

“This much-needed book addresses real questions, for real people, in a real teaching context. It offers down-to-earth, accessible answers for faculty serving in Christian higher education who want to develop their craft as effective educators. It offers concrete help for thinking about the task of teaching, rooted in sound theory and guided by clear thinking. Michael Lawson offers insight and guidance, not tricks, for educators serving in the context of Christian higher education. I am grateful that this book is available for both new and seasoned educators.”

Perry G. Downs, professor emeritus of educational ministries, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“What a helpful book for new and future faculty members! This is a highly practical book that reflects a lifetime of experience of teaching in Christian higher education. Michael provides foundational principles and best practices across a wide range of critical aspects of teaching, including classroom management and learning assessment. It is a resource I want all of our doctoral students to read.”

Kevin E. Lawson, director of Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs in educational studies, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“As someone who speaks or writes daily about the vocation of Christian schooling, I have found myself remarkably refreshed and reinvigorated after only an all-too-hasty reading of Michael Lawson’s book *The Professor’s Puzzle*. The tonic for my mind and heart began early with his differentiation between the Greeks’ search for wisdom and a Christian’s recognition of the source of wisdom. Written as if he were holding a conversation with his readers, Professor Lawson presents, then helps to solve, the puzzle that confounds every seriously thoughtful instructor: How do I help my students learn what is needful? I recommend this book to those who join me in a desire to inculcate into our teachers a desire for an intentional biblical worldview pedagogy that leads our students to love God more and appreciate his divine love for each of us.”

D. Bruce Lockerbie, chairman, PAIDEIA, Inc., Stony Brook, New York; author, *The Way They Should Go; Thinking and Acting Like a Christian; A Christian Paideia; A Passion for Learning: A History of Christian Thought on Education*

“Dr. Lawson’s book will make us all better educators. It is warm, well written, and draws you in. I’ve not read a more instructive treatment of the craft of becoming an effective educator. Reading it was like taking a long walk with an old friend in a place I love—academics. Sometimes it was hard to keep up and convicting. Sometimes I learned what I was embarrassed not to know. At all times I knew I was in good hands, being taught by someone who loves the

topic and the student. This book could be the best tool in the kit. I wish I'd had it decades ago."

Beverly Lucas, former associate vice president for institutional effectiveness and accreditation and professor of Christian education, College of Biblical Studies, Houston, Texas

"Listen up, fellow Christian educators! *The Professor's Puzzle* is required reading for the guild. This hands-on, accessible text addresses our most critical issues with categorical precision. Dr. Michael Lawson, a master educator and practitioner, speaks from both classroom and administrative experience. Yet he does so with great pastoral skill. Make this the tool for your professional development—and your personal puzzle will radically improve."

Mark M. Yarbrough, vice president for academic affairs and academic dean, Dallas Theological Seminary

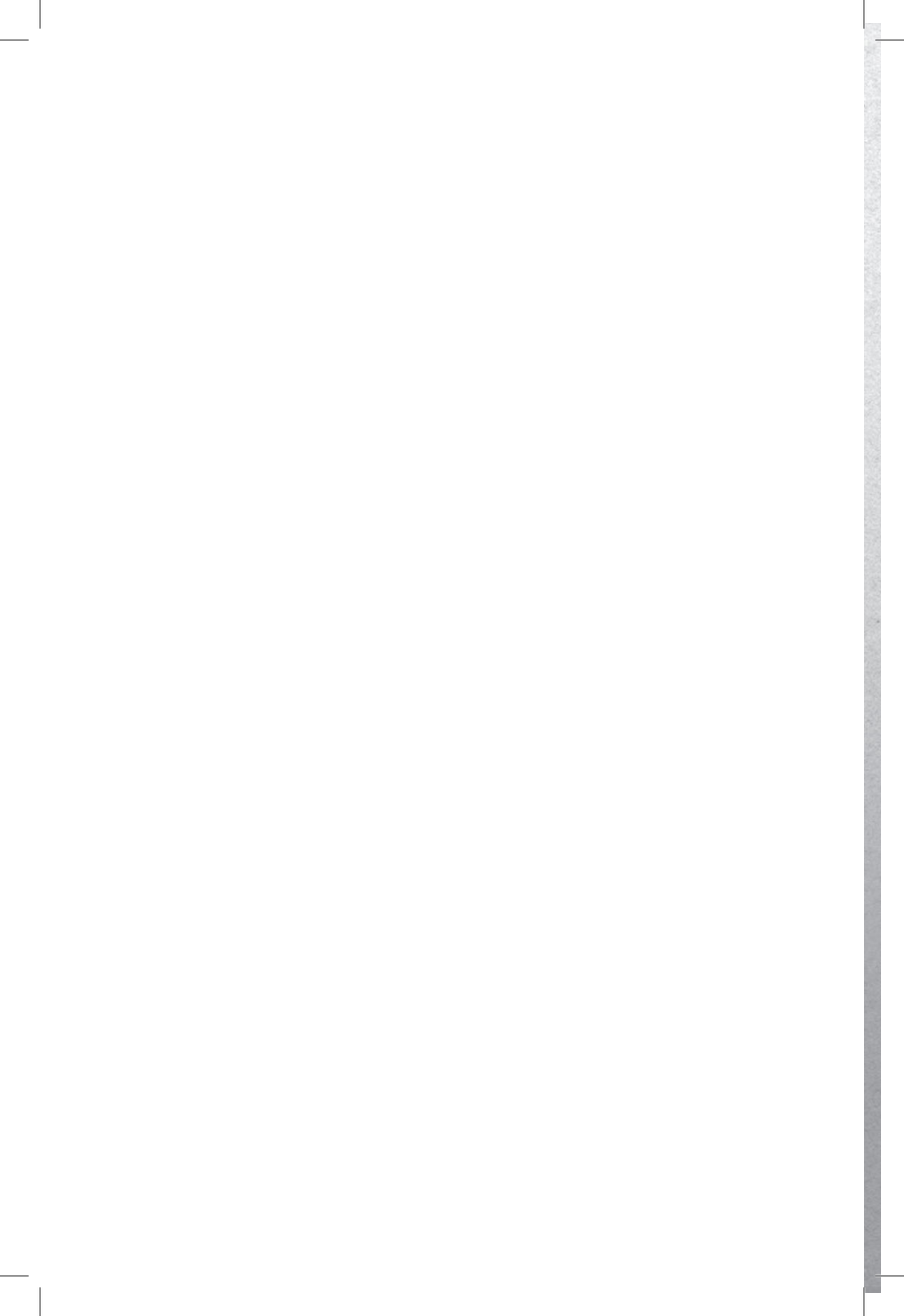
"I wish this book had been written thirty-five years ago when I stepped into a classroom for the first time as a teacher and wondered if the students were as terrified as I was. Whether summiting the lofty peaks of educational philosophy or hacking through the tangled underbrush of syllabi and institutional life, those who dare to believe that God can use them as a professor will find *The Professor's Puzzle* a trustworthy map, and Mike Lawson is the expert guide whom they need by their side. It's that good."

Mark Young, president, Denver Seminary



THE

**PROFESSOR'S
PUZZLE**



THE
**PROFESSOR'S
PUZZLE**

TEACHING
IN CHRISTIAN
ACADEMICS



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

MICHAEL S. LAWSON

The Professor's Puzzle: Teaching in Christian Academics

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SB

DEDICATION

This book dedication seems like a very clumsy way to pay my intellectual debts. Having “run over” my manuscript one more time, I looked in life’s rearview mirror. The sweet faces and dear names of those who gave me strength, wisdom, understanding, insight, and correction effortlessly appeared. As I age, the list of those who carried me to this time and place gets longer and longer. I absolve them all from any overstatements, understatement, misrepresentations, or foolishness found in this volume. And I thank them all for helping me grow up “in Christ.”

I dedicate this book to . . .

the Lord Jesus, the greatest teacher of both method and content who ever lived, who came looking for me when I was not looking for him

Dr. Howard G. Hendricks, the best classroom teacher I ever observed, who believed in us students more deeply than we believed in ourselves

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel, the best model of a Christian academician I ever worked for, who had the courage, patience, and persistence to lure me into academic ministry

Dr. Donald C. Campbell, a seminary president worthy of the term “emeritus,” who knew me as a student at Dallas Theological Seminary but hired me anyway



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PREFACE

PUTTING THE *PROFESSOR'S PUZZLE* TOGETHER

A number of years ago I inherited a course named “Teaching in Christian Higher Education” from Dr. Kenn Gangel. Under his leadership, the course became required for all students in the Academic Ministry Track at Dallas Theological Seminary.¹ At that time, I spent the better part of a sabbatical completely dismantling and reassembling the course. The reassembly took into account a review of the literature designed to train young faculty. This book and particularly the puzzle reflect that research.

Since that time, a number of good books have emerged for professor enrichment but nothing to guide aspiring teachers through the necessary role adjustments. Historically, acquiring a PhD did not involve specific preparation for teaching. Everyone assumed mastery of content (evidenced by a PhD) qualified one to teach. But accrediting agencies continue to squeeze academic institutions for measurable

¹The course is no longer required in the DTS curriculum.

student learning outcomes. This trend exposes the assumption's deficiency because professors must completely refocus on what students learn rather than their personal research. In spite of accrediting agencies, PhD training remains almost entirely focused on research.²

I designed the *Professor's Puzzle* to guide aspiring teachers through the initial shock of moving from the extended period of independent research required for their PhD to classroom teaching. I've added material because of the online explosion that catapulted the teaching profession into uncharted waters. That material appears in the chapters on planning, managing, evaluating, instructing, and relating. In an online platform, learning objectives remain the same, but teaching processes move from mostly "telling" toward "guided learning." This major recalibration leaves many experienced professors unable to adjust. Their faith in and reliance on the force of their personalities to communicate handicaps their efforts in a virtual environment. In fact, I have heard some declare the online environment off limits for their subject material. Of course that is nonsense. Online education is simply another form of distance education, which has been around at least since the apostle Paul wrote letters!

In addition, teachers in Christian secondary schools began to take my course. Their questions caused some material tweaks to account for older adolescent students. Many Christian secondary schools do not require the same educational certification as public schools. Consequently, some teachers come through the back door with little more than a fair understanding of their subjects. I hope this volume "putties up" some training cracks for these strategic educators. The students they represent deserve a truly Christian education, not just teaching from a Christian.

² I say "almost" as the last time I checked evangelical seminaries, no courses on teaching were required in PhD studies; but I don't check every day either.

Lastly, I bumped into a group of people hiding just below the surface. They bubbled up as soon as Dallas Seminary offered a new Doctor of Educational Ministry degree. A flurry of inquiries filled my e-mail inbox. Every kind of master's degree seemed to be knocking at our door. More often than not, their seminary degree was only remotely related to their teaching role. One common theme emerged; they already had teaching positions they could not leave. Their roles required more specific training in artful teaching and careful administration rather than the pure research offered in a PhD. They came from small Bible colleges, church-based Bible institutes, and mission schools. They represented every shape and size of school. I hope this book helps all those who enter the teaching profession through the back door feel welcome.

Many pieces of the *Professor's Puzzle* can be found in general education research publications. I have attempted to gather them all in one puzzle. Although Christian education relies heavily on general education research, I have leavened each and every piece with the yeast of Christian theology. After all, we have been in the teaching business from the very beginning. Some pieces need more yeast than others. Christian education is not merely public education with a devotion-popped on top. If Christian theology does not permeate everything in our educational system—from the president's office to the janitor's closet—then I question whether we have the right to call it Christian.

One piece, "Institutional Realities," became part of the puzzle when I realized I could account for all the educational variations except institutional policies and politics. These realities often surprise and shock newcomers to the faculty. Higher education (and even lower education if there is such a thing) does not always reflect a rational universe. We do things because a major donor wants them done that way, we don't have enough money to do them the right way, the person in charge is the brother-in-law of the "Grand PooBah," . . . need I go on? Life is like that. The faster we adjust to the realities, the less stress we feel.

