

▸ CUI Bono: “Education, Gospel & Freedom”

I. ▸ Introduction, Thanks

- A. ▸ I thank all the faculty leaders of CUI Bono for the invite to address you all, and in particular, Dr. C.J. Armstrong (who, I think, “cooked up” this invite.
- B. ▸ I promise (1) to keep it short, and (2) to avoid self-centered remarks, e.g., “weepy.
- C. ▸ Truth be told, almost everything I will recommend to you (Sorry—a lot of what I’m going to say is what grammarians call “hortatory”) is technically going to be in the realm of *opinion*.
- D. ▸ But, contrary to most of your gov’t schools (what used to be called “public schools”) taught you training, there *is* a real and defensible distinction between “good opinions” and “bad opinions.”
 - 1. ▸ That I’ll leave you to decide.
 - 2. ▸ Admittedly, much of what I will say is “old” rather than “modern.”
- E. ▸ If you want *the* definitive address along the lines I intend, it would be C.S. Lewis’s book *The Abolition of Man*.
 - 1. ▸ Lewis in this book was in full-scale, broadside attack on what you and I would call “modern education.”
 - 2. ▸ Should you decide to get it and read it, you will have read one of the most important statements on Western education of the whole 20th century.
 - 3. ▸ Lewis’s basic thesis is that “modern education” turns almost every field *away from* “true mastery of the subject matter” to “the student’s feelings about that subject.”

II. ▶ **Title: “Education, Gospel & Freedom”: Overview**

- A. ▶ I’ll be using a recent NYT opinion article by David Brooks: “The Big University” (Oct. 6, 2015)—one that I hope you’ve already received?
- B. ▶ I will not follow it directly, but will attempt to speak to what he (a dedicated political “progressive” or “liberal”) says are the ways out of our present muddle.
- C. ▶ How does Brooks describe the muddle in our present universities? (I’ll just *quickly summarize* because you have already read Brooks’ article, or will.)
 - 1. ▶ American universities were founded as **religious** (you and I would say “Christian”) institutions.
 - 2. ▶ But the universities have become officially or effectively **secular**.
 - a. ▶ “Religious rituals” like chapel were long ago dropped.
 - b. ▶ Academic **research and teaching replaced character formation** at the core of the university’s mission.
 - 3. ▶ Administrators & professors **dropped “spiritual language” and “moral prescription.”**
 - a. ▶ either didn’t know what to say [or]
 - b. ▶ didn’t want to alienate any part of their diversifying constituencies
 - 4. ▶ Humanities departments became less important.
 - a. ▶ Parents ratcheted up the pressure for **career training**.
 - 5. ▶ Brooks: “Universities are more professional and glittering than ever—but in some ways there **is an emptiness deep down**.
 - a. ▶ “Students are taught how to do things, but many are not forced to reflect on why they should do them or what we are here for.”
 - 6. ▶ Too, **technology** is forcing change.
 - a. ▶ On-line courses make the transmission of information a commodity.
 - b. ▶ means that if colleges are going to justify themselves, are going to have to thrive at those thing that require physical proximity
 - i. ▶ That includes moral and spiritual development.
 - 7. ▶ Thus far, the first section of Brooks’ article

