

## Christ in Education

Views held in politics, pastoral care, missions and education often coincide with a particular philosophical outlook. In the Post Modern era there has been a move away from absolute truth towards relativity and also a misplaced trust in the goodness of human nature.

This means that pastoral care is more open to “private interpretation” and less dogmatic, missions is less exporting a conservative faith and more accepting of a contextual or local faith and education is less teaching a body of knowledge and more guidance in self-discovery. One problem in a Post Modern world is about personal identity. With relativism many people do not know what to believe, what is true, what they stand for, or even who they are.

This chapter explores two things. Firstly, what are the philosophical foundations upon which we base ideas on politics, pastoral care, mission and education? Philosophy affects all people, though some people may not be aware. Secondly, how has philosophical thought impacted on educational theory and practice in particular?

We are not saying that philosophy is the foundation of things. The word of God is the only foundation. But people pick up philosophical views from media, conversations with friends and popular current thought. These views affect how we look at scripture. We put names to these views in this chapter, only to help us to have a look at them.

One important question is what is the nature of knowledge or truth? Is truth determined by our personal view, meaning is truth subjective, relative, cultural or dependent on perspective or opinion? Or is truth determined by the nature of the thing itself and not by us? In other words, is truth objective and determined by God? For example, does two plus two equal four, or is that a matter of opinion? Is the Bible interpreted by what the Author meant, or by how we look at it?

Another important question is about human nature. Are people born naturally good so that we can determine truth reliably from our own inward perceptions? Or is human nature corrupted so people cannot rely on their own judgement, but must have some standard in education to guide them? Is the answer somewhere in the middle, meaning should education encourage research into new understanding, while we are guided by certain parameters?

These two questions relate to academic freedom. The secular world today often talks about freedom of thought, but at the same time those who wish to enquire freely into “intelligent design” as a theory of creation are often silenced, persecuted and dismissed from jobs. Secularism has become a faith which seeks to hinder free thought.

In this chapter we will look at how people’s views have shifted through the church age and how Reformed views impacted upon educational development. In the first 1,000 years of the church views were largely Platonic, meaning there were tendencies towards trusting in experience. In the second 1,000 years views have been based more on Aristotle, which seeks to be more rational. Both of these are humanistic, meaning they trust in man and are therefore man-centred.

More recently in Post Modernism there has been a shift back to a more Platonic experiential world view. Theologically, this is supported by Karl Barth and Neo Orthodoxy. The Platonism of Western Post Modernism easily merges with the Platonism of African animism. This can result in a much more global emphasis on experience and spiritual warfare.

The Reformation sought to build truth about God neither on experience nor rationalism, but upon the scripture alone, interpreted in its plain sense, how the Author meant it when it was written. In the Reformation truth is determined by what God says in His word and not by our experiential or rational view of it.

We will start by looking at some philosophical views and then see how these relate to our educational practice. Topics covered in this chapter include:

- Plato and the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium.
- Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium.
- Natural theology.
- Karl Barth.
- Nominalism and science.
- Reformed principles in education.
- Integration of natural theology with biblical theology.
- Behaviourism and Developmentalism.
- Informal and formal education.
- Values in African education.
- Education for pastors.

### Plato

Plato lived before Christ. During the first 1,000 years after Christ Platonic philosophy formed many of the ideas of church leaders. Similar ideas were held in Persia and India, as the basis of Hinduism and Buddhism. Plato followed a common Greek belief that material things were more or less evil. This included the flesh or body of man. They believed only the spiritual realm was real, while the material was a distraction, or even an unreal imagination, that had to be overcome to achieve a better state.

Some claimed that the God of the Old Testament was evil because He created a material world. They claimed that Jesus came in the spirit and not with a body. This position was known as Gnosticism, which the Apostle John stated, in his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle, was the spirit of antichrist, i.e. it denied the bodily atonement of Christ on the cross.

Paul fought against these Greek philosophies in his epistles. He was against both Jewish and Greek syncretism with the gospel. However, as the church grew it became more and more Hellenized (Greek), as more Greek converts came into the church. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century church fathers such as Justin Martyr began to steer the church more towards these Platonic Greek ideas.

Justin Martyr was a Christian and the basics of his Christian doctrine were sound. However, Martyr was a Platonist before his salvation. Increasingly church leaders of his time began to deliberately work to win more Greeks by presenting the gospel as a fulfilment of their Greek philosophy. Platonism promotes human experience based theology. This means they sought “spiritual” experiences by denying their flesh. From these experiences they would garner their theology and then allegorise scripture to support it.

Church Fathers such as Jerome and Origen further popularised this approach. They followed the allegorical form of interpretation that the Greeks believed in, looking for the hidden “spiritual” message behind the plain meaning of scripture. They believed that to gain revelations, or a deeper spiritual life, one must fast and deny the flesh. This would make them holy and give them special “truth” through visions. This is not Christian. The scriptural principle of mortifying the flesh means to deny ungodliness.

The idea of personally earned holiness became popular, rather than holiness by faith and the finished work of Christ. Monasteries and asceticism grew. The reward would be special knowledge, such as false visions of Mary. Much of the false doctrine was based on man made visions, “puffed up by their fleshly mind.” (Col 2:18). The early church was Hellenized and left its Hebrew roots.

## Augustine and Pelagius

In the 5<sup>th</sup> Century Augustine had a foot in both camps. As an Alexandrian Christian from North Africa he was heavily influenced by asceticism. Abstinence from marriage was highly honoured due to Mary worship. There was also a debate concerning Pelagius. Pelagius believed that man is not born in sin and does not inherit Adam's sin. He said man can be saved by works without the help of God's grace.

The church councils met and condemned the doctrine of Pelagius and also condemned semi-Pelagianism. Semi-Pelagianism held that in salvation a man takes the first step towards God and then God assists the man thereafter by His grace. The *Council of Orange* in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century held that salvation is by grace and that the first cause in man coming to Christ is election, not man's choice, citing several texts including:

I have obtained mercy to be faithful (1 Cor. 7:25, 1 Tim. 1:13). What have you that you did not receive? (1 Cor. 4:7). Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above...(Jas. 1:17). No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven (John 3:27).

It is worth reading the whole statement from the Council of Orange on the Internet.

Augustine upheld Paul's position on grace, faith and the blood of Christ alone for salvation and sanctification, thereby defeating Pelagius. This victory in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century is known as the *Mini Reformation*. Augustine's teaching later inspired reformers such as Martin Luther, through whom God brought a more complete escape from past errors. Luther also threw off Augustine's allegory and asceticism.