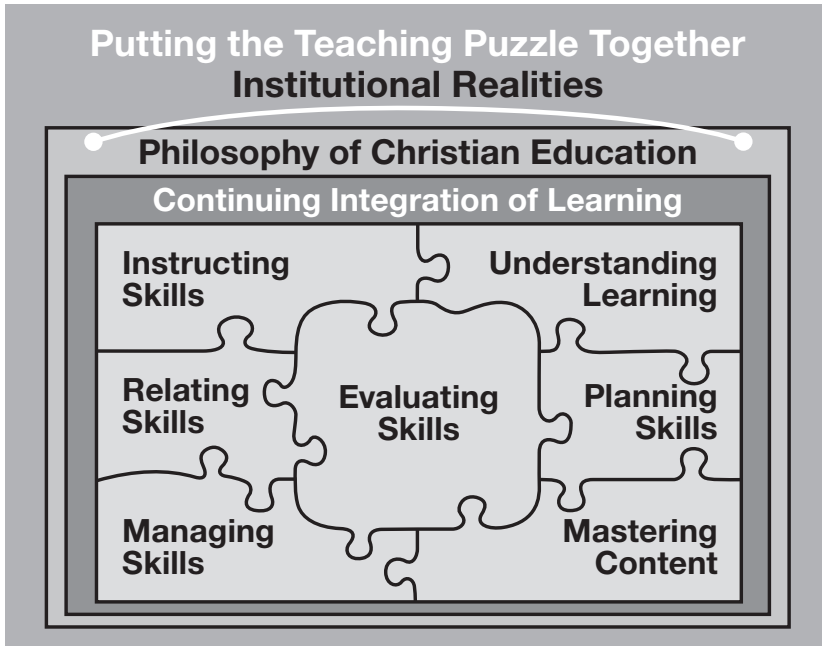
In preparation for this volume, I submitted an annotated outline. After reading it again, I decided it might serve readers well—especially if they decide not to read the book sequentially. If you are looking for immediate help with a problem, by all means go to the chapter that addresses your need. Before you lay the book down for too long, please read the chapter on philosophy. That chapter alerts you to my (hopefully) consistent perspective guiding my approach through each chapter. Here is the annotated summary representing each piece of the *Professor's Puzzle*.

Preface: Putting the Professor's Puzzle Together
(see graphic on facing page)

This introduces the reader to the essential components of successful teaching found in the book. The book begins where Christian teaching ought to begin, with a proper philosophy and understanding of truth. With that background, the focus shifts to the thinking and planning that informs course design. The character formation of the teacher, lesson planning, presentation skills, and assessment also appear in appropriate chapters. This perspective enables the reader to plan a highly detailed course syllabus and lesson plans that thoughtfully coordinate and structure the students' learning experiences. All of this must be done from a distinctly Christian point of view.

Chapter 1—A Philosophy for Christian Academic Education

The word *Christian* transforms everything about education. For instance, if the goal of all *Christian* education is to love God more, then we ought to ask students at the end of every course, "Do you love God more, and, if so, how did this course contribute to that growth?" While I am not advocating a strictly devotional approach, I am advocating more



than content recall as the goal for *Christian* education. Also *Christian* ought to change the role of the teacher from adversary to advocate. The chapter graphics provide readers with a bit of structure for continuing development of their philosophy from a theological point of view.

Chapter 2—Helping Students and Professors Integrate Learning

A Christian worldview depends on an understanding that all learning is interconnected and interdependent. The compartmentalized approach that characterizes public education has influenced the Christian community to think more about particular subjects and less about how and why things fit together. A Christian approach to learning recognizes the larger picture of truth and enables students to fit individual subjects within that structure. In theological education, for instance, we often

think of theology emerging from exegesis. But, sometimes we use theology to inform exegesis. These are interdependent and not unidirectional.

Chapter 3—Learning Theories for Practitioners

Depending on your categories, there are around fifty different theories.³ Most teachers do not have time to wade through and evaluate the usefulness of each theory. This chapter will summarize the essence of ten significant theories and how they might be used. For example, Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy is universally accepted as the best guide to writing course objectives for cognitive information. In many Christian circles, certain theories are categorically rejected, but they often contain significant pieces of truth that help us understand the learning process.

Chapter 4—Planning Skills in Syllabus Design

At least six steps belong in syllabus design. However, a syllabus is no more than a description of the learning experiences planned for the students. Each of these experiences, from classroom activities to course requirements to assessment devices, must connect back to course objectives. Each course objective must find its expression clearly achieved in the experiences of the students. Ultimately, the course should be evaluated on the basis of whether the objectives were accomplished in the lives of the students. The plan should also take into account that classroom "learning" varies over a fifteen-week semester. A check list and a model example appear in appendix A.

³ Accessed September 11, 2014, <http://www.learning-theories.com>.

Chapter 5—Mastering Content

Most students preparing to be scholar/teachers assume this is the only real criterion. In fact, everything in their PhD training points toward knowledge mastery as their exclusive goal. Contract renewals based on student evaluations often shock the unsuspecting new teachers. While teachers are expected to know their material, the current pressure in higher education as everywhere in education is to measure student learning outcomes. Teachers will need to reconsider strategies that help their students master the content or demonstrate an achievement of the course objectives.

Chapter 6—Managing Skills: The Classroom Experience

The successful classroom teacher must manage at least six different elements. While transfer of information dominates most classroom experiences, more powerful learning opportunities can be employed. The students themselves tend to be one of the most neglected resources in any classroom. The careful selection of appropriate methods makes the learning process a more active endeavor, which in turn leads to long-term memory. One helpful way of making that selection looks at the various components from the student's point of view.

Chapter 7—Evaluating Skills: Assessing Students, Courses, and Professors

Although testing remains a favorite assessment device among professors, there are many ways to make this single tool more effective. Depending on the course objectives and specific learning outcomes desired, testing may not provide an accurate measurement. In order to examine the results of learning, teachers need a tool chest stuffed with devices to assure the students and themselves that real learning occurred.

Chapter 8—Instructing Skills: Using Appropriate Variety

No book on teaching is complete without a chapter on instruction (read: lecturing). Some use the terms *teaching* and *instruction* (lecturing) interchangeably. Technically, instruction describes a professor's activity in giving information. Today teachers can provide information in a variety of ways. Students have direct access to an ever-growing information resource through technology. The role of the professor continues to shift away from just giving information to helping students evaluate information from a Christian perspective.

Chapter 9—Relating Skills: A Particularly Christian Idea

Of all the pieces in the *Professor's Puzzle*, this one displays the heart of Christian education best. Unlike the public sector, which may or may not care about the overall development of the students, Christian teachers should relish opportunities to engage the broader concerns of their students' lives and education. In addition, the Scriptures provide the healthiest guidelines for dealing with conflict and difference between teachers and students. From a theological point of view, Christian professors and students actually work within a family framework.

Chapter 10—Institutional Realities

Teachers must become students of the institution they serve. There are many mixed messages. For instance, the administration may emphasize time with students while the tenure review committee may only value publications. Or, at a different level, the teaching schedule and committee work may leave little time to improve teaching skills. What institutions say they value and what they actually celebrate and reward are often quite different. I have never seen a celebration of a professor's student appointment calendar. Most often, teachers will have to work

very hard to stay student focused. Many decisions at the institutional level are driven more by finances than philosophy. Professors live within this constant tension. Working in a Christian institution provides both access and opportunity to minister to students. How a professor chooses to use those will in many ways measure his commitment to personal Christian goals. After all is said and done, it is not how he starts his teaching career but how he used it.

May God bless your every effort to represent the Savior to the students he chooses to entrust to you.

Michael S. Lawson
Dallas Theological Seminary





A PHILOSOPHY FOR CHRISTIAN ACADEMIC EDUCATION

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”
Psalm 111:10*

Introduction

Plato did not invent philosophy (the love of wisdom), although his name has become synonymous with it. When we consider his teacher, Socrates, and his student, Aristotle, we find the Greek foundation stones of Western philosophy. In the East, thinkers like Guatama Buddha and Confucius also took leading roles in the search for wisdom, but they have not affected Western educational philosophies. A love of wisdom (philosophy) did not originate with philosophers or thinkers. The Bible traces an earlier and significantly different history for wisdom and those who love “her.”

In the opening book of the Bible, Eve took the first misguided step in her pursuit of wisdom. But eating the fruit brought only the knowledge of good and evil, not the wisdom she sought. Obviously they are not the same thing. In contrast, Job traces the source of wisdom directly to God, not a particular fruit. In the New Testament, James echoes that thought and announces God's open promise to generously bestow wisdom on any who ask him in faith. Solomon sought wisdom above wealth, power, or vengeance, and Proverbs extols her virtues in chapter after chapter. The Old Testament encompasses a whole genre of material called "Wisdom literature," verifying her significance. Ultimately the apostle Paul painted a bold contrast between God's wisdom and Greek wisdom in the opening chapter of his Corinthian correspondence.

Fundamentally, Greek philosophers and the Bible differ in their starting places for wisdom. The great Greek thinkers struggled to explain the nature of reality as best they could in their *search* for wisdom. They used reason and logic, which they assumed existed to test ideas and perceptions. They questioned any notion that failed their rational tests. Their formulations attempted to account for both the visible (tangible) world and the invisible (intangible) world around them.¹ However, Greek philosophy ended where it began, with a *search*. Ultimately, the Greeks and those who followed after them could not escape the confines of their own logic.

On the other hand, the Bible begins with the *source* of wisdom, the Creator himself. He blessed the tabernacle craftsmen with wisdom. God's wisdom guided both Moses and Daniel. Solomon's unprecedented wisdom came as a gift from God. Ultimately, all the treasures of wisdom are bound up in Christ, the exact representation of the Father.

¹Plato and Aristotle differed in their view of reality. Plato believed the perceived world of objects could be best understood through their ultimate forms. Aristotle believed the forms resided in the particulars of the perceived world.

And God grants generous portions of wisdom without criticism to those who ask in faith. Furthermore, God's wisdom doesn't only explain life; God's wisdom produces a life that "is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy" (Jas 3:17). Those who embrace God's wisdom live such lives.

Given the disparity between the Greek's *search* and the Bible's *source*, why do Christian scholars bother with Greek philosophers? Let me suggest four answers. First, Greeks set the philosophical agenda for Western thinkers. No one interacting with philosophy can ignore their questions. Second, Western theology organized itself to answer Greek philosophical questions.² Third, Augustine and Aquinas brought Christian thought to bear on Platonic and Aristotelian ideas respectively. The writings of these two ecclesiastical giants continue to influence Christian theology in the West. Fourth, many "modern" practices of education have roots deeply buried in Greek soil. For instance, Plato thought education ought to sort people into proper social positions. Education still tends to establish social status, even in Christian circles.

This chapter is not designed to provide a Christian philosophy. Instead, I hope to provide basic categories, questions, and comments to guide your construction of a personal philosophy of Christian education applied specifically to an academic setting. In order for us to think together, you need to know how I am using some key words. Of course, *Christian* refers to all Christ's teaching and character. I am particularly interested in his core values, which should permeate anything that bears his name. *Theology* refers to a comprehensive understanding of God based on both Scripture and creation. For clarity, I use the capitalized term *Philosophy* to refer to the Greeks and those who followed them, while the lower-case *philosophy* describes the wisest approach or best practice. *Education* encompasses the broadest scope of human learning

² Andrew Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 79. This book belongs on your "must read" list.

and should be distinguished from academic schooling. Schooling only provides a portion of any person's overall education.³ Therefore, a general philosophy of *Christian education* fits a wide variety of contexts totally, many of which are unrelated to schooling. But, *Christian* should modify everything associated with both education and schooling.

In the ancient world, education and religion were inseparable. Religion provided oxygen for the culturally rich structures in a society's general education. A son normally learned a trade at his father's side and there watched his father offer sacrifices designed to increase the family's success. The visible and invisible worlds intertwined. This understanding of reality in the West began to change as the Enlightenment's effects took hold. Eventually, educators separated general (scientific) education from religious (unverifiable by science) education. The university curriculum, once unified under theology, split into physical studies and metaphysical studies—with the latter deemed to have little practical value.

Today, children of the Enlightenment who come to faith in Christ need restructured thinking at the most basic level because Christian education stands in stark contrast to this dichotomy. Christian education offers a unified system. A genuinely Christian school recognizes the Creator in every subject and applies Christian values to every practice or policy.⁴ I freely admit this is easier said than done. We do tend to "sprinkle" a little Christianity on inherited structures and practices rather than giving them a thorough cleansing with biblical theology. I am confident we can and must do better.

