

CHRISTIAN COLLEGES – BLESSING OR BANE?

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Introduction

As I began preparing for this assignment I was not really prepared for the documented evidence of the problems and some necessary conclusions that many of my brethren need to face and acknowledge. Many are trying to defend the unscriptural positions taken by some colleges as well as the actions and activities sponsored by these colleges.

It is not my intention to “attack” these schools. But it is time for all to come to their senses and become active in their restoration to soundness which at first set them apart from state schools. At some point there must be a turning back to what these schools of higher learning were first designed to accomplish. When the evidence is set before us we must decide as to whether we are on God’s side or on a particular schools side. I find that allegiances to the schools often cause some to turn their heads and even ignore violations of scripture. Many are saying that this is a school and not the church. While I agree with this conclusion, sinful practices are still sin wherever they are committed. It seems to me that our children’s spiritual well being would be more important than to overlook sinful doctrines and practices. Truth is, we should expect and get more from those who claim to be affiliated with churches of Christ.

In a speech at the 2001 Spiritual Sword, The Glory of Preaching, Wendell Winkler stated; “When students leave homes and congregations with their family firmly planted and/or pointed in the right direction but return from their educational climates with their faith greatly altered, something needs to be scrutinized.” I personally know of cases where the aforementioned situation has occurred. Families then wonder what happened, what went wrong. To a great degree the reason for these faltering faiths is that the schools have not been doctrinally strong, have not held on to the faith, and have presented examples which are foreign to sound doctrine. The end result is those young minds have been bent toward that which is foreign to their Bible based upbringing. That bending is possible because they are in the “halls of higher learning” and they are learning what they are taught and shown.

Background of These Schools

I cannot possibly give the background of all the schools which will be mentioned in this material. However, I do want to establish the intended purpose of the schools at their inception. The reason for their beginning was noble and profitable to the work of the Lord’s church. In the catalog of Lipscomb University they state; “As was the dream of its founders, the vision of Lipscomb University is to advance the kingdom of God by developing individuals who are spiritually, socially, physically and intellectually equipped to serve an unchanging God and an ever-changing world.” They further say they are committed to “promote Christian faith and practice by providing specially-designed programs, activities, and worship experiences which strengthen the desire to be faithful, knowledgeable, and mature Christians. The university is committed to serve the church, the community and the world by providing opportunities for Christians to participate in events designed to strengthen the church.” What a great picture this paints. If only this were true. All of the schools have similar objectives and goals. I do not question the intentions of those who saw the need for

Christian education and set out to establish institutions to fulfill those needs. But these men have long gone to their eternal reward and men are now in these positions who do not honor the noble and godly intent of the founders.

These schools came into being with the purpose of teaching truth. However, as time went by the schools sought to have accreditation. This means it could be an institution that has educational standards that qualify the students for admission to higher or more specialized institutions of learning. This required the schools to go in a different direction than was first intended. Brother N. B. Hardeman stated, "If I could start over again I would have a school in which only the Bible would be taught."

Please keep in mind the beginning purpose of Christian schools and after we have examined the evidence ask yourself the question; "Are these schools still holding to those intended purposes?"

Some Clear Evidences of a Departure

In this section of our study we will be documenting various practices and doctrinal positions that are foreign to the Word of God. Thus we must conclude that these institutions of higher learning are not focusing on the elements that truly make for "HIGHER LEARNING." (Isaiah 55:9) It is important to keep in mind that the material given will be documented and it is our sincere desire that by learning of these things many will consider what is happening in these schools and set a course to resolve these situations. For the sake of clarity each school will be listed separately.

Lubbock Christian University:

1. In response to a letter which asked L. Ken Jones, president of LCU, if a Baptist preacher was a Christian, he stated "I very much believe that baptism is for the remission of sins and is an expression of faith. Concerning what God will do with those who are in denominational groups who express faith in Jesus Christ, I do not know what will happen. I hope God saves them." I wonder whether or not Lubbock's president knows what God has said and means concerning one's salvation. Surely he knows this Baptist preacher was not baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, thus could not have been added to the church. (Acts 2:37-47; 22:16; 8:5-12; 1 Corinthians 12:13) And then to say he does not know "what God will do...I hope God saves them" is a direct reflection on the faithfulness and truthfulness of God. God keeps His word and does not discriminate in His judgment. (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; Acts 10:34)

Abilene Christian University:

1. A mark of unfaithfulness is seen in those who are chosen to speak on the Lectureship programs. At Abilene's 2004 Lectureship Max Lucado was honored as the outstanding man of 2003. This man's liberalism and downright ungodly teachings are known far and wide. Yet he is classed as outstanding. He has introduced instrumental music into worship, and has exchanged pulpits with a Baptist preacher. He does not believe nor teach that baptism is essential for salvation, but rather says that men are saved when they believe. ! Instead of being honored he should be marked and avoided. (Romans 16:17) I do not know of any who are causing more problems with digression than Mr. Lucado.

