

HOME SCHOOL DIGEST

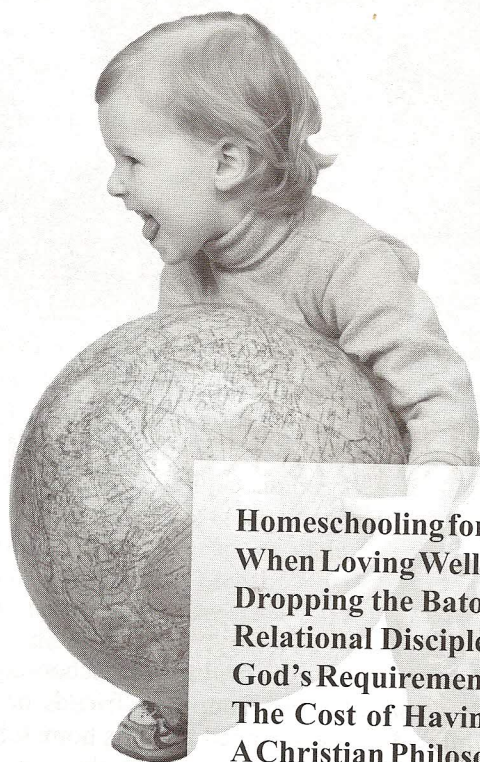
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*H*OMESCHOOLING
for the RIGHT REASONS

Home School Digest

Homeschooling for the Right Reasons



"An appropriate goal in the education of a child would be that throughout the child's years of formal education and upon entering adulthood, integrity be the hallmark of his life."

—SKEET SAVAGE

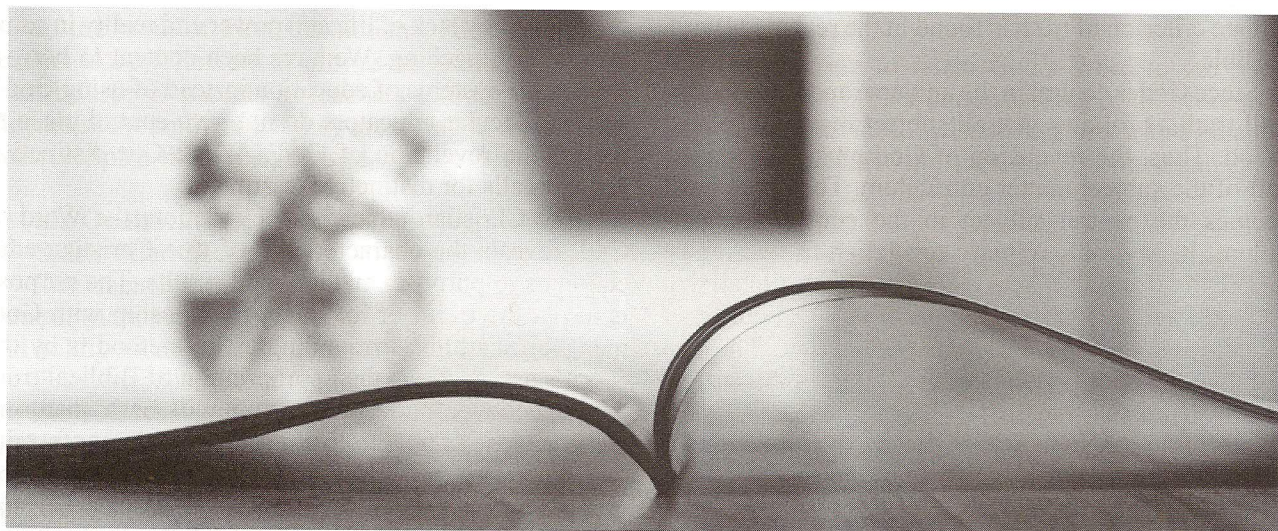
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A Christian Philosophy of Education

Dr. Paul Cates, Ph.D.

From a Christian philosophy of education, thoughts and actions can be derived, implemented, and defended. The elements to be considered in developing a Christian philosophy of education range from theological and doctrinal to social and educational. The first step is the development of a Biblical base. The Bible becomes the skeleton on which the practical application of our philosophy can be arranged.

Under consideration in this article on a Christian's educational philosophy shall be the Biblical base, implications for the teaching-learning process of the school, the role of the educator, and the role of the learner.

