

To: Stephen Jones

From: Camille Lewis

Re: Our Moorings

Date: 23 March 2006

The Holy Spirit has laid some things on my heart that I am compelled to share with you. You mentioned in Faculty Meeting that you'd like us to bring our concerns to you, and I'm very thankful for this opportunity. I have been praying over these issues for years now, and I believe it's time to lay them out on the table. We've all talked recently about Christian universities losing their moorings, and I'm quite afraid that we may be losing a few of our own. I've seen it happen all too quickly in recent months, and I want you to be aware of what God has laid on my heart before it's too late.

Our university has a robust history. Its philosophy is sound. Its creed is strong. Its people are blessed. I'm proud to be a part of this ministry. I brag about us. I relish correcting myths and misinformation. I've devoted even a chunk of my professional scholarship to just such a correction.

Dr. Bob, Sr. started the school with a commitment to its employees. He was demanding, I know. But he also demonstrated a secure loyalty to those with whom he ministered. That co-laboring perspective is why we all choose to work here. It's why we stick around. It's not about the money (as you know) or the power. It's about seeing how together we can join God in His ministry of grace to these young people. After Elise died, I remember the next In-Service vividly. Dr. Horton talked about the Sons of Korah and connected us to them. I looked around that room and wept in thanks to the Lord for the gentle, "peculiar" people who had shown His love to us. I don't think any other place on the planet could top the warmth and the grace that the University family as a whole showed us. Administrators and staff, students and faculty—all were one in demonstrating God's tenderness.

You started this past school year in that same spirit. It was palpable. We could all tell that you and your new administration were trying to communicate a spirit of teamwork and cooperation. You couldn't wipe the grin off the faculty's faces! I was again thankful that you had revitalized that mutual loyalty that Dr. Bob, Sr. had privileged. Yes, it was slightly different—maybe more academic or more corporate—but we as a faculty still felt like allies with you and yours.

But that has been dwindling throughout the year, and it's breaking my heart to see how quickly it has slipped. The relationship that has been corporately communicated to us in recent days is one of employer and employee, not co-laborers. The faculty now tangibly sense disloyalty. It's not the result of one decision or announcement; it's an accumulation. For instance, our beginning-of-the-year pay raises have amounted to end-of-the-year job cuts. What your dad gave the faculty to thank them for working in the summer—paid days off—is now moot because, as a result of huge cutbacks, we don't have summer work at all. This comes as a complete surprise; we were given no warning of this change, and so we could not adequately prepare. You told us at the beginning of the year that summer jobs may pay differently, but that the Administration

would let us know by February 1st if there would be change. “No news means the status quo,” you said. But what has happened is actually worse because it seems underhanded and disloyal. Many heads of household among the faculty have no jobs this summer and, thus, no way to pay mortgages. When a division chairman recently asked HR what he should do without his customary summer employment, it was actually suggested that he work as a greeter at Wal-Mart. Ironically, his secretaries will have employment, but he may not be there because the Summer Work Committee has made their decision. That HR, who is supposed to understand its “resources,” would think so little of the gifts and contributions of a fellow laborer that they would suggest he take the most unskilled job with the most unethical employer in town is disgraceful.

And it’s not just that our personal bills will go unpaid. The University’s educational mission will be harmed. Approved Performance Hall renovations have to be postponed. Divisional websites will be horribly out of date. And even classes will not be taught because we often use part of the time from the faculty working staff positions to prepare students for recitals or teach private lessons. Clearly, the tail is wagging the dog. The members of the Summer Work Committee who are making these decisions are evidently not educators, and they obviously have no concept of the vital role played by the faculty who working during the summer months.

The recent inordinate preoccupation with the bottom line has also seeped into the process of those seeking to begin doctoral work. Faculty who were encouraged to deepen their education for the sake of accreditation and their ministry are met with an interrogative manner and insistence for financial justification. When Grant and I sat before Dr. Smith before we left for IU, he gave us a fatherly pep talk and warned us about departmental politics. Now young faculty members are getting a message that focuses on the financial bottom line, and they are wondering whether the whole scary experience of going away is worth it at all.

I worked for HR a few summers ago and got to know them very well. I regularly heard the disdain they expressed toward the faculty, and especially the Fine Arts faculty whom they describe as the “laziest of all.” I’ve seen with my own two eyes how Roy Hulehan abuses his inferiors and kowtows to his superiors. To discover that HR is in large part making these poor decisions, I’m sorry to say, would be no surprise to any one—faculty or staff—in the university. It’s just more of the same of what we’ve come to expect from them. But unfortunately, this single department has more power than ever.

The recent result of all of this is a very clear communication from the top that finances have become more important to BJU than its people or its mission. I have a strong sense that the new administration is listening to some powerfully persuasive people who have very negative biases against the faculty specifically. Long-term decisions are made and communicated that reduce our partnership to a crass business relationship. From the initial roll-out of Workbrain to the present disregard for summer employment, the faculty no longer feel like vital co-laborers at all but rather as disposable rank-and-file.

