

Ideological Battlefields Facing Christian Educators
Association of Christian School International
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We might call it, “Culture Warriors” (Wars) by Bill O’Reilly. We might call it, “Culturally Incorrect” (Confrontations) by Rod Parsley. Or we may call it, “How Now Shall We Live” (Worldview Collisions) by Charles Colson. However we identify this ideological conflict, we must accept that we are in a battle. I have chosen the concept of Ideological Battlefields because Culture Wars, Cultural Confrontations, and Worldviews Colliding are just the names given for Battles that are being waged or will be waged during the tenure of most educators professing Christianity.

America’s Christian educators are striving to teach what is best for students, both academically and socially. Being a good citizen in our country is as important today as being a good scholar. However, are we seeing a clash coming between these two ingredients and how our Christian public and private school teachers can and will prepare students in both areas? I use the concept and the visual stimulus of a horseman riding two horses, galloping at full speed, controlled only by the reigns held by the rider. (Slide 2)

One horse represents Christian values based on Right and Wrong, of Truth and of Value. And, the other horse represents political correctness and tolerance, of diversity and ideological independence. The rider (Christian Educators) has attempted to keep these two mighty forces parallel for the past two hundred years. It works, as this picture depicts, as long as both horses move in the same direction and at the same speed. When Christian values and political correctness are considered as these two horses, what conflicts will the rider face when these mighty forces decide on a new direction and a faster speed that is not acceptable to the rider?



Each horse has the strength and mind necessary to carry the rider anywhere the rider wishes. These horses have operated in unison for many years enabling the rider to accomplish many great feats. However, these two horses may have decided they can accomplish the same feats without the other and the rider is finding the single direction of the pair now widening and the direction that was once agreeable is now seen so varied that the rider can no longer stay astride both.

An example of this widening path can be illustrated with a simple understanding of the differences our children are being taught and what Christian teachers consider acceptable material to be taught. In most of our schools, you will find two definitions of tolerance -- one held by teachers and the other by their students. Both think they are saying the same thing -- but they are not. Our Christian parents are beginning to realize this difference but it may be too late. (Gibson, John) (Slide 3)

I present this cartoon as an example of the mixed values concept. Please excuse the connotations but accept the conflict implied. The following is a cartoon but Lowes and K-Mart restricted the use of Christmas when advertising Christmas Trees. Lowes retracted its error but K-Mart refused to change their notation. In Fort Collins, Colorado the city council is considering the restriction of certain holiday decorations because they denote Christmas. These decorations are red and green lights. (Liberty Council, Law Alert, November 16, 2007)



Fox News host Bill O'Reilly claimed that "it's all part of the secular progressive agenda ... to get Christianity and spirituality and Judaism out of the public square." (November 21, 2005)

So what's the problem? What happens when your child is taught that his beliefs and values are no different from other cultural values? This is today's tolerance. Our kids are being taught that all truth is relative to the individual. Knowing Right from Wrong doesn't matter. To say something is right or wrong is not being tolerant.

In *Total Truth*, Nancy Pearcey (2004) says:

"As Christian parents, pastors, teachers, and youth group leaders, we constantly see young people pulled down by the undertow of powerful cultural trends. If all we give them is heart religion, it will not be strong enough to counter the lure of attractive but dangerous ideas.... Training young people to develop a Christian mind [worldview] is no longer an option; it is part of their necessary survival equipment" (p. 19).

Let's consider what these ideological battlefields look like and act like, and why Christian Educators should be concerned.

The First Ideological Battlefield: What will we call God?

A 71 year old Roman Catholic bishop, Bishop Tiny Muskens, from the Netherlands, teaches,

“Allah is a very beautiful word for God.....What does God care what we call him?” He contends that “people of all faiths refer to God as Allah.....” (The Herald Sun, Melbourne, Australia, www.albertmohler.com/blog_read_php?id=991)

“It reinforces the fact that Muslims, Christians, and Jews all worship the same God” (Ibrahim Hooper, Council on America-Islamic Relations)

Does it matter what we call God? Does He really care? Can you, as a Christian Educator, truly accept the concept of Allah for God? You may say that it doesn't matter. I wonder if it would matter to Jesus, since God declared His love for His Son and Allah declares he had no son. It just might matter what we call God.