The Biblical Base

The importance of having a sound Biblical philosophy of education cannot be overemphasized. In referring to the importance of developing a distinctively Christian philosophy, more Christian educators are beginning to realize that to be truly Christian, the curriculum must be Bible-integrated in theory and practice. By this, the Bible is to provide more than theoretical guidance and generalization. It is to be a vital part of the content of the curriculum and integrated with all subject matter. The Bible should be the integrating factor around which all other subject matter is correlated and arranged, and provides the criterion by which all other subject matter is judged.

A God-centered pattern of education demands that

the Christian educator spell out clearly the processes involved in the total structure of the curriculum. This means all procedures and processes must be based on a definite theory of knowledge.

Since education deals primarily with the communication of knowledge, the defining of knowledge of truth becomes important. Knowledge may be defined as an understanding or a clear perception of truth. The Biblical view of knowledge presupposes a source of all knowledge, for knowledge is dependent on truth; and truth, in turn, is dependent on God. All avenues of knowledge stem from God. God, Himself, is truth, and has chosen to reveal Himself through natural revelation and special revelation.

The implications of having a God-centered theory of knowledge as a base for the philosophy of education are clear. Since God is the source of all truth, then all truth is God's truth.

For the Christian, then, the seat of truth is God's revelation, contained primarily in the inspired Word, but manifest also in creation. This truth, though on its highest level received by faith, can also be known through our reason, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Any adequate basis for Christian education must, therefore, include God's revelation in creation as well as in His written Word. Our human understanding of the book of nature must not be made the norm for acceptance of the other book, the Bible. All the time, however, the

ultimate criterion of truth is found in the revealed Word, the Bible.

Since God is central in the universe and is the source of all truth, it follows that all subject matter is related to God. Thus, the revelation of God must become the heart of the subject matter curriculum. The Bible itself becomes the central subject in the educational curriculum. It, as God's primary revelation to man, must become the integrating and correlating factor in all that is thought and taught. It is the basis by which all other channels of knowledge are evaluated and used. Through the Bible, the inter-relatedness of all other subjects and truths is made possible.

We may conclude therefore that the function of the Bible in the subject matter curriculum is two-fold. First, it provides content of its own. Second, it provides a service function to the other subjects. The principles of Biblical truth should be applied to, and in, all other subjects. Claim to truth from other areas should be tested and evaluated by the philosophical and theological truths of the Word of God.

Christian education is built on the premise that all truth is God's truth and that the Word of God is to be the key factor in the communication of knowledge. It is important to note that any and all education that is received should have the Word of God as its foundation. This is not to imply that the Bible is a textbook on anything and everything; but rather, that the Bible is to be the point of reference from which we can evaluate all other areas and sources of knowledge. What one learns from God's natural revelation must be in harmony with what He has revealed in His Word. Since God is the author of both revelations it is reasonable that they would not contradict each other.

In summary some of the advantages of having a Biblical philosophy of education are as follows:

- It coordinates the various spheres of life as a whole.

- It relates knowledge systematically.

- It examines the presuppositions, methods, and basic concepts of each discipline and group of disciplines.

- It strives for coherence, the formulation of a worldview.

- Its method is to consult data from the total experience.

The Implications for the Teaching-Learning Process

The implications of having a sound Biblical base for the educational process are many. The educative process is the process by which the communication of the foundational truth is accomplished—in other words, it is the process by which the Christian philosophy of education is implemented.

A clear danger of not having a firm Biblical base is

pointed out by lack of life and power and reality in some evangelical teaching. We have been content to borrow man-made systems of education instead of using God's system. Secular educators do not give central place to the unique revelation of God's Word. Our distinctive content calls for distinctive treatment.

The Christian educator's foundation, the Word of God, reveals the characteristics of true Christian education as to purpose, method, and results. The purpose is to put the Believer into right relationship with God, man, self, and his surroundings. The method is by the Spirit's assistance in the appropriation of Biblical truth to the believer's life. The result will be a maturing Believer who is able to live a life that is in conformity with the Word of God. In essence, Christian education is a process of guided learning where the teacher and the Holy Spirit combine efforts to help the learner to spiritually grow and mature, to more and more conform to the image of Christ.

The scope, or field of Christian education, though guided by Biblical truth, is not limited to Biblical exposition. A Christian educator seeks to develop in the learner a worldview—a perspective that enables him to understand, appreciate, and live a Christian life in the world in which God has placed him. This Christian education, hopefully, shall help the individual develop the ability to separate truth from error, not only in Bible doctrine, but also in the facts and issues of his everyday life.

The Role of the Educator

The Christian educator is to be a guide or resource person in the wonderful experience of learning. He is to be neither a drill sergeant nor a manipulator, but rather, a facilitator of learning. His learners must know that he cares about them. The educator must have experienced the reality of what he is attempting to teach or else he is just a blind man leading blind men.

