FROM DEPENDENT CHILD TO DISTANT COUSIN:  
A STORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF A COLLEGE AND THE CHURCH  

J. DENNIS WILLIAMS

Lebanon Valley College, a church related institution, is nestled in the town of Annville in south-central Pennsylvania. The spire of the college chapel, which dominates the skyline as you approach the college from the north, gives tangible witness that the church is part of the story of the school. The college catalog states that its “mission arises directly from its historic traditions and a relationship with the United Methodist Church.” It is the story of the relationship between church and college that will be examined in this article. It is a relationship that has required the college to interface with three different church bodies: the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (1866-1946), the Evangelical United Brethren Church (1946-1968), and The United Methodist Church (1968-present).

Higher education had its outspoken adversaries in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. This entrenched opposition was based on the fear that schooling beyond “the three R’s” would draw young people away from the Bible and promote worldliness. It was also feared that “irredeemable debts” would be incurred. Despite such apprehensions, the General Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ established Otterbein University at Westerville, Ohio in 1847 and Mount Pleasant College in western Pennsylvania in 1850. Both the East Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Conferences of the United Brethren Church gave support to these institutions. Things did not go well for the western Pennsylvania school. By 1858 Mount Pleasant College “had disappeared, being absorbed by Otterbein.” Since the East Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Conferences had sent their youth to Mt. Pleasant, its closure meant that those youth would have to travel longer distances to attend a United Brethren school. This gave impetus to “establishing an institution of learning in Pennsylvania as soon as possible.”

On February 24, 1865, a report was presented to the East Pennsylvania

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1Lebanon Valley College Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, 2002-2003, 3.
3This material is taken from an unpublished paper by the Rev. G. W. Miles Rigor, a founder of the college, in the college archives.
4This wording is taken from a resolution adopted by the East Pennsylvania Conference on January 17, 1860. See Wallace, 6.
Conference by the Committee on Educational Interests. The report included the following resolution which was adopted:

Resolved, That, for the purpose of preparatory training, and to subserve educational interests of a more local character, we will cooperate with the Pennsylvania Conference in building up a Seminary of learning somewhere within the limits of the conferences in mention.

Resolved, That we appoint a board of five Trustees, to meet and confer with the board of Trustees appointed by the Pennsylvania Conference upon the place of the school's location and its early projection, as per proposition of the last mentioned conference.

Resolved, That these trustees shall meet as early as practicable, and report the result of their consultation at the next annual sitting of this conference.

Similar legislation was approved by the Pennsylvania Conference.

The joint board, authorized by the two conferences, met to consider various sites for the college. When two of the members of the joint board from the Pennsylvania Conference purchased Cottage Hill College and prepared to send its daughters to this "female" institution, the joint undertaking ceased. The East Pennsylvania Conference was now alone in its effort to establish a co-educational college.

The choice of location narrowed to Annville or Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Five men from Annville purchased the Annville Academy for $4,500 and donated the property to the East Pennsylvania Conference. In February, 1866, the East Pennsylvania Conference "accepted the proffered donation by the people of Annville," established a "Board of 12 Trustees," and provided for the leasing of the operation of the college to a "responsible party," who was to conduct the affairs of the school and assume all of the risks as well as potential profits from the collection of college fees.

Lebanon Valley College officially opened on Monday morning, May 7, 1866. It was the infant offspring of the East Pennsylvania Conference, the conference's dependent child. By 1872 the Pennsylvania and the East German Conferences joined with the East Pennsylvania Conference to support the school. The rationale for the support of the conferences during the United Brethren era was three-fold.

1) A United Brethren College would aid in the retention of the church's youth. In a resolution of support for Lebanon Valley College by the East Pennsylvania Conference, the conference declared that the college would be a means of keeping young people from attending other denominational schools. See Wallace, 8, 9.

2) Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Session of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, 1865, 14, 15.


4) Cottage Hill College was located in York, Pennsylvania. It was within the boundaries of the Pennsylvania Conference.