In a very dramatic scene in “Kingdom of Heaven” a priest, when confronted with certain death from the invading Muslims, said “let’s convert and then repent later”. (20th Century Fox Productions, Director, Ridley Scott, 2005) Are we being forced into a cultural position where this could be an option for Christian Educators, today.



The Second Ideological Battlefield: What do we consider a mixed marriage and thus parents?

Since the 2004 elections, we have been facing a re-definition of family, marriage and parents. Can Christian School leaders consider a man and a man, a woman and a woman, or a man and three women as the constituted parents for an entering student? Most Christian schools require a parent/student interview before entering the School. Can these marital combinations be accepted as the parents of the student? What will you say to that entering student, “no, we cannot admit you because your parents are not married or are of the same sex?” Is that legal? No, it will not be if current purposed congressional and senatorial legislation is passed (House Bill 1592 and Senate Bill 110).

According to California’s 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, words like “natural family”, “marriage”, and “union between a man and a woman” would be considered hate speech. This is probably headed for the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Third Ideological Battlefield: What will we consider appropriate couples for the Senior Prom and Dance?

ENDA (Employment Non-Discriminatory Act-H.R. 2015) was proposed and slated for a vote on November 6th. Very few religious exemptions will meet this mandate.

The approving of legislation such as this will declare sexual preferences are equally valid. This has not been applied to students attending a school function but can be extrapolated to apply even to that level. If this legislation makes illegal any discrimination in hiring practices for sexual orientation, can Christian schools or church screen and fire employees practicing what is considered protected under ENDA?

Sexual activity within the student body has always been considered unacceptable in any form in our Christian Schools, punishable by expulsion. Will ENDA guidelines apply to your student body? Can a case be made that this behavior is protected and therefore any action to stop this behavior or remove the students from school because of this behavior is illegal and discriminatory?

The Fourth Ideological Battlefield: What constitutes a viable applicant for a teaching position with your Christian School?

The position of teacher of religion at a Christian School or church-related school would be exempt from the guidelines of ENDA. However, the position of Biology teacher, English teacher, Coach, Principal, and Counselor would not be exempt. This means that the church would be forced to hire applicants despite the fact that their lifestyle is in direct conflict with the religious beliefs of the school or church. This would apply to Church camps, summer camps, Boy Scouts, Christian Bookstores, etc.

The Fifth Ideological Battlefield: What will we accept as Science Truth?

The National Science Foundation Standards present, “explanations of how the natural world changes are based on myths, personal beliefs, religious values, mystical inspiration, superstition, or authority may be personally useful and socially relevant, but they are not scientific.” (page 201)

In a current case between the Association of Christian Schools International, et al. v. Roman Stearns, Special Assistant to the President, (2005) said,

“the freedoms of speech from viewpoint discrimination, religion and association, arbitrary discretion, equal protection of the laws, and from hostility toward religion, are being challenged.” (ACSI Legal/legislative update, 2006-2007)

Much of this case is based on the fact that some state universities would not accept students from a Christian school because the books that the school used for certain classes, such as Science, do not meet the standard-based requirements of those courses that are required as a base to enter the university. The books that the school used were Christian high school Worldview books.

California just passed a bill making seniors ineligible to enroll in public universities unless they have taken certain courses using certain textbooks. The California Entrance Criteria Discrimination case is based on the University of California’s decision not to accept or recognize certain private school curriculum. The text books in question are the ABeka Series and the Bob Jones curriculum for core subjects. The basic issue is that the books are taught from a religious standpoint.

ASCI became involved and contacted the U of C director of undergraduate admissions. She returned a statement that the courses must be rigorous and cover core academic concepts determined by the faculty to meet college prep standards. These books were criticized for their Christian content.

