

A Christian Philosophy of Education

God, whose subsistence is in and of Himself,¹ who has revealed Himself in three persons, is the creator of all things. He is sovereign, maintains dominion over all creation, and has revealed Himself to man, His chief creation, whom he has created *imago Dei*, in the image of God². The first man, transgressing God's law has brought upon all man the disease of sin, which has distorted this *imago Dei* and man's ability to reason.³ God, in His sovereignty, has provided man with the Holy Scriptures in order to restore man to his pre-fallen state. The Holy Scriptures provide the only means for man's restoration and is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, which has been revealed and is centered on Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.⁴ Furthermore, it has been given for the preservation and the propagation of truth.⁵ It is to this end that this philosophy of education is forged. Truth, the chief end of all educational practices, can only be attained through knowledge of God, revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Man without this knowledge remains in a fallen state—maintaining faulty reasoning—which cannot lead to a knowledge of God the Redeemer.⁶

Brief Commentary

This statement of philosophy is based on the major components of a worldview: theology, anthropology, and epistemology.

The **theological views** are outlined as follows: *God, whose subsistence is in and of Himself, who has revealed Himself in three persons, is the creator of all things. He is sovereign, maintains dominion over all created things, and has revealed Himself to man.* This statement declares, first of all, that we believe in God. It furthermore distinguishes which God we believe in. We believe in a God whose power is derived from Himself, who is transcendent, *creator of all things*, as well as, one that is immanent, and *has revealed Himself to man*. God, through His revelation to man, expresses a desire to be known. The ideas refuted here are many, but two in particular: First, God is the creator of all things but is not involved in the activities of His creation, leaving God to be defined as some aloof being leaving the world to govern itself.⁷ The second idea refuted is that of man being god. The line of demarcation drawn here is between who God is and how man was created. *Imago Dei*, in the image of God, by definition is merely a reflection or a part of an existing form. God being this existing form has only endowed man with an image or a reflection of Himself. As a result, man has the ability to respond to God, but

Comment [J1]: The article "a" is intentionally left out to preserve the wholeness of the knowledge of God. As oppose to using "a" to preserve clarity, it would be better rendered if "the," a more definite article, was used instead. In essence, the passage declares that there is only one knowledge of God, which must be taken in its entirety; a fraction of this knowledge is insufficient.

¹The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, Article 2.1

²Genesis 1:27

³Genesis 2:15-3:6, Romans 3:23

⁴The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, Article 1.1

⁵The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, Article 1.1

⁶John 14:6, Philippians 3:8

⁷This view is known as *deism*, which maintains the belief that God is like a great watchmaker, creating the world to govern itself without any intervention, thus characterizing God as being transcendent. If God is transcendent, then there are no miracles or revelations; the world is merely governed by natural laws, and it is man's responsibility to discover these natural laws.

this does not communicate the idea of man having the ability to become like God. When it is stated that God is the creator of all things, it by default denotes a hierarchy. This hierarchy is maintained in knowing that the creation is always and will always be subject to the Creator.⁸

The *anthropological views* are outlined as follows: [God] *has revealed Himself to man, His chief creation, whom he has created imago Dei. The first man Adam, transgressing God's law has brought upon man the disease of sin, which has distorted this imago Dei and man's ability to reason. God, in His sovereignty, has provided man with the Holy Scriptures in order to restore man to his pre-fallen state.* This position maintains that God created all mankind, in direct opposition to the belief that mankind is a product of natural selection. God has separated man from all other creatures, and endowed him with *imago Dei*. This image is reflected in man's ability to reason. Reason is defined as the power of man to think, understand, and form judgments logically.⁹ To think is to deliberate over possibilities, and self-willingly choose between those possibilities. Not to think is not to be human. Not to think is to be purely instinctive. To be purely instinctive is to be a brute. The first man, Adam, transgressing God's command, thus breaking the covenant between him and God, has brought death upon men.¹⁰ Man's transgression of God's command has distorted *imago Dei* placing on man the mark of original sin which is detestable to God. Since *imago Dei* has been distorted, man's ability to reason—his chief attribute—has been distorted also. If man's ability to reason has been distorted, man cannot arrive at truth through reason alone. Man can only arrive at truth through a knowledge of God the Creator and of God the Redeemer.

