



April 1993

Dear Friends,

Let me begin this month by expressing appreciation for your response to the eight-page epistle I sent in March. We've been inundated by encouraging letters and phone calls these past three weeks. More than 20,000 letters have arrived in the last week, many of them pledging continuing diligence in defense of family values and traditional standards of morality. One man sent me a telegram that simply said, "Stand!" I knew exactly what he meant.

This spring is a time when we must "stand" with greater conviction than ever before. Even as I write, Congress is preparing to consider the abominable "Freedom of Choice Act." If it passes, America will have officially turned its back on the defenseless unborn child. This bill as now written would eliminate waiting periods, parental-consent requirements, "informed consent" for women, and every law regulating abortion anywhere in the United States. It would be legal to kill unborn children throughout the nine months of pregnancy—even five minutes before delivery. In a nation that imposes a \$5,000 fine on anyone who destroys an eagle's egg,¹ it will be open season on full-term babies! Indeed, some of them will be kept alive just long enough to "harvest" their brains and other body parts.

Considering the passion surrounding this issue and the differences of opinion among our citizens, it is outrageous that Congress would even consider this extreme legislation. But that's what many of its members plan to do. We believe the bill is likely to pass in the next few weeks, and it is no secret what President Clinton intends to do when it reaches his desk! Has there ever been a more evil piece of legislation in this great nation's history?

Despite this concern and a dozen others, I am not devoting the balance of this letter to the tragedy going on in Washington. We can only stomach so much of that discouraging stuff in one dose. Rather, I am addressing my comments this month to the subject of higher education. Many of you have high school students who will soon select a college for the fall. The subject relates to a far greater number, however, because the quality of our educational institutions affects us all. The specific question I will attempt to answer is, "Should a Christian student attend a Christian college or a secular university?"

Honesty demands that I admit my bias up front. I believe strongly in Christian education, especially at the collegiate level. My wife and I are products of a church-sponsored college that made an incredible contribution to our lives. Both our children have attended Christian universities, and we're delighted that they did. I will explain why in a moment.

Let me acknowledge that many students thrive academically and spiritually in large, secular schools, and they do not regret their decision to go there. Some get involved in Christian ministries on campus and emerge with their faith intact. Furthermore, there are thousands of dedicated Christian professors in public universities, and they believe God has led them to teach in that environment. In no way do I challenge that assumption or intend any disrespect whatsoever.

Nevertheless, I am very concerned about some of the disturbing trends in public higher education. I would not send my son or daughter there under normal circumstances, for the following reasons:

1. Secular universities today are bastions of moral relativism that leave no room for the Christian worldview.

I doubt if many parents realize just how antagonistic many of our state schools have become to anything that smacks of Christianity. There is simply no place for God in the system. "Diversity" is the new god, which respects all worldviews and philosophies—except one. The Christian perspective is not only excluded from the classroom, it is often ridiculed and undermined. The dominant philosophy in today's public university is called relativism, which categorically denies the existence of "Truth" or moral absolutes. Those who are foolish enough to believe in such archaic notions as biblical authority or the claims of Christ are to be pitied—or bullied.

That is the prevailing attitude in most state-sponsored institutions today.

2. State universities are dominated by "politically correct" (P.C.) thought that can be contradicted only at great personal sacrifice.

There is, perhaps, less freedom of thought on today's secular campuses than any other place in society. A student or faculty member is simply not permitted to espouse ideas that are contrary to the approved "group think." This purity is enforced by what has been called "campus thought police," including faculty feminists, homosexual and lesbian activists, leftist professors, animal rights proponents, minority activists and the bilingual advocates. Donald Kagan, former dean of Yale College, said, "I was a student during the days of Joseph McCarthy, and there is less freedom now than there was then."²

According to Todd Ackerman, writing in *The Houston Chronicle*, at least 250 universities now have "speech codes" to which students must conform.³ What are some of the ideas that they censor? John Leo, writing in *U.S. News and World Report*, listed these examples: "the SAT, doubt about abortion, Catholics, wearing fur, any emphasis on standards of excellence, and any suggestion that gender and ethnicity might not be the most overwhelmingly important issues of the modern era."⁴

Here are a few examples of political correctness in action.

