

Gordon College, Don't Sell Your Soul for Secular Accreditation

For years now, educators have known that a confrontation was looming between secular accreditation agencies and Christian schools over the issue of homosexuality. What would these colleges, universities and seminaries do when they were told they had to revise their policies on homosexual practice?

We no longer need to speculate, as this hypothetical scenario has become reality.

An article in *Christianity Today* on Thursday noted that, "Gordon College will spend the next year studying current campus policies on same-sex behavior."

According to the story by Ruth Moon, "The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) discussed whether Gordon's prohibition on 'homosexual practice' conflicts with its accreditation standards at its September meeting, and has agreed to give the school time to examine its policy. Gordon had already formed a discernment committee after recently losing partnerships with nearby Lynn Public School District."

But what is there to discern? What exactly does a committee need to examine?

It's one thing to look into ways of reaching out to students who identify as LGBT and are struggling to reconcile what they understand about themselves with what the Scriptures teach.

But if Gordon College is considering revising its morality standards so that all sex outside of marriage is forbidden unless it's homosexual sex in the context of a committed relationship, then Gordon College would be considering

exchanging the favor of God for the favor of man.

Why is this debatable?

As I have stated many times, no new textual, archeological, sociological, anthropological or philological discoveries have been made in the last 50 years that would cause us to read any of the relevant biblical texts differently.

This means that the reason some professing Christians now embrace homosexual practice is because they have changed, not because God's Word has changed and not because valid new interpretations have been discovered.

What then, do the esteemed leaders of the college expect to find out during the discernment period?

If this is their way of gaining increased sensitivity in the issues involved before restating that they cannot compromise their convictions, then that is surely commendable. But if the discernment period is meant to re-evaluate whether they are willing to face the loss of accreditation for upholding godly values, that makes no sense at all.

According to Barbara Brittingham, president of the NEASC's higher education commission, "the school's current Life and Conduct policy—which bans Gordon community members from 'sexual relations outside marriage' and 'homosexual practice,'—'may be inconsistent with the commission's standards.'"

And if Gordon College does not deviate from biblical standards and its policies are deemed "inconsistent with the commission's standards," then what? Will this venerated Christian college capitulate to culture, or will it do what is right in the sight of God and man?

To Michael Lindsay, the gifted president of Gordon, and to the board of trustees, I remind you: Many eyes are watching you,

knowing that the decisions you make could either strengthen or dishearten many other schools that will soon be put under similar pressure.

In the sight of the God that we serve and love, I ask you this crucial question: If your decision will cause a ripple effect across the nation for other Christian colleges, universities and seminaries, what do you want that effect to be?

Do you want to send the message across America (and beyond) that when culture changes, we capitulate to culture? That a practice expressly forbidden by the Bible and all major forms of Christianity through the centuries becomes acceptable if enough people sign a petition? That sufficient pressure exerted from some alumni or students or faculty can overturn God's Word? That accreditation is more important than morality?

I pray your message will be that the potential loss of accreditation is a small price to pay for obedience to God.

Jesus said that whoever loved father or mother or son or daughter more than Him was not worthy of Him (Matt. 10:37). Surely those of us who love secular accreditation and its many benefits more than the Lord are not worthy of Him either.

In the year 2000, writing on the theme of Jesus Revolution, I noted that Christian colleges could potentially be guilty of bowing down to the idol of secular academics. (To be clear, I am an educator myself, with all my degrees, from B.A. to Ph.D., coming from secular universities, and I have had the privilege of teaching at many of the leading seminaries in America. My concern has to do with us compromising our convictions for the sake of secular approval.)

I noted that Christian schools "can bow down to the same idol [as secular schools do]. Unless they offer certain courses and meet certain guidelines, they will lose their accreditation, and if they lose their accreditation, they will lose potential

students, and their degrees will not be recognized by other universities, and then that will make Christian education look bad. How so? Because the Christian college failed to live up to the standards of the state. But why must the state (or accrediting agency) set the standards? What if that school has a unique purpose and function? What if it needs to major on things the state considers minor and minor on things the state considers major? Why must it conform? To offer degrees, of course! This too is idolatry."

I'm sure there are many excellent standards set by accreditation organizations and many excellent benefits that accrue with accreditation.

But when those organizations demand that we revise biblical morality in order to keep our accreditation, we respectfully decline without hesitation or flinching. Really now, if believers worldwide are losing their lives rather than compromise, surely we can lose secular benefits as the result of holding to our faith.

It is these accrediting organizations that will need to change, not us. And if they don't, then we can work together as committed believers and form our own educational networks, esteeming the favor of heaven to be infinitely more valuable than the favor of this world.

To the leaders of Gordon College, I ask: What is the right decision in light of eternity? When you stand before God to give account, what answer will win the approval of our Father and King?

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