

# Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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## SATELLITE U.

by Gary North

It is my contention that the technological revolution of satellite television could be used to transform Christian higher education in North America within a decade, or at most by the end of the century. The network which starts a satellite university will be in a position to make a "technological end run" around the traditional "bricks and mortar" approach to higher education. The technology is available today.

Where will the future graduates of the Christian day schools go to college? Few Christian colleges are straightforwardly Christian in their liberal arts curriculum—certainly not nearly so Christian as the newer day school curricula are. Christian colleges are also expensive. State universities offer socialism at socialism's State-subsidized prices; Christian colleges too often offer **socialism at unsubsidized free market prices**.

How can Christians provide a low-budget Christian alternative to humanistic higher education? Simple: by creating a 1) low-tuition, 2) institutionally decentralized educational system which requires 3) minimal capital expenditures, but which has access to 4) an integrated, biblically based curriculum which is 5) taught by the best instructors in the Christian world in each field.

Impossible? Not at all. As they say on those late-night Ronco Products TV ads, "Here's how it works!" A Christian satellite network produces a series of 35-hour, one-semester academic courses. It hires the best people in each discipline to teach them. Each instructor is then brought in for two weeks during summer vacation to put his course onto videotape. He is paid, say, \$2,000 plus expenses for two weeks of lecturing. If the satellite network can locate stock footage (e.g., recent U.S. history, political science, economics), fine. If not, the "talking head" approach is all that a college classroom normally offers anyway.

Each instructor will be required to produce, in advance, a workbook which will be the basis of the course's outline. The workbooks will be sold by a Christian satellite network as part of the educational package. The profits can be split between the satellite university and the author on a 50-50 basis. This is the author's chief financial incentive.

A Christian satellite network can hire good instructors during the summers. Summer employment means extra money to these people. It also means that there are no continuing salary expenses for the satellite university. This drastically lowers its cost of operation. Also, no large library is mandatory initially. No dorms are necessary. No large administrative staff, groundskeeping staff, or secretarial staff is

necessary. The network has thereby reduced all the major expenses of running a college.

How to get this material to the students? To reduce costs, the satellite network can use the inexpensive hours of the day to transmit the material. From midnight until 5 a.m., or from one a.m. to six a.m., the network could broadcast one course per week. In one week, 35 hours of lectures can be put onto seven videotapes in the extended play mode. (You use 5-hour segments for the convenience of Betamax users; VHS units allow 6 hours). This is the equivalent of a 3-unit (3-semester hour) college course. One course per week could be beamed down to viewers.

A user buys a \$3,000 satellite reception dish and one or more **programmable videocassette recorders** (at, say, \$450 each). They will set their videotape units' automatic timers to begin recording at a particular hour and shut off five hours later. Then they go to bed. Next morning, they will wake up in possession of five more hours of the course. In a week, they will have own a 3-semester-hour course. Total cost per course to the user of "hiring" a permanent professor: \$8 per cassette (bulk price or sale price) times seven. Try to match this salary scale in any other university!

It is too expensive to produce videotapes in a studio and sell them: at least \$40 per two-hour cassette, if you have large sales, and \$60 if the market is limited. This means \$20 to \$30 per hour, compared with about \$1.60 per hour with a machine using the "extended play" slow speed to record the material. The cost-effectiveness of the satellite transmission is overwhelming compared to commercial videocassette tapes.

### Students and Faculty

Who will be the people who record the courses? They could be full-time students, but this is unlikely. The owners of the reception dishes will probably be Christian day schools, local churches, existing colleges, Christian businesses, and missionaries. These tapes will become permanent additions to a training library in all of these local institutions. Tape owners will then be able to go out and attract many sorts of students. Students can be instructed by local pastors or teachers, or they will be able to take the courses for credit through correspondence from a Christian satellite university.

What if the tapes are "pirated"? That is the whole idea. **The courses are tied to the workbooks.** Anyone who wants full use of the course needs to order a workbook. When he does, the satellite network then gets his name and address. This goes on the mailing list, and can be rented by other satellite-related organizations. Students are now identified. Their progress can be traced over the years. Whenever a Christian organization wants a specialist in a

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given field, he calls the satellite university, pays a fee, and is given a print-out of the names of students (auditing or correspondents), their particular specialties, and their attainments. A Christian satellite network could become **the foremost clearing house of Christian talent in the world**. It could get paid for its trouble, too. But this would take place only after several years of operations. Initially, the University gets money for its share of the workbook (say, \$25). What about selling textbooks by mail? Courses will require textbooks in addition to workbooks. This could prove very profitable. It could even develop that a satellite network will begin to publish textbooks, which could be even more profitable than printing workbooks.

