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 23.

A year later, frustrated with a job that was little more than a "big clerkship," Benjamin Andrews resigned in April 1900 to return to university academic life as chancellor of the University of Nebraska.³²² Andrews's tussles with local politicians brought encouragement from William Rainey Harper in December 1898, who wrote to his fellow Baptist, "Allow me to express the great satisfaction which we all feel that you have been able to hold your own against those members of the Board who have wished to introduce political methods. I think that you have every reason to feel that the city as a whole stands back of you. I appreciate the delicate position that you hold, and assure you that we are all standing off and watching the fight with intense interest. If at any time I can serve you in a quiet way, please command me." Andrews did not give Harper the grateful response that he probably expected, however, for Andrews was quick to point out the albatross quality of Harper's support: "I know that you have the interests of the schools at heart, but it will be some time before people hereabouts will so believe. They think you want 'an educational trust', as I have heard it phrased, in which the public schools will be a tail to the university kite. And some—most, of the people simply cannot be reasoned with. But times will change."³²³ Harper responded somewhat fatalistically, "You will agree with me that I have made every effort, since your coming to Chicago, to separate my work and myself from your work and yourself. I hope the time may come when it will not be necessary to continue this needless separation. I take it, however, that

322. *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1899, p. 13; September 26, 1899, p. 1; April 18, 1900, p. 1; April 19, 1900, p. 1; Joseph W. Errant, "The Chicago School Situation," *Educational Review*, 18 (1899): 119–37.

323. Harper to Andrews, December 15, 1898; Andrews to Harper, December 16, 1898, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 6, folder 22.

there never will be a time when the University, if it have any interest in public school matters, will be free from the suspicion referred to.”³²⁴ Earlier in same month, Andrews complained to the press, “As I look back . . . I am led to conclude that opponents were made for me the moment it was known that Dr. Harper was the agent used to secure my consent to accept the superintendency.”³²⁵

The Harper bill cast a long shadow, however, as subsequent school administrators tried to implement components piecemeal via administrative decrees and state legislation. As the historian of the Chicago public school system, Mary Herrick, noted in 1971, “Its recommendations might have been ignored, but they could not be answered. Slowly, many of them actually went into effect. They are still worthy of thoughtful consideration by any student of the history of Chicago schools.”³²⁶ The bill was one of the decisive factors that pushed Chicago public school teachers into the union movement via their formal affiliation with the Chicago Federation of Labor in 1902. Some of the tensions engendered by Harper’s initiative were anchored in cultural and gender, in addition to class issues. Of the approximately five thousand teachers in Chicago in 1900, over 90 percent were women. The great majority worked in elementary schools, which did not require their teachers to have a college degree for employment. Many of these teachers, brilliantly led by Catherine Goggin and Margaret Haley, were Irish Catholic women who lacked university credentials and who viewed the University-based rhetoric of expertise in

324. Harper to Andrews, December 19, 1898, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 6, folder 22.

325. *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1898, p. 1.

326. Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Schools. A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills, 1971), p. 87.

the Harper report as a challenge to their professional competence and self-esteem.³²⁷ Harper's specific call for the hiring of more male teachers in the upper grades and his further suggestion that higher salaries should be paid to men on the grounds of their "superior physical endurance" which made them "more valuable in the school system" generated bitter acrimony on the part of the women teachers. Margaret Haley later commented acidly that "the teachers of Chicago did not believe that if he [Jesus] returned to earth that he would come to Chicago by way of the Midway Plaisance."³²⁸

This clash was emblematic of other disputes in Chicago involving business-dominated civic elites on the one side and labor and women's groups on the other.³²⁹ Such conflicts played themselves out across the landscape of late nineteenth-century American cities, where elite-dominated Progressives sought to implement rationalization, administrative centralization, and professionalization by depoliticizing local institutions of municipal governance. Harper was clearly on the side of the "reformers," although for many working-class people in the city this was by no means an

327. See David Hogan's comments in *Class and Reform*, note 57, p. 312; Reid, "The Professionalization of Public School Teachers," p. 41; and James W. Sanders, *The Education of an Urban Minority, Catholics in Chicago, 1833–1965* (New York, 1977), pp. 27, 130–131 ("By 1902, two-thirds of the class entering the [Chicago] Normal School came from three Irish parochial high schools on the south side, St. James, St. Elizabeth, and St. Gabriel.")