2. In 2003 ACU invited a Baptist minister to speak in chapel. Tony Compolo gave his speech and then invited the students to join him in an inner-city mission work. In 2002 Katie Hays, a female preacher from the West Islip Church of Christ in West Islip, New York was invited to critique ACU's advanced preacher student's sermons as well as speak in chapel before the student body.
3. The **"Church of Oprah"** filled faster Monday than most mainstream churches could ever hope on a Sunday. The 75 seats in an Abilene Christian University classroom were quickly grabbed, and the remainder of the "congregants" sat cross-legged on the floor.
The "Church of Oprah" is the title of a class being taught by Chris Altrock, preaching minister of Highland Street Church of Christ in Memphis, Tenn. The class is one of many, plus daily lectures, being held during ACU's 85th Annual Bible Lectureship. "Oprah is one of the most influential spiritual leaders in America," Altrock said. (Abilene Reporter; 2/25/03, ReligionNewsBlog.com) How can Oprah be a spiritual leader when she is not even a Christian?

Freed-Hardeman University:

1. Freed-Hardeman has also been involved with programs which revolved around Max Lucado. In April 2002 I wrote Mr. Milton Sewell when we were notified that the West Tennessee Healthcare Foundation would have Mr. Lucado as their speaker. At this event it was also noted that the Freed-Hardeman and Union University choirs would join voices to make up a 250 voice combined choir. Union University is a Baptist University located in Jackson, Tennessee. Mr. Sewell did not respond to my inquiry but had John R. Hall respond. Mr. Hall stated that the event was a community humanitarian effort and "we are joining together, as we have done in the past with the community to support this effort for good works in the community." I responded by asking him to look at 2 John 9-11 and asked him if there were any speaker that he would refuse to be associated with? To this day he has not answered that question.
2. In advertisements of their basketball games there are some pictures of the cheerleaders. They are dressed as immodestly as any other cheering group you might see in state universities. Are moral standards and modesty redefined and overlooked if practiced by Christian schools?
3. In a phone conversation with Mr. Sewell he asked why I did not support Freed-Hardeman University Lectureships. I cited the fact that F. LeGard Smith was on the last program. He asked what the problem with Brother Smith was. I referred him to page 206 in Mr. LeGard's book *Baptism: The Believer's Wedding Ceremony* where he said; "Are unbaptized believers destined to hell? Are those who have received only infant baptism in eternal jeopardy? Only God knows. On one level, these are questions we have no right even to ask. As seen in this study, there is an abundance of scriptural language that, on its face, regards baptism as an essential part of our turning to God. Nevertheless, I would hope that God might apply the 'common law marriage' approach for those who have lived a lifetime of service in His name without having participated in the wedding ceremony of baptism." But Mr. Sewell said that if Mr. Smith were going to write the book again he would not include that statement! Common law marriages are for those who do not go through the ceremony, thus simply living in adultery.

To my mind that is blasphemous to the core! And Freed-Hardeman's president wanted to make an off-handed joke about the sanctity of baptism.

4. The school is advocating the acceptance of lottery-funded scholarships. In a published statement (3/7/03) Dr. Dwayne Wilson, Executive Vice President of Freed-Hardeman University, stated; "A student accepting a scholarship is not demonstrating approval of gambling or other lottery-related problems. The source and use of the money are independent." Would the same be said if it were from the alcohol industry, from prostitution, from illegal drug activity, etc.? If we know the money is generated by sin why would a Christian even consider involvement? (Ephesians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14) Mr. Wilson goes on to say; "Money is morally neutral. An individual is responsible for what he or she does to earn it, but not for its history when they have no control over that history." I really do wonder if the schools would accept monies from Jack Daniels, Budweiser, or any other sinful industry which we are obligated to oppose. (1 John 1:6-7; 2:15-17) Does money have such a hold on us that we cannot see that God does not approve of the use sinful things no matter the good which might be supposedly produced?

Lipscomb University:

1. "The Lord Reigns" will be the theme of Lipscomb University's Summer Celebration June 30-July 3. The series will open at 5 p.m. June 30 with a special dinner honoring missionaries, followed by a 7:30 p.m. keynote address featuring Rick Atchley, preaching minister for the Richland Hills church of Christ, North Richland Hills, Texas. (Few, if any congregations are more liberal than the North Richland Hills congregation.)
2. This Summer Celebration is filled with speakers who are the "who's who" of liberalism. Joe Beam has taught that the Holy Spirit personally directs him in a miraculous way. Jeff Walling stated at the Ozark Christian College that he does not speak our against instrumental music..."some things really aren't very important." F. Legard Smith who wrote that he hopes the Lord "might apply the 'common law marriage' approach for those who have lived a lifetime of service in His name without having participated in the wedding ceremony of baptism."
3. President Steve Flatt, in a letter sent to many congregations in Tennessee after the lottery was voted in, stated that he was opposed to gambling. However, since the lottery had passed, he was accepting a position on the board which would disperse the lottery monies for scholarships. How sideways can one get? How in the world will he ever stand in opposition to that which he is involved? The love of money has a strong pull. (1 Timothy 6:10) It seems to me that schools are more concerned with promoting themselves than they are at promoting Christianity. The proof is in the facts.