5) Wallace, 8, 9.

6) Minutes of the Twentieth Annual Session of the East Pennsylvania Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, 1866, 15, 16.

7) Wallace, 24

8) Wallace, 61

9) The United Brethren were not the only church body concerned about youth being lured into other denominations by attendance at other denominational schools. See Russell E. Richey, "Connectionalism and College." Quarterly Review (Winter 1998), 338, 339.
Pennsylvania Conference in 1880 the issue of retention surfaced. The resolution stated that the Church of the United Brethren could not "expect to retain a strong hold upon its [youth] if it fails to offer them as good opportunities for growth as can be found elsewhere... ."13

(2) The Church had a need for an educated leadership. This need was declared in a "Report on Christian Education" to the Pennsylvania Conference. The report expressed "unanimous agreement in its support of Lebanon Valley College," because the church must provide "adequate training for life and service within itself as well as for Christian service in the world" or she will "find herself without trained leadership."14

(3) No "irredeemable debts" would be incurred. The General Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ determined in 1855 that the financial responsibility for any college that would be established would lie with the annual conferences which should avoid "irredeemable debts."15 The enabling legislation of the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1866 that gave birth to the college determined that debt would be avoided. It declared that the expense to the conference "till next session... not be] a greater expense than one thousand dollars."16 Soon after the opening of the college a Confidential Circular was distributed among the members of the East Pennsylvania Conference. The circular took avoidance of debt to a new level. Commenting on leasing the supervision of the school, the circular indicated that the college had been leased in a way that "each additional boarding pupil will bring a revenue to the Conference of from $9 to $17 per annum...."17 Not only would there be no "irredeemable debts," the college was being shrewdly huckstered as a "cash cow" that could provide income to the conference.

The relationship between this offspring college and its founding church displayed a signature that was recognizable to both parties. One obvious characteristic of the partnership was that both the school and the church understood that Lebanon Valley college was an institution of the United Brethren in Christ. The initial resolution, that accepted the donation of property in Annville for the establishing of the college resolved that the school "be for ever retained and conducted as a Classical School of the United Brethren in Christ."18 The Confidential Circular distributed in 1866 stated that "the College belongs to the Conference."19 As an institution of the United Brethren Church, the college reflected the values of the church when it came to the Bible, church teachings, and evangelism.

1Minutes of the Eightieth Session of the East Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Harrisburg, Pa.: Telegraph Printing and Binding Establishment, 1880), 17.
2Proceedings of the One Hundred Fifty-Second Annual Session Pennsylvania Conference (Quincy, Pa.: United Brethren Orphanage Press, 1940), 75.
3Wallace, 5.
4Minutes East Pennsylvania Conference, 1866, 16.
5A copy of the Confidential Circular is found in the college archives.
6Minutes East Pennsylvania Conference, 1866, 15.
7Confidential Circular.
The religious conditions of the college last year were very gratifying. More than ninety per cent of all the students were professing Christians. All the resident students were, or became Christians during the year. During the winter term one of the winds of God blew through the college. Many accepted Christ, and others were spiritually revived. No college is better fulfilling its purpose, namely, that of promoting sound learning and deep piety in its students. In harmony with a half century of history, the college has aimed to maintain the teachings of the Church and has tinged all its work with the beauty and principles of Christianity. The Christian college that does not recognize the Bible and teach in harmony with the Church, has no right to exist and should close its doors and turn over the education of the young to more responsible people. The aim of the college has been to co-operate in every way with the Church and thus equip men and women to go out into the world prepared to be constructive and forceful leaders in both Church and State.

