

Case Statement for Bethany College by Alexander Campbell (1841)

Note: The following networking letter was written by church reformer Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) to "Brother Parmly" [possibly Eleazar Parmly, a well-known dentist in New York City] to get names of potential donors to Bethany College, which Campbell founded in 1840 as an all-male school in what was then Virginia. Bethany College is now the oldest college in West Virginia and is still connected with the Disciples of Christ (<http://www.bethanywv.edu/>). Campbell's case statement for Bethany College expresses concepts foundational to the views held by Restoration Movement educators, including the founders of ACU (1906). The text below was transcribed and edited by Carisse M. Berryhill from a handwritten letter held in the Campbell Papers in the archives at Phillips Library, Bethany College.

Bethany Va July 28 1841

Dear Brother Parmly:

To reform the next generation we must remember that the men and women of the next generation are the boys and girls of this; and as we educate, train, and discipline these, will be the character of posterity. The opportunities of doing this as respects either church or state in the present time are not what they ought to be, nor what they might.

We want the following arrangements:

1st Locations in the country for schools and colleges, especially for those who must be sent from the parental roof to receive instruction. The country is more favorable than towns or cities, to health, to morals and to study.

2nd We want a system of education more in harmony with the physical and moral improvement of youth, more suited to the whole constitution and destiny of man, both here and hereafter.

3rd We want teachers of great moral excellence and supremely devoted to the improvement of youth.

We have projected a large institution on these principles purposing to pay a proportionate regard to health, morals, and intellectual improvement in the ratios of their comparative merits. We have commenced our buildings on a good and liberal charter obtained from the State of Virginia in a country and neighborhood as healthful and as moral as any other in the Union, so far as our individual experience and observation go. We have selected a band of young, talented, and efficient professors and expect to open our institution on the 1st day of November next, so far as our accommodations yet limited will allow.

To perfect and complete this great literary and moral institution located in the country and to furnish all the means, houses, furniture, philosophical apparatus, library for some three or four hundred students is a work of such magnitude as to call for the united liberality and effort of many individuals. The benevolence and grandeur of the object too, of saving many

young men from ruin, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, by being located in city institutions in the midst of all manner of temptation; of raising up better accomplished men whether as men of business, agriculturists, mechanics, merchants, professional teachers of literature, science or religion; make it, in my judgment, an object of as numerous and urgent claims upon the liberality of the humane and affluent as any other earthly concern of which we can at all think.

If to prevent crime be better than to punish, or remove it; and if to prevent poverty, sickness, wretchedness be better than to relieve them; there is then no better work than by a proper system of intellectual and moral culture to raise up an intelligent, virtuous, and useful class of citizens. We, too, as a church devoted to reformation, need a more efficient and powerful ministry. We need to cultivate the talent which the Lord has given us, that we may discharge our duties to our Redeemer and to our race honorably and profitably and thus obtain the plaudits of well done good and faithful servants.

I wish to lay the matter very seriously and benevolently before you as one devoted to the cause of our Divine Redeemer, as one to whom he has vouchsafed many blessings and on whom conferred the means of assisting in this benevolent and truly philanthropic undertaking. We have found a goodly number of benevolent men and Christian brethren willing to assist in this enterprise, but we need many more to carry out and accomplish the wishes and relieve the wants of a great and growing community. I know I do not appeal to one who needs any other arguments to do good but to see a good and suitable opportunity. I therefore have no fear of appealing in vain.

I enclose you a formula to which after you have affixed your name, please present it to such of your acquaintances as you know to be men of benevolence and Christian sympathy.

There are some also not attached to any party that occasionally subscribe to such humane and unsectarian undertakings.

Please return within two or three weeks the enclosed with such names as in that time you may obtain.

Sincerely and affectionately,
Your brother in the Christian hope,
A Campbell