The *epistemological views* are outlined as follows: *The Holy Scriptures provides the only means for man's restoration and is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, which has been revealed and is centered on Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. Furthermore, it has been given for the preservation and the propagation of truth. It is to this end that this philosophy of education is forged. Truth, the chief end of all educational practices, can only be attained through a knowledge of God; as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Man without this knowledge remains in a fallen state—maintaining faulty reasoning—which cannot lead to a knowledge of God the Redeemer.* The impending question that has to be dealt with at firsthand is whether truth can be arrived at apart from the Holy Scriptures? Specified in Article 1.1 of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith is the *type* of knowledge found in the Holy Scriptures. This *saving* knowledge is the thread that binds all the verses and chapters in the Holy Scriptures. Revealed in the Holy Scriptures is a knowledge of God the Creator and a knowledge of God the Redeemer.¹¹ John Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, asserts that man can arrive at an elemental knowledge of God the Creator through pure reason, but denounces man's ability to arrive at a knowledge of God the

Comment [J2]: The Holy Scriptures is considered one entity and as such is treated singularly. As opposed to "The Holy Scriptures are," it is contextually accurate when written as "The Holy Scriptures is" especially when preceded by the article "the." (As per the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, Article 1.1.)

⁸ The view proposed here is *pantheism*, which is defined as "all is god" and "god is all." In other words, there is no distinction between God and man. There is no hierarchy, but man is on a quest to find or discover his "god-consciousness," awaking the god within and become deified.

⁹ Concise Oxford English Dictionary 11th Edition (CD-Rom)

¹⁰ Romans 5:12

¹¹ *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, Books 1&2

Redeemer through similar means. Thus the Holy Scriptures are necessary to attain both knowledge of God the Creator and the Redeemer. All educational practices must be geared and tailored towards this end: the pursuit of the truth about and of God.¹² All institutions without truth as their end, labor in vain. These institutions and their philosophies, without exception, must be refuted and denied the privilege of educating.¹³

¹² 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹³ Colossians 2:8

The Task of Christian Education: A Philosophy of Disciplines

Since the mandate of every Christian is to love God with all one's mind, soul, body, and strength, it is the task of the Christian school to equip all its' constituents with the tools necessary to pursue knowledge of and about God. These tools include the ability to *read* efficiently, *think* critically, *write* persuasively, *speak* clearly, and *persevere* relentlessly. In order to fulfill this need, it is necessary that all disciplines be taught with mastery as their highest objective.

The *humanities* (LANGUAGE, HISTORY, POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY and ETHICS) are necessary for providing discipline in the area of language acquisition and the tools for understanding, evaluating, predicting, and responding to various social, political and economic contexts.

The *mathematics and sciences* (PHYSICS and MEDICINE) discipline the mind to reason and cultivate deductive and inductive abilities it also seeks to providing the archetype (demonstrated in nature) for solving complex problems.

The *fine arts* (MUSIC, DANCE, and DRAMA) also discipline the mind in the area of emotional refinement. Music teaches melody, harmony, and dynamics. Dance teaches coordination, balance, and orderliness. Drama teaches the ability to control and manipulate emotions.

The *visual arts* (PHOTOGRAPHY, PAINTING, and SCULPTING) discipline the mind to pay attention to the finer details of reality as well as explore the potential reality through visual aids. It further trains the mind to think conceptually, when text is not an option.

Athletics discipline the mind in learning how to overcome defeat and the body to submit to the mind.

These disciplines taken as one will provide the Christian with the necessary tools to pursue the truth about God—biblical worldview—in whatever areas of service they are directed.

The Task of Christian Education in a Postmodern Context

Depending on the context in which the Christian school finds itself, the emphasis on the disciplines will vary. For example, during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, Western Europe experienced a rise in the areas of art, music, and a revival in learning, yet the amount of information reported on formal sporting is very little. In other parts of the world and in various time periods, sporting and military were the norms (e.g. Sparta). In such cases the context determines the focus of the education. The twenty-first century Christian finds himself in different social, political, and economic contexts from the first-century Christian. Although the goals of the enemy (Satan) have never changed, his schemes are continuing to evolve. Although the Christians' goals do not change, his methods and means of communicating the gospel message has had to adapt to the changes in the social, political and economic climate. The 21st century Christian finds himself wrapped up in a postmodern context that has as its goal the denial of all truth. Postmodernism will ultimately lead to nihilism, which is the final destination of radical skepticism. The scope of twenty-first century education must have as its focus the pursuit of truth about all things. This means that philosophical inquiry must become the basis for all educational practices. This includes engaging in the age-old "The Great Conversation" (the collection of books considered as essential parts of the Western canon) that investigates the great works of western civilization and serves as the foundation of all philosophical speculation. This is the primary and necessary means by which the Christian can effectively engage a postmodern world.

Developing Educational Policy

A sound philosophical position is the source of all ethical suppositions. Those ethical suppositions agreed upon by the community and its leaders, must provide the foundation for the development and implementation of all educational policies. Subsequently, the educational policies provide the framework for the governance and operation of the institution. Therefore, it is necessary that this Christian philosophy of education be reviewed in light of all potential revisions or amendments to this institution's governing policies.