In addition, Christian education must account for two features never mentioned in the public sector. Western Philosophy has largely

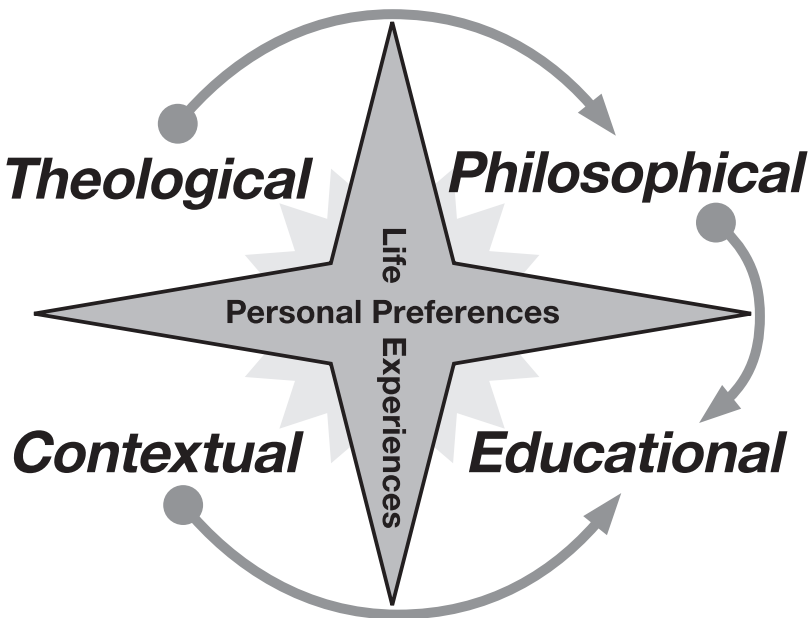
³ Children learn their mother tongue and many core values before schooling begins.

⁴ The next chapter on integration will attempt to show why and how these come together.

abandoned the search for moral absolutes. Public education in a pluralistic society mainly focuses on information. The Savior's teaching mandate focuses on obedience rather than mere cognition as his final objective. Plus, the Holy Spirit's activities among administrators, teachers, and students alter an ordinary school setting. We ought to expect evidence of his work.

Developing a Philosophy of Christian Education

To develop a philosophy of Christian education, I offer a graphic of various categories that represents how someone might make an intellectual journey beginning where he is and ending with a philosophy of Christian education in a specific context. Let your eyes work from the inside out and then clockwise from "Theological" around the outer edge.



Here is how the graphic works:

1. I acknowledge the existential beginning of the journey. We never quite separate ourselves from personal experiences and preferences. We may affirm or react to them, but those experiences form an invisible hand that shapes us. For example, I have difficulty finding a place for testing in my schooling philosophy because I hated each and every test experience. As an educator, I understand how to use testing positively, as the chapter on evaluating skills will show. But I have never used testing in any course during almost thirty years of academic work. Those early experiences continue to shape my philosophy.
2. My aversion to testing demonstrates another significant point in a personal philosophy, the difference between an affirmed philosophy and an operational philosophy. Although I acknowledge a place for testing in my affirmed philosophy, I never make room for it in my courses. Bringing personal preferences into a philosophy is acceptable as long as we don't bind them on everyone else or damage students in the process. You might also want to be careful to modify your personal preferences to fit within the institution you serve.
3. Look again at the graphic working from the inside out and clockwise. Life experiences often precede our formulation of theological notions. In a perfect world, proper theology comes simultaneously with life experiences, interpreting them, and shaping our personal preferences.⁵ In our current circumstances, we often accumulate a great many personal experiences before we formulate a reasonably comprehensive understanding of God. Our growing

⁵The only theologically correct, completely integrated system I know is the Old Testament Levitical system designed for the nation of Israel. The next chapter is dedicated to exploring an updated version of integration suitable for contemporary settings.

understanding should help us evaluate our personal experiences and preferences to see whether to modify our philosophy.

4. Next, our theology should address questions raised by Philosophy—especially if we find ourselves in Western cultures. I would change this section to address the categories of the dominant philosophy within a particular setting. For example, in the East I would look carefully at Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha, or Hindu thinkers dominating the setting. The important questions raised by the Greeks or others deserve Christian answers because Christianity works inside a comprehensive truth-based system. As Christian apologists have pointed out, the Bible gives the most complete and satisfying answers to those questions.
5. Now, our growing theological philosophy moves to inform educational issues and questions. Questions about the goals, curriculum, and participants in education find their best answers inside a theologically informed philosophical scaffold.
6. One last step applies our thinking to a specific context. Generally speaking, contexts can be formal, nonformal, or informal. Everyone recognizes that standard church-based educational endeavors differ radically from academic institutions bound up in proper credentialing, government regulation, and accreditation. Formal settings reflect the latter; nonformal reflect the former. Informal contexts also offer powerful educational opportunities when used intentionally.

Basically, then, our theology should answer Philosophical questions and address educational issues in specific contexts. This provides a rather orderly way to think through our constructing process. The starburst acknowledges the disorderly reality. Ideas about theology, Philosophy, education, and context come in erratic spasms at unpredictable times from unexpected sources as we move through time and space. We often have unassimilated bits and pieces orbiting in our minds. Significant time may elapse before we finally place them appropriately

in our philosophies. So, the graphic reflects an ongoing process. While we gather and process ideas constantly, we often fail to evaluate them theologically. Or, conversely, when we add new theological ideas, we fail to adjust the educational processes we have constructed. So, the graphic emphasizes an essential point in Christian thinking. As our comprehension of God grows, we should adjust our ideas about philosophy, education, and context accordingly.

Look at the four major categories of the graphic.

Theology

Although Christian thinkers have applied their theology to Western philosophy for more than two thousand years, applying theology to educational processes is often a new experience. When theology is applied to education, it most often finds a home in what should be taught rather than how education ought to be experienced. Formal instruction about theology usually comes via individual courses of study, leaving students to somehow integrate the various courses into a comprehensive picture of God and his world. My seminary training ended before I ever began to draw the pieces into any kind of holistic understanding about God.⁶ In fact, a substantial amount of time elapsed before the various bits and pieces congealed into a more coherent form. Only then did my view of God begin to seep into my educational philosophy. As I reexamined some formal theological categories from my training, a number of questions began to stir in my thinking. Here is a sample.

Bibliology: If God used such a rich mixture of method in the Bible (drama, story, poetry, song, paradox, solemn occasion,

⁶ Don't misunderstand; I recited and believed the creeds even before my conversion. However, a full understanding of God goes way beyond the creeds. I am still growing in my understanding.

festival, visions, dreams, animals, plants, food, etc.), why were my seminary professors so enamored with the lecture?

Theology proper: Should a love for God rather than a mere knowledge of God anchor the heart of an educational philosophy? If so, how do students move from mere cognition about him to an intimate relationship with him? What role does/should a school have in this process?

Christology: Does competitive grading conflict with the Christological implications of Philippians 2? How should Jesus' example as a foot-washing servant affect faculty/student relationships?

Pneumatology: Do we undervalue the fruit of the Spirit when we applaud and reward cognitive achievements so highly? How can the fruit of the Spirit be accommodated in our assessment devices?

Soteriology: Where in our educational policies do we apply unmerited favor and make room for repentance, forgiveness, and restoration? Is Christian education for believers only? Do non-Christians have any place in Christian education?

My own personal dream is that no educational process escapes thorough theological evaluation, and every new policy clearly is designed to reflect appropriate theological underpinnings.

Philosophy

This chapter will not untangle all the Greek philosophical riddles but does acknowledge their influence and presence.⁷ Rather than an apolo-

⁷If you want a straightforward, plain English approach to philosophy from a Christian point of view, I highly recommend George R. Knight,

getic, this chapter simply assumes the validity of Christian theology to answer these questions.

- *Origins* (cosmology): Where did we come from? How did we get here?
- *Purpose*: Why are we here? What unifying principles (if any) bind life together?
- *Reality* (ontology): Is what we experience real, a dream, or a shadow of something else? Is there an invisible reality? Does it impinge on the visible reality?
- *Truth*: Is there such a thing as unchanging absolute truth?
- *Knowledge* (epistemology): How do we or can we know anything?
- *Values* (axiology): Does anything transcend human opinion about what is good, beautiful, honorable, right, and so on?
- *Reason*: What role does reason have in human experience? Can we assume reason and logic are unaffected by emotion or personal preference?
- *History*: Is history a linear, circular, spiral, or random sequence of events?⁸

Could you write a four- or five-sentence answer to each of these affirming a Christian perspective? What would be the most important biblical passage you could reference for your position? You might want to reflect on the questions for a while before you gather an answer from the Bible's point of view.

Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998). For an extensive treatment of Western thinking from a Christian theologian/philosopher, I recommend the trilogy by Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: Three Essential Books in One Volume* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990).

⁸The questions shown are introductory rather than exhaustive.

Education

I encourage students to think through the theological implications of everything from formal classroom experiences to casual hallway encounters. Theology ought to escape from their textbooks and invade absolutely every living activity. Put another way, theology ought to help us make better decisions, not only articulate right definitions.⁹ Given that perspective, look at the following educational questions. How can theology help us make better decisions about these issues?

- *Goals:* What are the goals of Christian education? In what way do these change in academic settings?
- *Learners:* Who are they, and what are their special needs? Do non-believers have a place in Christian education?
- *Curriculum:* What needs to be learned? When should it be learned? Do all subjects have a spiritual dimension and a connection to the Creator?
- *Teachers:* What are essential spiritual and academic qualifications? What role(s) should an educator play?
- *Learning theory:* How does learning take place? Do the planned educational experiences reflect sound learning theory?
- *Methodology:* What procedures will be used? Will the activities stimulate or subdue curiosity?
- *Measurements:* How will teaching/learning be demonstrated by the student and evaluated by the teacher? Will things other than cognitive data retention be evaluated?

⁹ I am indebted once again to Andrew Walls for this thought that filled a painful cavity in my thinking. He believes the developing world church will bring forth fresh theological insights as they answer questions raised by their cultural context rather than Greek philosophical questions. For example, Hindus wonder why Christians eat God's creatures and show such disrespect for life. Buddhists cannot understand how loud modern Christian music promotes any reflective worship of any god. See *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History*.

- *Rules:* What limits are established? In what ways will these procedures reflect Christian values?
- *Technology:* How does/will media affect education? What limits, if any, will be placed on the use of technology? How can technology be leveraged to advance learning?
- *Communication:* Should Christian education be conversational? What kind of relationship nurtures educational conversations?

Some of these questions have generic answers, but others require a great deal of thinking and a specific context for a thorough answer.

Context

The graphic guiding our approach to a philosophy of Christian education applies theological answers to classic philosophical questions in order to make wise decisions about educational choices in specific contexts. In the history of education, a significant number of philosophies have been put forth. Each has merits and drawbacks. At various times, Christian groups have embraced one or another while excluding all others. I find various contexts useful to demonstrate how we alter philosophical emphases. In order to promote a conversation about philosophy applied in context, I structure a hypothetical situation. You might try it with several friends or colleagues. The discussion works best in a group of four. Here are the scenario and the challenge:¹⁰

¹⁰ Needless to say, this is not a comprehensive list, and these descriptions are clearly oversimplified. But, they focus on central issues, which keeps the conversation focused. I have found that the discussion and decision-making process is more important than the actual percentage assigned. Other options include: idealism, realism, progressivism, educational humanism, reconstructionism, futurism, critical pedagogy, behaviorism, and Educational Anarchism.

Welcome to the newly formed “Wegotittogether” Christian Philosophical Society. For several months, we have been postponing a discussion about our philosophical positions. Meanwhile, a number of groups have been pressing us for clear answers. You will see them listed below. In the interest of time, the executive officers narrowed the discussion focus to four leading philosophical positions. Please read each summary carefully. Then, after thoughtful and biblical reflection, assign a percentage of application for each educational context so that the total for the given group comes to 100 percent. You may use any percentage from 1 to 100, but we ask you not to use 25 percent. Please be prepared to discuss your choices at our next meeting.

