

A Reading on Benchmark Young Adult School AKA Benchmark Transitions in CA  
Sermon by Michael Crawford, Guest Sermonizer for October 14th, 2020 (and beyond)

I feel it's misguided to try and start any sort of church. I feel it detracts from any organizational legitimacy. Earth and Animal liberation never had any place either. I want to make it clear I do not support this church and I do not endorse any organization.

I don't feel Benchmark will be affected one way or the other by remaining on your watchlist. The past 20 years or so have taught me that anybody can get away with anything in this kakistocracy of a country so long as they are a charismatic liar. Recent events have only solidified this stance.

Benchmark destroyed lives. It misrepresented itself. It left people scarred. It ripped apart families. It blamed it's victims, and it got away with all of this. I don't believe that will change. The lack of regulation, the perfect victim, a culture that will accept quacks over real doctors -- that's ingrained. An immutable part of the American psyche.

This country will continue to consume itself until it implodes, and I will watch from a distance with apathy -- perhaps a bit of schadenfreude. Mercy? They showed none to their victims and will get none from me. That would require an apology and real organizational changes -- the kinds that would eat into profit and ego. If you accept their word on anything, you're a fool.

About the only useful thing that came out of the experience for me was an awareness of cults and cult like groups. I have watched in horror as cults of all stripes have spread across social media, powered by recommendation algorithms favoring engagement at any costs. People live in bubbles now of their own creation, and it's no less damaging that the bubbles programs put us in.

We're on a trajectory straight to hell, and at this point I just want it to be over. The damage is already irreparable. A great man once had the audacity to hope, but I have lost the ability. I have to think about myself and my family now. As such I will be leaving the country and not looking back. Good riddance to an impossible dream. My only sincere hope is programs like Benchmark go down with the ship, but I fear when all is said and done only the worst of people will remain.

[End of Sermon]

Commentary by Rev. Angela Smith:

The HEAL Mission has received three separate complaints from individuals and families unrelated to each other alleging fraud, undue influence, abuse, and more as described above by guest sermonizer Michael Crawford. The most recent complaint the church and/or mission has received was from 2010. The mission and church are thankful to Michael Crawford for participating and contributing in-kind and beyond. Crawford truly understands and grasps what it means to be a Wycliffite where all are welcome to

disagree as long as being honest (including intellectually honest). That being said, when I approached Michael Crawford and other Benchmark survivors/victims about writing a guest sermon in lieu of the round table, I asked that the following two questions be addressed:

1. Did you report fraud or other unlawful actions to the proper authorities? If not, why? If so, what happened with the reports? (So, 2 part question)
2. Why do you believe Benchmark should be denied merciful release from the COPE Conversion Program?

I do feel Crawford effectively answered the second question. In a separate message Crawford did not expressly state was to be included in or with his sermon, though failed to clarify whether he wanted it included or not prior to the deadline prior to deliverance, he said:

"Regarding Benchmark's criminal activity, I think most of what they did would fall under civil and not criminal law, for example false advertising. Probably some of it crossed the criminal line but never lost any hope of enforcement of that kind of thing. Another problem with today's America is selective enforcement of regulation. To regulators, Benchmark seems better than many other places, and maybe it is I can't say, but in my heart I know they hurt people. they claim the 97% success rate and that was not at all true. Had about as much truth and advertising as Trump University."

For those reading this who need to report false advertising, misleading marketing, or scams of any sort (including diploma mills), you can report to your home state's attorney general by filing a consumer complaint or file a complaint with the FTC. You can find reporting resources at <https://www.heal-online.org/report.htm> and it is my hope that all find this helpful.

It is important to note that HEAL Mission was founded in 2002 which is the year Crawford was last held captive by Benchmark. At that time our mission site was hosted by the University of Washington and did not yet include the reporting guide. In addition, I didn't pass the California State Bar First Year Law Student's Exam (Baby Bar) until 2009. So, the reporting guide has been around since about 2008. For Crawford, he had 3 years maximum to file a civil complaint on most civil violations including torts. If kidnapped and/or falsely imprisoned though, there is no statute of limitations to pursue that criminally if he was not court-ordered and prevented from leaving. Please direct any questions regarding this sermon to me by submitting feedback. See <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> for more info.

In addition, Trump University was shut down and operated from 2005-2010. Victims of the scam sued within the statute of limitations and the settlement was finally reached in 2018.

Source:  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2018/04/10/trump-university-settlement-judge-finalized/502387002/>

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <http://www.heal-online.org>