III. ▶ **Starting at Beginning: Elementary school, Middle school and High school**

- A. ▶ To begin with, I recommend that you fight for freedom for all elementary school, middle school, and high school students.
 - 1. ▶ In specific terms, I urge you to fight any “upper-level” gov’t types who would like to be in total charge your childrens’ educations.
 - 2. ▶ Why?
 - a. ▶ First, for the same reason that C.S. Lewis could not approve “rule by the king or queen”: “No one is good enough to be king or queen!”
 - b. ▶ But, in a more pragmatic vein: because no matter how many billions of taxpayer dollars are fed into U.S. gov’t schools, the overall enterprise decade-after-decade gets an “F!”
 - c. ▶ Overall, you want to support *local control* of gov’t schools (and *never* even state control of it, let alone federal control. of it).
 - 3. ▶ In particular, you want to support local educational freedom(s) for the poor.
 - a. ▶ If their (or your) children are trapped in a lousy school, support parents being free to drive their kids to *another* school—a better one.
 - b. ▶ “But, you say, if many do that, those local schools can’t make it!”
 - i. ▶ Answer: Of course they can’t! It’s “survival of the fittest.”
 - ii. ▶ Plus, those schools are part of a gigantic gov’t monopoly with zillions of dollars to keep every one of them afloat— even if they are useless to students. Let *the unions* keep them afloat.
 - iii. ▶ But don’t don’t don’t let your children be sacrificed to the gov’t monopoly ed monster!
- B. ▶ I had to face that with my own children.
 - 1. ▶ When I first came to Irvine, I chose it because of the test scores of Irvine’s students.
 - a. ▶ seemed to make sense to me (“top 10%”)
 - b. ▶ —until a friend said to me, “Congratulations! Your children are part of the ‘top 10%’ of a state that is *in the bottom quadrant of the whole U.S.!*”
 - c. ▶ Ooops!
 - d. ▶ To be fair, though, my daughter was saved by a school program that was part of the gov’t pig trough of money: G.A.T.E. (“gifted and talented education”)
 - i. ▶ For that *one* thing, I’ll be forever grateful.
 - 2. ▶ I found St. Margaret’s (Episcopal, Harvard prep school sort of misplaced in southern California), chose it.
 - a. ▶ In an initial interview, I asked Fr. Sellars just how many of their faculty were “credentialed.”
 - i. ▶ He responded (with some embarrassment), “None (I think).”
 - ii. ▶ “Perfect!” I yelled! “Just what I was looking for!”
 - b. ▶ So every M-F, I drove 25 mi. to take them to the Ortega exit, later 25 mi. back to Irvine.
 - c. ▶ And cost of uniforms and books—almost like the cost of college!

3. ▶ (If you're curious as to why I *never even considered*—even for a moment — Lutheran/LCMS schools for my children, ask me later.)

IV. ▶ **College/University**

- A. ▶ I'm going to go light on "College/University," because of everything you've already learned from your professors in C.U.I.'s "core curriculum."
- B. ▶ (We'll tackle Brooks' "cures" in a minute.)
- C. ▶ While you are here, pick your courses and professors well, and *if* a course is not a waste of time, "squeeze it for all it's worth!"
 - 1. ▶ First, that means, "Do the assigned readings." And assignments.
 - 2. ▶ If you early-on see that it *is* a waste of time, quit that course, rush into another.
- D. ▶ Know that you are on a very *rare* campus: one with a faculty that holds genuine science in very high esteem (this goes all the way back to the Lutheran Reformation, to Tyco Braehe, to Kepler and others) *and* a faculty who confess a high view of Jesus Christ and of Holy Scripture!!
 - 1. ▶ And they *don't* do this by "dividing their brains," either.
 - 2. ▶ What a place to ask questions!! So do that! Ask questions!

V. ▶ Gospel

- A. ▶ I'll stick to basics here: What the Gospel of Jesus Christ *is* and the case for it being "true" in the normal sense of the word "true."
- B. ▶ What is "the Gospel?"
 - 1. ▶ The Gospel is news, really good news—an *announcement of pardon* for us sinners.
 - 2. ▶ It is what Paul calls "the Gospel" in 1 Cor. 15.
 - 3. ▶ "... for I delivered unto you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was entombed for three days, and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than 500 brothers . . ."
 - 4. ▶ Notice that as Paul describes "the Gospel," all of it is facts.
 - 5. ▶ Not a word about . . .
 - a. ▶ your inner heart opening somehow to Jesus, or "inviting Him into it"
 - b. ▶ your "inner transformation," moral change, improvement, new view of life, etc.
 - c. ▶ your "emotions": glee, ecstasy or anything else like these
- C. ▶ For all the details of this, be sure to take the course Introduction to Xpian Apologetics here at Irvine.
 - 1. ▶ What you are going to learn in our CUI course is an *objective case for the Gospel of Christ actually being true*.
 - 2. ▶ If you are pre-sem, you *especially* need to take apologetics here for the simple reason that *neither LCMS sem offers "Christian apologetics"* (Am I discounting their catalogs in saying this? Damned right I am!)
- D. ▶ Most universities have (often because of how Christians talk!) taken a totally *subjective* approach to religious truth, read Christianity out of the real university disciplines.
 - 1. ▶ Their approach is sort of like B'Hai ("All the religions are true") or, more likely, the cynical "All religions are all equally *false!*"
 - 2. ▶ or pure pragmatism ("Well, if it works for you, . . .")
- E. ▶ Here at CUI, you have a chance to spend a whole course on this subject, objections to it, answers to those objections.
 - 1. ▶ If you imagine that you don't need such knowledge, it proves to me that you are completely uninvolved in evangelizing others.
 - a. ▶ That's fine if you are a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu or a (I hope *true*) Jew—or even an agnostic or an atheist.
 - b. ▶ Why would anyone expect you to be defending the Xpian Gospel as true if you think that it's *false*?
 - 2. ▶ Still, if there is a sound *objective* case for the truth of the Gospel, I think that there is a real need on your part to re-think it, re-consider it—and college is a perfect place to do this.
 - 3. ▶ And no matter *what* you are, in taking the course in Xpian Apologetics, it will give you a chance to ask, "Do I have a comparable case for what I now believe—or no?"