PERENNIALISM

The goal of Christian education (CE) is to impart biblical knowledge. When people understand the truth, they will want to obey it. The mind is like a well; from its supply of clear pure truth can be drawn the answers to life’s questions. Careless study may lead to contamination of the supply. Therefore, educators must organize lessons so the student can apprehend truth. Key verse: 2 Timothy 3:15–17

ESSENTIALISM

The goal of CE is to provide spiritual life-skills. Unless people develop for themselves the capacity to study the Bible, to pray, to worship, and to develop effective personal disciplines, they will always remain dependent on others for spiritual nourishment. The mind is like a workshop, therefore CE provides tools and equipment. Key verse: 2 Timothy 2:15

PRAGMATISM

The goal of CE is to stimulate corporate ministry. The great aim in life is not knowledge but obedience; most people already know more truth than they live. The mind is like a military command post where information is processed into strategic and tactical actions; therefore, CE should focus on discerning, developing, and exercising each person's spiritual gift. Key verse: James 1:22–25

EXISTENTIALISM

The goal of CE is to facilitate personal health. As caring undershepherds, educators should nourish the flock with special attention to the weak and hurting. The mind is like a plant; with proper care it can be vigorous and fruitful, but when neglected it shrivels and turns inward. Therefore, CE should be alert to identify and meet people's needs. Key verse: Hebrews 12:12–13

	Perennialism	Essentialism	Pragmatism	Existentialism	Total
The Episcopabapterian Christian school (K-12)					
The Oldgeezers Sunday school class					
The Bestlooking Small Group					
The Totallybiblical Christian University					
The Missionest Bible School Ever					
The We'rethebest Theological Seminary					

(Students are asked to fill out the form first from their personal perspective then by group consensus.)

Now think carefully about why you made the choices you did. Did your allocations reflect some original personal preferences? Did any successful or unsuccessful educational experiences (without any real reference to theology) influence your decisions? As you explored your choices with others in your group, what changes occurred in your thinking? How did other views modify your own? Did your understanding of the purpose for each context alter your allocations significantly? Did the formal or nonformal context affect your assigned percentages? This exercise intentionally demonstrates how certain contexts alter our approaches. If you compared the group choices of five or six groups, the results might surprise you—at least they always surprise me. Just because you have a philosophy of Christian education does not mean everyone agrees with your priorities.

This volume is not designed to address church-based, nonformal educational processes.¹¹ However, it is designed to explore academic models of education, whether they are formal or nonformal, and the number of these latter models seems to be exploding. Is it fair to say that almost every church, parachurch, or mission agency is involved with one or more of these? If so, I suspect thousands of nonformal institutes are operating spasmodically throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. I also applaud their development stateside because not everyone needs an undergraduate or graduate degree. But many desire training beyond the sermon and Sunday school in order to permeate every corner of society with Jesus' teaching.

These intensive modular courses of nonformal institutes often range in duration from two to three days to one week. Some involve distance learning experiences combined with face-to-face interactions. They

¹¹ For an extended discussion of that challenge, see Michael S. Lawson and Robert J. Choun, *Directing Christian Education: The Changing Role of the Christian Education Specialist* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992).

often target local leaders and address specific concerns. Although structured and focused, they differ from formal schooling in several ways:

- They may offer some kind of certificate but do not lead to an accredited degree.
- The measurements of learning tend to be anecdotal rather than standardized.¹²
- The prerequisites for the students who attend are minimal if they exist at all.
- The courses stand alone rather than inside a curriculum.
- Faculty credentialing is often less specific.

Pause with me for only a moment to think through the amazing advantages of these nonformal models of academic Christian education. My colleague Dr. Ramesh Richard presented the following graphic at a faculty retreat some years ago. As I think through this graphic, the reality of the world's population grips me.

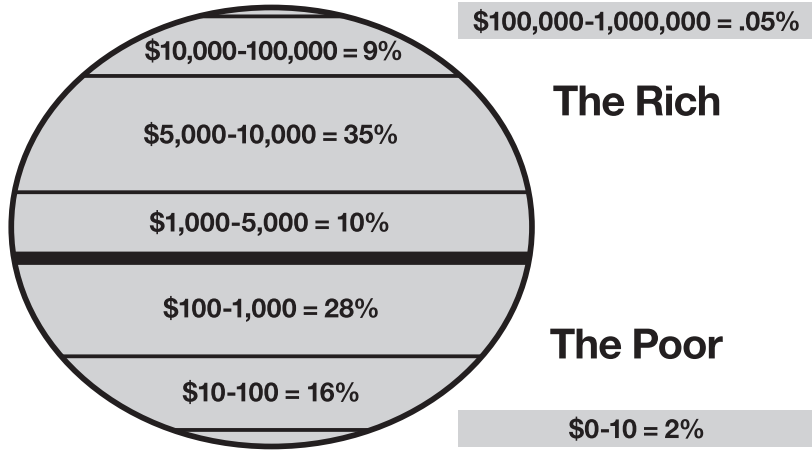
No one knows exactly how many people live on planet earth. For purposes of our discussion, let us assume the world population clock represents a reasonable approximation.¹³ Today, as I write this chapter, the world population sits at somewhere more than 7 billion. If the graphic and population are roughly accurate, then only 630 million people make more than \$10,000 a year while 6.37 billion live on less.

The latter number also represents people with limited access to education of any kind, let alone a Christian education. Even a philosophy of Christian higher education must take Jesus' teaching mandate in Matthew 28 seriously. Those trained in Christian higher education tend to minister to the upper 9 percent. My post as a faculty member

¹² Success is often measured by comments of appreciation during or after the course rather than submission of course papers or testing.

¹³ World Population Clock, accessed May 4, 2015, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population>.

World Population/Income



of Dallas Theological Seminary does not excuse me from Jesus' global vision. What strategy do we have for teaching 7 billion people? Christian higher education is certainly not up to the task by itself. But non-formal Bible institutes, training centers, and distance learning offer a promising infrastructure. I encourage their development wherever I go.¹⁴ I hope you have a place for these in both your affirmed and operational philosophy. Most of the work in these settings offers little or no financial remuneration. What an honor to give away the training Jesus has entrusted to us!

Students add a special contextual modifier. Students vary within and between academic settings. The serious bachelor-level students at the Yanjing Theological Seminary differ from the playful bachelor-level students at the Greek Bible Institute. What master's-level students at the Freie Theologische Hochschule in Germany expect

¹⁴ I am also in favor of planting churches, but this volume focuses on academic teaching.

from their teacher varies greatly from the master's-level students at the Hindustan Bible Institute in India. The research preoccupation of PhD students differs from the ministry concerns of DMin or DEd-Min students. These examples highlight how issues of culture, language, prior training, and future roles of students affect the context. A competent educational philosophy should embrace and account for these differences.

Outside the American context, the minority status of Christians often frames Christian education differently. For example,

- A Jordanian student said, "We are too small to divide the Christian community as you do in the West. Here there are Christians and Muslims. Your ecclesiastical divisions do not work well here."
- An Indonesian student said, "Do not pray our persecutions cease. Because we are persecuted, we are also richly blessed with many miracles."
- A Chinese student said, "Pray that we will be a good testimony to our government and a benefit to our society."
- A Haitian student asked, "How do we teach our people to avoid the witchdoctors and not return to them when God doesn't answer their prayers as they expected?"

These students seek an education that addresses their specific cultural concerns from a uniquely Christian perspective.

As our discussion of context concludes, let me offer one last word about formal, nonformal, and informal settings for education. Of the three, informal has the most power, especially if there is a strong relationship between the teacher and the student. More often than not, casual conversations catch people at a moment of learning readiness. While we see these moments in the ministry of Jesus, we often fail to grasp their significance in our own interpersonal encounters. Perhaps our words will not be used to complete an academic assignment or pass

a test, but they might be the very words a student needs to move forward in his living walk with God. In my philosophy of Christian education, the teacher is always “on,” redeeming each and every opportunity.

A Philosophy of Christian Education in an Academic Setting

Up to this point we have been thinking about our philosophy of Christian education in a general sense, noticing the variations caused by context. These various contexts modify the understanding and application of a Christian education. A course taught on the Gospel of John in an air-conditioned Dallas classroom will take a different turn under a humid Haitian thatched roof. Miraculously, Christian education actually flows into each and every context—but not always in the same way or with the same results. Sometimes it flows smoothly, and other times, well, let us just say it’s bumpy.

We turn now to the various parts within a school’s philosophy. Each of the parts has its own work of the Holy Spirit. Whether he is inspiring Scripture, bearing fruit, building community, comforting, or teaching, our dependence on his activity creates an essential unifying feature of a distinctly Christian philosophy. Truly, his name and work modifies everything we say about a philosophy of Christian education.

For the remainder of this chapter, I offer a series of categories and questions you might use to begin shaping your philosophy. I will suggest some answers in this chapter for the first four. The only way I know to illustrate these honestly is to reference my personal practices. If you find something you like, I probably borrowed it from a really good book, a professor I admired, a successful colleague, Jesus’ interactions in the Gospels, or even one of my students. The last six questions have whole chapters later in the book. Ultimately, of course, you are creating your own personal philosophy. Here are the questions:

1. *Goals*: What are the goals of Christian education? Do these change in an academic institution?
2. *Learners*: Who are they and what are their special needs? Do non-believers have a place in Christian education? (See chap. 9, "Relating Skills.")
3. *Curriculum*: What needs to be learned? When should it be learned? (See chaps. 2, "Helping Students and Professors Integrate Learning," and 5, "Mastering Content.")
4. *Teachers*: What are essential spiritual and academic qualifications? What roles should educators play? (See chaps. 2, "Helping Students and Professors Integrate Learning," and 5, "Mastering Content.")
5. *Learning theory*: How does learning take place? Do the planned educational experiences reflect sound learning theory? (See chap. 3, "Learning Theories for Practitioners.")
6. *Methodologies*: What procedures will be used? Will the activities stimulate or suppress curiosity? (See chaps. 6, "Managing Skills," and 8, "Instructing Skills.")
7. *Measurements*: How will teaching/learning be demonstrated by the student and evaluated by the teacher? Will things besides cognitive data retention be assessed? (See chap. 7, "Evaluating Skills.")
8. *Rules*: What limits should be established? In what ways will procedures reflect Christian values? (See chap. 10, "Institutional Realities.")
9. *Technology*: How does/will media affect education? What limits, if any, will be placed on technology? (See chaps. 4, "Planning Skills in Syllabus Design"; 6, "Managing Skills"; and 8, "Instructing Skills.")
10. *Communication*: Should Christian education be conversational? What kind of relationship encourages educational conversations? (See chap. 9, "Relating Skills.")

Now, let's look in more detail at the first four categories and questions.

Goals: What Are the Goals of Christian Education?

Clear measurable goals are essential guides to any philosophy. Without these, we cannot know whether we have accomplished anything, or even the wrong thing. The central goal for Christian education ought to be a love for God. Jesus said this is the greatest commandment (Matt 22:34–40). No matter where I am, who attends, or what I intend to say, I am always asking myself, *How will this help them love God more?* If I cannot answer that question with some degree of precision, why am I doing it? This central question must be asked repeatedly and used to influence our educational design.

While I am much in favor of a deep emotional attachment to God, love for him means acting with patience and kindness toward family, friends, and even enemies.¹⁵ Every lesson, every course ought to move us in some way toward that goal. The very fact that Jesus repeats his command to love one another five times in the Upper Room Discourse ought to galvanize this as the central goal for Christian education. Loving God with our minds ought to include using the knowledge we gain to make decisions that consistently reflect his values. Everything in Christian education should orbit around a love for God in such a way that no one could ever doubt it as the central goal.

I worry that endless school lectures have dulled students' capacity for personal reflection about their love for God. I wonder whether teachers or students make the connection between the material at hand and a love for God. Sometimes I prod students in this direction by asking, "In what way did this learning experience help you love God more?" I ask teachers to evaluate each class and course the same way.

¹⁵I often use the first two words of Paul's definition because impatience is relatively easy to detect, and unkindness is always measured by the victim's experience.

The teaching mandate of Jesus contains an educational feature unlike any other in the history of education. The acid test in Jesus' educational system requires obedience to Jesus' teaching rather than mere cognition or recall of his teaching. Our teaching must be organized so that no one loses focus on ways to obey his teaching. While I am not convinced we have organized theological or Christian university education in this way, I am content to see it change one lesson, one course, one student, or one teacher at a time.

The New Testament describes a fully grown disciple as "mature." Various passages emphasize different features of maturity. In the question about curriculum, we will examine these features a little further. However, they must always be wrapped in the first and Great Commandment and the second that is like it.