- Pennsylvania State University advised its 10,000 incoming freshmen in 1990 that they might be assigned a homosexual roommate, and if so, they would not be permitted to object.⁵
 - At New York University Law School, students refused to debate a moot-court case involving a hypothetical divorced lesbian mother trying to win custody of her child, because arguing the con side would be hurtful to gays.⁶
 - At Harvard University, a leading liberal historian of race relations, Stephen Thernstrom, was vilified as a "racist" for endorsing Sen. Patrick Moynihan's views on the social ills caused by the collapse of the black family and using such terms as "American Indian" instead of "Native American."⁷
 - The University of Michigan has established a "student guide to proper behavior" that indiscriminately lumps racist threats with such conduct as "failing to invite someone to a party because she's a lesbian."⁸
 - While Donna Shalala was chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Board of Regents implemented a written policy requiring politically correct speech. The document was so extreme it was declared unconstitutional by a federal court.⁹ The regents attempted a narrower stab at the same policy, but gave up when court rulings cast doubt on their second try as well. Shalala said she was for "a harass-
-

ment rule.”¹⁰ This advocate of far-leftist ideas now serves on the Cabinet of the President of the United States as Secretary of Health and Human Services.

3. The politically correct philosophy on many campuses disdains Western civilization, with its emphasis on the Judeo/Christian heritage.

Many of the more prestigious universities, including Stanford, have eliminated their “core curriculum” based on Western civilization. It is, they say, inherently unfair to minorities, women and homosexuals. Great disrespect is expressed on these campuses for the literature, science, art, religious heritage and history of our European forefathers. (PARDON ME! Forepeople!) Much less emphasis is given to the study of Shakespeare, Mozart, Newton, Galileo, the British monarchy, and the significant events in European history. In fact, it is possible to graduate from 78 percent of America’s colleges and universities without taking a course in Western civilization.¹¹

The consequence? Lynne Cheney, former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, wrote that many students earn bachelor’s degrees without knowledge of “basic landmarks of history and thought.”¹² For example, in a 1989 Gallup poll, 25 percent of 700 college seniors did not know that Columbus landed in the Western Hemisphere before 1500. Most could not identify the Magna Carta.¹³ In short, what has constituted a liberal arts education for the past 200 years is undergoing a radical transformation. The revolution began by eliminating the concept of truth, and from there it dumped the common heritage that has bound us together as a people. Diversity, rather than cohesiveness, is the new passion, and it pits us against each other for “rights.”

4. State universities are breeding grounds, quite literally, for sexually transmitted disease (including HIV), homosexual behavior, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, alcoholism, and drug abuse.

As public universities exercise tighter and tighter control on politically correct thought, they seem entirely disinterested in student sexual activity and other behavior with moral implications. Indeed, the word *morality* itself implies a value judgment that violates P.C. “theology.”

For example, administrators at the University of California at Berkeley were paralyzed for months over what to do about the behavior of “the Naked Guy.” In the fall of 1992, a student named Andrew Martinez made a practice of walking around the campus in the nude. He jogged, ate in the dining halls, and attended classes while totally naked. When asked why he wore no clothes, he said he was protesting sexually repressive traditions in Western society. Female students were uncomfortable in his presence, and both males and females were nervous about the “seat issue”—not wanting to sit where he had recently sat.

It is unbelievable that it took the Cal administrators all fall and winter to deal with this outrage. They couldn’t come up with a legal excuse or a school regulation that would require “the Naked Guy” to either suit up or ship out. Instead, every precaution was taken not to violate his rights. Remember, many administrators have no difficulty in expelling a student who utters an unwelcome opinion about the immorality of homosexuality.

At one point, Martinez was expelled under a hastily written policy banning public nudity, but he was immediately invited back when school officials realized they had not obtained a vice chancellor’s approval for the decision. What a graphic illustration of the moral confusion of our day. Finally in late January, Martinez was sent packing. How did they finally get him out? Some female students charged that his behavior constituted “sexual harassment”! That says it all, doesn’t it? The man was not expelled for violating established standards of decency. He had to trip over a tenet of political correctness before he could be thrown out on his naked rear end.

I understand Mr. Martinez is now preparing a lawsuit against the university. That figures. Hard-pressed Californians paid taxes to give this ungrateful dude an education, and he threw it in their faces. Then the administrators at Cal Berkeley pathetically allowed him to mock the entire system!¹⁴

As for sexual behavior on other campuses, consider these illustrations:

- Cornell University's Student Assembly recently recommended that a dormitory wing be reserved for about 60 students interested in promoting "gay, lesbian and bisexual awareness." Cornell President Frank Rhodes has 30 days to decide on the proposal.¹⁵

- Since last fall, about 20 students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst have lived in a gay-lesbian-bisexual "corridor." The University of California has about 40 students living in two gay "theme" dormitories, and Rutgers University started a gay studies living unit for about 10 students this year. The idea is spreading.¹⁶

- A study at the University of Texas student health center revealed nearly one in 100 students seeking medical care is infected with the virus that causes AIDS.¹⁷

- Seventy-five percent of students visiting the Cowell Health Center at Stanford University describe themselves as "sexually active."¹⁸

These are only a few of my concerns about the state university system as it is currently operated. It is sad to realize that our most intelligent and promising students must face relativistic philosophies that would have horrified past generations. Those among my readers who are alumni of universities need to stay in touch with them and use their influence to the degree possible.