328. See Robert L. Reid, ed., *Battleground. The Autobiography of Margaret A. Haley* (Urbana, 1982), p. xx. For Haley, see Cherry W. Collins, "Schoolmen, Schoolma'ams, and School Boards. The Struggle for Power in Urban School Systems in the Progressive Era," Dissertation, Harvard University, 1976, pp. 153–87, 207–31.

329. See Maureen A. Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago* (Carbondale, 1987), esp. 110–35; idem, *Seeing with their Hearts. Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City 1871–1933* (Princeton, 2002), esp. pp. 59–70.

unambivalent posture, and their suspicious reactions revealed much about the potential challenges faced by university-based reformers in the twentieth century.

Some tensions in the public schools were mitigated when a University-educated woman (and protégé of John Dewey), Ella Flagg Young, became school superintendent in 1909 and found ways to encourage administrative reform while also supporting the professional and financial interests of the teachers.³³⁰ But the clash between the ideals of a university-influenced reform movement and the hard realities of urban politics in a multi-ethnic, substantially Catholic Chicago was a perennial one. Even among those who were sympathetic with Harper's vision of stronger connections between the public schools and the University found the perceived arrogance of some senior faculty at the University to be frustrating. Edwin Cooley, who succeeded Andrews as city schools superintendent in 1900, was a graduate of the University of Chicago (Ph.B., 1896) and admired Harper's administrative reform proposals. Yet when Harper complained that the board's own teacher training institute, the Chicago Normal School, was luring (or forcing) teachers into taking their extension courses at the cost of University's courses, Cooley became outraged, writing to Harper,

We personally know that you and some of the people connected with the University of Chicago were very critical of this work and were inclined to belittle the undertaking. . . . I am unable to understand your attitude and that of some of your colleagues on this question. . . . I might say to you that we are every day conscious of antagonism, to the Normal School in particular,

330. Diner, *A City and Its Universities*, p. 87; John T. McManis, *Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools* (Chicago, 1916), pp. 95–100, 103–22, 156–99; Joan K. Smith, *Ella Flagg Young. Portrait of a Leader* (Ames, IA, 1979).

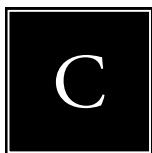
manifested by people connected with your institution. We hear criticism of our methods of work, of the character of the people employed as instructors, and we are inclined to believe that a part of this abuse comes from the fact that the extension movement is headed by the Normal School.³³¹

At the Autumn Quarter convocation of the University in October 1899, Harper engaged in a bold act of ecumenism by inviting the Roman Catholic bishop of Peoria, Illinois, Msgr. John L. Spalding, to speak about "The University and the Teacher." Arguing that good teaching was essential to the progress of mankind, Spalding insisted that "[t]he whole question of educational reform and progress is simply a question of employing good and removing incompetent teachers. And they who have experienced best know how extremely difficult this is. In a university, at least, it should be possible, for a university is a home of great teachers or it is not a university at all."³³² Coming on the heels of Harper's political fiasco involving the teachers of Chicago, many of whom were Catholics, Spalding's speech was all the more ironic. Was good teaching only possible in a University? If so, what about the city and its publics? Harper had used the educational commission to confront crucial and thorny issues in bold and audacious ways. That some of his solutions were flawed, and in the case of gender issues that they were remarkably benighted, does not detract from the larger vision that Harper had the courage to articulate—of excellent schools that encouraged young people to progress in their personal growth and professional success.

331. Cooley to Harper, October 14, 1903, *PP 1889–1925*, Box 9, folder 5.

332. *University Record*, 4 (1899–1900): 141–51, here 151.