"This is why the school or college that would develop a Christ-centered and Biblically grounded program must fly from its masthead this standard: 'No Christian education without Christian teachers', and must never, under any condition, pull its colors down. Compromise of this issue, always results in the progressive de-Christianizing of an institution" (Frank Gabelein, *The Pattern of God's Truth*, 1954, p 37).

The nature of the teaching process gives us some clues as to the function of the teacher. As a Christian educator the teacher must be both a Christian and an educator. As a Christian he has experienced the reality of God's truth, and he has God's Spirit to empower him and his teaching. As an educator he functions in accordance with the mandate of God to teach in accord with the educational principles contained in the Word of God. To "educate" means to change one's behavior.

In the book of First Corinthians, Paul exhorts his readers to be followers of him as he is of Christ. This must be true of parents as teachers too, for as leaders they must exemplify what they are trying to teach. They must be Spirit-filled men of God.

Six Qualifications for a Spirit-filled Teacher are:

The teacher is the communicator of truth, he must be openly and boldly a Christian.

Every teacher must know the Bible. Because the Word of God is relevant to all subjects.

The Christian teacher must be committed in every aspect of his life and work, in all his being, to the truth.

The teacher must seek excellence. This is a seeking after intellectual excellence to the glory of God, and a Christian teacher should be content with nothing less than superiority in this area.

The Christian teacher must truly love his students, seeking their highest good even when at times the way may be hard. Not only should he love his students, he should genuinely like and understand them.

Finally, the Christian teacher should exercise complete submission to the One Great Teacher. Every teacher must listen to the Lord, and the Holy Spirit, for his lessons and never should he think that he does not need to be taught of Him.

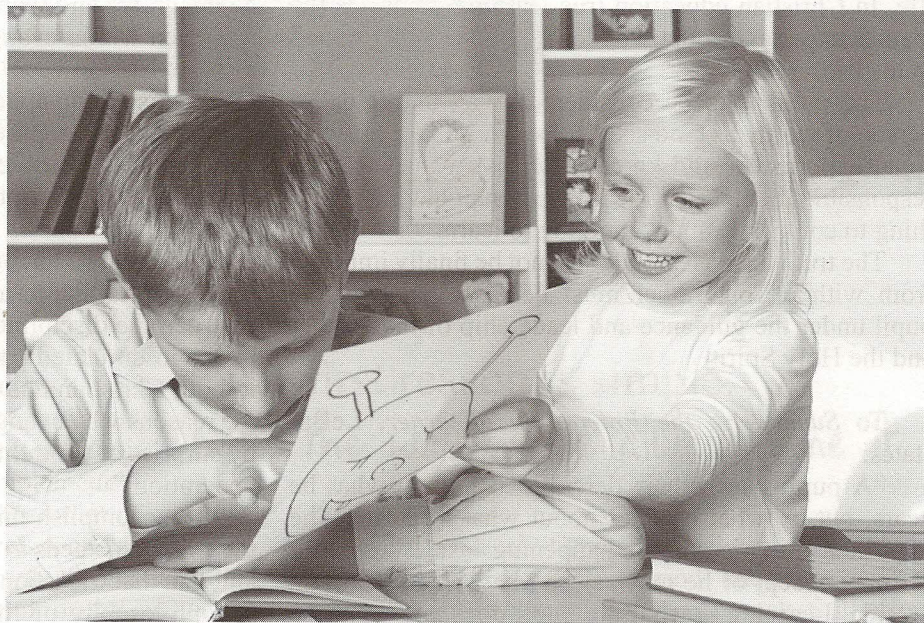
A very helpful summary concerning the teaching role is given by Dr. Roy Zuck. His five points fairly well sum up what the Bible expects of its educators:

Remember that Christian education is a supernatural task. The presence of God's Holy Spirit in teaching takes Christian education beyond mere programming, methodology, and techniques.

A teacher is to rely on the Holy Spirit. Seen in light of the Spirit's teaching ministry, Christian education demands you be submissive to the guidance and direction of the Spirit. Teachers must work *with* God, not

against Him.

Teachers are to relate God's Word to the pupil's experiences. A proper understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit provides Christian teachers with a balanced, blended approach to the question of content and experience.



Teachers are to rest satisfied with nothing less than spiritual results. A teacher must constantly test his teaching to see if it's resulting in spiritual growth on the part of his pupils.