The gospel defeated asceticism and so-called knowledge by the works of the flesh. The knowledge of Christ is a free gift, "Blessed are you Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father in heaven." (Matt 16:17).

The ideas of the early church severely limited educational thought. If material things were evil then there was no need for scientific advancement. If knowledge is arbitrary then there is no standard of truth. Their knowledge was subjective and they elevated the teachings of men and the church struggled through the *Dark Ages* until the Reformation.

## Aristotle and Aquinas

At the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> 1,000 years of the church a shift began to occur in educational thought. The writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle were rediscovered in Europe. This shift heightened after the fall of Constantinople to the Muslims in 1453, when ancient Greek manuscripts were circulated widely in Western Europe, from Constantinople through Africa into Spain.

Aristotle was also Greek and lived before Christ, but he took a different view to Plato. Aristotle believed that material things were not evil. He believed they contain the knowledge of spiritual truth. He taught that by studying material things man could discover the spiritual truth behind them. He taught that by following logic or rational thought man could study nature and come to the knowledge of God.

Aristotle's view supported *natural theology*. This means that we can come to knowledge of the things about God by studying nature. The Roman Catholic academic Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century supported natural theology. Aquinas said there were *two tiers of theology*, biblical and natural theology. He believed that we can gain the knowledge of God both by studying scripture and from nature.

This suited the Catholic position. With two sources of theology the church could continue to authorize what was not in scripture, by drawing authority from logic, reason and the natural sciences, including the humanities. The Catholic Church believes that natural theology is an authority equal to scripture. They believe their Catholic Catechism, which draws theology from various sources, interprets scripture.

At the time of Aquinas a *Renaissance* had begun in Europe: a *reawakening, rediscovery, or rebirth*. This means a rebirth of knowledge from Greek manuscripts which became more common in Europe. This was also termed the *enlightenment*. People began to question Papal authority. This was begun by the Reformers who had a renewed knowledge of the scripture by studying the newly acquired Greek manuscripts from Constantinople.

But there was also a humanist arm to the Renaissance. The humanists thought they could know God from nature and did not therefore need the church. The Reformers broke from Papal dogma to biblical truth. The humanists broke from Papal dogma to belief in science, or belief in self.

Renaissance humanist educators such as Jean Rousseau taught that man could discover his own thoughts about God by studying nature and did not need scripture. This led to scepticism about faith and to liberal theology, which denies anything in scripture that logic or self-judgement cannot accept. Self and individualism had become the centre of all things.

Theology was drawn from the “authority” of the natural sciences rather than from scripture. These “sciences” includes the *behavioural sciences*, the *humanities*, meaning the study of man in nature, culture, anthropology and psychology. It was believed that from these studies man could learn about God.

Today it is claimed that pastoral ministry can be based on “truths” learned from psychology. Students preparing for ministry then spend more time studying the humanities than studying theology. However, the only true witness we have of man’s real condition is the Bible. The Bible provides the solution, the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Psychology tries to patch old wineskins.

All areas in science, including the humanities, have their value when it comes to understanding our environment, but none of them can reliably inform us about God and the New Covenant in Christ. Scientific understanding, especially in the field of the humanities, is so subjective that it cannot be used to judge God’s word. It is not psychology that we are against. It is the use of it to reinterpret scriptural values that we are against.

### Natural Theology

People sometimes claim the use of natural theology is supported from Bible passages such as Romans 1 to 3 and Ps 19:1-3 that says creation declares the glory of God. The argument of Paul in Romans is that creation shows us there is a God and leaves us without an excuse. Paul did not claim that we should use nature as a source of theology.

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 Godhead; so that they are without excuse. (Rom 1:20).

Paul’s point was the condemnation of man, not that nature could lead man to God. Nature may show that there is a God, but it cannot lead us to Him. The Bible does not teach that nature leads man to God. It teaches that the Holy Spirit through grace leads man to God. The Holy Spirit is the teacher.

Aquinas’ position has serious flaws. Aquinas did not believe in the total depravity of man. He said man had fallen morally, but not intellectually. This means he believed that man was able through logic to make faultless assertions about God through his observations of nature.

But if man's moral fall has in some way impaired his understanding, or made his conclusions somewhat biased towards his sinful nature, then what Martin Lloyd Jones said in *What is an Evangelical?* is correct:

We have got to exclude the notion that men have arrived at the truth as a result of searching and thinking, or by means of philosophy...I put it dogmatically and bluntly, that the evangelical distrusts reason and particularly reason in the form of philosophy...Reason must never determine what we believe. The business of reason is to tell us how to believe.

By this he meant that we use reason to interpret what scripture says, but not as a second source of theology apart from scripture, to judge what the scripture says or what we should believe. Jones is correct. The *Fall* has totally impaired man's reason. Paul describes fallen man:

...In the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (Eph 4:17-19).

### Man a Whole Being

We cannot say man has fallen morally but that it has not affected his intellect. As the *Council of Orange* affirmed when speaking of the necessity of grace in enlightening the heart, "The soul that sins shall die", meaning the soul has no power to enlighten itself (Ezek 18:20).

Man is a whole being, spirit, soul and body. What happens in one part affects all the man. In Hebrew thought this is known as *holism*. Sin impacts all of our being. It deranges the mind. How can a politician who is unfaithful to his wife make sound decisions in leading a nation? He obviously has poor judgement. He is dishonest, a covenant breaker. The same applies to those in ministry. We cannot separate the way we live from who we are.

### Corrupted Vision

Paul showed that man has corrupted the knowledge of God.

Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. (Rom 1:25).

It is inevitable that fallen man will bias his mind against the things of God and then fail to perceive things as they are, but rather as he wants them to be. Fallen man cannot faithfully follow the logic of reason because his personality is flawed. This disproves the belief of Aquinas and his confidence in natural theology. The verse below is about all men born of Adam:

...but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. (Rom 1:21).

Even after man is saved he cannot depend on his intellect, but on the grace of God. "Lean not to your own understanding." (Pr 3:5). We use our intellect, but faith must be in God and not in our intellect. As Christians we should be robust intellectually, but our trust must be in God and not in self.

When studying for a business degree I scored 100% in a Logic module. I was not saved then, but the module taught me something. I learnt that attempting to get at truth through logic was vanity. Truth is a person – Jesus Christ. He is not a way to the truth, He is the truth. There is no truth outside of Jesus Christ (John 1:3, Col 1:17). There is no other Rock. We can trust in nothing else.

The fear of the Lord, not the study of nature, is the beginning of knowledge (Pr 1:7) and wisdom (Pr 9:10). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not upon your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight. Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil." (Pr 3:5-7). "Your word is a lamp to my feet." (Ps 119:105).