So far, we have only been talking about people who "audit" ("vidit"? ) the courses. What about a person who wants to take a course for full academic credit? He will send in, say, \$100 per course for his tuition in order to receive credit for the course. Paying \$100 for a 3-hour, one semester course is a bargain in today's college world. A Christian satellite network takes, say, 50% of this tuition money, and the instructor takes 50%. The student writes two term papers and takes two locally monitored exams. These are sent to the satellite university's correspondence division and forwarded to the instructor. Total time needed to grade these? Possibly an hour per student. What teacher wouldn't be happy to make \$40 or \$50 an hour in his spare time? This could become the best retirement program in the history of education. He gets residuals on his workbook plus a big chunk of any future tuition payments. Think he won't do his best to create an interesting, popular course? At last: a faculty payment schedule based on actual performance! Pastors or other entrepreneurs will be encouraged to set up **totally autonomous local colleges** that use the Christian satellite network's tapes and workbooks. The more, the merrier.

### Overcoming Bureaucratic Restrictions

The more schools there are, the tougher it will be for the State bureaucrats to bottle up these materials. If a headmaster of a Christian day school decides to start a junior college program by using the satellite network's materials, that is to the satellite network's advantage. A Christian satellite network accepts no responsibility for the final educational product, makes money selling the workbooks and textbooks, and sees the creation of dozens of new colleges.

But what about **accreditation**? Well, what about it? First of all, who needs it? Employers are buying competence, honesty, and people who are willing to work hard. If a student can show that he read the material (in his library) and he has the grades, what does the recruiter care about accreditation? Furthermore, graduate schools are willing to accept a college graduate's test scores on the various Graduate Record Exams in lieu of grades. Second, those who still want accreditation can enroll in the courses directly from the network university. Third, a Christian satellite network can set up its undergraduate division, if necessary, in whichever state in the U.S. has the easiest accreditation requirements. Nothing says the undergraduate program has to be located in any particular state. Offer an accredited home study degree. But never forget: **it is better never to have received accreditation than to have received it, and subsequently have it revoked.**

The humanists who control the accreditation committees understand this. Once they accredit a school, they possess a powerful lever. Why give them a lever to use against us? Why

should humanists and compromised Christian academics certify our competence? Will we not judge the angels (I Cor. 6:3)?

What about **transferring credits**? Again, this is not a very big problem. These days, independent Christian colleges are in deep financial trouble. What if the Christian satellite network offers a junior college program? The director of the network's correspondence university division can send out a letter offering the following deal to every president of a Christian college: "Accept the graduates provisionally, Mr. College President, and don't grant any credit for previous work unless the graduate gets at least a B-average in his upper division major during his first semester or quarter, and at least a C average in his non-major course work. If you will grant this, sir, we will put you on our recommended college list."

What will the rational college president's response be? He is being offered access to bright students. (The less bright will pay their tuition for at least a semester and then leave.) The regional accreditation committee cannot complain, since all these students are accepted only provisionally—a reasonably common practice. And the college taps into the largest single base of Christian college students in the nation. Almost any Christian college president will agree to the deal. Anyway, several dozen will. All you need is a dozen, perhaps fewer. Where will graduates want to go to **graduate school**? How about a Christian satellite network? By creating videotaped undergraduate college courses, a Christian satellite network positions itself in the future market for graduate studies. Students who have been trained in an explicitly Christian world and life view will be valuable commodities in the future. A Christian satellite network will be able to attract a far better prepared student body because it has provided the undergraduate training materials in the first place. Furthermore, the population base of students who have received an integrated Christian curriculum will be far larger than it is today, which also serves as a means of upgrading a Christian satellite network's graduate program. There will be more students to attract.

### Conclusion

**A Christian satellite network could create a decentralized educational revolution within ten years.** The whole program could be packaged at the junior college level within two years. If demand is high, the satellite university can add the upper division courses later on, but at least offer the first two years of academic course work. Before any Christian student walks into the lions' den of a humanistic college classroom, he can already possess the philosophical and biblical training necessary to "gird his loins" for an intellectual battle. Why send them in unarmed at age 17 or 18?

Who wins in this program? 1) Students who cannot afford college. They can work for two years, take cheap tuition courses, and save money for upper division. 2) Younger students who are not yet emotionally or intellectually prepared to face the intellectual and moral battlefield of university life. 3) Married students who cannot afford the move. They need their local employment. They study part time, at their own pace. 4) Families who prefer not to send 17-year-old children off to college just yet. 5) Headmasters who want to expand into a junior college. 6) Pastors who do not want to see young people turned into humanists. Who loses? State universities, state accrediting agencies, and the compromised Christian colleges that demand high tuition for third-rate courses in baptized humanism. Who cares about these losers?

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