

PROLOGUE

Among scholarly works today, there is missing a distinctive presentation of a Christian philosophy of education. New Christian schools are being started continuously in the United States and throughout the world--even in the former USSR. This movement is growing. This short work is an attempt to place in writing a philosophy already in practice and to improve it somewhat. It is written in philosophical language primarily, with some theological language used when appropriate.

INTRODUCTION

It is inherent in human nature that everyone have a life-guiding philosophy. We may not know the language of philosophy or how to organize our philosophy logically, but our philosophy is manifest by our speech and actions. The most important aspect of a personal philosophy is that it be aligned with the Word of God.

A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

By Dr. John E. Russell

CHAPTER I

Philosophy

Metaphysics

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The word *Metaphysics* is taken from Aristotle's work, which is translated, "After the Physics." His work *Physics* dealt with the area of the scientific and his *Metaphysics* dealt with basic assumptions, first principles, and the religious, including cosmology and ontology.

Cosmology

Cosmology deals with the origin and structure of the universe. Science can understand the nature of the universe to a limited extent. However, science does not understand the nature of the universe well enough to demonstrate scientifically how the universe came into being--it is out of the realm of science.

As Christians, we believe that the world was created by God and it is sustained by God: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). (Also see Hebrews 1:2-3). The universe is devolving. The only principle of "evolution" in effect today is the work of God in redeemed man. Later, God will make a new heaven and earth:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

2 Peter 3:10-12

Ontology

Ontology is that branch of philosophy that seeks to explain the nature of being or reality. Is what we experience through our senses all there is? Is it reality? Yes, but God is Ultimate Reality--His creation is reality. God alone is eternally self-existent, whereas His creation is finite. His creation is dependent on Him. We are not *Pantheists* (From Greek, *pan* = "all" + *Theos* = "God," hence, "All is God" or "God is All"), but rather we are *panentheists*

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pan

= "all" +

en

= "in" +

Theos

= "God," hence, we are "all in God." "For in him [God] we live and move and have our being...." (Acts 17:28).

From metaphysics, we logically move to epistemology.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that seeks to define truth and discover the nature of knowledge.

Absolute truth exists only in the mind of God. Jesus is Truth personified, the greatest revelation of truth from God to human beings: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6). "In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). "In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe." (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Absolute truth is communicated to us in abstract form from the Bible. As we read it, the Holy Spirit illuminates the Bible, which is the objective revelation of the Word of God.

Human beings discover relative truth through their experience, or interaction with creation. Refined human experience we call scientific method, which produces relative truth or knowledge, the results of which are always tentative and subject to revision.

Logically, we proceed to the next branch of philosophy which is axiology.

Axiology

Axiology deals with the nature and types of values. We will deal with two kinds of values: (1) Ethics and (2) Aesthetics.

Ethics

Ethics is the study of moral good and evil. Natural evil, such as earthquakes, accidents and tornados are excluded unless it is demonstrated that a free moral agent caused the evils.

The only valid source of ethics is God Himself, as transmitted to us through His Son Jesus and the written Word (Bible). Human experience is invalid as an ethical standard.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics deals with the nature of beauty. The standard for the beautiful is found in the mind of God. It was reflected in His pristine (original) creation--before the fall of man. Spiritually, holiness is beautiful--the good and the beautiful belong together. Rationally, that which is logical is beautiful, but since man's reason is fallen, his mind cannot be the standard--it must be renewed by the Word of God for both content and logical form. Physically, that which is symmetrical and flawless is beautiful.

From the study of values, we then seek to discover whether or not there is any purpose or end to which history is moving.

Teleology

Teleology is the study of final causes. The Christian dismisses the ideas that the universe is simply a machine, or that human beings generate purpose in life. God has a purpose in history--it is "His story." Through Jesus, His Son, He is reconciling mankind to Himself, and redeeming His creation:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Romans 8:19-21

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8:19-23

From a biblical philosophy flows a biblical view of education.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL VIEW OF EDUCATION

The Learner

The learner is a spirit-being who possesses a soul (intellectual and emotional faculties) and lives in a body. "... May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NIV).

The Teacher

Jesus of Nazareth is the Master Teacher and paradigmatic Self (Model). Students are to develop as Jesus did--spiritually, mentally, physically and socially. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52). In this verse, *wisdom* includes both moral and intellectual development. The word

stature

has to do with physical growth and development. The phrase

in favor with God

has to do with spiritual development.

In favor with men

has to do with social development.

Both parents and teachers are to be like Jesus who taught by precept and example.

The Curriculum

Curriculum includes the entire learning environment. The student learns through interacting with the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the teacher, the students, physical surroundings, and written curriculum (includes audio visual).

The primary written curriculum is the Bible (the Word of God), which serves as the ultimate criterion for all other written curriculum. The secondary curriculum is constructed from Biblical principles and content with collective human experience under the headings of math, English, science, social studies, word building and electives.

The Method

The method is God-centered, rather than man-centered. The focus is on the student rather than the teacher or curriculum. The Holy Spirit leads the whole process, guiding the interaction of the student with the Word of God, the teacher, and the written curriculum (1) to form Christ within the student and (2) to prepare the student for life.