A second characteristic of the relationship between the church and the college in the United Brethren era was the dependency of the college upon the church. The college relied upon the church for students. At the college's inception, the members of the East Pennsylvania Conference were asked to "use [their] personal influence to secure students for the school." The same refrain was repeated by later Lebanon Valley College presidents. At the end of the United Brethren era, President Clyde Lynch indicated that the school was very much dependent on the church for students. He reported that 30.7% of the total full-time enrollment were from the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. The college was also dependent upon the church for finances. In difficult financial times the college would cry for help to the church. During the Second World War the male student body of the college declined dramatically. This caused a financial emergency. President Lynch reported to the Board in 1943 that "our cooperating conferences and the denomination should stand in readiness...to provide emergency financial aid to the College... Unless such aid should come, Lebanon Valley College will likely become a deplorable casualty of the war." A financial campaign to raise $550,000 was launched. In 1946 President Lynch made the following report to both the East Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Conferences that indicated that the college was indeed dependent upon the church as a source of funding:

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20This is part of a report of the President of Lebanon Valley College, Hervin U. Roop, to the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1900. See The Official Minutes of the One Hundred and First Session of the East Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Dayton, Ohio: United Brethren Publishing House, 1900), 20.
21This was part of the report of G. D. Gossard, President of Lebanon Valley College, to the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1920. See The Official Minutes of the One Hundred and Twenty-First Session of the East Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Central Printing and Publishing House, 1920), 28.
22Confidential Circular.
23Minutes of the East Pennsylvania Conference, 1880, 18.
25Wallace, 201.
Financial Campaign: One of the most significant events of this interlude between conference sessions was the successful culmination of our Building Endowment Campaign. The goal of $550,000 has been exceeded in pledges and cash.... As of June 30, 1946, the cash receipts are indicated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Receipts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Pennsylvania Conference</td>
<td>$133,942.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania Conference</td>
<td>115,373.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>49,893.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon County</td>
<td>39,467.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Gifts</td>
<td>39,610.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A third characteristic of the partnership between the church and the college in the United Brethren era was that the church had a pivotal influence upon the college. This influence could be seen in the selection of the president of the college. Every college president, after the initial lease to Thomas Vickroy was terminated, was not only United Brethren, but a United Brethren minister, who received at least part of his education at a United Brethren institution. The presidents of the college were sons of the church who brought the church's values and agenda to the college. Since the church elected the Board of Trustees of the college, it was inevitable that the church would have a pivotal influence on the college. In 1866 there was a board of twelve trustees, consisting of an equal number of clergy and laity, who were related to, and elected by, the East Pennsylvania Conference. The following year the number of trustees was expanded to twenty-seven, of which fourteen were clergy and thirteen were lay persons. By 1946 the board consisted of forty-one trustees. Twenty of these were clergy and twenty-one were laity. Thirteen of the trustees represented the East Pennsylvania Conference; thirteen represented the Pennsylvania Conference; six represented the Virginia Conference; and there were six trustees at large and three alumni trustees. Except for those representing the alumni, all trustees, including those at large, were elected by the various church bodies.

A fourth characteristic of the relationship was that the church saw itself as a college related church. This was true for the cooperating conferences, the General Conference, and local churches. At the annual meetings of the cooperating conferences the President of Lebanon Valley College would be presented. The president of the college gave a report on the state of the college to the conferences. This report was published in the Minutes of each conference. Invariably there were comments concerning the college in the report of the superintendents and the committee charged with the educational interests of the conference. There were often resolutions and discussions about the college and its welfare. At the General Conference there were

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26 Minutes of the One Hundred and Forty-Seventh Annual Session East Pennsylvania Conference Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Dayton, Ohio: The Otterbein Press, 1946), 33.
27 Minutes East Pennsylvania Conference, 1866, 16.
28 Minutes of the Twenty-Second Session of the East Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (Published by Order of Conference, 1868), 4.
29 Lebanon Valley College Catalog, 1946, 6.
reports by the college presidents, a time to highlight institutions of higher learning, and discussions about the viability of and budgetary allocations to United Brethren schools. Local churches of the cooperating conferences annually celebrated a college day. They sent the sons and daughters of their churches and financial support to Lebanon Valley College. Representative of the college were welcomed in the churches. In his report of April 7, 1908 to the Executive Committee of the college, President Lawrence Kiester reported that he had spoken in nineteen local churches in a thirteen-week period.30