### Three World Views

Let's say that a world view is categorized by what we base knowledge on, or what we believe determines truth. A world view is determined by how we evaluate knowledge, or what we accept as truth. Our source of knowledge determines our world view. There are three sources of knowledge:

1. Knowledge by experience - Our religious, emotional, demonic, life experiences, or those we hear by other people's stories, or anecdotal (unproven) evidence. This is Platonism, internal intuitions derived through experience which are held to be truth. We are judges of the truth. This is subjectivism, devotionalism and existentialism.
2. Knowledge by reason – Trusting in the rational process to bring us to self-ascertained truth, trusting in our own understanding, interpreting the scripture by outward scientific "evidences". This is Aristotelian, arriving at truth through a rational process without regard to revealed knowledge as our starting point. We are judges of the truth. This liberal theology and secular atheism.
3. Knowledge by grace – God revealing Himself to our hearts and minds by His own initiative by gift through faith. He reveals Himself in scripture and through the Holy Spirit to our mind and heart. His truth is not contrary to reason and it is experiential, but is determined by God.

All world views concerning ultimate truth derive their arguments from one these three categories and are based on experience, reason, or God's word. Every book we read about spiritual matters will base its arguments on points derived from experience, reason, or from God's word. Many books will mix their points from all three of these sources of "truth".

*Epistemology* comes from the Greek for *the theory of knowledge*. It addresses how we know what we know, or what we base knowledge on. When someone believes we cannot know anything for certain we say they hold a *negative epistemology*. When someone stands firm on the faith of God's word and has a positive view of reality we say they hold to a *positive epistemology*.

The epistemology of humanism exalts either experience or reason above God. We subject experience and reason to faith and faith is based on God's revealed truth. Faith is the ultimate authority to the Christian, because faith maintains God's glory. We are a fool to trust in ourselves.

### Creation Cursed

The second point that natural theology misses is that when Adam fell God cursed creation. The creation we see now is not exactly that which God created, but has been marred due to the sin of man. Creation after the *Fall* does not fully represent the nature and purpose of God in its original order. Creation shows God's glory, that there must be a Creator. It shows His magnificence and power.

However, there are many things in nature that do not reflect God's perfect will. There is corruption, killing and disaster throughout nature today. Only the person of Jesus Christ is the perfect image of the Father. Jesus did not say, "If you have seen creation you have seen My Father." He said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen My Father." (John 14:9).

In another chapter we looked at the biblical teaching that through Adam's sin death entered the world. We have to do hermeneutical gymnastics to claim that this was only the spiritual death of man and that it did not affect the whole of creation. The fact that, as a result of Adam's sin, God cursed creation shows that his sin affected all creation.

So the two facts:

1. Nature is fallen and not yet restored.
2. Fallen man does not perceive rightly

...Mean that natural theology cannot lead us to God, or give us a detailed understanding of God. Nature and our perceptions are not inerrant, meaning they are not without error or distortion. Only the scripture is an inerrant revelation of the mind and purpose of God.

Now we look at the reaction of the early Reformers such as Luther to philosophy.

### Philosophy Out

The Reformers had the answer to this problem of philosophy. They threw it out. Philosophy dealt with academic speculations for which they had no time. The Reformers were interested in results, or the benefit of education. They did not want education just for the sake of it, or just for debate. They wanted knowledge to be put to practical use. Education was to help them achieve certain goals in life. These goals were related to the purpose for which God created them, mainly to glorify God and be fruitful.

The Reformers rejected Plato. They did not like his negative view of natural things, his negative epistemology. They claimed that nature was real. They did this based on *deduction*. Christians who are also scientists start with a presupposition that God is. From this they deduce two things:

1. From a belief in God's love, power and integrity they deduce that creation itself is also real and contains some measure of reliability as it was made by a God of integrity.
2. That the loving Father is guiding them intellectually and emotionally through grace to make reliable and helpful observations about nature that will benefit mankind. We agree with John Dewey in part in that science is utilitarian. That is, our observations are not complete, but are based on the *utility or use* nature can be put to, given our needs.

Since God created the world, what we see in nature with God's help must be real. Luther and scientists therefore threw out Platonic scepticism (negative view) about natural things and scepticism about our perception of them. This gave us a far more positive outlook towards the natural sciences and brought significant advancement in those fields.

In the Post Modern climate it is popular for atheist scientists today to claim that our observations are entirely utilitarian subjective perceptions and therefore we can really know nothing for sure. They basically claim that there is no objective truth in anything. This means that education today has lost all its values, as values are based on God's truth. There is a great need to return positive values to education.

All scientific observation is built upon supposition. There is no pure empiricism, where knowledge is gained by the observation of our senses alone. We all have a world view, called *metanarrative* (*meta* [above], *narrative* [what we describe]), through which we view things. As Christians, for example, we start with the supposition that God is real, personal, good and reliable and so we believe in objectivity.

## Theology, Not Philosophy

Philosophy has nothing to do with faith. Philosophy is a system of thought to make sense of our environment, both material and spiritual. People come up with ideas they think are useful to explain life and existence and like or dislike the ideas according to their particular views at the time. The point is that our ideas are irrelevant. Whether we like an idea or not makes no difference whatsoever.

The only thing that matters is whether God said it. It is theology that counts, not philosophy. Theology is a study of what God says. We may have philosophical ideas about the resurrection for example, that make the resurrection more acceptable to men's minds, but this just makes people feel good, it means nothing. The only thing that matters is what God said about the resurrection in His word. We live life by His word. Only His word is truth (John 17:17). Philosophy is speculation.

## Science In

Rejecting Plato led the Reformers to science. They believed that by observing nature man could learn its properties and harness it for the benefit of man and the glory of God. Some felt that in this they were fulfilling the creation mandate to have dominion over the earth.

The Reformers believed in *inductive* science. *Inductive* means studying particular observations in nature to develop general theories about how nature works. These theories then enabled them to predict and harness the principles of the natural world and put them to work in producing a better environment.

At this point philosophy would ask, "What is a "better" environment?". According to scripture it is where we have the knowledge of God, printed Bibles for a start. God wants us to bring up our children in His love, so a home that has some security from the elements would help. He wants us to be healthy so good agriculture and medical advancements would be included. A study of God's word shows us what is "good" and what a "better environment" to live in is.

So Reformers helped inspire the age of invention and the *scientific method*, where repeated tests and observations lead us to the knowledge of general theories of nature. Modern science is not to the glory of man's talents. It is a result of God's grace, opening man's eyes to the natural sciences.