The plaintiff in the case was the ASCI, Calvary Chapel Christian School of Marietta, and several high school students. The suit claimed the students were being denied their religious freedom and the equal opportunity for a college education. A meeting was set by a state legislator with all concerned parties. The facts presented by the U of C concerning these textbooks, caused rejection due to their Christian teaching, although there was no evidence that these current college students had a deficit in the core areas. There was no problem with the material presented in the textbook, such as the Bob Jones Physics text. The book would have been approved if the Scripture that opened each chapter was removed. The science books were rejected as they gave God more authority than science observation.

The Sixth Ideological Battlefield: Will we accept a censored Bible?

One part of the proposed ENDA makes Romans, Chapter 1 and 1 Corinthians, Chapter 6

“hate speech”. Church leaders may not be able to preach from the pulpit, sermons based on these two chapters.. Stories about Sodom and Gomorrah will not be told as a punishment from God’s standpoint. This censorship has already occurred in Canada and will occur in the United States in the very near future. (Parsley, 2007)

Now consider the gender neutral Bible. If God is genderless, and therefore both male and female, how would we recite the Lord’s Prayer? (Matthew 6:9) How would we interpret Jesus’ statements to us in Matthew 5:, 16, 45, 48 and His statement about Himself, “

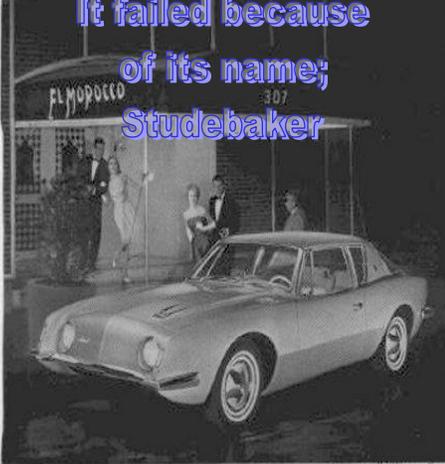
Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” (John 14: 9)

The Seventh Ideological Battlefield: Has Christianity mingled with the culture to the point of ineffectiveness?

James Veverka in his response, *The moral hypocrisy of the Bible Belt, Stop The Religious Right*, declares,

"We hear an awful lot from conservatives in the Bible Belt and the TV about how we all should be living. Certainly a culture that teaches the conservative religious values of the Christian right must have clean living written all over it, and lots of ripe fruit from their morally superior lives abounding. It doesn't! Far from it! People that talk the loudest may be the ones walking the slowest. Joining its history of Biblically correct bigotry and discrimination, it is an area with the highest divorce, murder, STD/HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, single parent homes, infant mortality, and obesity rates in the nation. As a region, the Bible Belt has the poorest health care systems and the lowest rates of high school graduation."

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"...Christianity's image problem is not merely the perception of young outsiders. Those inside the church see it as well - especially Christians in their twenties and thirties. I was unprepared for the research showing that Mosaic and Buster Christians are skeptical of present-day Christianity." (Kinnaman, David, Un-Christian, p. 18)

"Overwhelming pressures are being brought to bear on people who have no absolutes, but only have the impoverished values of personal peace and prosperity" (Schaeffer, p. 246)



Forty years ago our culture was not that foreign to our Christian values. It was like a small amount of cultural red dye dropped into our Christian glass of values. The change was so slight it couldn't be seen. However, now the entire bottle of cultural red dye has been poured into our glass of values.

What are Christian Educators seeing as they peer down their cultural telescope? How "Red" is our future?

Concluding Ideological Battlefield-Apathy within The Soldiers

Our two horses are running at full speed. It is evident that they are not running in the same direction, any longer. Christian educators must decide which horse they are riding because the finish line is approaching quickly and we need to make sure this is the finish line we intended to reach. The welfare of our students is the prize we stand to win or lose.

Are we finding in our mixed cultural ideologies that our horses are out of control, neither considering the other as important to the rider? Christian Educators, for over thirty years, have been able to balance these forces. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent the rider can no longer control the direction for either horse and the rider must choose which horse it will ride.



"But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed,....." 2 Peter 2:12

*"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness. It was the age of light; it was the age of darkness."
(Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities)*

Handout and PowerPoint available at <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/soe/> [choose Faculty Publications]

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