H A R P E R ' S L E G A C Y F O R T H E P R E S E N T



Charles Chandler once observed of his friend that no one could know the complete Harper, for “he was a many-sided personality, and *never* showed his whole self to any one person or group, not even to his wife or family. In my own limited contacts I have heard at least a dozen different Harpers described.”³³³ For some of his later critics, most notably Thorstein Veblen, Harper represented the commercialization and trivialization of higher education. Veblen thought of the true university in very austere terms—as a community of scholars pursuing knowledge with like-minded (and, for the most part, graduate) students. His portrayal of Harper in *The Higher Learning in America* is of a man who began as a scholar but whose love of learning was overpowered by his passion for making a public mark as an institution builder. For Veblen, Harper’s entrepreneurial energy was further evidence of a boyish devotion to bustling efficiency and an indiscriminate pursuit of prestigious enterprises, no matter what their cost to the true scholarly purpose of the university.³³⁴

Harper was an easy target for such critiques, since he did believe that universities had a business side and that university presidents had a fiduciary responsibility to care for their institutions’ material as well as spiritual goals. In an essay entitled “The Business Side of a University,” Harper wrote with evident relish about the multiple tasks and complex

333. Chandler memoir, June 21, 1927, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

334. Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Brunswick, 1993), pp. 178–80, 193–95. Veblen never mentions Harper by name, but the “captain of erudition” (pp. 182, 193) is clearly Harper.

but efficient administrative structures characteristic of Chicago. He also admitted that, for all of the noble ideals of service that circumscribed the office, a college president largely spent his time "in seeking ways and means to enable this or that professor to carry out some plan which he has deeply at heart—a plan, it may be, for research and investigation, or for improving the work of instruction."³³⁵ Because the new University was founded by civic-minded, wealthy businessmen, along with earnest Baptist ministers, from the very beginning Chicago was a much more complex institution than the austere utopia that Veblen favored. It was designed to serve its communities in many ways, and its scale eventually matched and exceeded the ambitions of its founders. Size, then, and multiple purposes, forced Chicago like all modern universities to adopt the managerial structures of large commercial enterprises, and very soon the academic leader, no matter how strong his scholarly credentials, adopted the qualities and the purposes of a business manager.

Even so, Harper was not a particularly successful business manager; as noted above, budget management was not his strong suit. He never ceased to be a scholar, and his dedication to the values of scholarship never abated. To fault him for his inveterate support of the popularization of scholarship is to misunderstand a crucial characteristic of his scholarly personality, for Harper believed that universities existed to spread knowledge to the masses.

Educational practitioners judged Harper with greater sympathy. One of the more fascinating tributes came from G. Stanley Hall, president

335. William Rainey Harper, "The Business Side of a University," in *The Trend in Higher Education*, pp. 161–85; *idem*, "The College President," in Robert N. Montgomery, ed., *The William Rainey Harper Memorial Conference. Held in Connection with the Centennial of Muskingum College, New Concord, Ohio, October 21–22, 1937* (Chicago, 1938), pp. 24–34, here 33.

of Clark University, an institution that had been ravaged by Harper's famous raid of the Clark faculty in 1892. Hall wrote to John D. Rockefeller in late 1905 that Harper would be "shocked to know that I thought of writing to you," since his own university had been seriously damaged by Harper's aggressive recruiting, but that

I think no one in the whole field of education has shown such genius for organization, has himself grown more rapidly in office, has given to college and university work so many new and good ideas, has been so unselfish, shown such powers of sustained and effective work, has so admirably combined the enthusiasm of a scholar and that of an administrator. Even his annual Register is full of stimulating new ideas. Eastern college presidents were a little disposed to look askance upon him at first, but their attitude has greatly changed, although even yet I do not think they appreciate him at his full worth. He will go down in the history of education as a man who marks a great and salutary epoch.³³⁶