There is a story, perhaps more legend than fact, that personifies the nature of the partnership between Lebanon Valley College and the church during the United Brethren era. On Christmas Eve, 1904, the administrative building of the college, ablaze with flames, lit the sky like a burning torch. “It burned like a brush pile,” said one spectator. At the end, all that remained was a “blackened skeleton” of what had once been the “Old Administration Building.”31 Rumor had it that the fire had spread upwards through the elevator shaft. When the plans for the new building were proposed, there was a place for an elevator. This was opposed by a bishop. Legend says that the bishop opposed having an elevator, because he believed that since elevators are not in the Bible, they are not proper for a church college. The new building was constructed with no elevator.32 From this story a picture emerges of the relationship between the college and the church during the United Brethren era. It was a relationship between a dependent child (the college), and a hegemonic parent (the church), a partnership marked by the four characteristics noted.

II

On Saturday morning, November 16, 1946, in the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church were joined. With this union the Evangelical United Brethren Church was born. Lebanon Valley College was now an Evangelical United Brethren institution.

The partnership between the new church and the college continued to display the four characteristics evident during the United Brethren in Christ years. The college was still seen as belonging to the church. However, now it was the Evangelical United Brethren Church.33 The church continued to be

30 This information is from the handwritten minutes for April 7, 1908 of the Lebanon Valley College Executive Committee.
31 For information about the fire see Wallace, 21.
32 This story was told to me by Dr. Howard Applegate, an emeritus professor of History of Lebanon Valley College.
a pivotal influence in the life of the college \textsuperscript{34} and saw itself as college relat-
ed.\textsuperscript{35} Dependency on the church for students and funding was no less real. In 1947, 262 students of the total enrollment of 831 students were from Evangelical United Brethren churches. Although by 1966 the percentage of Evangelical United Brethren students had decreased from the 31\% of the student body of 1947, 25\% of the students came from Evangelical United Brethren churches.\textsuperscript{36} In 1954 a report was received from Marts & Lundy, a fund raising group, advising the college that a capital campaign of $900,000 to $1,000,000 seemed possible. However, this goal was based on the assumption that "$500,000 [would] be authorized by the denomination."\textsuperscript{37}

The partnership between the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the college seemed much the same as it had been in the United Brethren years. However, change was taking place. At the 1958 General Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church the relationship between the church and its colleges was still like a parent with dependent children. The issue over which this attitude surfaced had to do with activities that should or should not be a part of the social programs of the college. There were some who wanted the General Conference, as a controlling parent, to ban certain activities on the campuses of its colleges, while approving other activities. In response to this desire a resolution was approved by the General Conference on October 17, 1958:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{39. Social, Moral and Religious aspects of the Life on our College Campuses:}

WHEREAS, several of our colleges have made or are now making a thorough study of this aspect of their life, the reports of which are very commendable and encouraging; and
WHEREAS, the college trustees of each college are made responsible for upholding high social, religious and moral standards on their campuses; and
WHEREAS, it is impracticable for the General Conference to attempt to list the social practices that should be accepted or rejected on our college campuses; therefore, be it

RESOLVED:

(1) That our colleges be commended for their detailed study and evaluation of their social programs and that we encourage each college to continue such studies
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\textsuperscript{34} The influence of the church was seen in the composition of the Board of Trustees and in the selection of the college president. Except for the alumni trustees, all trustees continued to be elected by the cooperating conferences. Half of the Board of Trustees were Evangelical United Brethren ministers. Though the college president during much of the Evangelical United Brethren era, Dr. Frederic Miller, was not an ordained minister, he was a respected leader of the church and the son of a prominent United Brethren in Christ clergyman.

\textsuperscript{35} The "Report of the Commission on the Study of Higher Education" to the 1954 General Conference attested to the church as being college related. The report declared: "There is probably no other single matter to which our denomination has given so much time, invested so much effort, or spent so much budget money as is true of this matter of Christian higher education." See Official Proceedings of the General Conference. 1954, 265.

