

THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE FROM A LAYMAN'S POINT OF VIEW

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As a Christian layman reviews conditions in the world today, it is not without grievous concern. On every hand there is evidence of lowering ethics, deteriorating morals, increased lawlessness, degeneration of the home and a contempt for basic honesty.

Business men in high places apparently totally disregard ethics in their mad desire for gain. They conspire together in price rigging, they pour forth on an unsuspecting public obscene literature from the presses and profit from degrading entertainment; some apparently would have all American men and women, young and old alike, become addicted to tobacco and alcoholic beverages with a total disregard for Christian ethics in a mad quest to make money.

Every discernable statistic indicates a lowering of moral standards. From a couple in a lover's lane to a mass assembly of college students on public beaches in Florida and Texas there appears a growing contempt for the moral laws of God and man.

The glorification of sex in movies, on T. V., on stage and in literature indicates a sensuality more reminiscent of ancient pagan Rome than modern Christian America.

An increased crime rate, growing juvenile delinquency, the ever growing and sinister influence of underworld organized crime and open disregard for law observance indicate an appalling lack of respect for law and authority.

The deterioration of the home, the lack of parental responsibility, the absence of the exercise of parental authority, the alarming divorce rate indicate the Christian home is losing its hold, its influence.

Apparently honesty is no longer considered the best policy. It is apparently proper to cheat one's way through the educational system. It is accepted business practice to cut corners, regulate prices and utilize questionable means to make more money for stockholders. It is acceptable labor practices to promote "featherbedding", to regulate work rules and create unnecessary overtime. Cheating on income tax returns, accepting or giving payola is not only generally acceptable but in many circles considered smart.

The Christian layman reviews today's world with a degree of concern and wonders if Christianity is even holding its own, let alone making the tremendous gains necessary to off-set the strides of an atheistic, anti-Christian, materialistic, communistic ideology.

What is the answer to the problem of today's world? The Christian layman believes that it is in the propagation, the acceptance and the practice of Christianity.

The greatest single factor in the propagation, the acceptance and the practice of Christianity is the Christian college. It is from the Christian college that come our preachers, our missionaries and other leaders in church related vocations. It is from our Christian colleges that should come a host of dedicated laymen and lay women who in their own lives will dedicate themselves to the propagation, the acceptance and the practice of the gospel.

If the Christian college is to meet this tremendous opportunity, if it is to accept this tremendous responsibility and if it is to fulfill its ultimate destiny there are some characteristics which will mark it from other educational institutions.

First of all, the Christian college should be distinctly Christian. If the Christian college is simply to be another educational institution, doing an identical job with a state university or a private non-sectarian endowed institution, its existence can scarcely be justified.

When Aquila and Priscilla took unto themselves Apollos and "expounded the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18: 26) Christian education perhaps had its beginning.

The pupil, Apollos, was to be given something distinctive by expounding THE WAY of God more perfectly to him.

If Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" the real reason for a Christian college is to teach, to exhort, to instruct and to instill this great truth in the lives of its students.

A layman views with grave concern the efforts of a Christian college to conform to questionable social practices for the sake of either pleasing students, attracting students or escape being branded as out-of-date.

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Compromise and worldliness has no accepted place on a Christian college campus. The college, like an individual, should seek to walk worthily in its vocation and to abstain from that which would cause a brother to stumble.

In the second place, the Christian college should be doctrinally sound. There is no place for aimlessness or lack of direction in our Christian colleges -- they should not be weather vanes pointing whithersoever doctrinal winds may blow, but they should be a compass always pointing in the same direction and that toward the Bright and Morning Star!

The doctrinal voice of the Christian college should be clear and unmistakable for "if the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8)

The goals should not be to see how far the students may be led from basic and fundamental beliefs and yet retain some degree of Biblical foundation, but the goal should be how nearly the students can be led toward the landmarks of the faith. There is no place on a Baptist college campus for doctrinal "brinkmanship".

The Christian college should exhibit an uncompromising doctrinal stability. It should "remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." (Proverbs 22:28)

The Christian college should be established upon a solid foundation of God's truth and should so remain. Its products will find themselves likewise grounded on a solid foundation of truth. The guise of academic freedom should not be abused as a means of attacking fundamental Christian beliefs or attacking doctrinal practices. Also, the Christian college together with its administration and faculty should be willing to submit themselves to the discipline of the doctrinal beliefs of those supporting the institution. They should likewise be willing to conform to the program of those supporting the college and not use the license of academic freedom to attack these programs, to deny these principles nor to plant seeds of distrust in the minds of those attending the schools.

