

Running Head: CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

Christian and Educational Worldview

Hartwell T Paul Davis

### Abstract

Among the principle activities of life, there are some that are basic and not complicated. As children we learn to eat, clothe ourselves, and practice basic hygiene skills. Learning to tie a shoe is not particularly complex, but it is a skill that must be learned, and most often with the help of someone else. There are some skills that we learn without much assistance from others, but most of our learning comes from “teaching”. There is a connection between the teacher and the learner. Most of our life-long learning is built upon relationship with others, whether as a parent, student, teacher, or colleague. Relationships that include God will produce learning that incorporates truth and sound knowledge. Relationships that exclude God results in potential deception and learning that will be distorted. The battle to keep *God in the schools* is not only about ideology, but about whether learning is based on truth or falsehood. Ultimately the effect of what has been learned determines the character and destiny of the learner.

## Christian and Educational Worldview

Among the principle activities of life, there are some that are basic and not particularly complicated. As children we learn to eat, clothe ourselves, and practice basic hygiene skills. Learning to tie a shoe is not complex, but it is a skill that must be learned, and most often with the help of someone else. There are some skills that we learn without much assistance from others, but much of our learning comes from teaching. Life begins early with caretakers that teach us to walk, talk, eat, and dress. Eventually we get to a stage where we become self-learners.

### *The role and responsibility of the teacher*

Solomon knew the value of a teacher. Solomon speaks of the life of the learner as one that needed to remember “thy creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1), and the life of the teacher (i.e. preacher) as one that must be dedicated to truth. Solomon writes,

And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh (Ecclesiastes 12:8-12, KJV).

The teaching profession is a ministry of service. Jesus himself exemplifies the perfect teacher, and while the cross speaks to his most important mission, teaching defines the most

important aspect of his life that became known as his “ministry”. The skill that trained twelve men to transform the world was the skill he had as the greatest teacher known to mankind.

A major role of the teacher is revealed in the Lord’s method of “discipleship”. The word to disciple speaks to the concept of one that trains another through the use of discipline. While the word “discipline” is often associated with punishment, the word actually means “(1) a branch of knowledge, (2) a system of values and conduct, (3) a method of practice” (See Discipline from WordNet). The concept of discipleship comes into the teaching profession when teachers see themselves as mentors, not controllers of thought. Harrison and Killion suggest ten roles for the teacher-leader that are worth noting (Harrison and Killion, 2007, pp. 74-77). These are,

1. Resource provider
2. Instructional specialist
3. Curriculum specialist
4. Classroom supporter
5. Learning facilitator
6. Mentor
7. School leader
8. Data Coach
9. A catalyst for change
10. A learner

The whole article wonderfully explains each of these roles. Absent among the teacher roles are police officer, medical doctor, psychologist, social worker, lawyer, clergy, parent, and president.

*The role and responsibilities of the family*

The greatest part of our life will always be in “learning mode”, whether assisted or unassisted. Parents and caretakers are our first teachers; playmates and friends often come next. Then we have our school teachers, counselors, ministers, employers, and others that contribute to our learning. Each stage of learning represents “development”. One stage may be built upon the preceding stage as if it were a foundation. It is possible however things learned can destroy and undermine the previous stage. The early stage of a learner’s development is critical, and that is why the scripture admonishes that our first learning be that of parents preparing the child with the knowledge of God and his law. The *Shema* for the Jew and Christian is a central theme for understanding all of the rest of scripture. It becomes foundational for all truth including the rest of what may be learned in life. Moses wrote,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, KJV).

Notice that teaching the things of God becomes a part of all other activity: sitting in the house, walking by the way, going to bed and rising up. The implication is that this covers all aspects of life and all aspects of learning; it is all inclusive.

*The role and responsibility of the learner*

Learning comes to us in two ways: independent of others or dependent on others. The first does not depend on relationship and may be the simple act of a child holding a toy and learning by touch. On the other hand, we may smell a rose and someone tells us that we are smelling roses. The Bible declares that there are times we need to separate ourselves and learn without the help of others. Solomon wrote, “Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom” (Proverbs 18:1, KJV). The learner however must learn to discriminate between good and evil, profitable and unprofitable, valuable and lacking in value. Although children are given little choice, they must learn to depend on their parents not only for guiding their education but to protect them from harm in the process. That is why obedience to parents is such an important theme within the scripture.

As learners mature, there are many opportunities to make choices about what they will learn, where they will go to school, and from whom they will learn. Several scriptures speak to the responsibility of the learner. Proverbs 19:27 states, “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth thee to err from the words of knowledge” (KJV). In Psalms we read,

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psalms 1:1-2, KJV).