\textsuperscript{36} Journal One Hundred Sixty-Seventh Session of the Eastern Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Evangelical Press, 1966), 172.

\textsuperscript{37} This report, Fund Raising Report of Lebanon Valley College, is found in the college archives.
and evaluations; and
(2) That we entrust to each college Board of Trustees the responsibility of determining what activities shall be a part of the social programs on their respective campuses in order to assist their students in achieving the highest social, moral and religious development. 38

With the adoption of this motion the General Conference refused to be a controlling parent. On the one hand, it entrusted to the Board of Trustees of each of its colleges, including Lebanon Valley College, the responsibility of determining what activities should be a part of their social programs. The General Conference would have nothing to do with micro-managing its schools. The colleges were being regarded as emerging adults who could make wise determinations. On the other hand, the church expected to receive reports about the social, moral, and religious aspects of life on its college campuses. These reports were to be evaluated and responded to by the church. Thus it was that the church was becoming a hovering parent that was involved with its colleges, while understanding that it was impractical to seek to run them.

This changing relationship was evident at Lebanon Valley College in the matter of finances. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1947, the beginning of the Evangelical United Brethren years, Lebanon Valley College received $57,346 from the church. This was nearly 13% of the total income of the college. As the end of Evangelical United Brethren era drew near, the fiscal year ending June 30, 1966, reported the amount of funding from the church had grown to $137,370 but the percentage of the total income of the college that came from church sources had decreased to 6.7%. 39 This decrease was a clear indication that the college was becoming less dependent on the church for its economic viability.

The growing independence of the college from the church extended beyond the area of finances. At its June 1961 meeting the Board of Trustees of Lebanon Valley College authorized a Committee on Policy and Program. The committee was to be a joint committee of trustees and faculty. The group met on September 9, 1961. At that meeting there was a discussion on the need for the college to provide a strengthened curriculum for the training of teachers. A clergy trustee urged the group to remember that it was the training of ministers that was the responsibility of the college. The president of the college, Dr. Frederic Miller, acknowledged this responsibility, but then returned the discussion to the need for the training of teachers. 40 In this discussion the college, like an emerging adult, was exercising an independence from the church. It would pursue a strengthened teacher training curriculum. And yet the church, with a presence like a hovering parent, was that

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39 The financial figures come from reports of the college treasurer that are found in the college archives.
40 This material is taken from the September 9, 1961 minutes of the Committee on Policy and Program. The report is in college archives.
to which the college listened. The training of ministers would not be abandoned.

III

On April 23, 1968, in Dallas, Texas, Evangelical United Brethren Bishop Reuben H. Mueller and Methodist Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke clasped hands and declared their two churches to be one in The United Methodist Church. Lebanon Valley College was now an institution related to this new church. Where once the college had been related to a body of people whose membership hovered under 800,000 Evangelical United Brethren, now it would be part of a group of nearly 11 million United Methodists.41 "The prospects of an expanded constituency appeared promising to the college."42

The Plan and Basis of Union that formed the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church in 1969, as a successor to the Eastern Conference (Evangelical United Brethren) and the Philadelphia Conference (Methodist), also exuded promise for the college. It cited noble principles and objectives for Christian higher education and established agencies to support colleges.43 It made the following recommendations that were adopted:

That financial support for the ...colleges... is a primary responsibility of the Annual Conferences within the geographical limits of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania...

That the level of financial support for 1970 be no less than the $2.00 per member of Annual Support recommended by General Conference.

That the Annual Conference shall establish reasonable goals for the level of support for these institutions, it being understood that Albright and Lebanon Valley Colleges not receive less than they are presently receiving from the Church which is $150,000 each.