By giving His common grace God can use scientists who are not even born again. So the Reformers believed that while nature was not reliable in theology, God was reliable to enable us to harness nature for the common good.

It is impossible for a civilization to depend on the scientific method to prosper if it is not God's will, for man's depravity would prevent possible benefit. Though Hitler had the greatest engineers in the world, his godless egotistical madness destroyed many, including himself.

God can prosper the work of scientists through general grace, even though they do not know Him, if He has a purpose in it. There is no room for boasting for any "civilized" nation. God even promoted ancient Egypt for His purpose and also made a donkey to talk!

## Practical Faith

Rejecting Plato led the Reformers to a belief in practical education. They wanted children to not only learn from books, but also from nature. They wanted children to use their hands and learn practically and not just debate ideas.

In rejecting Plato Luther rejected asceticism, works based holiness and allegory. He called allegory "harlot's rags". Luther also rejected Aristotle. Luther was not a humanist. He accepted whatever God's word said in its plain meaning, whether or not logic would accept it.

Luther accepted the mysteries in God, the trinity, the communion, baptism, miracles, the virgin birth and the God/man nature of Christ. There are no academic or natural solutions for these, but they are declared in the Bible. Luther had the correct understanding of truth, or *epistemology*. Luther's final authority in knowledge was not human reason or experience, but faith given by God and the authority of scripture.

The purpose of Luther's *sola scriptura* declaration was to refute both Plato and Aristotle and put the church on the ground of faith alone, *sola fide*. Ascetic experience and rationalist theology were rejected.

This makes us Christ-centred. It means we do not put man at the centre, or as the initiator, in our coming to the truth. Christ and grace centeredness is the only position that prevents syncretism by mixing humanism with God's revelation. God gives man his gifts, talents and graces. It is our duty in Christ to develop and use these in a practical way for His glory.

### Aristotle Out

Luther fully rejected Aristotle. Reformers agreed that nature was real and thus rejected Plato, but did not agree with Aristotle that nature could lead us to God. The Reformers were strong on this point. They rejected natural theology. For Luther there was only one source of theology and that was scripture. The Reformation rejected Aquinas. So in summary the Reformers said two things about nature:

1. Nature is real and we should study it in science.
2. Nature does not lead to God and is not a second source of theology.

### Nominalism

Luther followed William of Ockham who was a Nominalist. There are different forms of Nominalism (nominal meaning *one*) but for our purposes it means that natural things do not lead us to the knowledge of God. Natural things have *one meaning*, what they are in themselves. Natural things just represent themselves and should be studied for their own sake, not to gain theological truth. Nature is simply what God made it to be, for His glory and for our godly use.

There is nothing wrong with seeing God's beauty, love and character in creation, but He Himself is not in creation. "He was not in the fire and not in the wind, but in the still small voice (faith)." (1 Kings 19:11-13). He is distinct from creation. To see Him as His creation is Pantheism, which means the universe is God. This is the same as saying, "all truth is God's truth", or everything is God. It is secularism.

As we study nature we see something of the glory of God and are thankful to Him, but it is in Christ that we see His glory and love. There is no doubt that we see God's qualities reflected in nature, which He has so kindly blessed us with in abundance. However, what we see of God in nature depends to a large extent on our presuppositions. This means that the scripture alone must be our measuring rod of truth.

There can be atheist nominalists who believe that nature is the only reality. These will believe only what sense knowledge (through the eyes, ears, reason) will tell them and will not accept scripture. William was not of that type. He fell foul of the Catholics. They attacked him because he was against deriving theology from nature. He was against two tier theology.

Nominalism became the basis of modern science, with its belief that we study nature to simply learn about nature. Electricity is electricity. Nature is made by God, but it is not God. It is not where we meet God. We meet God only in Jesus Christ. Nature is beautiful but is decaying and will pass away.

It has no life in itself. Christian Nominalism is opposed to both Platonism and Aristotelian views. It has neither a negative view of nature nor positive view of nature in regards to theology.

Not only does Nominalism put us on the right foot theologically, it also puts us on the right foot scientifically. We no longer study nature for speculative reasons, just to debate it like the Greeks did, but to improve our society and service to God and man. This does not mean that we abuse nature or fail to value it. We are the stewards of this world and must look after it. Nature is one of God's wonderful gifts to mankind.

We are not saved by seeking and finding God through nature, reason and logic. We are saved by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. In steering us away from Plato and Aristotle Luther was steering us away from humanism and into the grace of God. This is what the Reformation stood for: *grace only, scripture only, faith only, the blood of Christ only*. When we go into the natural and behavioural sciences and cultures of man to obtain theological truth we go away from God.

Aristotle and Plato were not of God and were certainly not forerunners of His truth. While they may have had some knowledge of the Law of Moses they were lost and without hope and without any revelation of the truth of God in Jesus Christ. It is common today to take Plato's focus on spiritual things as somehow relevant to Christianity. His ideas had nothing at all to do with Christianity and the revelation of God in scripture. They were totally opposite to Christian truth.

#### Luther's Educational Reforms

In the Roman Catholic system in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century few other than the Catholic priests were able to read the Bible and only in Latin. People were shut out from scriptural truth for they never heard it in their language, they did not have access to a Bible and they could not normally read. Their ignorance of the word of God helped enable Catholic abuses to continue. The priests dispensed "salvation" to the common man by sacrament.

Luther's educational ideas were based on the concept of the priesthood of all believers. This concept was strongly opposed by the Catholics, who said only Peter's successors were priests. The Catholic concept of priesthood was similar to the Old Testament pattern of ritual. They denied the finished work of Christ and God's word that there is one mediator between God and man, Christ (1 Tim 2:5).

Luther taught that if all men could be priests in Christ then all men had a responsibility to know the word of God and believe and obey it. Salvation could not be dispensed by the Catholic priesthood, but only by Christ through faith. Since salvation does not consist of ritual but of faith, all men must know the scripture.

This means that each one must hear the Bible read in their own language so they can understand it and that each man, woman and child should also be able read the scriptures for themselves so that they can grow in Christ and fulfil their stewardship in the things of God. John Huss of the Czech Republic had earlier been burnt alive for wanting to make the scriptures available in each person's own language.

#### Universal Education

If all men must read the Bible in their own language, then all men must learn to read. This meant that there must be universal education. Also, if all men with faith are priests unto the Lord, there is no class distinction between people. There is no male, nor female, no poor nor rich, neither Jew nor Greek.

