

# Christian Philosophy of Education

A Christian philosophy of education is derived from sources provided by Christian theology, the Bible, and Christian philosophy. From these sources a Christian philosophy of education can be abstracted which can serve man by providing:

1. *Metaphysical* system with coordinated world view which gives unity and meaning to life.
2. *Epistemological* system showing relations and inter-relations in the totality of truth and provides for developing the curriculum with a systematic presentation of knowledge.
3. *Axiological* system with emphasis on absolute values and true objectives which gives purpose and direction to life.

Any philosophy of education must have directives. A primary directive involves the purpose of education. Four different purposes of education have been historically exemplified by four major civilizations:

1. The purpose of education among the Jews was to *prepare the individual in the service of God.*
2. The purpose of education among the Spartans was to *obliterate of the individual in the service of the state.*
3. The purpose of education among the Athenians was to *train the individual in the service of culture.*
4. The purpose of education among the Romans was to *train the individual in the service of the state.*

A Christian philosophy of education harmonizes with the ancient educational purpose of the Jews to *prepare the individual in the service of God.*

## Metaphysics in the Christian Philosophy of Education

*Metaphysics* (Greek, *beyond the physical*) deals with questions concerning *ontology* (the nature of being and reality) and *cosmology* (the nature of the universe as a whole). *Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being... Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

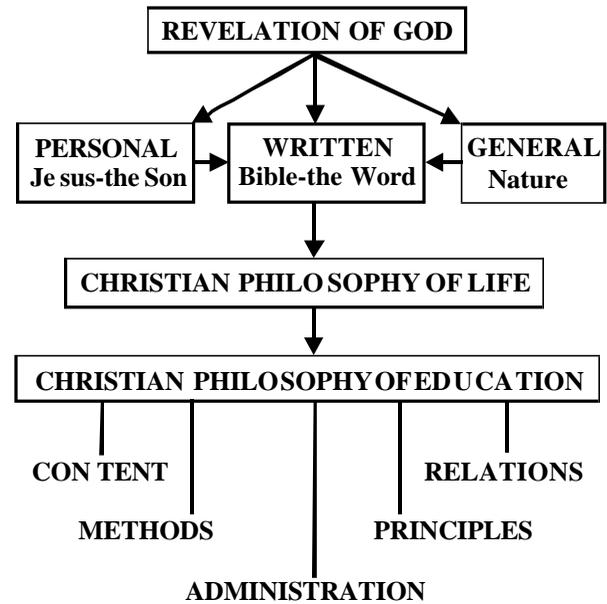
The Christian philosophy recognizes God as the supreme center of ontology and cosmology. *Colossians 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,*

*whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

God has revealed Himself to man in the Bible which is a positive, supernatural, and authoritative message upon which the Christian philosophy of life exists. *2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

All truth is God's truth. All understanding of experiences must be guided by the absolute standard of truth and reality, God's Holy Written Word, the Bible. *John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path... 160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. Proverbs 30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*

The Christian philosophy is comprehensive and broad enough to include all experiences of life, one of which is education, and provides guidelines for the whole educational process embracing content, methods, administration, principles, and relations. The implications of this working principle can be seen in the chart shown below:

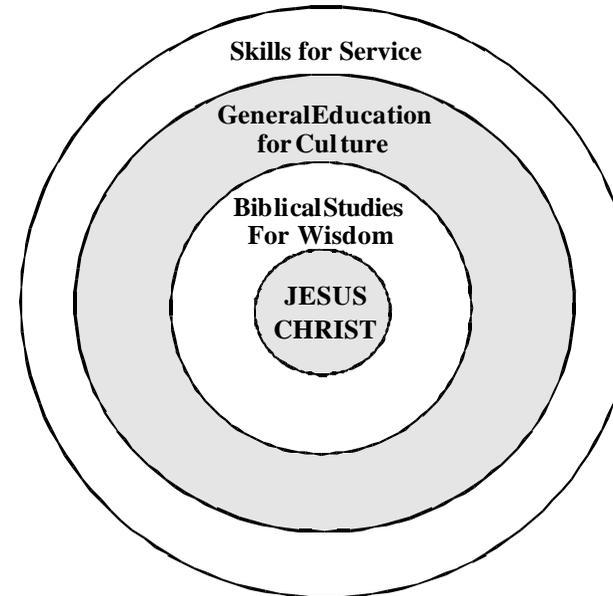


*John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

## Epistemology in the Christian Philosophy of Education

*Epistemology* (Greek, *study of knowing*) deals with questions concerning the nature of the cognitive (Latin, *knowing*) processes, the sources of human knowledge, and the methods of validating ideas. Epistemology encompasses the acquisition of knowledge through learning processes and curriculum development. The Christian philosophy of education requires that all knowledge in life be seen through God's Word – even our text books. Natural facts and raw knowledge take on meaning only through the supernatural resources of God. *Psalm 119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. 10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. 11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