This "sustained and effective" work came at a terrible physical and psychological cost. Harper would write in 1899 to an old friend from Denison days, "How often I long for the quiet pleasant days of old Granville! . . . I am living at a break-neck speed. Some morning you will read in the papers—Harper is gone. The pressure is tremendous. I cannot myself understand how I can stand it. My only consolation is that it will not last forever."³³⁷ Harper felt himself under tremendous pressure and

336. G. Stanley Hall to John D. Rockefeller, December 18, 1905, *Harper Papers*, Box 17, folder 1.

337. Harper to Colwell, February 8, 1899, *ibid.*, Box 4, folder 22.

stress throughout his presidency, in part because of his compulsion to continue to function as a teacher, scholar, and editor in addition to fundraiser, administrator, urban reformer, national patriot, and general visionary. He felt particularly strongly about the importance of teaching. Harper was convinced that top administrators had to be members of the faculty and that they should be active teachers as well as scholars. He insisted in 1895, "I cannot conceive that a man worthy to hold the place of Dean would accept the position without the privilege of giving instruction. A man who was a Dean and who gave no instruction would be merely a clerk, and would be so regarded by the students. So strongly do I feel this principle myself that I do the work of a professor, and shall continue to do so as long as I am President."³³⁸

Harper's urgent quest for Christian virtue and evangelical justification via the creation of an innovative learning and teaching institution that was to protect democratic values and provide civic leadership, when coupled with his parallel quest to sustain scholarly progress via scientific research programs, gave the young University an optimistic certainty of purpose and a self-enhancing moral authority that shaped the culture of the institution well into the twentieth century. Harper presided over enormous wealth creation for the University, in spite of Rockefeller's hesitance and anxiety, but he did so in a way that slowly built a firewall between external money and the independence of the research faculty. This firewall bolstered the faculty's sense of scholarly authority by making the faculty feel relatively immune from the political whims of big business or frightened churchmen, thus giving the Chicago faculty a gently inflated (and pragmatically protected) sense of their scholarly independence. Timing was crucial. Harper had huge resources at his disposal at a time when such money

338. Harper to Boyd [no first name], July 20, 1898, *ibid.*, Box 4, folder 10.

could make a difference and when the civic world was sufficiently inexperienced with the workings of higher education to admire and even to respect the enthusiasm and the cunning that it took to acquire such wealth.

Harper fashioned a powerful and visible academic aura for the University through the distinguished senior faculty scholars whom he recruited and through the remarkable University Press and its many outstanding scholarly publications (the new academic journals, scholarly monographs, the decennial reports, and even textbooks). This profile—together with Harper's articulation of the ideal of democratic service and leadership infused with (sublimated) norms of Christian virtue, with his eloquent defense of teaching and his belief in the transformative power of education, and with his strong sense of independence from the less seemly sides of high capitalism and the other distractions of everyday life—led to a sense of notability, institutional permanency, and self-regarding confidence that had instant traction in the rapidly developing world of American higher education.

After Harper's death, Harry Pratt Judson's long presidency (1906–22) basically preserved the status quo of this design, neither adding new elements nor detracting substantially from what Harper had done. Judson's major achievement, and it was considerable, was to balance the budget. The difference between Harper and Judson was immediately visible. James H. Tufts recalled, "President Harper's characteristic attitude toward a new suggestion which appealed to him as a good one worth trying was, 'That's a good idea. We'll try it. I'll find the money for it somehow'. President Judson's reaction was likely to be 'If there are sufficient funds available, we'll consider it.'"³³⁹ Yet by the end of Judson's presidency, the University was lagging financially and emotionally. Hutchins's capable,

339. James H. Tufts, "Chicago, 1904–1917," p. 7, *Tufts Papers*, Box 3, folder 19.

all-purpose vice-president, Emery Filbey, would later describe Judson's administration as a "stodgy and complacent" presidency which put the University to sleep, and it took Ernest Burton's strong burst of leadership in the mid-1920s to revive Harper's multifocused vision.³⁴⁰