In the Reformation we have the first serious declaration in human history of education for all, regardless of class, race, or gender. This was also one of the greatest inspirations towards world mission in church history. The doctrine of total depravity also meant that all men are in common,

despite class, race and gender. These doctrines of the Reformation led the way to modern Christian democracy, in which all men are equal.

They also meant that all men should have equal opportunity to be educated in the word of God. All men were seen as coming from one source, Adam and all with the same need, salvation by faith, with nothing else in culture or achievements to recommend them to God.

Because of the Reformation's view of the new birth the Reformers also held a positive view of learning. They knew that through grace man was able to understand and be creative and overcome the affects of the *Fall*, in as much as God would allow.

They saw the importance of the Holy Spirit in educating, by illuminating the word of God, as well as other fields of study and giving man understanding. They knew that because of common grace all men and women would have a lot to offer society if educated.

They saw the New Covenant as the age of the most grace and believed that this would extend to man's civil life and invention ability. They embarked on the most positive scientific era of history, believing that with Christ and the Holy Spirit quickening the mind, man could advance on all fronts. They proved to be correct. We see the evidence years later of what a sound mind quickened by the principles of Gods word and made known to the greater percentage of the population, has achieved.

Luther also saw the importance of authority in education. Because of human nature there needs to be discipline in the classroom to enhance learning. There is also authority as to content. Man does not decide what is true, but learns God's truth which is handed down or transmitted faithfully in its original form from one generation to the next.

Luther therefore saw the importance of catechism in which young children learn the truths of scripture as they have been handed down to us from the previous generation.

### Authority and Expression

The Reformers saw the importance of treating people as individuals, with different learning skills, aptitudes, callings and potentials. There was not a *one size fits all* approach, but education tailored to the individual's need and future. They distinguished between love for the individual and humanist *individualism* where the person becomes the authority on truth. Authority is in the teacher who is trained, not with a democratic student body.

This brings us to the two most important ingredients in the education process; discipline and individual expression. Discipline because of human nature and the unchangeableness of God's truth; attention to the individual due to God's variety, creativity and love for each person.

The Reformers were not *idealistic* about education, as humanism is. They did not see education as the answer for humanity. They saw new birth as the answer. They did not idealistically believe that education could change man's nature and improve society. They saw it as something *added* to godliness.

Luther introduced practical learning. He recognized that learning occurs as much by doing, participation and observing as by reading. He wanted children to learn the natural sciences experientially in class and on the field, where their young minds could become inquisitive. Children should employ all their senses in learning. He said that discipline in class should be tempered with love. He believed that children should learn according to their personal gifting; some in science, others in the arts for example.

Luther's goal in education was to educate all for the glory of God. This meant that each person serves God according to their God given capacity and purpose. All were to be educated to read. All were to be educated to improve their home, marriage and parenting life.

Some were to be educated for the improvement of civil services, so governments would better act in the interests of society; others were to be educated for various services in business; others were to be educated in theology and the biblical languages to serve in the ministry.

These principles were embraced by Calvin, Knox, Oliver Cromwell, John Wesley, Edwards and many others, becoming the bedrock of Western society. Cromwell made advances, desiring to move England towards universal education, empowering rather than subjugating others.

All good principles in Western education today come from the Reformation. Many principles have been eroded though. Discipline and respect have almost gone and genuine love with it. Truth has been replaced with individualism.

The educational standard has fallen and Western societies have found it more difficult to compete worldwide as a result. Education is often not fitted to the market place, as socialist governments support programmes irrelevant to a fruitful career. And in a society where personal enrichment is promoted, caring careers like parenting, teaching and nursing are not supported.

### Pietism

Phillip Spener and August Franke, the earliest European Pietists in the 1600's, believed we should study nature to learn about nature and study the scripture to learn about God. They founded an excellent Bible College at Halle emphasizing new birth, godly lifestyle and sound biblical studies. Later Pietists such as Jan Comenius and Nicholas Zinzendorf mixed Christian and humanist influences.

Comenius developed *student-centred* education and learning began to expand rapidly. He stressed the development of each individual, rather than the imposition of dogmatic tradition. He promoted personal experience and practical research into new discoveries. For Comenius teaching was as much about *how* the individual develops internally as it was about *what* to teach; "have more regard for the student than for the body of knowledge you want to pass on," was the idea.

However, Comenius, like Pietism in general, was a "mixed bag". He taught that nature reflects spiritual truth and thereby heralded "integration", the belief that truth, even theological truth, comes to us from all sources in God's creation. Comenius' idealism also meant that he thought that when properly developed, the student could learn this truth personally from within, since his soul and creation were one.

Though Comenius was a Christian he was not sufficiently grounded in the principles of faith and through his lack of recognition of the *Fall* he followed more secular strains of the Renaissance. He contributed to the idealism of Pietism and the Quakers, as some of them saw education and human development as the keys to world peace. As long as we are aware of this, we can recognize the headway made by Comenius in educational theory.

In England the Puritan movement was positively influenced by Pietism. Working in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England John Wesley was an advocate of education for all. His approach was student-centred, while grounded in Reformed truths. Christians began to educate the poor on Sundays, when they were not working in their jobs, firstly to teach them to read. Education began to break down class distinctions, giving many an opportunity for personal development.

## Idealism

Puritans believed children should study nature to learn how to harness and care for it and study scripture to learn about God. Humanists and idealists believed that children should study nature to form their own views about faith. They made two assumptions: That the Bible is not correct and that children were naturally good and can learn without God's word. They were called idealists because they held an idealistic or positive view of human nature without new birth.

This is idealism because the facts of history do not support this view of human nature. When man departs from the principles of God and goes his own way it inevitably ends in destruction. Human nature is seen historically as selfish.

Idealism believes that a child is not born with a selfish nature, but that it is society that makes the child go wrong. In other words, man is not responsible for his own actions, but is a victim of his environment. "Man steals because society has made him poor. Man is on drugs because he has been hurt. Man should not be executed for murder, but he needs rehabilitation and therapy. Children should not be smacked for doing wrong."

In idealism man's character development, civilization's progress and world peace are all expected through education and government sponsored programmes. Social engineering has eroded family structures and significantly increased social malaise. In the Bible it says that man wars because of his nature, not because of a lack of education (James 4:1). The Bible claims that unless man is born again and receives a new nature, there is no hope for him. Education will not change *the leopard's spots*.

If man is naturally good and can judge truth by his own opinion, a teacher should not tell the student what to believe and the Bible should not tell man what to think. In this view there should be complete freedom in education. A teacher is seen as a facilitator, who allows each student to come to his own conclusions about what is true. This is impossible in reality. If every person came to his own conclusions about truth, anarchy would reign and society would be unworkable.