A Christian philosophy provides for knowledge acquisition that develops both Christian personality and skills as illustrated below showing Jesus Christ at the center of concentric circles representing greater and greater specialties of learning and wisdom.



*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

A Christian philosophy of education skillfully integrates life and truth with a curriculum program that unites the diverse fragments that make up this raw material of education. This integrating factor is God and His revelation through Jesus Christ.

General education for culture basically includes a liberal arts education that embraces acquisition of language, science, art, and concepts of value. Skills for service include curriculum areas which supply the major specialization fields for academic study. Biblical studies for wisdom involve the absolute of reality and personal existence. These curriculum fragments are integrated through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This approach saves the curriculum from being narrowly intellectual to the exclusion of the dynamic life principle. Instead, it calls for skillful integration of life and truth in order to train the individual for service to God. Such service presupposes that the Christ-like life results in the greatest possible benefit to mankind. A philosophy of education that has departed from these precepts will continue *ever learning, and never able to come to knowledge of the truth (II Timothy 3:7).*

The Lord Jesus Christ established and commissioned His churches with the responsibility of communicating truth to the world. Christians are commanded to assemble in the Lord's churches to receive teaching and encouragements. *1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles... Matthew 28:16 Then the eleven disciples [apostles] went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them... 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things what so ever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Hebrews 10:25 Not for saking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Parents have the ultimate responsibility of educating their children. Parents accomplish this by attending church faithfully with their children, and by teaching God's Word to children in their homes. *Deuteronomy 6:7 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.*

## ***Axiology in the Christian Philosophy of Education***

*Axiology* (Greek, *study of value*) deals with the theory and study of values of all types. *Axiology* encompasses both ethics (What is right?) and aesthetics (What is beautiful?). In a Christian philosophy, value is simply the will of God for the Christian life. Value is theonomous or God-centered, rather than autonomous or man-centered. In a Christian philosophy of education, the educational system has the duty of training and developing the student to the highest extent possible so that the student may give the highest and best service possible to God. Only with this philosophy will mankind truly benefit from the student's service.

A Christian philosophy of education incorporates the universal, unchanging, absolute standards of value revealed by God in the Bible. These Biblical Absolutes are outlined as follows:

### **Biblical Absolutes**

- I. God Is. *Psalm 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*
- II. God has revealed Himself.
  - A. Through creation. *Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God head; so that they are without excuse.*
  - B. Through the Scriptures and Jesus Christ. *Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*
- III. Verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible. *2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*
- IV. Man's rebellion against God. *Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? Romans 3:22-23 ...for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*
- V. Judgment and the reality of hell. *Revelation 20:13-15 ...And they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was*

*not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

- VI. The Lord Jesus Christ and the atonement. *2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*
- VII. Salvation of the soul, the new birth. *John 3:3, 16-18 Jesus answered and said unto him (Nicodemus) Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God. . . For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever lasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*
- VIII. The child of God through Christ. *Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son: and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

### **Conclusion**

A Christian philosophy of education cannot be adequately summarized in one sentence because it encompasses Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Axiology. A brief summary of a Christian philosophy of education is as follows:

1. God is the supreme center of all reality (*Metaphysics*).
2. All knowledge must be seen through God's Word (*Epistemology*).
3. The Bible, God's Word, reveals the unique, unchanging, absolute standards of value (*Axiology*).
4. All these concepts are integrated through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (*Philosophy of Life*).
5. Education has the purpose to prepare the individual in the service of God (*Philosophy of Education*).

*Colossians 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain de-*

*ceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.*

## **Christian Philosophy of Education**

***Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.***

***Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.***

**by Dr. Gail E. Terrell**

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a road map of holiness***