Teachers must recognize that, in the final sense, God, the Holy Spirit, is the teacher. -It is God who does the teaching, a teacher is merely a channel of His grace,

an instrument doing the planting and watering. The spiritual effectiveness of a teacher's work rests ultimately with the Holy Spirit.



The Role of the Learner

The learner represents the challenge to the Christian educational process. Each believer brings to class a personal set of needs, wants, and goals. Each is looking for fulfillment and growth in his own personal and spiritual life. Every learner starts with his own basic needs, thus the educator must seek to motivate the learner to discover and apply God's provisions to his life. In Christian education true learning comes as the learner experiences the wonder of God's truth applied to his life.

The pupil is to be considered as an individual, a person of worth, as God sees us as individuals. His personal experiences and knowledge have value. He is a responsible member of a learning group, having something to contribute and something to learn.

The truth that is learned must not be finally imposed from without, but rather must be discovered by the pupil under the guidance and leadership of the teacher and the Holy Spirit.

To *Summarize the Role of the Learner*, LeBar states:

"A pupil's growth is determined not by what he hears, but by what he does about what he hears. The important thing is what is happening inside the pupil. He may accept or he may reject whatever is going on outside. Learning is what the pupil does and what the outer forces do to him. Teachers can influence the inner factors only by properly using the outer factors. If a teacher will work with the Spirit of God, He can use Him to effect the desired inner changes" (Zuck, *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching*, 1963, pp 167-168).

Therefore, it is the task of the teacher to help his pupils to know and to understand the principles of Scripture for their lives, and then to lead them to accept

these principles as their own. The motivation would not remain outward, that is, because the teacher says so but, rather, the pupil must be guided to the place where he can think through the issues and apply it to his life. Once the divine work of the Holy Spirit is accomplished, (John 16) God's pre-determined principles become self-chosen goals.

The Place of Practical Teaching in the Philosophy of Christian Education

The Hebrew educational curriculum was amazingly balanced. True, the Law was the center of everything, but all other studies were related to the Law in parallel lines. For example, the agricultural system of the Hebrew society was an integrated part of the educational training of the child and adult. The planting of crops was correlated with the commandments of the Law; the sacrifice system was described by the Law. So therefore, the Hebrews not only were commanded to keep the Law, but also were taught by the Law (LeBar, *Education That Is Christian*, 1968, p. 136).

After the exile period, we noticed that there was a direct parallel between the secular studies of mathematics, astrology, etc., with the study of the Torah. They complemented one another. They were not separated, but integrated. From this emerges yet another educational principle: Secular truth is God's truth and should be integrated and seen as a cohesive whole.

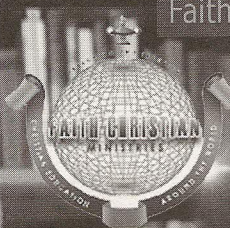
Even within evangelical circles, the great gulf that often exists between the Bible and everyday life and practice is all too apparent. A breakdown has occurred, intellectual schizophrenia if you please, with the result that business, science, and politics are almost totally unrelated to the Scriptures. As Francis Schaeffer has so aptly put it:

"Today we have a weakness in our educational process in failing to understand the natural association between the disciplines. We tend to study all our disciplines in unrelated parallel lines. This tends to be true in both Christian and secular education. This is one of the reasons why evangelical Christians have been taken by surprise at the tremendous shift that has come in our generation."

To accomplish this integration is no easy task, but the Christian needs to understand that all truth is important and that Christian education needs to present a unified philosophy of life (Frances A. Schaefer, *Escape From Reason*, London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship Press, 1968; page 12).

Known as "Homeschool's Education Doctor," Dr. Paul Cates is the founder of Faith Christian Ministries. Learn more about Dr. Cates and his work by visiting: www.FaithChristianMin.org. ©1975 by American Association of Christian Schools and Dr. Paul W. Cates, Ph.D. All rights reserved. (See ad on page 32)

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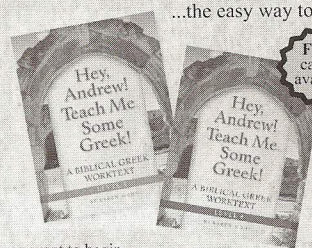
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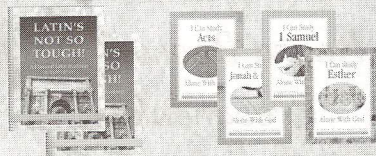
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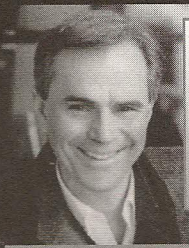
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