That our Annual Conference, our Ministers, our Alumni, our parents and our students encourage the enrollment of our United Methodist youth in these institutions.44

The higher education section of The Plan and Basis of Union that established the Central Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church was quite similar in wording to the plan that was adopted by the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. One notable difference was that the Central Pennsylvania Conference established a much higher goal of financial support for the colleges in the region. Its goal of support for each college was "not less than $250,000 annually."45 Resolutions such as these created a confidence that the relationship between Lebanon Valley College and

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41This information is from John G. McEllhenney's "The Four Tides of United Methodism," 200 Years of United Methodism: An Illustrated History (Madison, New Jersey: Drew University, 1984), 70, 71.
42This comment was made by Dr. Frederick Sample, who was president of the college from 1968 to 1983, the beginning of the United Methodist era, in an interview on October 30, 2002.
44The Plan and Basis of Union for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, 31.
45The Plan and Basis of Union for Establishing the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church (Journal, 1969), 32.
the new United Methodist Church would be mutually rewarding and no less close than had been the case with the former Evangelical United Brethren Church.

In the early years of the United Methodist partnership, much seemed the same as in the Evangelical United Brethren era. The four characteristics of relationship that had been present since the United Brethren in Christ days were still evident. The college viewed itself as an institution of the church and continued to be dependent upon the church for students, leadership, and funding. The new church, at least on an Annual Conference level, seemed to see itself as college-related and had a pivotal influence upon the college. In 1970, a year after the ratification of The Plan and Basis of Union documents, there were fifty-three voting members of the Lebanon Valley College Board of Trustees. Twenty-nine were elected by Annual Conferences. Seventeen of the conference elected trustees were clergy. Other than faculty and alumni trustees, all trustees were United Methodist. A bishop, three district superintendents, and two program directors of a conference were among the members of the board. The board’s chairman, Dr. Allan Mund, was a prominent United Methodist lay person. With such a Board of Trustees the influence of the church on the college was strong.

Though the partnership between the college and the church at the beginning of the United Methodist era was one of an emerging adult and hovering parent, that relationship changed in the ensuing years. In the mid 1980s the Treasurer and the Council Director of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference visited the college’s president, Dr. John Synodinos. The purpose of the visit was to inform the college that the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, because of financial difficulties, would be unable to include financial support of the college beyond a token amount of $5,000, in its future budgets. To the surprise of the conference representatives, the president of the college upon receiving this news expressed no resentment nor hostility, only understanding. His response was that “our relationship is not based on money.” He asked the conference representatives, “How can the college help the church?” The partnership had changed. The college was no longer a dependent child or an emerging adult. The church had ceased being a parent. The partnership was now between two full fledged adults.

Neither adult, upon the arrival of the 21st century, seemed to be talking very much to each other. By the year 2000, Lebanon Valley College no longer had conference elected trustees; therefore, the need for conversation between parties on this important matter ceased. The conferences no longer had the college president presented at their summer sessions. In fact, neither

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*This information is from the Lebanon Valley College Catalog, 1969-1970, 111-113.
*The Plan and Basis of Union that formed the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference had promised a decade earlier support of no less than $150,000. See The Plan and Basis of Union for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, 31.
*This account is based on conversations with Dr. John Synodinos, Rev. Dale Owens who was the conference treasurer, and Dr. Howard Applegate who was present at the meeting.
*In 1989 the college moved from conference elected trustees who represented the church, to all trustees being elected by the college board of trustees as trustees-at-large.
the Central Pennsylvania Conference, nor the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference included a report from the college in their 2001 Journals. The Plan and Basis of Union of the conferences talked of a Regional Commission on Higher Education. A coordinating committee of five educational institutions (including Lebanon Valley College) and three conferences was initiated, but this group ceased to exist well before the year 2000, as did occasional meetings of the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops with college presidents. The church and college had become more like distant cousins who seldom talked and rarely thought of one another.