*What is the purpose of education and the role of government?*

What is the purpose of education? David Brook reports one explanation by a Harvard professor and writes,

The aim of a liberal education is to unsettle presumptions, to de-familiarize the familiar, to reveal what is going on beneath and behind appearances, to disorient young people and to help them to find ways to reorient themselves (Brooks, 2009, p. 31).

Brook's analysis is that the Harvard professor means to promote individualism and independent thinking. He observes,

The report implied an entire way of living. Individuals should learn to think for themselves. They should be skeptical of pre-existing arrangements. They should break free from the way they were raised, examine life from the outside and discover their own values (Brooks, 2009, p. 31).

Brooks however concludes that this is a liberal view that while promoting individualism, actually undermines institutions and values established by relationship. The concern that students "should break free from the way they were raised" has become a familiar mantra among secular progressive educators attempting to remove God from the halls of education and who are trying to replace parental values with the godless ideology of humanism.

Tom Sowell provides dire warning concerning the ideological offensive that has been mounted by secular progressives in public education. The offensive takes place through the use of special programs such as sex or drug education, values clarification, and other programs that include such godless curriculum as *Changing Bodies*, *Changing Live* or *Man: A Course of Study*. Sowell writes that educational brainwashing takes place through curriculum that is primarily designed to be attitude changing curriculum. For example sex education programs, according to Sowell, is really intended to undermine values and parental authority. Sowell states, "Far more often, the primary thrust is toward a re-shaping of attitudes, not only toward sex but also toward

parents, toward society, and toward life” (Sowell, 1993, p. 35). In explaining the brainwashing agenda of such curriculum, Sowell postulates,

The most general – indeed pervasive – principle of these various programs is that decision are not to be made by relying on traditional values passed on by parents or the surrounding society. Instead, those values are themselves to be questioned and compared with the values and behavior of other individuals or other societies (Sowell, 1993, pp. 47-48).

Instead of creating individualism, secular progressive want to re-define and re-orient relationships toward a godless sinful world. This ideology is revealed in the scripture which speaks of those “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever” (Romans 1:25, KJV).

The role of the government in education is to support the individual’s rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights did not prohibit government funded education, however Gutek notes that “According to the Tenth Amendment of the Unites States Constitution, education was among the powers reserved to each state in the Union” (Gutek, 1995, p. 460). Unfortunately, governments often see themselves as *parens patrie* thereby replacing parenting with “it takes a village” to teach a child.

*What is the role of the federal government in education?*

Gerald Gutek observes that “An historical general trend in the Western educational experience has been to make formal education, or schooling, inclusive of more persons and groups than in the past” (Gutek, 1995, p. 528). The history of education for all nations has been one in which entities such as churches, localized institutions, and even states were eventually



replaced by the larger federal government. It happened in Russia, China, and Nazi Germany as schools became tools of ideology. Great Britain and other powers in Europe have become largely socialistic nations having created massive welfare states where in much of the economy was nationalized. Gutek notes that “British education follows the historical generalization operative throughout the world that government educational policy is a consequence of political and economic ideologies” (p. 367). Will this be the direction of American education?

What is the role of the federal government in education? From a Christian worldview it should be as little as possible. While much could be said for the benefits of standardization of educational curriculum, or the power to levy taxes, the greater concern is that we continue curbing larger federal power by virtue of state power prescribed in the Constitution. Unfettered federal power can only result in the corrupting influence of political agendas being wielded by the “big stick” of bigger government.

### *The Christian worldview promotes truth*

The real purpose of education from a Christian worldview is to provide knowledge that is based on truth and that is applicable to all things pertaining to life. Education is not only about what you know but what you become as a result of your education. In other words, what you know, what you believe, and what you understand determines your thought and actions, and ultimately your character and destiny. According to James Watson, Sire defines the term *worldview* as “a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make up of our world” (Watson, 2007, p. 361).

The definition of worldview for a Christian is broadened when we incorporate faith in Christ as a part of our worldview. Writing for *Focus on the Family*, Dell Tacket quotes David Noebel who defines worldview as “any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world and man's relations to God and the world,” (Tacket, n.d., ¶3). For the Christian, there is only one worldview because our assumptions must be based on truth. There is no room for falsehood in science, medicine, literature, math, history, or social studies. The basic makeup of our world begins and ends with the proposition that there is a creator to whom we are all accountable. Our worldview presupposes that God is the source of knowledge and is the source of life. The Christian worldview that demands truth in education is based upon the principle that “the truth will make you free” (John 8:32, KJV). The truth as a part of the educational process allows the development of good character, morals, judgment, and life skills. The Christian worldview sees character as a goal of education that allows knowledge and skills derived from education to be used in a righteous and godly manner, giving credit to Jesus Christ as the Lord of our life.