But what about the colleges and universities that represent themselves as "Christian"? Have they avoided all the pitfalls and immorality described above? Some have not, but most are a breed apart. I thank God for schools that are serious about the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are vital to perpetuating our faith in subsequent generations, and we *must* continue to support them in every way possible.

Here are a few of the reasons I believe strongly in Christian education:

1. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of having godly professors for students in their late teens and early 20s.

My great concern for students in the young adult years is that they are extremely vulnerable to the leadership of their professors. One of the primary reasons education changes people is that students admire and identify with those who tower over them in experience, training, maturity, intelligence and charisma. This makes a young man or woman an easy mark for older adults who want to reorder their basic beliefs and value systems. Anyone who holds the power to flunk a student finds it easy to prevail in debates about faith, morals or philosophy! That's why we must continue to support godly men and women who have dedicated their lives to Christian principles and to continuing those ideas in our offspring. Professors' worldviews influence whatever they teach, from the humanities to the basic sciences, and what they think about God cannot be hidden from their students.

2. Christian education places its emphasis on "unity" in relationships between people.

As we have indicated, secular institutions have become almost obsessed with the concept of diversity in university life. What this means in practical terms is that people become fractionalized into competing self-interest groups. African-Americans are pitted against Hispanics who are at war with Asians who resent Native Americans who must compete with homosexuals and lesbians for status and territory. At

the recent Academy Awards event, for example, the emphasis on “women in entertainment” was a prime case in point. It is impossible to credit one gender with every good and perfect gift without slighting the other. That’s what extreme diversity does to us. Indeed, a recent issue of *Newsweek* featured the last American group to be victimized—white males.¹⁹ Now we *all* have something to fight for.

Abraham Lincoln quoted the Scriptures in his second inaugural address, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” That, I fear, is where diversity leads. If by that term we refer to love and tolerance for peoples who are different from one another, it has great validity for us. But if by diversity we mean all of us have been given reason to resent one another, having no common values, heritage, commitment or hope, then we are a nation in serious trouble.

Whether right or wrong, it is *my* belief that Christian colleges place their emphasis not on that which divides us, but on the substance that binds us together. That commonality is the gospel of Jesus Christ. He commanded us to love one another — to set aside our differences and to care for “the least of these” among us. It is our unity, not our diversity, that deserves our allegiance.

Though Christian professors and administrators have not always succeeded in this effort, unity has been (and continues to be) the goal. In short, they seek to bring their students and faculty together, rather than dividing them into competing self-interest groups. I think that is a vitally important distinction.

3. I firmly believe students typically get a better undergraduate education at a Christian institution than at a large public institution.

State universities have earned most of their reputations for excellence from the quality of the research conducted in their graduate schools. Much less attention is given to teaching undergraduates. Professors are rewarded and promoted for their scientific findings and the number of publications they produce. Their ability to inspire and teach is of little consequence in advancement. Thus, freshmen and sophomores often find themselves in huge classes of 300 to 2,000 students. The instructor may be an inexperienced graduate student whose primary interest is his or her own academic pursuit. I know this system very well. I taught such a class at USC when I was working on my Ph.D.

The situation on Christian campuses is usually very different. Students often develop close relationships with their professors. The classes are usually smaller, permitting interaction and more opportunity to ask questions. Informal discussions at the professor’s home or in a restaurant are not unusual. When compared to the education of perhaps 30,000 students at a state university, there is no doubt in my mind as to where the best training for undergraduates occurs.

4. A Christian college is the only place where the majority of students are professing Christians. That is vitally important.

The single greatest influence during the college years does not come from the faculty. It is derived from other students! Thus, being classmates with men and women who profess a faith in Jesus Christ is vital to the bonding that should occur during those four years. In addition to formal learning in the classroom, a quality education involves a wide variety of experiences with friends who share basic values and beliefs. These include dorm parties, chapel programs, intramural and intercollegiate athletics, debates and seminars, a range of musical and dramatic groups, dorm Bible study groups, and evenings in faculty member homes. The friendships that flow from these activities will be remembered for a lifetime. Likewise, if it is considered important that Christian young men and women marry people with similar theological views (and I believe that is extremely important), then it seems wise to select a college where more of them will be found.

The students Shirley and I met while attending a Christian college are still among our best friends today—more than 30 years later. There are no friends quite like those made during your younger years, and not one of them can be replaced in later life. I thank God for the experiences we had among guys and girls of like mind, faith and values when we were very young!