Benjamin Spock was famous for claiming that spanking children was not in their best interests, as it may restrict their individual expression. Some idealists view the *Ten Commandments* as the greatest hindrance to creativity in society.

One commentator noted, "Dr Spock recanted his teaching that spanking a child would give him a complex - because he saw that a lack of corporal punishment spawned a generation of rebellious reprobates bent on ruining the order of society."

Education requires a balance between strict legalistic/negative views about humanity and unrealistic views on human nature that lead man and society away from God's truth. We can only have this balance in Christ, who sets us free from sin and enables us to fully explore and then enjoy His creation.

## Idealistic Pietism

In so far as Comenius continued in Reformed principles he contributed a lot to education, developing practical approaches in learning. Luther had developed diagrams to teach visually and interactive environments to teach "hands on". They really began to think about how people learn.

To recap, the term *child-centred* education, as opposed to *content-centred* means that the educationalist focuses on the child or person being taught, on the ways he learns and how to develop these, as opposed to focusing mainly on the content, which then goes over the head of most people, or means nothing to their lives.

A child-centred approach to education is good as it can prevent some children from being left behind. It assesses where that student is at personally and then devises ways to move them onto the next stage that is suitable for their life.

The lack of dogma in content can also encourage flexibility in research and new knowledge. A good educator needs to know how to inspire the imagination of people, as well as guide them in the way of truth. Love for the pupil will lead the teacher this way, as well as gifting from God.

However, person-centred approaches to education have often been used as a pretence for lowering the standard of content and curriculum and rejecting objective standards of truth, claiming that truth is subjective or person-centred. Education without curriculum and a standard content and assessment (examination) is useless to man and society. It has resulted in the *dumbing down* of education in several societies.

Zinzendorf at one point took catechisms away from children and said that parents had no right to expect them to adopt their own beliefs. He later admitted his rash enthusiasm in promoting individualism above truth. But this promoted an approach to *pastoral care* later called the *Rogerian* technique (from Carl Rogers, 1902-1987), where the individual's freedom is respected more than the discipline of truth that truly sets free (John 8:31-32).

Pastoral care models today are often more *existential*. This means truth is more based on the person's experiences and how they feel, than on a solid set of principles. The *Rogerian model* claims that it is an abuse of human rights to say that there is an objective standard to which a person must comply and a counsellor in pastoral care has no right to "impose" (suggest) another world view, even if it is God's. Educationalists and missiologists have often followed suit.

The psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) developed this view in counselling. He claimed that getting in touch with our inner thoughts would bring us into harmony with ourselves. Statements like "finding yourself" become popular. Counselling may be geared towards helping people to do this. These "discoveries" in the humanities began to lead the way in pastoral, educational and missions theory. Reformed theology was seen more and more as anti-person and rigid.

While it is true that some churches have been uncaring and inhumane, the Reformation in essence was a pastoral care (person-centred) movement, calling people to believe and obey God's word. They recognized the truth, as Jesus stated it, that a person can only be free with the mind renewed by the power of God (John 8:34). "Why do you call Me Lord and do not the things that I say...The man who hears and obeys My word builds his house securely." (Luke 6:46-49).

When we look to our own heart we become self-deceived and rather than finding freedom we bring ourselves into bondage to self. People may feel happier about themselves for a while, but be left without any real remedy. "The wound is healed slightly." (Jer 6:14). Their basic character is unchanged and the problems will soon surface again. There is no truth in the heart of fallen man.

The Quaker William Penn (1644-1718, founder of Pennsylvania) was idealist. He advocated human liberty as did other Pietists and their compassion for humanity contributed a lot to society. However, Penn advocated a European Union to advance peace and a nationalisation of church schools in early America, based on the secular principle of the separation of church and state.

This separation was deemed necessary to stop one denomination dominating society. It was not the intention of America's founders to steer the nation away from God. However, this is the inevitable legacy of humanism. It believes freedom is within the person and discounts any external authority, including the divine Creator. The most persecuted group in America today is Christianity. The Ten Commandments and prayer are outlawed in schools and public places.

Some say homosexuals are persecuted. It is said that people have a right to be homosexual. Humanism emphasises rights, not responsibilities. It is said that it is prejudicial to stop homosexuals from marrying. That is not true. A homosexual has as much opportunity to repent and obey God's word and principles as any other person does. We are not going to undermine the rights and futures of children and society because a few people choose not to follow time proven truth.

Homosexual and other groups get public money to propagate their religion, but Christianity is forbidden to propagate in a public place. This is where the discrimination is.

### Karl Barth

In Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries Aristotelian reason reigned. This led to an increase in liberal theology, where reason rejected miracles and most of the scripture. This materialistic world view left people emotionally and relationally empty. This has led people back towards a search for spirituality, but often a spirituality that is not based on scriptural truth.

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Karl Barth went part way in turning back the tide of liberal theology. Barth rejected the natural theology that liberal theology was based on. He claimed that no person could come to God based on reason. He said God could only be known in a spiritual encounter that God initiated by grace. Barth thus claimed to be building his theology on a Reformed position.

Barth's position was really Platonist. In claiming that God was above nature and unknowable except by an encounter he also claimed that the scripture was not inerrant. He claimed that nothing material could perfectly reflect the mind of God and this included the scripture.

To Barth the scripture was an imperfect witness of the spiritual encounters of others. A common phrase that reflects this view is, "The Bible *contains* the word of God, but it is not the word of God.". Then they said that it is for us to decide what part of the scripture is applicable today.

Barth was the founder of *Neo (new) Orthodoxy*. He departed from biblical orthodoxy, rejecting the Bible as inerrant. For Neo Orthodoxy, theology is derived from a sense of what the Holy Spirit is doing today. This means that theology is progressive, ever changing with human culture and preferences. Principles are taken from scripture, such as "love" and "faith", but scripture is not seen as prescriptive or authoritative in its moral codes.

This enables the church to move in tune with secular society. Theology is seen as coming *from* mission, rather than going *before* mission. That is, we see what "God is saying" in culture and experience, rather than accept what God has said in scripture. Theology is seen as experience based, just as Plato taught. This is why some churches today can accept serial divorce and remarriage and even homosexuality, because they believe if it is acceptable with society then it is not offensive or inappropriate behaviour.

Neo Orthodoxy is secularism. If man could have an encounter of "Christ" without the scripture, based on his own views, then every man's encounter is equally valid. To them this means that a democratic pooling of views is the best means of ascertaining truth. This is not an atheist secularism from liberal theology, but a pantheistic (God is everything) secularism. This is pretty close to the Christian/secular morality that is common in cultures today.