Now, think briefly about the secondary questions. Do the goals change in an academic institution? Christian schools at every level must keep the central goal clearly in view. Although schools cannot guarantee results, everything in them ought to consistently point in the same direction. Academics, athletics, and the arts must see themselves contributing to rather than competing for the central position. How are these educational goals visible throughout the daily routines of schooling? Students should easily point to a variety of activities that contribute to their movement toward a love for God if the school advertises a Christian education. And, every effort ought to be made to eliminate mixed messages.

Learners: Who Are They, and What Are Their Needs?

Numerous complaints have come to me over the past three decades about another young (always male) seminary graduate who has escaped to inflict a seminary-level education on poor unsuspecting adolescents. These graduates have no training in adolescent development, nor do the

churches require that before hiring. These churches fail to look inside a degree program to make sure their new hire has appropriate training. Moreover, these young graduates fail to give thought to the learning readiness of their students. I find faculty members making similar mistakes in introductory courses when they ask students to wrestle with issues the experts have not resolved in twenty years of research. So, what is my point?

A philosophy of Christian education should recognize that we teach students, not merely subjects. In a Christian worldview, one size does not fit all when students are involved. Some need prodding, some need inspiring, some need encouraging, and some need comforting—blending all of these with instruction. Students arrive in classrooms with varying levels of background preparation. Christian teachers in churches and seminaries may need to adjust material to appropriately fit their students. Sometimes, the longer we teach the more difficult it becomes to remember how little beginning students really know or understand. Perhaps several examples from my own experience will help clarify why identifying the specific needs of students is so important. In each of these cases more thinking about who the students were and what they needed was definitely in order. If you are tempted to skip lightly over these, pause long enough to read the last one.

- *Location:* Seminary in India
Subject: Faculty Training on Assessment
Problem: Faculty complain that students refuse to do exegetical papers.
What I learned: Students were not taught how to do an exegetical paper or what an exegetical paper was supposed to look like or provided with examples. Most of these students would leave the seminary, walking to their village ministry. They would not take a Greek text with them or the commentaries available only in the library. The faculty agreed it was very unlikely that those who returned to the villages (the majority of their students) would ever

do another exegetical paper. So why were the students required to do Greek exegetical papers rather than Hindi exegetical papers from the only Bible they will have? Because these professors were teaching the subjects they had been taught in the way they had been taught (in England) during their training without any reference to the students in front of them.

- *Location:* Central Haiti
Subject: Learning Theory for Christian Schoolteachers
Problem: Christian schoolteachers in Haiti need only to pass a grade to teach it. Most of them had not graduated from high school, not to mention college.
What I learned: These sweet dedicated teachers needed a lot less theory and a lot more time to process a few ideas that would work in their tiny village schools. I often had to rely on their thinking to find an application and then recruit the group to evaluate and modify it for immediate use upon their return to teaching.
- *Location:* Tyumen, Siberia
Subject: Small Group Process for Church Pastors
Problem: The organizer who selected the subject did not ask the pastors what subject would help them most.
What I learned: These bivocational pastors had no formal training beyond high school. They gladly came to sponsored training events because the hotel was very nice and the food was better than what they had at home. They listened politely to the typically rich American pastor give his sermonized teaching but found little value for their tiny rural Siberian ministry. At least, that is what they shared with me. When they finally believed that I cared more about them than the subject, they asked me if I could help them with their sermons. Their only tool was their Russian Bible. The remainder of the week was dedicated to learning how to read and study their Russian Bible in preparation for a weekly sermon.

- *Location:* Central Mexico
Subject: None. This was a strictly social visit with Manuel Arenas.
Problem: How to design an appropriate and affordable Bible school for poor Totonac Indian pastors.
What I learned: Living life below Mexican poverty line standards is harsh to say the least. Designing a Bible institute for those students who do required some creative turns. While students attended classes orbiting around biblical and theological subjects, they spent afternoons learning the latest processes to grow turkeys, goats, vegetables, and fruit trees. Their agricultural efforts cut food costs while at school to almost zero and gave them precious insights to share back home. Totonacs depend on the sale of agricultural products for cash. Upon graduation, pastors returned to their villages with seed, small plants, breeding stock of goats and turkeys, along with Bible training. They brought both spiritual and financial value home. This was integration at its finest!

One of the great temptations for teachers is to look at a classroom full of students and assume they all are clamoring for the lesson they have prepared that day. Everyone focuses on the person doing the talking, allowing teachers to forget the individual stresses each student brings to the learning experience. Regulations may require physical presence, but their minds and hearts may be on their parent's pending divorce, a beloved family member's cancer, a personal financial crisis, or a myriad of other issues. So, teach your lesson but look deeply into the eyes of your students for indications of distraction and follow up. Try to associate the material at hand with something meaningful in the students' life experiences. Whatever else is true as a Christian teacher, you represent the Lord Christ and his boundless compassion.

Now consider the secondary question. Where do nonbelievers fit in a Christian education? At first blush, we might answer, "Christian education ought to be for Christians." While that may be a good

answer, it does not correspond to reality. For quite a long time, Christian schools of various shapes and sizes have opened their doors to nonbelievers. One Christian school in the Philippines has 80 percent Buddhist children; another in Hong Kong enrolls substantial numbers of international diplomatic core children representing a smorgasbord of religions. A New Orleans seminary has an extension in Louisiana's Angola prison that allows anyone to attend, and of course Christian colleges, while requiring a faith commitment from faculty, usually have an open-door policy for students. Perhaps Christian education should play a larger role in helping nonbelievers understand Jesus' teaching and clearing up misconceptions.

Curriculum: What Needs to Be Learned?

Jesus made it clear that he wanted us to teach everything he taught. Most believe that encompasses the whole biblical corpus because his life and teaching documented in the Gospels and fully explained in the Epistles forge inseparable links with the Old Testament. We certainly expect Christians to have some sense of biblical theology and Christian history.¹⁶ Teaching this part of the curriculum must lead to obedience, as simple knowledge about the Bible was never what Jesus intended. Ignoring obedience as an essential part of the curriculum is not an option for the teacher or the student. Christian teaching comes with serious expectations. Any course dealing with biblical material ought to feature a distinctive call to obedience for teacher and student rather than mere cognitive manipulation of information. The call to obedience for nonbelievers begins with a fundamental trust in Jesus. Without basic trust in the Savior, they lack both motivation for obedience and the Spirit's power to obey.

¹⁶ I appreciate Walls's distinction between church history and Christian history.

As the New Testament unfolds, growing to *maturity* represents a major objective. Various passages reflect the different components that lead to maturity. Because curriculum by necessity is broken into smaller pieces, teachers need to help students connect what they are learning to why they are learning it. Too often the questions of why were answered long ago in a land far away and the reasons have been long forgotten. Although nonbelievers may accumulate a great deal of biblical information (as did the scribes and Pharisees), they cannot move toward maturity without the Spirit's enablement.

As you reflect on maturity's components, connect elements of the curriculum to one or more of these. Once again, if what we are doing does not really lead students to maturity, why are we doing it? Here are the references along with my sense of their application to curriculum.

- Ephesians 4:9–14 suggests gifted teachers prepare Christians for works of service and ministry, promote unity among believers, and stabilize faith. So Christian education culminates in service.
- Philippians 2:12–16 suggests mature Christians have a forward-looking heavenly perspective and ought to live up to whatever truth they have.¹⁷ So Christian education encourages students to embrace an eternal perspective on life as lived.
- Hebrews 5:14 and 6:1 suggest mature Christians can handle advanced teaching and have practice making good decisions. So Christian education enables students to grapple more effectively with daily decisions.
- James 1:4 and 3:2 identify endurance as a key producer of maturity evidenced by the ability not to stumble in what one says. James 3:1 warns teachers of stricter judgment in this regard. So

¹⁷Christians who did not have a completed canon were still expected to move to maturity by acting on what they knew.

Christian education helps students understand and cope with difficult circumstances.

These four offer many anchor points for the various subjects within a theological education. However, teachers must help students make the connections. My professors in the business school at the University of North Texas began every course demonstrating how management, economics, statistics, accounting, or law was both an art and a science. This was their attempt to help students integrate the courses. While their efforts were largely wasted on me, I do believe as Christians we need to constantly reorient students to the ultimate goals of their education and how the material at hand moves them toward those goals.

The larger and more difficult question comes from what we commonly refer to as “general education.” This category includes subjects like math, language, history, science, social studies, and so forth. What business does Christian education have with these subjects? Prior to the Enlightenment, Christians would not have asked this question. Now is a good time to reassert God’s claim on everything knowable. Omnipresence normally has a technically defined theological meaning. But there is a sense in which the term fits a Christian philosophy of curriculum because every subject of inquiry has theological origins and significance. Christ is present in every subject, and we must teach students how to see him. God can be found as the Creator of substance for scientific inquiry, originator and confounder of languages, superintendent of history, and the philosophical foundation for predictable mathematics. Name your subject; each finds its origin in him. Somehow, Christian education let the theological significance of these subjects slip away while relegating theology to a class, department, or special school.

Now think about the secondary question. When should it be learned? From the beginning of schooling, God’s presence in and authorship of everything being taught should be made clear. But schooling can be so stressful and pressured that much of God’s presence

is lost along the way. Jesus provided an educational mantra when he said, “I still have many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now” (John 16:12). The amount and sequence of learning needs careful consideration. How many of us were told to learn something because we “will need it someday” only to discover we didn’t need it except to win at Trivial Pursuit?

I’m also concerned that so much of what was once learned in college has now been pushed down into the lower grades. The competitive nature of parents and schools often promote this. This has also occurred in theological education where seminary graduates teach exactly the same graduate level course to their undergraduate students in Bible colleges.¹⁸ Sometimes students become victims rather than beneficiaries of an education. A healthy view of curriculum provides foundation and motivation for lifelong learning.

Teachers: What Are Essential Spiritual and Academic Qualifications?

Christian education demands more from its teachers than any other form of education. Students expect their Christian teachers will know their subjects and practice the Christian faith. No matter what the subject, we are always in the business of making disciples of Jesus Christ. We cannot escape our responsibility as living examples of what we want our students to become. Loving God must find its living expression in the teacher first, then in the student. Or, in the scary words of Jesus, the student “will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). If we want them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, they should at least experience the Spirit’s sweet fruit during their encounters with us.

¹⁸ In one case, the young teacher used his professor’s syllabus without bothering to remove his professor’s name.

The age of specialization places Christian teachers in a precarious position. The tendency in advanced studies is to know more and more about less and less. We may become so immersed in our subject area that we fail to see ourselves as only one piece within the student's larger educational experience. Some of my professors thought their course was the only one I was taking (or perhaps needed to take) that semester. If our training primarily came through the public sector, we may lack sufficient theological foundations to properly orient students. Neither of these concerns can be corrected without intentional effort.

Is there a reason why pastor and teacher are linked in Ephesians 4? Is there a reason that Jesus' apostolic commission of Peter repeatedly focused on shepherding? Yes, I know that teaching is listed independently in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. Is it possible to completely detach pastoring from teaching in the Christian sense? Students consistently want their teachers to be interested in them as persons, and those educators who are amplify the impact of their teaching.

What does Jesus' role as foot washer have to say to those who teach others on his behalf? And, if Jesus only does what he sees the Father doing, what excuse remains for us to act aloof? I raise this here because we inherit a tradition that typically distances teachers from students. There are great temptations to intellectual pride, professional competition, and/or inflated self-worth in the teaching profession. The words we use to describe our activities define us. Will any of the following activities characterize you?