Ernest DeWitt Burton was the last self-avowed Christian leader of the University. He was one of Harper's original hires in the Divinity School, a distinguished biblical scholar like Harper, and his close friend and confidant. When Harper became the first chair of the Department of Semitic Languages and Literatures, he chose Burton to head the new Department of New Testament Literature and Interpretation. Like Harper, Burton was extremely active in trying to popularize and professionalize the study of the Bible, and he was Harper's successor as the leader of the American Institute of Sacred Literature.³⁴¹ Harper's wife later described Burton as Harper's "spiritual brother."³⁴² Burton's fundraising speeches during the 1924–25 campaign contained Harperian echoes of the scholarly and teaching community as providing intellectual and ethical leadership for the advancement of our democratic community. Like Harper, Burton led the University in a prosperous and optimistic period of "fresh ideas, of freedom of thought and action," one that he felt would be marked by great progress in American life. Burton unaffectedly developed a confident vision for the future. He was convinced that the

340. Interview of Richard Storr with Emery Filbey, May 7, 1954, *Storr Papers*, Box 6, folder 8.

341. Thomas W. Goodspeed, *Ernest DeWitt Burton. A Biographical Sketch* (Chicago, 1926), pp. 40–41.

342. Richard J. Storr to Margaret E. Burton, June 11, 1958, *Storr Papers*, Box 6, folder 12.

University had made “immense contributions” in its “enlargement of thought and in increased appreciation of spiritual values.” New knowledge for Burton was “[t]his mighty and fruitful thing, the quest for new truth.”³⁴³ The University’s mission was not only to help our democracy by training leaders of “extraordinary power of thought” but also to train intelligent citizens “who possess a habit of mind which qualifies them to pass judgment on the wisdom of solutions of problems that are proposed to them by the leaders of thought.”³⁴⁴ Burton was a logical successor to Harper, and his great act on behalf of the University—launching the 1923–25 capital campaign—was an almost messianic effort to recuperate and re-enliven older Harperian themes, while adjusting them to the new financial demands of the fiercely competitive professionalism that the modern research university after World War I had already brought upon itself.

This was the institution that the young Robert Hutchins inherited in 1929 on the eve of the enormous social transformations wrought by the Great Depression and the New Deal. Via his fascination with truth and ideas—and with his still-charming, Depression-era, the University is not “a country club” rhetoric—Hutchins helped to transform the University into the intellectual hothouse that it still is today. In a sense, what Hutchins did was to turn Veblen’s critique back on Harper, using it to root out or at least dampen those elements of the original Harper plan which were less “pure” (e.g., big-time athletics), while preserving the ethical urgency and the self-confident sense of scholarly authority and independence that Harper had set in place. Hutchins also adopted Harper’s sense of

343. Ernest D. Burton, “Radio Address, March 24, 1925,” *University Development Campaigns, Part 1: 1896–1941*, Box 5, folder 12.

344. *Idem*, “Educational Attitudes,” March 5, 1925, *ibid.*, folder 9.

democratic purpose but used it in a more internalist, self-reflective way to impel the new curricular reforms of undergraduate education that he helped bring about. General education, the comprehensive exams, the two-year degree—all these could be justified by the same kind of impulse to civic service and citizenship and the need to save time and increase efficiency that had originally informed Harper's quarter system, correspondence schools, extension schooling, and so forth.³⁴⁵ The New Plan College served as a sign of renewed intellectual vitality and an agent of intellectual unity in the University. The College thus became (and still functions as) one of the University's most valuable agents for doing good in the civic world via its curricular ideals of educating well-trained, thoughtful leaders for the many professions and institutions of our democracy.