#### *The Christian worldview promotes character*

Character however must be aligned with God’s word and not liberal values. The Christian worldview is that the Bible is the source of truth by which all other sources must be measured. As Christian educators, curriculum would be examined in the light of God’s word. Not all curriculums are Bible specific, but their merit would be judged against the guiding principles of God’s word and in keeping with God’s truth. For example, the series *In Search of Character* focuses on ten virtues as a part of a character education. These ten virtues include respect, trustworthiness, responsibility, fairness, and caring, to name a few (Thomas, Character

Counts). Numerous scriptures uphold these same virtues and depending on how they are taught, the curriculum could be compatible with a Christian worldview. A second example from the series on sex and dating issues, deals with the issue of teen sex by emphasizing the Biblical viewpoint of abstinence. The tagline for Michael Pritchard's book, *Speaking of Sex*, reads, "This program gives young adolescents the message that abstinence from sexual activity is normal and desirable at their age" (Pritchard, *Sex and Dating Issues*). When judged against scripture, the Christian educator will look for curriculum that agrees with God's word.

The importance of character education as a part of the Christian worldview is noted in a study by Cox, Hameloth, and Talbot of Regents University. Because Christian character is commanded by God, the authors contend that "it is imperative that they be sufficiently presented in Christian education text" (Cox, Hameloth, and Talbot, 2007, p. 190). In explaining the reason for character as a part of the curriculum, the authors state,

One of the primary ways that Christians are to reflect Christ is via their character. Jesus' own character and that which He expects of His disciples (cf. 1 Cor 11:1) includes, but goes beyond what may be considered good moral character (cf. Matt 19:16–21; Lewis, 1947). For example, to rejoice in persecution, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile, to praise God in all things, to pray for the lost, and to engage in spiritual warfare are examples of character qualities that are distinctly Christian (2007, p. 190).

The development of a Christ like character is an essential part of the education process within the Christian worldview.

### *Conclusion and philosophy of education*

The abundant life spoken of by Jesus Christ not only purports that there is an eternal life for the future, but that the life we now have can be full of the riches of both the spiritual and

temporal world. Life skills which include work related skills, social skills, learning skills, and survival skills should all rest on character values that are centered in what is true and right.

Truth should be a way of life in business. Truth should be a way of life for government. Truth is not only a religious principle. Truth and education must go together, because education is not only about what you know but about how you live. The abundant life is an outcome of what you know, and it begins when one “knows Jesus”.

Truth must be the center of all things learned and if it is, then “reality is real”. Otherwise, the outcome will be a life that is full of fantasy, false dreams, false hopes, and ultimate deception. The Christian worldview for education is that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, KJV), and must therefore be a part of the educational process.

## References

- Brooks, D. (2009). What life asks of us. *New York Times*, 31. Retrieved January 19, 2010 from Academic Source Complete: <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu>
- Cox Jr, W. F., Hameloth, N. J., & Talbot, D. P. (2007). Biblical Fidelity of Christian School Textbooks. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 16(2), 181-210. doi: 10.1080/10656210701647498
- Discipline (n.d.) retrieved from <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=discipline>
- Gutek, G.L. (1995). *A History of the Western Educational Experience* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Harrison, C., & Killion, J. (2007). Ten roles for teacher leaders. *Educational Leadership*, 65(1), 74-77. Retrieved January 26, 2010 from Academic Search Complete: Liberty University.
- Pritchard, M. (n.d.) *Speaking of Sex*. Retrieved January 20, 2010 from <http://livewiremedia.com/SubjectSexDating.html>
- Sowell, T. (1993). *Inside American Education: The Decline, The Deception, The Dogmas*. New York: Free Press.
- Tacket, D. (n.d.) What's a Christian worldview? Retrieved January 20, 2010 from [http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/christian\\_worldview/whats\\_a\\_christian\\_worldview.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/christian_worldview/whats_a_christian_worldview.aspx)
- Thomson, M. (n.d.) *In Search of Character*. Retrieved January 20, 2010 from <http://livewiremedia.com/products/isoc/isoc.html>
- Watson, J. E. (2007). Integrating a Biblical worldview into Bible college teacher education Programs. *Christian Higher Education*, 6(5), 357-369. doi: 10.1080/15363750701285842