VI. ▶ Freedom

- A. ▶ “Freedom in Christ” (“God’s ‘right hand’ reign”)
 - 1. ▶ for the Christian only
 - 2. ▶ St. Paul to the Christians in Galatia: “For freedom Christ has set us free. Do not ever again, therefore, submit to a yoke of bondage.”
 - a. ▶ foil: a particular type of Judaizers who would have voided the Gospel of Christ—*not* by denying it, but by adding to it!
 - b. ▶ is the *only* Pauline letter in which he warns that “. . . if you do this, Christ’s death will be of no effect for you!”
 - i. ▶ was a *theological* move—not a “moral” one
 - 3. ▶ Best source: Luther, *On the Freedom of the Christian* [or] *Christian Liberty*
 - a. ▶ (Thesis #1 of 2) in Luther: Christ’s death has made every believer a Lord over all—esp. fear of sin, death, the Devil, . . . and the law (in the sense that any of these will ever “trump” the death of Christ *for us*).
- B. ▶ Political freedom (“God’s ‘left hand’ reign”)
 - 1. ▶ Even if you are a Christian, you are still a citizen and, therefore, subject to the ruling authorities (Rom. 13).
 - 2. ▶ In this country, you are heir to unique Constitutional freedoms—freedoms unknown in almost the entire history of man.
 - a. ▶ Others gave their life blood that you and I could still have these.
 - 3. ▶ They are *not saving* (that is God’s “other reign”—*not* this one).
 - a. ▶ But they are of great, great value.
 - b. ▶ If you are wise, you will watch out for the loss of these, fight against those who would wrest them away from you.
 - c. ▶ Learn here at CUI why most forms of utopianism are “tyrants in disguise.”
 - d. ▶ As my son wisely says, “‘Left’ and ‘right’ are the same, are usually statists.”
 - i. ▶ The true poles should be “freedom” and “tyranny/statism.”
 - e. ▶ Or, as I first read the other day, “Inside every liberal [read “progressive”] is a totalitarian screaming to get out!”

VII. ▶ **Brooks: Four Important Tasks**

- A. ▶ First, “reveal **moral options**”
 - 1. ▶ Greek tradition (“emphasizing honor, glory and courage”)
 - 2. ▶ Jewish tradition (“emphasizing justice and law”)
 - 3. ▶ Christian tradition (“emphasizing [**Christ, His Person & work?**], surrender and grace”)
 - 4. ▶ scientific tradition (“emphasizing reason and logic”)
- B. ▶ Second, “foster **transcendent experiences**.”
 - 1. ▶ “four years of concentrated contact with beauty (poetry, music, time in a cathedral”)
 - 2. ▶ serving a child with Down syndrome
 - 3. ▶ waking up with loving friends on a mountain
 - 4. ▶ “. . . there’s a good chance something transcendent and imagination-altering will happen.”
- C. ▶ Third, investigate current loves and find “**new things to love**.”
 - 1. ▶ Nietzsche on how to find your true identity [See article for blog reference.]
 - 2. ▶ “. . . wise student will search for, find new things to love: a field of interest, an activity, a spouse, community, philosophy or faith.”
- D. ▶ Fourth, “**apply the humanities**.”
 - 1. ▶ Brooks: Social sciences are *not shy* about applying their disciplines to real life. [No shit, Sherlock!]
 - 2. ▶ But literary critics, philosophers & art historians *are* shy about this.
 - a. ▶ Brooks: “because it might seem too Oprahesque or self-helpy?”
 - b. ▶ Brooks: “are afraid of being prescriptive because they idolize individual choice”
 - c. ▶ Brooks: “. . . but great works of art and literature have a lot to say on how to tackle the concrete challenges of living . . .”
 - i. ▶ how to escape the chains of public opinion
 - ii. ▶ how to cope with grief
 - iii. ▶ how to build loving friendships
- E. ▶ **Comment** on Brooks’ “First” [reveal moral options]
 - 1. ▶ But gov’t/culture of U.S. no longer allows universities to offer the “Christian option”—even on moral values (badly worded as Brooks’ version of it is).
 - a. ▶ Question: Why *is* that, given our 1st Amendment?
- F. ▶ **Comment** on Brooks’ “Second” [foster transcendent experiences]
 - 1. ▶ How does one know when or even *if* one is having “a transcendent experience?”
 - a. ▶ How exactly is one to discern between the Holy Spirit and heartburn?
 - 2. ▶ Are the children of Adam able to discern between “abherrent chemistry of the brain” and “an experience of the transcendent?” How?
- G. ▶ **Comment** on Brooks’ “Third” [examine current loves, teach new things to love]
 - 1. ▶ How exactly would following Nietzsche’s counsel re: finding our true identity via present or new loves “offering anyone a true experience of the transcendent?”