In the third place, the Christian college and its faculty should be denominationally loyal. Admittedly, there will be a difference in Christian interpretation, in doctrine, in faith and practice of a college supported by Southern Baptists as contrasted to a college supported by some other denomination of contrasting belief. The other denomination has a perfect right to support its schools and teach its faith and practice. Likewise, Southern Baptists have a perfect right to support institutions which would teach their faith and practice.

No person has a right under the cloak of academic freedom to use a position in a Southern Baptist college to attack the denomination, to plant seeds of distrust in the minds of pupils regarding the denominational program, to undermine faith in the denomination's doctrine or to belittle the efforts of the denomination.

A layman would scarcely tolerate a business associate who would use his position in a company to attack the company, to undermine the principles upon which it was established and to seek to destroy that which has been built up in the company through the years.

Likewise, our denominational institutions should back the denomination with loyalty as an institution and should expect and demand the same degree of loyalty from those associated with the institution.

In the fourth place, the Christian college must put its main emphasis in working with the specialized tools at hand and not attempt to compete across the board with state institutions. The specialized tools of the Christian college are the Bible and Christian morality. That is the field in which the Christian college should major. It should major on quality education as contrasted to quantity. It should measure on individual craftsmanship of character development rather than mass production of mental development.

The layman is concerned about an uneducated heart and a trained mind in a trigger happy world!

Increasingly, state laws and court orders are prohibiting instruction in our state institutions of that which is considered by many as the most essential basis of education. Wisdom is the principal thing but "with all wisdom get understanding". Understanding comes from a proper knowledge and application of Divine truth.

Laymen are increasingly interested in Christian colleges because they see in them a hope for raising our ethical standards, improving morals, reducing lawlessness, strengthening the home and returning to a Christian concept of basic honesty.

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Laymen will translate their interest in Christian colleges to financial support if the Christian college is doing its job and the layman is properly approached.

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Eight years ago business and industry were giving forty to fifty million dollars a year to higher education. Today business is providing around two hundred million dollars. But it is predicted that business must provide at least five hundred million dollars annually within the next three years to our colleges if they are to continue to move ahead.

A very hopeful movement developed in the city of Cleveland recently. A group of businesses there entered into agreement that they would increase immediately their corporate gifts to private education and step up their gifts over the next two years to be a total of one per cent of their net income before taxes. These men hope that their move will spread over the country until at least five hundred million dollars annually is given the colleges.

Here is a statement taken from a recent bulletin published by A. N. Marquis Company: "The leaders, thinkers and builders are coming today from the small colleges of the country out of all proportion to the enrollment of these institutions."

As never before the world, our nation, our denomination, our churches, our businesses, political, social and economic life need the product of Christian colleges.

This challenge is not alone to the Christian institution but to those whose support, whose lives, whose dedication and whose sacrifice make Christian education possible. As laymen, as pastors and as educators we must renew our dedication and redouble our efforts to provide a quality of Christian education that will hasten the day when men shall know war no more, when the peace of God shall reign in the human heart, and when the brotherhood of man shall motivate parliaments of men to follow the Way of God.

Southern Baptist Convention  
St. Louis, Missouri, 1961  
W. C. Fields, Press Representative  
Theo Sommerkamp, Assistant

Executive Committee Meeting  
Lloyd Wright

ST. LOUIS, May 23--Efforts by some pastors to get the Southern Baptist Convention to change its name were thwarted here Tuesday by the denomination's Executive Committee.

Action by the committee may have killed any serious consideration of the controversial issue by messengers to the annual convention which opens a four-day meeting in Kiel Auditorium tonight.

However, any messenger may bring up the matter on the floor at any convention business session.

Debate on the name change request and other recommendations from the executive group's administrative committee snarled the significant pre-convention session for nearly two hours.