And the consequences of that lost mooring—the mooring of mutual loyalty—will be devastating. Those who are the most loyal to this ministry are also, understandably, the most invested. And we who are the most invested are getting the strongest sense of disloyalty from the administration. As a result, faculty retention is going to inch its way up the priority list—

perhaps faster than anyone might anticipate. This is not how Dr. Bob, Sr. envisioned the “university family.” These are not the values I have come to relish as I work within this ministry. And because this has become such an endemic problem so quickly, Grant and I have actually begun to wonder if we can continue in this ministry. If loyal employees like the two of us are cast so easily aside during the summers for budgetary constraints, we’re wondering if perhaps we need to find employment elsewhere that will enable us to provide for our family’s needs more consistently and more predictably. (Please understand: I’m not couching a threat with this statement. It’s not as if our bags are packed and we’re just waiting for the first opportunity to leave. I’m simply seeking to transparently communicate to you both our concern for the university’s direction and the gravity of this situation. I would not go to the effort of writing you this letter if we were on our way out the door.)

The second mooring that I see slipping requires, if you’ll indulge me for a moment, a little historical background. My Seminar in Public Address class last Spring uncovered some things in our study of Moody that have been revolutionary for me in understanding American Christianity, the university, and my own personal walk with God. Let me explain.

Before his British revivals, Moody visited a camp in Keswick, England. The theology expressed there greatly moved him and, according to George Marsden, boosted his success in those British revivals. Marsden credits Moody for transporting Keswick to the United States.

As we researched this idea, it popped up in more places than I had imagined. Contemporary examples of Keswick come from the motto “Let go and let God,” the song “Oh, to be Nothing,” the organization “Campus Crusade,” or the evangelistic plea for continuous consecrations or “the victorious life” or “deeper life” or “second blessings.” Even the ever-popular expression “Just two choices on the shelf—pleasing God or pleasing self” is pure Keswick.

In *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925*, Marsden best explains the conflicted cobbling together that Keswick theology attempts. Keswickian proponents try to negotiate among a Calvinist “total depravity,” a Wesleyan “eradication” or “perfection,” and a Pentecostal “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” “As long as Christ dwelt in the heart, a Christian could be free from committing any known sin. There was therefore no excuse for tolerating any known vice, appetite, or sinful habit.” Their popular metaphor is that “sinful nature is like an uninflated balloon with a cart (the weight of sin) attached. Christ fills the balloon and the resulting buoyancy overcomes the natural gravity of our sin. While Christ fills our lives we do not have a tendency to sin, yet we still are liable to sin. Were we to let Christ out of our lives, sin would immediately take over.” While D. L. Moody popularized it, Cyrus Scofield and Henry A. Ironside documented Keswick theology. And Charles Trumbull perpetuated the “let go and let God” motto. He elaborated that Christ would rule in us so long as we did not interfere. Objectors claim that “Christ was supposedly let in and out of peoples’ lives like steam or electricity turned on or off.”

According to Marsden, Keswick works in the United States because the notion of “free will” is an “American dogma.” Keswick negotiates between God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. He ends his chapter on Keswick history by addressing it as a dispensational compliment within the Bible institute movement. It softened the often hard edge of “more objective arguments” and the harder edge of a cultural pessimism by focusing on individual success.”

That's the history, and M. James Sawyer lays out the Keswick theology (http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=391). For the Keswickian there are two types of Christians: carnal and normal. For the normal Christian, the self is dethroned, yielded, absent. Any hint of self-identity, however, is carnal. Sin, in the Keswickian perspective, is overwhelmingly powerful. And while it can never be eradicated, it must be continually thwarted. Full surrender is the only solution; anything less is willful rebellion. What this comes down to is complete capitulation of anything human or anything personal. The self is useless. It has no rights, no personality, and no humanity.

Sawyer also points out the formulaic quality to the Keswick mindset. Keswick proponents often tout their "five simple steps to a successful Christian walk!" This simplicity is only possible with an eradication of any difficult feelings. For the Keswickian, a strong faith is proven in positive "feelings." Negative or strong feelings demonstrate self-rule and are, thus, to be eradicated at all costs.

Keswick teaching assumes a kind of Gnostic dualism, a good angel and a bad devil sitting on the shoulders of every believer, ready to duke it out for ultimate control. When the believer remains completely passive, then the "good" side may take over. But any sign of will is certain doom. There's a catch-22 in Keswick, however. Its semi-Pelagianism is conflicted. The self-control that Keswick demands is impossible if the self is as wholly evil as they describe. If we put on our Burkean critic hat for a moment, believers are very much the actors in this drama, holding the reigns, controlling the outcome as well as the scene upon which the battle takes place. God is nothing more than a goal to be reached, a dramatic purpose, or a badge to be worn. In sum, the Christian walk is a tightrope that we must precariously negotiate, a tragic precipice upon which we teeter. One little slip to the left or the right, one little glimpse down below, and we're doomed.