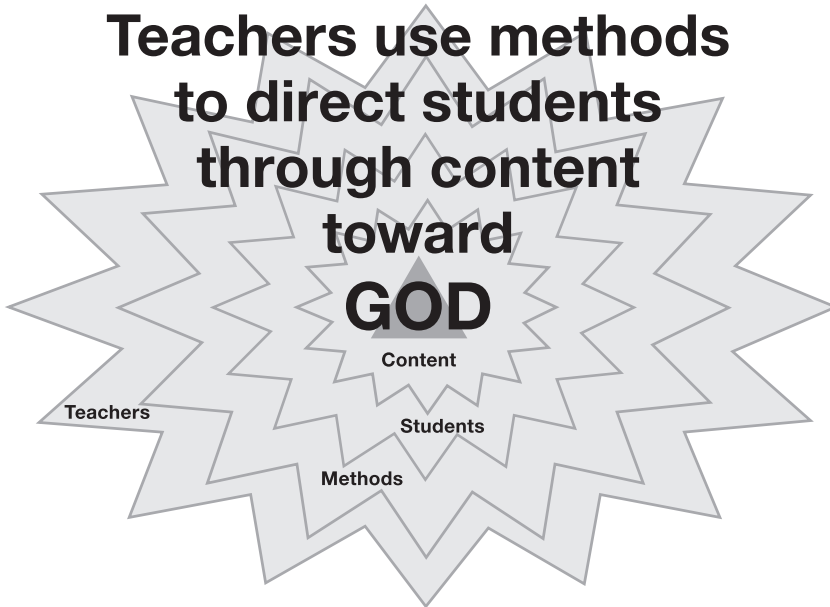
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Modeling
- Instructing
- Evaluating
- Guiding
- Illustrating

- Motivating
- Counseling
- Serving

Just before Jesus' example in the kenosis (self-emptying) passage, the apostle Paul admonished his readers, and by application, all of us, with these words: "Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:3–4). What if professors and teachers really considered students as more important than themselves? Here I appeal to the difference between our affirmed and operational philosophies. If we affirm their significance, then we must treat students as significant. I honestly believe this should distinguish Christian education from every other offering.

Conclusion

The basic purpose of this chapter was to furnish you with categories, questions, and comments to guide you through the process of creating a personal philosophy of Christian education in an academic setting. On page five I offered a graphic with those categories. In our discussion, I raised a lot of questions and offered a few comments. Of course, this whole professor's puzzle reflects my personal philosophy. Given the complex nature of a true philosophy of Christian education, my students have driven me to summarize my philosophy for them. The following graphic represents my best effort. I hope it helps keep you centered on the task God is entrusting to you.



Our operating philosophy of Christian education reflects what we really believe to be true and always guides our decisions and practices. May we attempt to collect and formulate the wisest approaches to education that consistently reflect Christian values. And, at the core of those values, may the fear of the Lord guide our wise choices. Whether I am planning a course, actively engaged with students in a classroom, or sitting alone evaluating their work, I try to remain aware that God holds me accountable for what I do to students. If, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,” then I cannot construct a reasonable philosophy of Christian education without keeping this consideration before me at all times.



HELPING STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS INTEGRATE LEARNING

"All truth is God's truth."

Frank Gaebelein¹

This chapter deals with Christian education particularly as it addresses schooling. If I were writing to church educators, this would take a decidedly different turn. I have chosen to describe the problem in an unusual way in an effort to simplify the discussion. If you feel I oversimplify the problem, please refer to one or more of the competent authors cited in the discussion. Their insights approach integration from various angles and provide wonderfully detailed but lengthy perspectives.

¹Frank E. Gaebelein, "The Pattern of God's Truth," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 111.441 (1954): 71.

The Problem

Life confronts everyone with a combination of harsh and pleasant experiences. Humans need a meaningful explanation that makes some sense of these two disparaging realities. Sickness, disease, death, war, rape, theft, slavery, poverty, hunger, greed, murder, and birth defects (among others) contrast vividly with young couples preparing for marriage, newborn babies, spring flowers, cool breezes, songbirds, sunsets, star-filled skies, fresh water, sweet fruit, and, personally, I include my wife's chicken and dumplings. Because these various experiences come at us in convoluted fashion, life's realities may resemble our old friend Humpty Dumpty.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

Rather than a single reality, life may appear as simply a bunch of broken pieces! A good quality Christian education should explain how all life's pieces fit together. Putting Humpty Dumpty's pieces together again is precisely our problem with integrating learning.

No matter where we are born in the world, we grow up with some explanation of how the pieces fit together. Perhaps you grew up as I did, seldom thinking about the distasteful pieces. In college, the pernicious insistence on relativism by some university professors forced me to reexamine my views of right and wrong, good and evil, harsh and pleasant realities. My views were loosely cobbled together from a solid, hard-working, mildly Christian, middle-class Texas family. Religion had its proper place on Sunday morning. The rest of the week was mine to do with as I pleased as long as I didn't break the law. Wrongdoers were punished and hard work always rewarded. No one close to me got seriously ill or died except for an uncle in a different city whose funeral

I was not allowed to attend. My grandparents died before I was born or while I was too small to remember. Vacation was once a year almost always in Colorado. We were the belly button of the middle class. I can remember the first divorced couple I met as a teenager. Even my aunt who was estranged from her husband remained married to and supported him until he died. I also remember the first time I heard of a professional athlete breaking his contract. I had no categories for broken marriages or broken contracts. Otherwise, my world was nicely organized, and all the pieces seemed to fit.

University professors challenged my neat categories. Were the laws that seemed so essential to maintaining order merely social conveniences? If, as these professors claimed, evolution was true and survival of the fittest the doctrine to believe, then things were as they should be. People who had money and power deserved it. People who wanted it would have to outsmart or overpower them. That made sense. So why were some of those same professors clamoring for “social justice” as though something was wrong? That did not make sense. Of course many adherents of materialist evolution try to untangle themselves from its uncomfortable social implications by talking loudly about human rights. Whenever I pressed for the source of human rights, the conversation got louder and filled with multisyllable words but no real reasons. They covered the lack of rationale with more volume. At least that is how it seemed to me.

My sophomoric wrestling took a decidedly different turn when God graciously confronted me with his Son’s sacrifice for my sin and generous offer to be my Lord. I had been taught that Jesus died for the sin of the world, but it never occurred to me that I needed it—after all, I was native-born Texan! “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” really shocked me. I gladly accepted his atonement and simultaneously yielded my life to him as Lord. Not only did I now have a Lord for my life but for all of life and life’s pieces. Clearly, as Creator and

Redeemer, he could organize the pieces! I did not put all the pieces of Humpty Dumpty together that day, nor do I have all his pieces together today. But my growing biblical construct of Humpty Dumpty looks decidedly better than that of many friends who seem to leave numerous large pieces lying around.

Most of the world believes an explanation of life's reality consists of interrelated visible and invisible pieces.² They would probably also say we cannot really understand the visible pieces without understanding the invisible pieces. People hold these explanations very tightly. From childhood, respected parents teach and emphasize these explanations. Extended family, friends, neighbors, and sometimes whole cultures embrace essentially the same views and reinforce the explanations. Some cultures threaten death for anyone who thinks otherwise. Many, if not most, of life's pieces seem to fit. Those that do not are simply held as items to wonder about but not at the expense of damaging the whole explanation. The explanations go largely unchallenged even when alternative explanations are offered.

A friend told me how African tribal women received training in hygiene so they could work in a health clinic. These wonderful ladies learned to wash utensils, hands, clothing, and bedding so as not to spread disease. But when asked why people got sick, they responded, "Someone put a curse on them." They were happy to do what they were taught, but repeating procedures did not change the explanation for how the pieces fit together when it comes to sickness.

These explanations vary from place to place and may actually contradict one another. What explanation could ever reconcile the Hindu's innumerable gods who each control only individual pieces and the Muslim's Allah who they claim controls them all? The border between Pakistan and India is not like the one between the United States and

²I am using visible and invisible to stand for the material and immaterial parts of reality.

Canada. Pakistan and India represent oil and water in their explanations of life and reality. They can be stirred, but they can never be blended. The tensions there will never go away because they lie deep beneath their soils of explanation.

While I do not agree with the Hindu and Muslim explanations, I do respect the fact that they try to account for very important pieces to Humpty Dumpty. Invisible pieces like a purpose for life, good and evil, life after death, and spiritual forces all find a place in their explanations of life's reality. Sometimes pieces of their explanations surface in unexpected places. Disney's *Lion King* presents one such example. Mufasa, the lion king, offers the "Circle of Life" as an explanation to his young son, Simba, who will one day be king, according to the story, and needs to understand what the position means.

Mufasa: "Everything you see exists together in a delicate balance. As king, you must understand that balance and respect all the creatures from the crawling ants to the leaping antelopes."

Simba: "But dad, don't we eat the antelopes?"

Mufasa: "Yes, Simba, but let me explain. When we die, our bodies become the grass and the antelope eats the grass. And so, we are all connected in the great circle of life."³

The deliciously resonate voice of James Earl Jones as Mufasa rumbles out the words so convincingly no one thinks to question the explanation. But, does the circle of life truly explain reality? Does the antelope like this explanation? The antelope dies an excruciatingly violent and painful death, while the lion dies of old age. How did the antelope end up in such a precarious position in the circle? Why can't he choose a

³ *The Lion King*, Platinum Edition DVD: Walt Disney Productions, 2003 release.

different place in the circle? Does the circle of life seem fair to all its members? Of course *The Lion King* is a children's movie with a childish explanation, but I have living relatives who embrace this explanation.

For ever so long in the West, the history of explanations worked with a whole set of life's pieces. Some were harsh while others were pleasant, but they all belonged to life and needed explaining. The rules changed during the Enlightenment (which did not substantially affect Africa, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, China, Japan, most of Mexico, Central and South America. Need I go on?).⁴ Certain Western thinkers of that era decided to separate life's pieces into visible and invisible categories. Moreover, they simply dismissed the invisible pieces and anyone who holds to them as irrelevant. This numerically tiny but vocal group of people promoted their point of view as the only rational explanation. Today, that view has become the dominant explanation in public universities.

Some of my university professors held that dominant view. Even though no one knows exactly how many visible pieces exist, nor is able to account for the extreme diversity of pieces or consciously holds all the known visible pieces at any one time, these individuals still proudly proclaim to have assembled Humpty Dumpty. I contend they have either Humpty or Dumpty, but not both. Their explanation only describes what they experience. They cannot criticize what has been nor prescribe what should be. They lack the invisible pieces of fixed values, ultimate purpose, and final hope to work with.

Sometimes people think Christians overstate the consequences of the naturalist case. But actual testimony from committed philosophical naturalists suggests the Christian critique is accurate. Philip Ryken cites one scientist who expands his materialist point of view: "Gone is

⁴ Andrew Walls even refers to the Reformation as only "the European controversies of the sixteenth century" in *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 39.

purpose,” writes the Oxford chemist Peter Atkins. “Gone is the after-life, gone is the soul, gone is protection through prayer, gone is design, gone is false comfort. All that is left is an exhilarating loneliness and the recognition that through science we can come to an understanding of ourselves and this glorious cosmos.”⁵ Ryken concludes, “According to this culturally dominant creation story [evolutionary naturalism], the only purpose we have is whatever purpose we find for ourselves.”⁶ Frankly, this sounds to me like someone who just scooped up a glass of seawater and declares there are no whales in the ocean! While I am sure Peter Atkins is a smart man, he can hardly claim to have drawn his conclusions having evaluated every available piece of information.

Once in a while someone in that group breaks ranks, like Jeffrey M. Schwartz.⁷ Schwartz teaches and conducts brain research at UCLA. His research not only opens the door to the possibility of invisible pieces; it demonstrates that at least one invisible piece (the mind) affects and changes a visible piece (the brain). He documents how the activity of the invisible mind changes the visible brain in both chemistry and wiring. His work with OCD patients clears new ground for extending the conversation about visible and invisible pieces. His views are considered radical, unacceptable, and nearly heretical in brain research circles. He makes no claim about God, but his encounters with various colleagues echoes my own experience when calling a culturally dominant view into question.

Of course, Christians have always had numerous groups of prominent scientists with strong Christian faith who do not adhere to the

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 49–50. The citation can be found at Peter Atkins, “Science and Religion: Rack or Featherbed: The Uncomfortable Supremacy of Science,” *Science Progress* 83 (2000): 28–31.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jeffrey M. Schwartz and Sharon Begley, *The Mind and the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002).

culturally dominant explanation.⁸ These women and men recognize the insufficient nature of visible pieces to explain all of life. Organizations like the Christian Medical Society, Creation Research Society, and American Scientific Affiliation, to mention a few, represent these reputable scholars. But in spite of strength and credibility, their voices do not prevail in the public universities or even in some previously Christian universities. Consequently, an overwhelming majority of people in America and Europe are educated in a system that simply ignores the invisible pieces of Humpty Dumpty. And, by being taught to ignore a whole category of pieces, students assume those pieces have no real value or impact on the visible pieces.

