

CHRISTIAN LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Christian liberal arts colleges typically are privately funded, small, residential, and primarily undergraduate institutions of higher education. Most of these institutions are found in the United States. They embrace the traditional aims of liberal arts education by focusing on shaping whole students fit for all of life through a comprehensive education in the humanities, social sciences, sciences, and arts; this educational approach is often contrasted with more narrowly professional or vocational training. Appropriating the liberal arts tradition in the interests of an explicitly Christian mission that equips students intellectually, morally, and spiritually for faithful service to God, these institutions approach the entire curriculum from the standpoint of the truth of historic Christian convictions. They also pursue an educational strategy that brings those beliefs to bear upon every realm of knowledge, emphasizing the importance of grounding in biblical and theological study to provide a basis from which to approach the full range of academic disciplines. Often this quest is referred to as the cultivation of a “Christian worldview” or the “integration of faith and learning.” At the same time, these institutions function as intentional Christian communities that foster their students’ growth in discipleship through compulsory codes of conduct, as well as co-curricular components such as chapel attendance (sometimes required), Bible studies, and service projects. Many of these colleges require applicants to profess a personal allegiance to Christ in order to maximize a genuine Christian educational experience, while others admit non-Christians into a more diverse academic community that gives Christian viewpoints a privileged position. Similarly, many institutions restrict their faculty to those with Christian belief, as defined by their school’s faith tradition, while other institutions hire faculty from a broader range of religious traditions or those without any faith commitment.

Most Christian liberal arts institutions are associated with the evangelical Protestant movement in North America, where more than 100 such institutions participate in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Well-known representatives include non-denominational entities such as Gordon College (MA), Taylor University (IN), Westmont College (CA), and Wheaton College (IL). Others are associated with specific denominational traditions, such as Calvin College (MI), which is Christian Reformed; Union University (TN), which is Southern Baptist; and Roberts Wesleyan College (NY), which is Free Methodist. Similar colleges increasingly are found around the world, such as Uganda

Christian University, Daystar University (Kenya), Tokyo Christian University, and Handong Global University (South Korea). Christian higher education is a rapidly growing movement internationally. Some Roman Catholic institutions, such as Ave Marie University (FL) or Franciscan University of Steubenville (OH), are comparable in their educational philosophy with the evangelical Protestant colleges and are intentional in forming students within the Roman Catholic intellectual tradition. Other Protestant institutions, such as Pepperdine University (CA), Azusa Pacific University (CA), and Samford University (AL), share many of these traits, but transcend the liberal arts model as larger entities organized on a university pattern featuring graduate schools in professional fields such as law, business, education, nursing, and pharmacy.

References and Resources

- Davis, Jeffrey C., and Philip G. Ryken, eds. 2012. *Liberal Arts for the Christian Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Holmes, Arthur F. 1985. *The Idea of a Christian College*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Ringenberg, William C. 2006. *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

—JEFFREY P. GREENMAN

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is a denominational branch of the Reformed theological tradition. It is a binational denomination represented by approximately 1,000 congregations in the United States and Canada. The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) was founded in 1857 by Dutch immigrants who wanted to practice their commitment to Reformed theology and Christian education in a distinct way that set them apart from the general culture. The CRC places strong emphasis on the importance of K–12 Christian education. Congregations collect offerings to provide supplemental financial support for CRC families to send their children to Christian school.

Historical Overview

The events that culminated in the formation of the CRC began in 1848 when a group of Dutch immigrants led by Albertus van Raalte settled at Holland, Michigan. These settlers were fleeing both hard economic times and liberalizing forces in religion in the Netherlands. The Holland settlers eventually forged a union between their congre-

gations and the Dutch Reformed churches in New Jersey. A small group of 130 families split from this merger in 1857. They cited as their reasons weak adherence to the traditional Reformed confessions, a lack of strong doctrine in preaching, the practice of “open communion,” a lack of piety, adaptation to American culture, singing of hymns in worship rather than the psalms, and a lack of sympathy for secessionist churches in the Netherlands that were opposing declining orthodoxy in the Reformed churches there. The CRC members continued to observe worship in their native language and to emphasize the importance of traditional orthodoxy.

Newly arrived Dutch immigrants added to the ranks of the CRC in the late 19th century and also introduced the thought of Dutch statesman and theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) to their American predecessors. Kuyper had infused Dutch secessionism with a strong theology of cultural engagement to accompany its defense of Reformed orthodoxy. Kuyper famously declared that “not one square inch” of the creation is beyond the bounds of Christ’s lordship over creation. Kuyperians acknowledged the concept of “sphere sovereignty,” the idea that God has designated specific authorities to govern particular areas of the creation and has ordained that those authorities exercise their influence in a manner consistent with their divinely delegated responsibilities.

Having imbibed this philosophy of cultural engagement, members of the CRC began to make the difficult transition from their native Dutch language and customs to a closer engagement with American culture in the early 20th century. The denomination began the publication of the *Banner*, the official CRC news publication, in 1915. The CRC grew increasingly Americanized after World War II and also cooperated more closely with the growing Canadian Christian Reformed Churches, necessitating the recognition of binational cooperation in the name of the denomination.

Educational Contributions

The CRC prioritizes the importance of cultural engagement in all aspects of its educational ministry. The CRCNA continues to model its educational ministries according to the theological and cultural tradition of Abraham Kuyper. Christian Reformed educators believe that God fashioned creation with a particular structure and with the intent that humans would develop that creational structure. This cultural mandate continues to be the calling of the Christian church as believers seek to create and influence culture in a manner that brings glory to God. A strong network of Christian elementary and secondary schools throughout the United States and Canada provides for the training of young people from a Christian Reformed perspective. These institutions

are faithfully supported by Christian Reformed families through the attendance of their children and the collection of offerings to supplement the cost of a private education for families in their congregations.

The Christian Reformed commitment to Christian education includes higher education as well. The CRC established Calvin College and Theological Seminary in 1876 at Grand Rapids, Michigan. Calvin continues to function as an entity of the CRCNA, reporting an enrollment of 4,008 for 2012. In 1953, members of the CRC founded Midwest Junior College, which was moved in 1954 to Sioux Center, Iowa. The institution was renamed Dordt College in 1956 and was expanded to offer four-year degrees in 1962. Dordt College reported an enrollment of 1,400 students for the 2012–2013 academic year. Some CRC faculty and administrators also serve at Redeemer University College in Ontario and Trinity Christian College in Palo Heights, Illinois. The Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto was established in 1967 as an independent graduate school in the field of philosophy that operates from the Kuyperian perspective.

References and Resources

- Christian Reformed Church Centennial Committee. 1957. *One Hundred Years in the New World: The Story of the Christian Reformed Church from 1857 to 1957*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Publications.
- Hofman, Tyman E. 2004. *The Canadian Story of the CRC: Its First Century*. Belleville, ON: Guardian Books.
- Schaap, James C. 1998. *Our Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications.
- Swierenga, Robert P., and Elton J. Bruins. 2000. *Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church of the Nineteenth Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

—SCOTT CULPEPPER

CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP IN POLITICS

Christians did not attempt to formulate a theory of relationship between the church and the state until Christianity became legalized in the fourth century. Prior to Christianity being made a state religion, when the church had no legal right to exist, believers heeded the biblical admonition “to be in subjection to the governing authorities” (Rom 13:1), *except* when such submission conflicted with the explicit command of God with regard to the proclamation of the Gospel message (cf. Acts 5:29). The reason for subjection is that “there is no authority except from God.” Authorities do not derive their power from the consent of the governed; rather, civil authority is derived from God (cf. Dan 2:21; John 19:10–11). All