Last summer, I casually mentioned all this to Dr. Horton as we were discussing his book's upcoming publication. My question "Have you ever heard of Keswick?" was met with "Oh, yes!" as he proceeded to tell me that Dr. Bob, Sr. founded the university in direct opposition to Keswick thinking. Here's the more formal statement from Dr. Horton's philosophy of education statement from the BJU Press:

"Our common-sense realism encourages a balanced approach in peripheral theological matters that have divided orthodox Protestantism as well as a down-to-earth approach to the Christian life. Certain features of our Puritan heritage and of European pietism in general have given an introverted, mystical character to some Evangelicalism. Oddly coupled with this subjective 'deeper life' inwardness is the emotional exuberance of Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on the experiential validation of truth. These intuitional tendencies, too easily disregarding of doctrine, have merged in leftward evangelicalism with an intellectualism anxious to establish rational bases for faith and eager for the respect of liberal scholarship. Intuitionism and intellectualism have not been characteristic of historic American Fundamentalism, nor are they part of our defining identity. For our founder, Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., success in the Christian life was largely a matter of obedience and good sense. Hence, our anti-rationalism and anticharismaticism."

That "'deeper life' inwardness," Dr. Horton explained to me, was Keswick. And when you think about it, comparing our curriculum to Moody Bible Institute's makes this difference all that

much clearer. Moody and his educational heirs focused on the Bible alone because, they believed, all that was human was corrupt. Dr. Bob, Sr., instead, saw godliness reflected in humanity. More to the point, Moody Bible Institute, as a product of Keswick, studies the Bible alone because all other human learning is condemned; Bob Jones University, as an alternative to Keswick, studies the liberal arts because humanity is created in God's image, and we can see God in the best of human endeavor. It just doesn't make sense to have a Christian liberal arts curriculum if you think everything human is mutually exclusive from everything divine! Dr. Bob's founding principle was biblical and strong.

But as I listen to sermons and meetings this year, we're sounding more and more Keswickian. It's more than just a flavor here and there or a black-dog-white-dog sermon illustration now and then. The students sense it and are overwhelmingly burdened when they're repeatedly taught that their Christian walk is a perilous tightrope negotiation. The works theology foregrounded in *Changed Into His Image* is at every turn. Jim Berg's unfounded conclusion that the redeemed "possess within us a clone of Satan's own nature, and it violently opposes God" (36) goes unquestioned and is used as a foundational, guiding principle in the residence halls. We hear sermons entitled "How Can You Get Grace," when the Bible clearly teaches that grace is not something we earn. The students are told that the Christian life is hard, when Christ Himself stated that His burden is easy and His yoke is light. We faculty are told that "disciplining" the students means "policing" them, when Scripturally disciplining actually means nurturing them. And while you have rightly related that the Student Handbook is not the *Textus Receptus*, the Dean of Students states that if they're guilty of one rule infraction, their entire spiritual condition is suspect. As a result of this semi-Pelagian climate, student leaders openly mock those in their charge who struggle with depression since, the leaders presume, these weak few are just not as agile as they at walking that tightrope.

With all this "tightrope" talk swirling around us, it's no wonder that the students are overwhelmed and confused. They do their best to follow the spiritual instruction they're given, but because that instruction is fundamentally works-based, they wind up discouraged and defeated. Rather than enjoying the green pastures under the gentle guidance of the Good Shepherd, they will be fixated on earning grace. And when they leave the safety of BJU, they are likely to resign themselves to complacency or carnality since they will not, by their own efforts, be able to live successful Christian lives. Rather than abounding in God's gift, they will be futilely engaged in "getting grace" and will find themselves sadly lacking.

Some build a hedge around the Torah, but that is not what Christ intends. And it's not what our school was founded on either. Plain and simple, Keswick talk doesn't fit in a Christian liberal arts curriculum. We can't fully relish the humanity and the divinity in Shakespeare and Milton and Handel and even the apostle Paul when gum-chewing is our obsessive focus.

Last summer I was carefully "listening" to all the public/outsider talk surrounding your inauguration. And the metaphor you used to explain the university was a "greenhouse." That's a really good metaphor, and I would urge you to stick to it. To be honest, it's a much better metaphor than that of a "show window" or a "Christian West Point." The greenhouse is a temporary place. Its purpose is to start the seed, feed it, nurture it lovingly, and eventually to harden off that plant and send it out into the world to bloom and flourish. Greenhouses are used to grow plants that are not only beautiful, but also strong. They not only produce good

fruit, but also weather the storm. Not just for show and not just for the fight, the products of a greenhouse will thrive and edify many future generations.

A faith grown in a Keswick ethic cannot withstand the inhospitable winter of a secular world. It must remain cocooned and insulated in a perfectly controlled climate because it can't brave the outside. Historically BJU has produced healthy, godly oaks and azaleas and magnolias. We can't go on doing that if we have a hyper-focus on pruning and staking. We can't encumber our young saplings with the weight of a "conditional grace" that Christ never intended. Nor can we produce those robust plants if our gardeners are regarded as a drain on resources rather than co-laborers in ministering God's grace.

We must keep these two moorings of the university strong: demonstrating loyalty to all employees (rather than to the bottom line) and opening the students' eyes to a full vision of God's wonderful work of redeeming, sustaining grace in their lives (rather than to a narrow, fragile, cumbersome concept of Christianity).

Thank you again for this opportunity. Know that I'm praying assertively for God to give you His wisdom and courage and grace.

Camille