This dominant explanation affects us in at least two ways: (1) as teachers, the deficiency of the dominant explanation may characterize our previous training and affect our understanding; and (2) students arrive in our schools and courses with varying degrees of exposure to or belief in the deficient system. To make matters worse, not only does public education ignore a whole category of pieces, but education's curricular structure tends to be quite compartmentalized. Once past the early grades where a single teacher teaches everything, disciplines tend to take divergent paths. So, even the visible pieces remain isolated and unconnected to one another.

My own training illustrates the deficiency of prior training. I came to Christ in 1963, and upon graduation from North Texas State University, entered seminary in 1965. Christian education as a major appealed to me. At the time, I thought in terms of two educational categories: general education and Christian education or, if you prefer, secular and

⁸ In books like John Clover Marsma, ed., *Behind the Dim Unknown* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1966), "Twenty six notable scientists, from twenty fields of natural and physical science—all monotheists—discuss the unsolved (and probably unsolvable) problems within their own fields and explain why they believe in God" (quoted from back cover).

sacred education. Language arts, math, history, social studies, and so forth, were clearly part of general (secular) education. In my understanding, Christian education gave attention to matters of the spiritual life as taught in the Bible and was chiefly done through church or parachurch ministries. The notion that Christian education approached and explained all learning was undoubtedly presented to me but probably got crowded out by too many other pressing issues. My comprehension of integrated learning came much later. In essence, I didn't really care how subjects in general education were learned or who taught them because I was focused on Christian education at church. This chapter offers evidence that a needed change took place in me.

My students illustrate the second way our current educational system affects us as Christian teachers. All my students are Christians as far as I know, yet they come with a wide variety of educational backgrounds. A good many only have Christianity dusted on the edges of their education, if at all. Their public university engrained the dominant explanation with the possible exception that they may now hold to a creationist point of view. Of course, some students come from Christian homes or schools, but they are a small minority in comparison. Even those with Christian school experience often lack a complete picture of Humpty Dumpty, with all his pieces. While they benefitted from a high-quality education in subjects taught by Christian teachers, they experienced a compartmentalized curriculum lacking an integrated whole. Their GPAs demonstrate how well they did in one subject after another, but they rarely understand how those subjects interrelate with one another or to the whole. Neither can they explain how their general education pieces interface with their current experience in theological education. I know; I ask them. Many (though not all) of my best students find the notion of integrated learning a novel idea.

Integration begins with Christian teachers who have a clear understanding that visible and invisible pieces not only fit back together but

actually interconnect with one another. In other words, reality has both visible and invisible parts. Subjects in any curriculum are interconnected and interrelated. A true Christian education must take students as they come and guide them into as full an explanation of as many pieces as possible. In the end, students should have a fair notion of what God intended Humpty Dumpty (life) to look like. Or, in contemporary jargon, they have a proper worldview. Our task as Christian teachers shows where our piece (whatever course we teach) fits among all the curriculum pieces in their education and then shows how both visible and invisible pieces help us make sense out of life's experiences. I assume this is almost never done for the student in our compartmentalized approach to education because we address worldview issues in their master's degree. The average entering age of students at our seminary is around thirty-two. For most of them, our program represents their first exposure to shaping a Christian worldview or attempting to understand how Humpty Dumpty goes together.

Our Challenge

Because integrating learning occurs at various interconnected levels, I have framed the educational challenge by connecting four levels in the following way:

“An integrated *life*
should be taught through an integrated *curriculum*
in order to reflect the integrated nature of *truth*
found ultimately in *God* himself.”

Note how the statement works from life toward God. Another approach is to work from God's revelation of himself in Scripture and

creation back to life as integrated experience. In that case, the statement reads as follows:

“*God* himself reveals
the integrated nature of *truth*
which should be taught through an integrated *curriculum*
to produce an integrated *life*.”

Modern education simply assumes students will take the various subjects in their education and somehow assemble a meaningful explanation. Christian education has tended to do the same thing. For the most part, integrating learning remains the unassisted task of the student. In my training at university and seminary, I had only one course that even attempted to synthesize anything. That course examined systematic theology and attempted to integrate its numerous components into a whole. The course was helpful but obviously limited in scope.

If we want students to know more than the answers to Trivial Pursuit, Christian education must teach them where each piece fits and how the visible and invisible pieces interrelate. What does Humpty Dumpty look like when he is “together again”? As teachers, we need to know where and how our courses fit within the whole. A coherent outlook on life (worldview) and a consistent practice of Christian living (integrated life) should be the products of a truly Christian education.

Integrated Life

Helping students develop a consistent outlook and integrated life begins with an appreciation for God’s interest in all areas of learning. In Genesis, the Creator reflects on his work and exclaims, “It is good!” Just as students learn about famous writers, artists, and designers by studying their work, they must also learn about God by studying his work in creation and Scripture. The intricate design and attention to detail display

his interest in every minute feature. As students learn to give attention to design and detail, they imitate God. The creation's immense magnitude and intimidating displays of power provide appropriate context for inflated human egos. Scientists are slowly learning about the interconnected and interdependent nature of the whole created order.

Students might conclude that humans simply occupy another place in the long list of life-forms except for God's appointment of humans as stewards of creation. While adults should conclude God exists by simply observing the creation, they could not conclude their responsibility for the creation without Scripture. As Christians, we take that responsibility seriously and believe God holds us accountable for what we do with and to his creation. His interests extend from the cattle of Nineveh to the sparrow that drops from the sky. God wants students to care as much about his creation as he does.

Christian education orients students to God's ownership of the world around them and their responsibility. God's world is not ours to do with as we please. Christian education also helps students take responsibility for their education as they develop God-given abilities. Their skills and insights will be needed in the body of Christ and ultimately in his kingdom. Those whose education integrates learning not only know their place in the creation but also come to understand their places in their countries, states, cities, neighborhoods, and families.

With its prevailing materialistic worldview, public education pushes students toward a more utilitarian objective. College students most often choose their studies with jobs or careers in mind. Career days for students in secondary education emphasize courses where students have achieved some success to point to possible future career choices. Seminary students are not exempt from a utilitarian approach to their theological education. I am often asked, "If I pick your department, what kinds of jobs are available, do you know basic salary ranges, which parts of the country offer the best opportunities, and what would my whole career

path look like?” While we must give some attention to those details and how God works with his children through them, we must not neglect the larger goals of Christian education to love and obey God. We should be helping students sort through and put the pieces of life together so they don’t look like a freshly fallen Humpty Dumpty. If Christian education does not point students toward a more integrated life, who will?

At its heart, Christian education revolves around Christ himself, the model of an integrated life. He experienced life as an integrated whole rather than a movement into and out of the spiritual realm. Sometimes we either forget or fail to point out that Jesus was skilled in

- Language arts: he used sentence structure and word choices to demonstrate his deity.
- Ancient history: he used Sodom and Gomorrah as an illustration.
- Public reading: he often read Scripture in the synagogue.
- Rhetoric: he went about the country preaching and teaching.
- Woodworking: he was known as a carpenter.
- Regional news: he reflected on two recent events to illustrate a theological point.
- Wine making: the governor of the feast noted the unusually high quality of the wine Christ made.
- Cooking: the only meal we assume he personally prepared was grilled fish.
- Local customs: he knew Jews and Samaritans do not talk to one another.
- Roman law: he recognized imperial taxes.
- Jewish tradition: he noted the tithing of dill and cumin.
- Social obligations: he knew when his feet had been neglected in the customary washing.
- Family responsibilities: even on the cross he was concerned about his mother.

- Biblical theology: he knew the requirements for making a new covenant in biblical terms.
- Mosaic law: he corrected a misrepresentation of Moses' command by noting the difference between command and permission.

Jesus seamlessly blended the visible and invisible into everything he did. All of his activities reflect his attachment to and reflection of the Father. He gives thanks before he eats, he forgives sin as part of healing, he prays all night before selecting the Twelve, he declares prophetic Scripture fulfilled after reading a section, he obeys his parents while affirming his loyalty to his Father's business, and he considers discussing theology a normal activity. There was no compartmentalizing or incongruity in Christ's earthly life.

Among other things, when the Word became flesh, Jesus cemented his words to his actions. The theological, philosophical, and practical implications of that event fill whole libraries. As multiple witnesses unfolded his life, Jesus' actions so consistently mirrored his teaching that he declared, "If you don't believe my words at least believe my works" or "I am . . . the truth." He added to his declaration in John 14:6, "and the life." He is both the truth and the life. Not only did Jesus reflect consistency between words and action; he demonstrated consistency through each area of life. He asked, "Who convicts me of sin?" This consistency runs the length of his life. Jesus was as merciful creating wine for a wedding in Cana as he was forgiving a thief while dying on a cross.

In his letter, James reaffirmed this consistency with his reminder to both listen to and do the Word and not to show favoritism to the rich over the poor. James would not need to give his instruction if Christians did not experience a constant tension between what they affirm and what they do. Which of us as teachers does not find ourselves drawn to those students who admire us and offended by those who criticize us? We find ourselves consistently inconsistent. One of the goals of a

high-quality Christian education ought to be modeling for students the consistent integration of words and actions, or an integrated life.

While Jesus lived an integrated experience fusing the visible with the invisible, he was no Pollyanna. His Beatitudes clearly define “the good” in terms of activities and character qualities. They are not only good in some abstract sense; they bring a personal blessing and a promise to those who practice them. His pronouncements are good, wholesome, and healthful. No one challenges the value of the Beatitudes. In contrast, he acknowledged and forgave individual sin, condemned leaders for overburdening people, and acknowledged the presence of evil beings interfacing with human life. He made point-blank statements about the reality of eternal life, death, hell, and heaven. He expects people to make daily choices based on those realities.

Of course the task of integrating learning does not belong to the school alone. The Christian family remains the primary conduit for transmitting the faith from one generation to the next.⁹ The family provides the best place to sort through values like blessing or cursing, thanksgiving or ingratitude, praise or grumbling, service to others or self-promotion. Children develop best when healthy families work together with competent schools and vibrant churches. In my opinion, it is easier to compensate for poor schooling than dysfunctional families. But parents entrust a great deal of a child’s intellectual development to the school.

If the school provides a truly Christian education, students learn how to evaluate and choose based on the interconnections, interrelationships, and interdependencies of life’s realities. Students can almost unconsciously construct a worldview if teacher after teacher connects her subject back to God. And, because everything (except evil) connects

⁹Michael J. Anthony and Michelle Anthony, eds., *A Theology for Family Ministry* (Nashville: B&H, 2011).

back to God, every subject teaches something about God. In essence, students learn how to love God with their minds as they see the interdisciplinary connections and probe deeper into each one.

Teachers must see their task as much more than instruction in subjects. In order to do that, some will need to overcome their own training. Many of us were pressed into the details of our discipline as we worked toward our advanced degrees. So, when we turn from those studies to teach back at introductory levels, we must resist the temptation to focus on those same details that have become so familiar to us. If we want our students to integrate their learning, we will need to periodically orient them within a theological framework and model integration through intentionally referencing other disciplines. In that way, students will watch integration in action. We want their education to paint a clear picture of where their integrated life fits within God's world and purpose.

Integrated Curriculum

"An integrated *life*
should be taught through an integrated *curriculum*
in order to reflect the integrated nature of *truth*
found ultimately in *God* himself."

The approach to a discussion about integration depends on whom one is addressing when the discussion begins. This section finds us standing before school colleagues committed to and engaged in Christian education. Whether secondary or postsecondary education, they labor inside established curriculums. Curriculums are rarely built from the ground up, and curriculum revisions are mostly cosmetic. I do not intend to be unkind, but having survived several curriculum revisions, actual class sessions change little. Sometimes a professor will modify

a course objective or tweak an assignment to show compliance. My sense of the reality may be oversimplified, but teachers and professors with established courses reluctantly abandon what appears successful to them.

So, this section seeks to help everyone work with what is. No curriculum can teach everything, but it will teach something. And hopefully, when the last class dismisses, the subjects within the curriculum will have helped students integrate their learning.

Leaders of the Reformation understood education to be a priority. At the time, education was normally reserved for nobility or the financially blessed. The reformers worked hard to press schooling outward to embrace those less fortunate. They envisioned schools for children and youth to prepare them for adult responsibilities. As leaders, they held a consistently unified theological orientation to knowledge. The languages of the Bible and the Bible itself formed the curricular core. Every subject had a proper place within a Christian worldview. There was no bifurcation of things to be apprehended by faith and things to be apprehended by physical investigation. Every teacher from that era was first trained in Scripture and language.

