

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, DOES IT HELP OR HINDER?

Dear Bro. Waddey: I am convinced that Christian Schools and the books that preachers write are the source of all our problems in the church. Rather than looking to them, people just need to read the Bible and all would be well. RJ

Dear Bro. R.J.: Thank you for taking time to share with me your thoughts about books and education and the church.

Since you obviously can read and write and since you use the English language reasonably well, it is evident that you have some education. Just as Christians have the right to build houses, repair cars and farm they have the right to work in the field of education. Just as a group of three Christians who are carpenters can form a company to build houses, so a group of Christian educators can form an organization to teach young people. Should they do so there are no Biblical prohibitions that would keep them from teaching the Bible to their students. They have the same right to do that as do you. In fact we should be grateful for anyone who teaches God's Word in an honest, truthful way.

I am sure you do not feel that you violated God's will by getting an education that enables you to serve as a preacher. Would you have sinned had you sought out a Christian to help you with grammar or speech? You may be a rare person who has been able to educate and inform yourself with no assistance, whether by personal or by written instruction. Unfortunately not many people are so gifted. That is why parents teach their children and send them to school.

If preachers should not seek education from other Christian teachers or their books, would it not also be true that your congregation should not listen to you as you teach them Why should they listen to you, why not just read their Bible?

If no Christian should read the books that other Christians write, then why should anyone read the booklets you write and send out to many congregations? If it is in somehow wrong for me to write my thoughts in 100 pages and glue them together in a book, how can it be right for you to write yours in 10 pages and fold them together?

You have read into my article about Christian Education things that I did not say. I do not believe that Christian Schools are essential to the survival of the church. I do not believe a man has to attend a Christian School before he can effectively preach the gospel. I do not believe that any teacher or any book should be given precedence over the Bible. I do not fault you for not having attended a Christian School. I do not justify any failure of any Christian School or their administrators or teachers. I do not exalt Christian educators above any other faithful brother. I do believe that to be effective as a preacher a man must, from source, have a reasonable amount of education. Ignorance is never a benefit in teaching others, regardless of the subject being considered.

That some schools founded and operated by Christians abandon their original purpose and do harm does not therefore condemn all such schools. Some churches of Christ abandon the faith and do harm, but that does not mean all churches of Christ are bad. Some preachers do the same, but that does not mean that all preachers are bad.

You suggest that churches should raise and train their own preachers. That is exactly what schools of preaching are doing. Local churches provide a setting and older, wiser men to share their knowledge and experience with young men who desire to preach. To train their own preacher a church will need some help in teaching him to read and write, to be able to express his thoughts in an intelligible way.

While most of my education came from sources other than Christian Schools, I am greatly indebted to people who helped me gain my knowledge. For example Christian teachers in public schools taught me English grammar, math and science. I am even indebted to many non-

Christians such as those who prepared the dictionaries I use daily. I am obligated to those scholars who have put the Word of God into the English vernacular so I can read and understand God's Will. I am thankful for Alexander Cruden who developed the Bible Concordance and William Smith who compiled his Bible Dictionary and a host of others who have provided me knowledge I could not otherwise have discovered.

While I have spent relatively little time in college classrooms, I do not resent those who have been able to spend extended time in that environment. Although I hold no graduate degrees, I respect those who have attained them and kept their faith and been useful servants of Christ. While not every religious book written is true to God's message and helpful, many are and I thank God for them and use them to improve my usefulness in the kingdom. There is room in Christ's church for men with your background and for those who are well-trained scholars. Neither should disparage the other so long as they are faithful servants. JHW