

Academic Preparation (Part 2)

ACSI's mission is to "enable Christian educators and schools worldwide to *effectively* prepare students for life." So what does this preparation look like—and what does it *not* look like?

Secular education has pushed God out, excluding His Word as the basis for truth. This has resulted in *mis*education, which is the opposite of excellent, effective academic preparation. We are engaged in a great spiritual battle for the hearts and minds of our children.

I believe the eye of the hurricane is who we place on the throne of our lives—God or ourselves. I find it interesting that it is difficult to find anything that even resembles truth in some of "the finest, most prestigious" universities. So what happened, and what lessons can we learn from history?

In *The Dying of the Light*, James Burtchaell tells how many prominent colleges began with a commitment to Kingdom education. How did they lose their way? Love of money replaced love for God. Faculty and presidents who were not sold-out followers of Jesus were hired. God's Word was displaced by men's philosophies. Over time, these colleges embraced a private school mentality. Consider these examples (emphasis is mine throughout the following quotes):

Dartmouth—"Having moved ... away from a cramped orthodoxy and into a modernism that reduced faith to morals, and then having shifted its focus again from morals to manners, and its primary loyalties from church to class and country, it had become an enterprise unable to respond any longer to Christianity in any but a sentimental and trivial way" (1998, 54).

Davidson—"Most students ... came to the college for its academic or social benefits and feared that Christian commitment might obstruct the pursuits closest to their hearts" (225).

"The [Presbyterian] colleges came into the hands of academics who not only did not believe ... integration of faith and scholarship to be possible, but found it an *unattractive ideal*" (239).

"Colleges ... continue to advertise themselves as in some sense church related, but in their statements of purpose make no mention of deity, much less of

Christ, and thereby assure one and all that their religious heritage will cause *no embarrassment or offense*" (229).

Wake Forest University—"In 1946 an overture was made by the Reynolds family, of the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, that would draw Wake Forest in a new direction, quite literally" (371). The new direction resulted in Wake Forest becoming "a liberal, heavy-drinking, godless school" (372).

"Colleges . . . assure one and all that their religious heritage will cause no embarrassment or offense."

Now contrast this drifting with God's Word:

• "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to

nothing the understanding of the prudent' " (1 Corinthians 1:18–19, NKJV).

• "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on *human tradition* and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8, NIV).

So what, really, is academic excellence? Consider the words of Martin Luther:

But where the Holy Scriptures are not the rule, I advise no one to send his child. Everything must perish where God's word is not studied unceasingly.... I greatly fear the high schools are nothing but great gates of hell, unless they diligently study the Holy Scriptures and teach them to the young people. (2009, 80)

God has entrusted these students to our care. For our students to become disciples but not to be thoroughly prepared to live life here and now is an abuse of their minds. For our students to be thoroughly prepared academically but not to be taught to follow Christ is an abuse of their eternal souls.

References

Burtchaell, James Tunstead. 1998. *The dying of the light: The disengagement of colleges and universities from their Christian churches*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
Luther, Martin. 2009. *The ninety-five theses, on Christian liberty, and address to the Christian nobility*. Trans. R. S. Grignon and C. A. Buchheim. Lawrence, KS: Digireads.com.



Brian S. Simmons, President
Association of Christian Schools International