There have been reasons for this distancing between church and college. An erosion of interest on the part of the church toward the college has been a factor. Through much of the United Brethren in Christ era, Lebanon Valley College had been the only college of the church in Pennsylvania. By the year 2000 there were four United Methodist colleges within the boundaries of the Central Pennsylvania and the Eastern Pennsylvania Conferences alone. Interest could no longer be focused on one institution of higher education. Once Lebanon Valley College had been the primary center for the training of ministers and church leaders. This gradually changed.

More and more of the church’s youth began to attend public institutions. With fewer United Methodist youth attending the college, interest on the part of the church toward the college was mitigated. There had been a time when the church with its Annual Conferences had energy and resources to sustain the college’s development. By the arrival of the 21st century, this was no longer the case. The church was dealing with issues such as an aging membership, a slow decline in membership, and financial crisis. It was these matters and not a college that captivated the attention of the church.50

The maturation of Lebanon Valley College has been another factor in this distancing. As the college matured, it required resources and leadership beyond which the church was able to provide. This demanded that the college become more independent of the church. With independence the college began defining itself, choosing its own presidents, and cultivating a constituency of support beyond the church. It became immersed in the collegiate universe and a professional distancing took place. The college and church developed their own quasi-professional networks and areas of expertise.51 All of which resulted, some 30 years into the United Methodist era, in the college and church becoming distant to each other.

This distancing has not meant that the imprint of the church is absent from the visage of the college. The United Brethren parents who in the late 1860s sent the first students to Lebanon Valley College in most cases did not have the benefit of a college education themselves, but they wanted their children to have a place at the table of learning, to be included, and to have “good opportunities for growth.”52 The anticipation was that those who sat at

50 This erosion of interest also took place in other denominations. See Merrimon Cuninggim, Uneasy Partners: The College and Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).
51 For a more detailed exploration of the effects of professionalism on the church and college see Richey, 346-350.
From Dependant Child to Distant Cousin

this table marked by inclusion would do so in an atmosphere in which there was a vibrant religious life and training for service to the world.

A vibrant religious life, service, and inclusion are still very much alive on the campus of Lebanon Valley College. In the year 2002, forty percent of all students participated in some aspect of the religious life on campus. There were three worship opportunities each week in which the Christian story was central. There were numerous Bible study groups and support groups took place. Students were involved in Habitat for Humanity projects and work camps in Appalachia. They served as mentors to high risk, potential drop-out students in a local, urban school district (beginning at the 8th grade), and tutored elementary age students in various subject areas. They shoveled sidewalks for senior citizens, provided music in area churches, and organized parties and led worship services in local nursing homes. Inclusion was also at work. A significant portion of the student body of the entering class of 2002 came from households where parents had not attended college, but who wanted their children to be included at the table of higher education. In fact, students at Lebanon Valley College on average came from families with a lower average income than that of students who attended state universities and other private colleges.

On June 15, 1892, at the 25th anniversary of Lebanon Valley College, Judge J. B. McPherson stated the following:

On such an occasion it is well to pause... and review the story of the past; to linger with pardonable pride over difficulties... faced and overcome, to point out the steps of progress and... the measure of Advance,... and take courage for a new and ever more inspiring future.

The story of the relationship between the church and Lebanon Valley College when reviewed is a story of change. The college is no longer a dependent child and the church is no longer a controlling parent. There has been progress and advance. The relationship between the church and college is between two full-fledged adults. Unfortunately these adults, like distant cousins, seldom talk and so rarely think of one another that the purposes for their having conversation are not as clear as they once were. Can this difficulty, as past difficulties, be overcome? That would require someone to begin the conversation. Will it be the bishops, or the college president, or a general church board, or something not yet created that will be the joint work of the college and church leadership? Such a question deserves to be pondered and must be answered if there is to be an “ever more inspiring future” for the church and college relationship.

52Minutes East Pennsylvania Conference, 1880, 17.
53This information came from an interview with the Lebanon Valley College Chaplain, Dr. D. Darrell Woomer.
54The source of this information was Gregory G. Stamson, Lebanon Valley College, Vice-President for Enrollment and Student Services.
55Wallace, viii.
56This question raised by Richey, 350.