Ironically, Hutchins was forced to spend much of his political capital in a more explicit and aggressive defense of the ideal of academic freedom, a hotly controversial policy arena in the 1930s and 1940s, and one over which Harper had tried to tread ever so gently. Harper protected the faculty (or, at least, most faculty) against the harsh political (and denominational) realities of his nineteenth-century world. But he operated within an elite-driven civic world with more normative consistency between the senior faculty of the University and business elites of the 1890s than their counterparts in the 1930s and 1940s (and this consistency was perhaps what Veblen was so worried about before World War I). Hutchins in contrast had to protect the University at a time when severe

345. Hutchins's famous radio addresses and William Benton's radio programs might be seen as latter-day versions of Harper's correspondence education, adapted to the new media of the 1930s and 1940s and presented with a much more self-consciously intellectual aura.

ideological fracture lines were beginning to have an impact on the student and faculty culture of many American universities.³⁴⁶

William Rainey Harper was a successful president not only because his heroic plans and visionary convictions were right for his time but also because he had the trust and the scholarly legitimacy to cajole his colleagues to embrace bold innovations. Edward Levi once rightly argued that “no one owns this institution—not even the students. In a more genuine way it possesses all of us.”³⁴⁷ But Harper’s case is instructive about the dependence that this particular university has always had on strong, visionary presidents who are willing to take big risks. Harper’s greatness lay in his stunning combination of intellectual vision, moral courage, confidence in the efficacy of knowledge, and impetuous institutional risk taking. Many of his schemes did not work out quite as he intended, but this bothered him little. He was a charismatic leader, not so much for what he said as for what he dared to do and for the ebullient, courageous way in which he did it. It was perhaps his tragedy that he outlived, or almost outlived, the kind of rip-roaring fiscal environment in which he and his early faculty colleagues believed that they could build a great university on call, a day early and a dollar short, simply because it was the right and noble thing to do. But build it he did, and Harper’s moral sensibility about the ethical purpose of the University has, over the last century, been confirmed and justified. When other colleagues at other universities talk about Chicago as a real university, they are talking

346. Hutchins was a New Deal sympathizer running a University whose former presidents had either been progressive-minded Republicans (Harper) or out-right party-oriented Republicans (Judson), and was thus himself a poster child of the new and greater ideological stresses endured by the University after 1930.

347. Levi, “The Critical Spirit,” p. 5.

about a place that has a clear sense of itself deriving from our certainty about the strength and the efficacy of higher learning. Rockefeller, Ryerson, Field, and other capitalists endowed us with bonds, real estate, and cash, but Harper gave us a clarity of mission. This mission had both secular and religious origins. Its genesis depended on our enormous wealth, which gave us unimpeded scholarly freedom, but also on our robust belief in the moral virtue of learning and knowledge, which sanctioned the uncompromising quality of our educational and research programs. Both features were necessary to make the University truly distinguished. As Frederick Gates would later put it, the early University’s growth was one that “for solidity, strength, rapidity, [and] wisdom has probably never been equaled in the history of learning.”³⁴⁸

On this, the hundredth anniversary of his death, we should remember William Rainey Harper as a good and generous Christian believer, as a passionate and even frenzied teacher and scholar with a natural discipline to work and an impulse to take on more controversial challenges, as an imaginatively unprofessional administrator inclined to spend money not quite in hand, as a leader not always right in the details but always convinced in the special and noble power of the higher learning, as a president prepared to sacrifice his life and his reputation to empower the University as an agent of democracy in enhancing our civic virtue.

William Rainey Harper exhausted himself and everyone around him in his decade-long leap to create this great University. In the exquisite Tiffany window dedicated to his memory in the Hyde Park Union Church (since 1963, the new name of the Hyde Park Baptist Church) one finds a line from the Book of Amos (5:24), the eighth-century B.C.E. prophet whom Harper found particularly fascinating: “Let judgment roll

348. Gates to Goodspeed, December 27, 1915, *Goodspeed Papers*, Box 1, folder 21.

down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Like the generations of faculty, students, and alumni who went before, we continue to be blessed by Harper’s certitude and his dignity, by his love of the life of intellectual discovery, by his insistence on the highest standards of educational work, and above all by his belief in the profound righteousness of this university’s service to our nation.

As always, I thank you for your splendid work on behalf of our students, and I wish you a challenging, safe, and stimulating academic year.

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