One of the early formulations of integrated Christian education came from John Amos Comenius, “the founder of modern education.”¹⁰ Comenius, along with many others, believed all knowledge (*pansophic*) could be accumulated and taught. He viewed knowledge as an interconnected whole to be taught to both genders of youth who would thus be “trained in all things necessary for the present and for the future of life.”¹¹ The expected result of teaching an integrated curriculum was an integrated life.

¹⁰ Michael J. Anthony, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 159–60.

¹¹ *Ibid.* (Obviously, a lot less was presented in the schools of the sixteenth century.)

No one of that era anticipated the explosion of information that would follow or the separation of truth into categories. From their Christian point of view, all knowledge was interconnected; subjects were merely a conventional device for breaking down the whole into more manageable parts. The history of education in the West demonstrates what occurs without an integrated orientation. Today, public education looks like an examination of Humpty Dumpty's pieces without any reference to what a whole Humpty Dumpty might look like. Students take geography that is not connected to math that is not connected to language that is not connected to history that is not connected to social studies. You get the idea. Subjects are not connected to one another or any true organizing principle unless you consider the random chance of the evolutionary hypothesis an organizing principle.

The average Christian teacher in a high school, college, or seminary can do little to change that public school picture. When a student moves from the public sector into a Christian institution, an ideal curriculum should reveal both the central connection to God and the interdisciplinary connections among the subjects. School documents such as catalogs and syllabi should articulate these connections in writing. Because teachers are the face of a curriculum, those who work inside a curriculum must help students build the connections among the subjects and also back to the Creator. The beginning of every semester offers an ideal opportunity to verbally reinforce those connections. These need not be elongated speeches. A paragraph or two punctuated by a pause may be all that is needed. Teachers can also look through their teaching schedules for opportunities to reinforce these ideas. Students may not totally understand all the implications of integrating their learning, but they should experience a consistent pattern of comments from multiple teachers during their journey through a semester and a curriculum.

Students are not the only ones migrating from the public sector into Christian education. Often, Christian schools recruit teachers who have

not thought about integration on any level. Their training left them with bifurcated categories of truth and subject-driven specialties. Their public education helped them become subject proficient but deficient in theological training or orientation. For those who lack a thorough theological grounding, seminaries and Bible schools are extending themselves into the community like never before. Extension sites and online courses pockmark the landscape like craters on the moon. Theological education has never been more accessible on either undergraduate or graduate levels. Those whose training left them theologically deficient can and should merge back into the conversation by extending their training and using their newfound theological sieve to evaluate their discipline. Even though a degree has been conferred, we should not consider ourselves to be fully trained until we have solid theological understanding (not only an evangelical affirmation) and a thoroughly integrated perspective. This is indeed a great day for Christian education if we seize our opportunities.

The journey toward an understanding of integration need not be made alone. Many have been on the road ahead of us. Their writings can bring us along quickly. Some of us owe the next generation a more integrated education than we received. While most of us can quickly name several authors of English literature, authors of integrating learning may be much more difficult to recollect. The following authors represent modern thinking on the subject. Because no one has written the final word on integration, each one approaches the subject from a slightly different angle. You will note how the discussion changes as the authors address different audiences.

- *The Whole Truth: Classroom Strategies for Biblical Integration* by Mark Eckel.¹² Eckel's extended bibliography of websites, books, and articles along with his practical exercises to reshape classroom experiences make this volume both extremely practical and unique. He is primarily addressing secondary schoolteachers.
- *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education* by David S. Dockery¹³ and *Conceiving the Christian College* by Duane Litfin.¹⁴ Dockery draws us away from our detailed discipline orientation and toward our ongoing objective in Christian education. In addition to his extensive bibliography, Dockery provides a list of Christian associations relevant to various disciplines. Litfin focuses on key issues surrounding integration in Christian colleges. They are primarily addressing Christian college faculty and administration.
- *Faith and Learning on the Edge: A Bold New Look at Religion in Higher Education* by David Claerbaut.¹⁵ Claerbaut makes a persuasive apologetic for an integration of faith into learning and then discusses the implications of integration for science, humanities, and the arts.
- *The Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldview Approach* by Robert A. Harris.¹⁶ Harris develops his discussion of integration from a broad perspective engaging multiple worldviews. He writes

¹²Mark Eckel, *The Whole Truth: Classroom Strategies for Biblical Integration* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2003).

¹³David Dockery, *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education* (Nashville: B&H, 2008).

¹⁴Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

¹⁵David Claerbaut, *Faith and Learning on the Edge: A Bold New Look at Religion in Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

¹⁶Robert A. Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldview Approach* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004).

directly to students whose primary educational experience has been in the public arena.

If I were dean or principal, I would pick one of these and ask each faculty member to read a chapter(s) and create a summary presentation for the rest of us to discuss. The integration of learning is a significant issue that all too easily slides under the table. If we allow that to occur, we will lose the unique contribution Christian education offers students of an integrated curriculum.

Integrated Truth

“An integrated *life*
should be taught through an integrated *curriculum*
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found ultimately in *God* himself.”

The Christian community has not stuttered in her declaration about the unity of truth. Jesus' words stamped an indelible and continuing impression on Christian thinkers from the beginning. They understood at once that he was the glue needed to put the pieces together as well as the model for what they look like when together. All the lofty discussions about truth suddenly had a much-needed sorting device. The impact of a unified system of truth was not lost on our forefathers. They staked out a claim on truth that extended well beyond the pages of Scripture to each and every piece of life, drawing it irresistibly back to its proper place. Listen to these leaders as they speak for themselves:

Justin Martyr: “Whatever has been uttered aright by any man in any place belongs to us Christians; for, next to God, we worship and love the Logos which is from the unbegotten and ineffable God.”

Augustine: "Every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's."

Rabbanus Maurus: "The seven liberal arts of the philosophers, which Christians should learn for their utility and advantage, we have, as I think sufficiently discussed. We have this yet to add. When those who are called philosophers, have in their expositions or in their writings, uttered perchance some truth, which agrees with our faith, we should not handle it timidly, but rather take it as from its unlawful possessors and apply it to our own use."

Desiderius Erasmus: "All studies, philosophy, rhetoric are followed for this one object, that we may know Christ and honor him. This is the end of all learning and eloquence."¹⁷

In fact this section should need little discussion except so many Christians have no exposure to these voices. They grew up without having them emphasized in their Christian education or entered the Christian faith without an awareness of their legacies. Few Protestant churches give even modest attention to historical matters. Even in seminary, I have bright students question the need for Christian history in their education. Some of my students have been so deeply influenced by the bifurcation of truth that they categorically deny any such unity exists. Nor was I successful in persuading them in spite of all Christian tradition and thinking to the contrary. The dominant explanation plus a compartmentalized educational curriculum created an insurmountable mental barrier for them.

If Christianity offers a unified perspective on truth, then whatever is taught ought to be anchored to, informed by, and integrated with that

¹⁷I am greatly indebted to D. Bruce Lockerbie who collected and published all these quotes and so much more in his volume *A Passion for Learning* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 49, 79, 109, opposite the contents.

truth. The way students progress through the curriculum ought to help them move toward a unified perspective on truth. Students ought to know how each piece contributes to each other piece and the whole. If they enter theological education, they need to understand how theology wraps its arms around their so-called general education and embraces everything. Students often feel like the little metal ball in the pinball game, bouncing from one course to another for no apparent reason.

Throughout this section, I have been trying to show the necessity of educational integration. If, as we affirm, God is one, then truth as a reflection of God must also be a unified whole. Truth remains stable even as God remains stable although our understanding of it and him may be imperfect. Our curriculum should guide students toward an understanding of truth and God. Although every curriculum is artificially assembled, it ought to consistently reflect truth as a unified whole, not an arbitrary selection of subject materials. The way we teach our individual subjects ought to reveal the interconnections with other subjects. If this is genuinely important, then it must be explained, modeled, emphasized, and reinforced. Otherwise, it will slip by much like it did in my own experience. This may require a level of sophistication for teachers that goes beyond technical proficiency. In reality, we have not only isolated subjects from one another but also separated general education from theological education. Consequently, truth comes to students like pieces of Humpty Dumpty. Some ultimately figure out the connections; others never do.

Truth must ultimately correspond to and explain reality. The Bible is the only book that adequately deals with the existence of evil, the paradoxical nature of humans, an ultimate resolution of injustice, and the human heart's longing for immortality. Today, if you want answers to these issues, you must pursue a theological education by attending a seminary. Theology, once known as "the Queen of the sciences," finds herself discreetly hidden from public view. Those who speak of

theology are sequestered to “special” schools. A better approach would be to have theology woven into the very fabric of everything a student studies in Christian education. After all, God continues to explain himself through both the creation and his living Word.

Unfortunately, theological education even neglects a full exploration of both sources of revelation. Seminaries work hard at exploring aspects about God through biblical research and systematic schemas. Yet everything we have learned or can learn in general education reveals something wonderful about the Creator. Courses exploring God’s character from the contributions of natural revelation simply do not exist. Carisa Ash highlights this discrepancy in her PhD dissertation. She traces the affirmations of evangelical theology. Everyone agrees that God reveals himself in both special revelation (the Bible) and natural revelation (all those subjects normally included in general education). Both are sources of truth. Yet those who write theologies normally cite only the Bible. Few, if any, writers give equal space to both sources of truth.¹⁸ This may be because a PhD in theology does not start with, include, or conclude with any academic training in the created order. In any case, a great deal about God goes unexplored or unconnected to him by those who champion his study.

Christian education may need to reassess and reassign its resources if it is to regain its central role in education circles and the society at large. We have unlimited access to the truth bound up in a Person and reflected in everything he has said and done.

¹⁸ Carisa Ash, unpublished PhD dissertation, *A Critical Examination of the Doctrine of Revelation in Evangelical Theology* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2011).

God Himself

The God of the Bible, unlike Muhammad's god or any other god, reveals himself in order to invite intimacy with those who bear his image. He created a predictable and visible universe so that wherever man looks he discovers something true and wonderful. Through his written revelation, he discloses certain invisible truths that expand man's understanding of reality. Ultimately, he completely reveals himself through the Lord, Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus says so in his high priestly prayer in John 17. The whole purpose for created and written revelation is for man to understand and enjoy everything about God. Only in a combined understanding of these two do we have the final plan for putting Humpty Dumpty together again.

Whether we refer to the great *shema*, the first and greatest commandment, or Paul's living sacrifice, no life can be considered fully integrated until every facet aligns with God. That is another way of saying "righteous." The God of the Bible has no duplicity, no shadow of turning, and no hint of evil. As his image bearers, our education ought to help us reflect his beauty, majesty, creativity, compassion, responsibility, ethics, joy, justice, delight, and everything he wishes to manifest through us.

Conclusion

In my educational readings about integration, I find Frank Gaebelein's work the most compact and understandable. "All truth is God's truth" sums up our Christian position. The context for his now famous quote is as follows:

For Christian education, therefore, to adopt as its unifying principle Christ and the Bible means nothing short of the recognition that *all truth is God's truth*. It is no accident that St. Paul, setting before the Philippian church the subject matter

of Christian thinking, writes: “Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true . . . think on these things” (Phil 4:8). He knew that Christian truth embraces all truth, and that nothing true is outside the scope of Christianity.¹⁹

Although we have a clear affirmation, we have not yet pursued integration as far as we can and should. Earlier in those same lectures, Gaebelein explains the extensive implications of an integrated approach to Christian education. “Nevertheless, in respect to a thorough-going integration of Christ and the Bible with the whole institution, with all departments of study, with all kinds of student activities, with all phases of administration, there remains much land to be taken.”²⁰

I submit to you that whether Humpty Dumpty ever fell off a wall remains a subject of literary investigation. However, I am absolutely sure we and our educational system did! If we are to pull ourselves back together again, we need a fully operational integrated approach to Christian education. Should we carelessly neglect a single area, our omission would indicate an area where God has no interest. We do bear a responsibility for making sure this piece of the professor’s puzzle fits snugly into place.

¹⁹ Gaebelein, “The Pattern of God’s Truth,” 71.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.