Neo Orthodoxy has become popular and is taught in many Evangelical and Charismatic colleges. Its philosophy fits in well with current Post Modernist society. We applaud Barth for turning away from Aristotle, as the early Reformers also did and for placing emphasis on grace. There is a lot of good in Barth's teaching on Christ and His work. But on the whole we do not accept Neo Orthodoxy as a valid Christian faith.

## Theological Integration

Integration in regard to theology means mixing natural science, behavioural science, philosophy, culture and human religion with biblical theology. Integration is sometimes heralded as a way that Christian education or pastoral ministry may benefit from the “findings” of the behavioural sciences: psychology, philosophy, anthropology, business principles or human religion.

We have no doubt that all truth is God’s truth. However, we have already seen that what appears to be true may in fact not be and therefore to use human sources to add to biblical truth will inevitably redefine that truth to suit human corruptions. Because all scientific truth shifts according to our limited knowledge of it, it is rash to integrate it with biblical theology. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.” (Matt 24:35).

When we talk of the behavioural sciences we mean psychology, culture and the humanities. They are sciences that study the behaviour of mankind. Studies in these areas are not always strictly science because they are often subjective in matters of human behaviour.

If we take studies from psychologists such as Carl Yung (1875-1961) and apply them to pastoral care, as Morton Kelsey in *Healing and Christianity* and John Frye in *Jesus The Pastor* appear to do, then we refashion God’s ministry by the wisdom of man. Both of these Christian authors recommended Eastern meditation techniques that are not scriptural in order to enhance existential experience.

Integration has to do with a secular view of holism. To be holistic it is said that we need the contribution of all sources of truth. This is not Hebrew or biblical holism. Hebrew holism saw man as a whole being, but did not integrate pagan ideas into its knowledge of God. Secular holism comes from *dialecticism*, meaning truth emerges from a synthesis of all values from all sources. (See *Hegelian* philosophy.)

For Christian studies against integration and advocating a biblical model for pastoral care see Jay Adams in *Competent to Counsel* and *How to Help People Change*. Adams claims, “The *in* word in Christian circles today is *integration*, the idea that the results of psychology may, many say must, be integrated (with theology).”.

Jerry Jenkins in *Addicted to Recovery* commented on the integration (syncretism) of *self-esteem psychology*: “Self-esteem is at the heart of our rebellion and is therefore certainly not a solution to our problems...Self-esteem and the fear of God cannot be integrated and a glance at the church in the 1990’s leaves no doubt as to which of those has been eliminated.”.

## Abraham Maslow

Atheist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) developed a *need scale* that shows that each man seeks to meet his most basic needs first, such as food and shelter and then seeks to meet his more psychological needs, such as his need for self-esteem, love and self-actualization. Many books have claimed that Maslow’s findings should be integrated to form the basis for pastoral ministry.

This approach means that we make ministry “relevant” to the listener by showing how the coming of Christ has met his “felt needs”. “Jesus meets our basic needs, He prospers us and He gives us self-esteem and self-actualization by fulfilment in career and in our personal goals.” Many pastoral care books are about “the psychology of self”, how to build self-esteem.

A lack of self-esteem is seen as the cause of wrong behaviour. Therefore, the task of a pastoral counsellor is seen as to build up the person’s self-esteem to correct his sinful patterns. This is certainly not biblical, but is common today.

The question is, how can building self-esteem lead to a better Christian life? We know scripture can be presented this way: "You must see who you are in Christ, accepted and loved by Him. You must love your self as He loves you, then you can love others.". It is true that God accepts us and loves us dearly, but He does not say we should love ourselves. We should love Him and love one another. Jesus said we should love others as we love our self, meaning do to others as we would they do to us.

Maslow's "truth" is not gospel truth. Jesus said we must deny self. Jesus did not come to give us five steps to a better life. He came to give us life exchange, that we lose our life and gain His life. (Matt 10:39) The gospel is self-denial, not self-fulfilment. "Self" is Renaissance humanism. Jesus came that we might glorify God. It is about God, not us. But psychology tells us that the key to life is self. This is building theology and pastoral practice on Renaissance humanism.

This Renaissance emphasis has harmed Western culture, making it self-orientated and private. Preaching is seen as an invasion of privacy. Neighbours hardly know each other. The word "private" does not exist with the same meaning in traditional African culture. In Africa people are community minded. People can drop in on you unannounced with their family and stay a week. Hospitality and sharing are a way of life.

### Sigmund Freud

Freud developed theory relating to man's inner and outer consciousness. He claimed that unrest comes to man when these consciousnesses are out of harmony. The man then needs to get in touch with his inner self and then there will be harmony of mind. Healing will then flow out of this harmony to his body and society.

Christian ministry authors Kelsey and Frye promote Buddhist style meditation to create this inner harmony. Normal every day dreams are interpreted by counsellors to help people "find themselves", instead of using God's word in a direct manner. Ministry becomes therapy, where people need treatment rather than repentance and new birth.

One Christian lecturer told us of a case where a man divorced his wife so she could qualify legally to receive expensive medical treatment free as a single mother. When her treatment lasted a long time, the man went off with another woman to meet "his basic needs" and abandoned his wife. The lecturer claimed the man's problem was a lack of self-esteem and that he needed therapy. The Apostle Paul's teaching on similar issues in churches he dealt with was totally ignored.

Due to these behavioural sciences some say ministry should bring healing by alleviating man's worries, helping him accept himself. These values come into Christian education, where the teacher *suggests* but never *tells*. Dogmatic preaching and teaching is seen as offensive to self. Many colleges present various views, but the lecturer does not say which one is correct biblically. It is left for the student to decide.

Freud and others in his field have made some genuine observations about human behaviour. There is nothing invalid about this type of research. We can make legitimate observations about behaviour, but these do not mean we have the answer for it. Freud's techniques may help to "patch old wineskins", but the solution for man's need is the gospel. The problem is sin: the solution is the blood of Jesus.

### Education Deals with Truth

In the therapeutic approach people are seen as victims, not sinners. Their behaviour is seen as a result of the way they have been treated by others in the past. If a person sins, the approach is not to confront the person or correct them, but to try to heal their self-esteem. Thus we hear more about *affirming* people than correcting what is wrong.

It is wrong to always bagger people about their faults. But a lack of clarity in truth is not at all helpful. People need truth. If we love someone we tell them the truth.