If you have a son or daughter who might like to attend a Christian college, we can provide a handbook for selecting the right one. It's called *Choose a Christian College*, released by Peterson's Guides, one of the largest publishers of college handbooks. (See the back page for more information.) While not covering every Christian college in North America, this volume includes information on 84 member colleges and universities of the Christian College Coalition. Each of these schools meets eight membership criteria, including a commitment by the administration to hiring as full-time faculty only people with a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. *Choose a Christian College* provides information on tuition costs, grants and aid, available majors, entrance requirements and campus life factors.

It must be acknowledged that many families feel they can't afford a high-quality Christian college for their son or daughter. Actually, I have found that Christian schools often charge less than comparable secular institutions. But I know that doesn't solve the problem.

Most Christian colleges are accustomed to serving low-income families or those where parents have lost their jobs or experienced long-term sickness. You would be amazed to hear how God has provided for their needs, through financial aid, federal grants and loans, work programs and special student scholarships. Before you rule out a private education, therefore, I hope you'll check the possibilities. I also recommend that you do not plan to send your student to a community college the first two years, unless absolutely necessary. The freshman and sophomore years are the most important of the four in terms of personal growth and development.

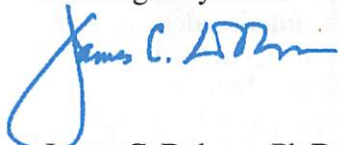
Well, I had better bring our discussion to a close. I have written this comparison of public and private education for two purposes. The first has been obvious—to express my strong support for Christian colleges and universities.

The second is to acknowledge that many of these schools are threatened today. Rising costs, competition from state-sponsored institutions, and declining numbers of students (resulting in part from the legalization of abortion in the 1970s) have made it more difficult to remain solvent. These schools **MUST NOT** be permitted to pass from the scene. Not only should we send our students to them, but those of us who can help financially should remember to do so.

Thank you for letting me share these ideas with you today. I'd enjoy hearing from you regarding the opinions expressed. I always welcome the comments of our friends and supporters.

Speaking of support, the month of April is tax month. (I'll bet you already knew that.) Our contributions usually get a little thin at this time of the year, when our constituency begins to think about paying Uncle Sam. If you can help us, your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Blessings to you all.



James C. Dobson, Ph.D.
President

Endnotes

1. Mitchell Freedman and Donald Mace Williams, "Fishers Island Escapes From Lyme Disease," *Newsday*, July 9, 1989.
2. Dinesh D'Souza, "The Visigoths in Tweed," *Forbes*, April 1, 1991, p. 82.
3. Todd Ackerman, "Decision Could Kill College Speech Codes," *The Houston Chronicle*, June 28, 1992, p. A1.
4. John Leo, "The Academy's New Ayatollahs," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 10, 1990, p. 22.
5. Carol Innerst, "'Sensitivity' Is Buzzword at Colleges," *The Washington Times*, August 29, 1990, p. A1.
6. Leo, "The Academy's New Ayatollahs," p. 22.
7. Edward Lucas, "Free Speech Falls to the Campus Thought Police; The Fight Against Racism and Sexism Is Creating Another Oppression," *The Independent*, June 9, 1991, p.13.
8. Stephen Chapman, "Campus Speech Codes Are on the Way to Extinction," *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1992, p. 21.
9. Barbera Vobejda, "Shalala: A Lifetime Spent in the Center of Storms; Tough Questions Likely for HHS Designee," *The Washington Post*, January 14, 1993, p. A13.
10. Barbera Vobejda, "Hill Republicans Map Attack on Shalala; Confirmation Inquiry May Focus on Campus 'Political Correctness,'" *The Washington Post*, December 20, 1992, p. A13.
11. Dennis Kelly, "A Call for a Return to Liberal Arts Education," *USA Today*, March 4, 1993, p. 4D.
12. William Celis, "College Curriculums Shaken to the Core," *The New York Times*, January 10, 1993, p. 4A.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Bob Greene, "What Does the Naked Guy Tell Us About Our Society?" *The Dallas Morning News*, February 14, 1993, p. 7J.
15. Hilary Appelman, "Cornell University President Considering Gay Living Unit Proposal," *The Associated Press*, March 24, 1993.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Scott W. Wright, "1 in 100 Tested at UT Has AIDS Virus," *Austin American Statesman*, July 14, 1991, p. A14.
18. Robin Wilson, "Sexually Active Students Playing Russian Roulette," *The Seattle Times*, February 6, 1992, p. A9.
19. David Gates, "White Male Paranoia," *Newsweek*, March 29, 1993, p. 48-54.

*This letter may be reprinted without change and in its entirety for non-commercial purposes
without prior permission from Focus on the Family.*