The School

The school derives its authority from the local church, of which it is an integral part. The Great Commission clearly states that the Church is to teach:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

God made three great institutions: (1) The Family, (2) The Church, and (3) The State. Both the family and the Church are commanded to teach. The state is not to teach--it has other important functions.

Parents have the primary responsibility to teach their own children:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of our fathers, promised you.

"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

The school derives its authority to teach children whose parents give it that authority. Each set of parents gives the school authority to teach only their children, in which case the school

stands *in loco parentis* (in place of a parent).

The Social Policy

Justification corrects the student's relationship with God (vertical relationship). The new birth (Conversion) corrects the student's relationship with himself (circular relationship). Revival, through the sanctification process, corrects the immediate relationship with family, church, and other groups (horizontal relationship). Reform for the United States is effected by the believer's influence in society--social order is reconstructed.

From Christian education philosophy we move logically towards a proper set of training objectives for the student.

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CHAPTER III

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Spiritual

The student will

1. Accept Christ as Saviour and Lord.
2. Receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and exercise the gifts of the Spirit as He leads.
3. Study the Bible as God's inspired Word and develop attitudes of love and respect for it.
4. Learn the basic doctrines of the Bible.
5. Discover, love and perform the will of God as a lifestyle.
6. Discover his/her identity in Christ.
7. Gain an understanding of his/her place in the Church and its worldwide task of evangelizing and discipling and become involved in his /her calling.
8. Locate himself/herself in his/her particular stage of spiritual development and accelerate his/her development.
9. Develop self-discipline and responsibility based on respect for and submission to God and all other scriptural authority.
10. Develop a Christian worldview.
11. Develop decision-making skills.

Academic

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The student will

1. Gain basic skills in the areas of English, math, social studies, science, wordbuilding and appropriate electives.
2. Demonstrate communication skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
3. Develop good study habits.
4. Perform independent research.
5. Develop creative, logical and critical thinking within the guidelines of Biblical criteria.
6. Understand and appreciate our Christian and American heritages.
7. Keep up with current affairs and relate them to God's overall plan.
8. Develop an appreciation of the fine arts.

Physical

The student will

1. Treat his/her body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.
2. Develop psychomotor skills.
3. Attain and maintain good physical fitness.
4. Learn and practice good health habits, including eating properly, getting enough rest, attaining a balance between work and recreation and avoiding drug abuse.
5. Trust God for physical and mental healing without excluding proper medical help.
6. Accept Biblical attitudes toward material things, using them for the glory of God and to help people.
7. Understand man's role in God's world and faithfully fulfill this stewardship.

Social

The student will

1. Treat others with love and respect, since all people are made in the image of God.
2. Become a contributing member of society.
3. Become results oriented.
4. Attain and maintain a positive attitude.
5. Use time efficiently.
6. Develop skills in interpersonal relationships.
7. Develop good attitudes toward marriage and the family and gain the understanding and skills needed to establish a God-honoring home.
8. Honor and obey his/her parents.

9. Communicate the truth.
10. Gain and maintain a clear conscience.
11. Educate his/her conscience according to the principles of God's Word.
12. Think, speak and act in a Christlike manner.

All objectives come from God. His Word reveals His will. Therefore, we turn our attention to a core of Biblical truths.

CHAPTER IV

STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

God's family is One because of Jesus' death on Calvary and our fellowship is based on the new birth. However, in order to establish a clear understanding with all, the following theological statements are affirmed:

1. The autographs of the scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and serve as the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct.
2. There is one true God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God.
4. God created man not only sinless, but positively holy. Man fell by an act of own his free will and incurred physical and spiritual death.
5. It is God's will for everyone to be saved. Man is justified initially and kept justified on the basis of trusting Christ and His finished work on the cross alone. The individual who trusts Christ as

Saviour is "born from above" (born again) by the Holy Spirit.

6. There are two practices Christ appointed for the Church, water baptism and holy communion.

7. All believers should be baptized in the Holy Spirit, an experience distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth. Also, the nine spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 should be in operation today.

8. It is God's will for every believer to be like Christ.

9. The Church consists of every born-again believer.

10. A divinely-called ministry has been provided by our Lord to (1) bring glory to God, (2) evangelize the world, build up Christians and help equip them for the ministry God has for each one.

11. Divine health is God's will for everyone.

12. The Lord Jesus shall complete the salvation of all believers at His Second Coming. He shall later reign one thousand years on the earth.

13. There shall be a final judgment in which the wicked dead shall be raised, judged, and consigned to everlasting separation from God.

In perspective, we stand for *Unity* in things essential; *Liberty* in things non-essential; and *Love* in all things.

EPILOGUE

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This short work is meant to offer a guideline for Christian schools in the United States. Secular Humanism (a form of atheism) has invaded the realm of Christian education and this "another gospel" must be purged from our thinking. Also, government education, though many times well-meaning, has enforced miseducation and usurped the authority of parents and of the Church.

May the truth of this booklet be driven home to the minds and hearts of the readers and may all that the Heavenly Father has not planted be plucked up--in this booklet and the in the educational establishment.

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