Do we really think we should expose our young people to this kind of heresy?

Oklahoma Christian University:

This university lists what they call a covenant on their web page. This covenant states; Oklahoma Christian University is a higher learning community which transforms lives for Christian

faith, leadership, and service. The values and behavior of this Christian community are derived from the Bible, rather than the prevailing culture. Because we are a higher learning community dedicated to a distinctively Christian mission, we join together in a community covenant. This covenant is not a creed demanding strict belief in its veracity and inerrancy, and it is not merely an ideal to which we aspire; rather, it is a personal commitment that while we are members of this community, we will abide by the principles and ideals set forth in the covenant. The purpose of our covenant is to unite all of us at Oklahoma Christian University—students, staff, faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees—in a Christian community which is based on biblical principles and which transforms lives for Christian faith, leadership, and service. We recognize that the University is not the church; however, we are a Christian community which seeks to be guided by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in scripture. We welcome all students, regardless of their church affiliation, who agree to abide by this covenant. Because the University was founded by members of the churches of Christ and because we seek to serve our church constituents effectively, we expect all full-time faculty and staff to be faithful, active members of the churches of Christ who fully embrace the principles of this covenant.

Let us notice some of their actions and see if they coincide with their “covenant.”

1. Mark Henderson spoke on the 2004 Lectureship. He is the preacher for the nearby Quail Springs congregation. This congregation fellowships denominations and Mark Henderson was a member of Billy Graham’s Executive Committee during the 2003 Oklahoma City campaign. He was quoted in the Daily Oklahoman as saying “Billy Graham has preached the gospel to more people in the last 50 years than any other person.” This does not sound like what was revealed in scripture. (Ephesians 5:11; 2 John 9-11)
2. The Acappella music group appeared on the OCU’s campus March 28, 2004. The advertisement said “The concert, presented by OCU’s Student Government Association, begins at 8 P. M. in Hardeman Auditorium.” The founder and producer, Keith Lancaster caused a great deal of harm to the church in Paris, Tennessee by promoting and pushing this unauthorized method of music making. He has said, “Our main goals are to plant the seeds of the Gospel in hearts that haven’t heard yet, and to encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ in their faith.” How in all the world can the Gospel be taught by their sounds which are designed to sound like instruments of music? All this can possibly do is to violate the command to sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:19) It is no wonder that our young people do not “get anything out of worship” because they have been exposed to “toe tapping, hand clapping, and body swaying” worship!

A Remedy for this Dilemma

It is a clear and undeniable fact. These so called Christian schools are at the forefront of carrying the church into the current digression. As we have observed, the positions and practices of these schools are undeniable and are at odds with faithful elderships and congregations who seek to hold to the old paths. To correct this ungodliness, all true and sound congregations, men and women must do something!

Parents must wake up to the fact that these schools are not promoting sound doctrine any longer. Every parent should take a closer look at what is going on and "...try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1) Parents must put a stop to the things academia is presenting to our sons and daughters. Learn to say no to all those who would lead our children into apostasy. Do we not realize the souls of our young are at stake as well as the future of the Lord's church?

One sure way to stem the tide of this apostate direction is to put a lock on our check books. If the schools are not supported they cannot keep going. But I suppose I should not be so naive as to think such a simple solution will be accepted. What if parents strongly and loudly objected to each and every situation which is contrary to Biblical truths? What would be the result if every parent would "earnestly contend for the faith" in regard to these institutions of higher learning? These schools have correctly said, "We are not the church, we are an extension of the home." Question: Do they doctrinally represent that for which your home is standing? Remember the comment from Brother Winkler in our introduction; "When students leave homes and congregations with their family firmly planted and/or pointed in the right direction but return from their educational climates with their faith greatly altered, something needs to be scrutinized." I believe it is time, yea past time for scrutinizing and firm decisions being made in regard to our loyalty to schools that are no longer loyal to the truth.

Conclusion

The question we must ask and answer is; are the Christian schools still holding to the intended purpose of helping build strong, godly families and congregations? Can gospel preachers and parents teach the doctrines and/or condone the practices which are occurring in these schools? Are these institutions a blessing or a bane? The answer is clear! Do not be tricked into thinking that just because we have taught and trained our children correctly that they cannot be turned aside. It is a dangerous thing for our children to be associated with error. Many young minds have already been turned from truth to error by these liberal minded institutions.

How long will good men continue to look the other way? How long can we afford to keep an allegiance to these institutions that are not honoring the word of God? They may say that they are still on the "old paths" but their actions are sharply contrary to sound doctrine. (Matthew 7:20) The Bible tells us that this sort of action makes one an enemy of the cross. (Philippians 3:17-19)

I close with a plea. The years that lie ahead will be in the hands of our children. The home and the church will be what they make of them. We must never forget that the training we give them today will to a great degree mold them forever. (Psalm 78:3-6; Proverbs 22:6; 1 Samuel 1:28) May it be said of us as we make some decisions for our children and direct them along the road of life as it was said of Abraham; "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Genesis 18:19) Do not let anyone or anything divert them from the road you have prayed they would travel.