2. ▶ How would an individual *know* that his or her “present or new loves” has anything whatever to do with the transcendent?
- H. ▶ **Comment** on Brooks’ “Fourth” [apply the humanities]
 1. ▶ Without belittling Brooks’ “how to’s” and the importance of them, how are any of them connected with “the transcendent?”
 2. ▶ How do I *know* that any of these are connected with “the transcendent?”

VIII. ▶ Conclusion

- A. ▶ “O.K.,” you say, “I think that Brooks’ four ‘cures’ for what ails the universities are all weak, superficial, insipid, ill-founded. “Really, sort of dumb”
- B. ▶ *But* if we think secular arguments for the nature of today’s university are “weighed in the balance and found wanting,” what can be offered in their place?
 - 1. ▶ G.K. Chesterton: “historic Christianity, of course!”
 - 2. ▶ You very wisely reply, “But the university is *never* going to allow anything ‘religious’ into their curriculum—not really.”
 - a. ▶ I answer, “You are correct. They will and do allow courses in religion, just because the university sees these as no more than sociological, psychological studies—not *objective knowledge*, not subject to testing re: truth or falsity of religious claims.
 - 3. ▶ The defining fight on this occurred in the 19th century, was the background of John Henry Cardinal Newman’s *The Idea of the University*.
 - a. ▶ Newman might be one of the required readings in your “core curriculum.”
 - b. ▶ If it is, pay particular attention to this one.
 - c. ▶ Background was the university’s opinion that all of what you and I call “religion” is limited to *subjectivity*.
 - d. ▶ I understand that. So should you.
 - e. ▶ But there is one great exception: historic Christianity!
 - i. ▶ How so?
 - ii. ▶ If there is a real God and if He once became a man, Christianity is unique in its claims.
 - iii. ▶ means a person can *test* it for truthfulness *apart from* inner satisfaction or inner anything else.
 - 4. ▶ key chapter of Lewis’s *The Case for Christianity* is the chapter titled “The Grand Miracle” (that is, the Incarnation—claim that the true God once became an individual man)
 - a. ▶ *If* God once became a man, then God allowed us to evaluate Jesus’ claims as to Who He Is, Was!
 - i. ▶ including scientists!
 - ii. ▶ including lawyers!
 - iii. ▶ is *public* and *testable* knowledge—just the opposite of “private,” “esoteric,” “hidden,” “occult,” etc.
- C. ▶ You will delve into Christianity as a genuine truth-claim when you take the Introduction to Apologetics course here.
 - 1. ▶ And the key authors you will read are (1) C.S. Lewis and (2) Dr. John Warwick Montgomery (an LCMS Lutheran!)
 - 2. ▶ If you are already a Christian, you *might* have been introduced to discussion of Christianity as a genuine truth claim prior to coming to college.
 - a. ▶ If you were, you are genuinely rare in the Western world!

- b. ▶ The usual parish diet is “how happy Jesus can make you”—totally useless in the university discussion.
- c. ▶ or, other (perhaps *true*!) assertions—but *no arguments* to support the assertions
- 3. ▶ all-too-common *illustration*: Introduction to Philosophy course, the textbook’s chapter on “philosophy of religion”
 - a. ▶ Professor: “Are there any Christians here?”
 - b. ▶ one brave Christian young man or woman raises his or her hand.
 - c. ▶ Professor: “Is there any factual state of affairs which would cause you to deny your faith in Christ?”
 - i. ▶ Student (w/o any apologetic training): “No! I’ll believe no matter what!”
 - ii. ▶ Student means well, but just *lost the argument*!
 - iii. ▶ Why? Because he doesn’t use what Paul argues in 1 Cor. 15 (the resurrection of Christ after being dead for 3 days)
 - iv. ▶ His answer should have been, “You bet I can! If the dust of Jesus’ body lies somewhere in some mid-eastern cave, I will leave my faith in Him!”
 - v. ▶ would totally flummox the prof, he would never see this one coming