In other action, the committee:

Approved an enabling act permitting ministers of education, music, and administration to Southern Baptist churches and agencies to qualify for Social Security coverage;

Voted to recommend a constitutional change to the convention prohibiting agencies from maintaining self-perpetuating boards;

Voted to purchase property in Nashville, Tenn., on which to build a new Southern Baptist building and hired an architectural firm to design the building; and

Approved several program structure proposals for convention commissions and agencies.

Strong opposition to the proposed constitution change affecting membership on boards of agencies came from two of the affected agencies. The change would delete an exception in the constitution which now makes it possible for some board members to be retained because of "peculiar talent and ability."

A convention policy makes it impossible for a member to serve more than two consecutive terms without rotating off for one year. Officials of the Annuity Board and Baptist Foundation argued that because of the peculiar financial operations of their agencies, some board members need to be retained.

Said Dr. Wallace Bassett of Dallas: "The convention will not approve this thing. And I'm going to have my say about it."

He will get his chance Wednesday morning at 9:45 when the executive committee's report is made to the convention. No convention action can be taken on the proposal for another year. Convention rules say a year must elapse after the first presentation of a constitution change before it can be voted on.

Debate will be in order, however, when the proposal is made and Dr. Bassett, president of the Annuity Board and a member since its inception, 43 years ago, promised that it would be lively.

Another outspoken Texas Baptist, Dr. E. S. James of Dallas, editor of the Baptist Standard, spoke in favor of the proposed change. He said:

"To make an exception is to rule out democracy. And if it's not democratic, it's not Baptist."

Another lengthy discussion developed on the Social Security enabling act, with several pastors insisting on careful definition of such words as "commissioned," "minister" and "ordained."

The recommendation would make it possible for church music directors, business administrators and ministers of education to qualify for old age security insurance. A provision of the Social Security Act requires the state convention of a religious group to pass such an act in order for individual members to qualify.

The recommendation said that such workers who have been "ordained, by a church ...shall be recognized as commissioned ministers of the Gospel."

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Some Baptist churches ordain ministers of music and education. Others insist that ordination is Scripturally limited to deacons and pastors. This difference in interpretation prompted the debate.

"Are we to interpret this as an endorsement by the executive committee of ordaining persons other than pastors?" asked Dr. James.

Executive Committee Secretary Porter Routh said the act was not intended to be such an endorsement and that the policy of who would be eligible for the coverage would be determined by individual churches and agencies.

Rejection of the proposal for a convention name change advanced by several Southern Baptist pastors in "pioneer" northern mission areas was based on the committee's belief that "the name Southern Baptist Convention best describes our fellowship."

A group of pastors in Wisconsin and Minnesota sparked a widespread discussion among Baptist newspaper editors early this year with a recommendation that study be given to changing the name. Several editors suggested new names ranging from "Baptists, Incorporated," to "Solar Baptist Convention."

Dr. J. Ralph Grant, a Lubbock, Tex., pastor and chairman of the administrative committee, said the group felt that the Southern label had come to identify distinctive doctrinal and theological beliefs rather than a geographic section.

The new Southern Baptist Building in Nashville, to be designed by the architectural firm of Hart, Freeland and Roberts, will house administrative offices of the Executive Committee, the Education Commission, the Christian Life Commission and the Southern Baptist Foundation.

Approval was given to purchase property for the structure on the James Robertson parkway between 4th and 5th Avenue in Nashville. Cost of the building will not be determined until final plans are drawn. A five-member committee was named to work with the architects in designing the building. The new site is about one mile north of the present location of the Executive Committee and agencies.

Approval was also given to a Stewardship Commission proposal to establish a Convention-wide "Cooperative Program Week." The week would begin each year the first Sunday in October. Purpose of the emphasis is to encourage greater support of world missions through the denomination's Cooperative Program.

Home Mission Board leaders outlined renewed efforts to get adequate financial backing for loans to new churches in pioneer mission areas. A proposal for a separate Home Mission Board church loan corporation was rejected by the committee in February.

Board Executive Secretary Courts Redford said an approach now is being made to individual banks for the loan support.

"Three banks have indicated a willingness to purchase \$1 million each in church loan paper from the board," he said.

Rejection of the corporation proposal had generated special interest in many areas of the Convention. Southern Baptists' 30,000 Movement program, they said, has created an unusual need for building loan funds in pioneer areas. The 30,000 Movement seeks to establish 30,000 new churches and missions by 1964.