Charles Spurgeon stated in his *Personal Reminiscences*, "Instruction should be given in definite, dogmatic form. Tutors should not teach their students in that broad, liberal manner which presents a number of 'view points' and leaves the ultimate choice to the student; rather they should forcibly and unmistakably declare the mind of God and show determined predilection for the old theology, being saturated in it and ready to die for it."

### Business Integrations

Another example of integration is when business principles, such as "networking", are used in ministry. Networking means that we gain advantage from working together with others. This of course is true and we need to work on teams. But if we seek to work with others just to gain the advantage of what they have to offer, we can often find ourselves moving away from the purpose of God.

Be not deceived, evil association corrupts good manners. (1 Cor 15:33).

Business is about how to sell, how not to put off the potential customer. "Soft sell" is a popular theme. It means to be positive. One of the principles is that we should always find the point of agreement with another person and use that to build a communication bridge and develop a relationship. People sometimes say that in ministry the same approach should be used, so as not to offend and thereby build a bigger church.

If Stephen followed this in Acts 7 he may have had a large church in Jerusalem for many years. But in his first sermon he "blew" it all by focusing on the one point of disagreement, the temple. Some see this as poor stewardship. He touched what made the Jews mad, but could have made more use of his talents if he lived, opened a church and slowly changed people.

When people go by man's wisdom, God leaves us to our own devices. He gave Paul to the church when Stephen was stoned. Paul was there holding the garments of those who stoned Stephen. Paul did far more for the church than Stephen would have done by compromising. When we operate by church growth principles we miss what God has in store. Instead of working with what God is doing by not compromising, people can build their own church by the wisdom of man.

In the book of Daniel Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were in high government positions when the call came for all to bow down to the statue and worship. They could have justified the situation, saying that they can be a more godly influence by staying alive. They could have said everyone is doing it, so why should we be any different. That is, there is the wise thing to do in the sense of the most effective and the right thing to do. The second choice leaves the consequences to God and lets Him run His church.

"User friendly" churches avoid terminology or subjects that will offend. Words like the *cross*, *sin* and the *blood of Jesus* are toned down or not used. Sermons are short and God's truth is not put across in a direct manner.

A soft sell experiential approach has left a generation of people that know very little truth about God. In a Post Modern society people are readily looking for an experience and will fill buildings to get it, but are not necessarily looking for truth.

There is a great illiteracy in the knowledge of God. Man does not know his need of God because sin is not disclosed and the law of God is not known. In such an environment there is a need for bold preaching. Not angry preaching, but clear. People must know they are sinners before a holy God.

Church growth principles often use methods and strategies (whether natural or spiritual) to grow God's church. Jesus said He would build His church (Matt 16:18). If we obey Him like Stephen did, God provides everything that is needed. We can never grow the true church of Jesus Christ. We can grow corporations, but not the church. It is God who "added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:27). The church is built by the direct preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Much of this business type integration in Western life leaves us with an emphasis on goal setting and vision. Jesus never told us to have a vision. "Without a vision the people perish" is referring to a vision of the law (Pr 29:18). This is the problem. There is often no fear of God. Jesus told us to love the Lord our God, obey His word and voice each day and to do His will. Christian life is simple enough. We do not want to use people and burn them out on our visions.

### The Way of Jesus

Jesus offended the Pharisees. The disciples asked Him, "Do you not know you offended them." (Matt 15:12). What they meant was, "We love your message, but it's your delivery that needs toning down. If you could win the Pharisees first and they come to your meetings, you could slowly change them. But now that they are offended, you have isolated them and you cannot win them."

Here was man trying to counsel Jesus. It is like all the disciples gathered around Him and said, "Look Jesus, Matthew has just graduated from the University of Humanities and he has a few principles for you that will be useful in attracting members.". When Peter tried this Jesus said, "Satan, get behind Me, for you do not consider the things of God, *but the things of man.*" (Matt 16:23).

Imagine calling a faithful elder in your church Satan! Jesus dealt with the Pharisees the same way, *in public*. We are not talking about pastoral abuse here, or dictatorial leadership. We are speaking about clear direct preaching of the principles of God without the fear of man, for our own good and the good of those who hear us. Once we fear man, we are no longer the servants of God.

When the multitude of disciples turned away from Him, Jesus did not try to explain or win them back. He just turned to the twelve and said, "Will you too go away?" (John 6:67). If we are going for a multitude by toning down the message we are not in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The preaching of the apostles in Acts was always plain and direct, even though those they spoke to had the power to kill them.

### The Place of the Humanities

Integrating the social sciences into theology has misdirected Christian ministry and education theory. We need to take our theory of human nature from the Bible, not from atheists. We find out who we are when we see ourselves through God's eyes, not through our own eyes. We practice ministry rightly when we are called by God and do not compromise the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The behavioural sciences, psychology and psychiatry, all have their place. By no means are they wrong fields for Christians to study. They must be practiced by properly qualified people. But when we use them to define theology or ministry we have *another gospel*. Business principles are good in their place. The church needs good administration. But when we preach the gospel like a business man we have problems.

### Teaching in the Bible

In the Old Testament Hebrew nation memorisation was important as people did not have their own Bibles (Old Testament). Education was often through songs and poetry and this aided memorization. Much of the Old Testament was written in poetic format, such as the acrostic Psalms.

The content of faith was passed down from one generation to the next. Abraham was instructed to teach his children the same truth that he received from God. Deut 6:4-9 commanded parents to educate their children diligently during daily life. Note the word *diligently*. Mere story telling is not sufficient. We must *teach* our children until they fully understand God's heart and ways. We call this *transmission* of truth.

Israel failed because they failed to obey this command. The Lord repeatedly warned Israel to teach His word (Deut 32:46-47). He said His word was their life. However, they did not teach their children, except maybe in a ceremonial way, but they did not apply their children's hearts to understanding. Many of the men of God in the Old Testament failed in this respect, including Eli, Samuel, David and Hezekiah.

The student of God's truth is in a sense a passive recipient. This means he or she accepts humbly what God teaches, but is actively involved with all his being to appreciate and apply it to daily life. This still applies today. Theology is not progressive, subjective or adapted to culture, but is faithfully passed on with its original meaning, to the next generation.

During Old Testament times faith was not fully developed in the heart, as the people were not born again. Paul explained they were as children, as "faith had not come" (Gal 3:23). They were taught by symbols, which were the rudimentary or beginning principles, but the full meaning of these things was shut up to them until Christ came at Pentecost and lived within His people's hearts.

Meaning is fully revealed by the Spirit in Christ, as the prophets said, "All Your seed shall be taught of the Lord." (Is 54:13). "Your" seed is referring to Christ's seed; those in Him are taught by the Lord. The Holy Spirit in the prophets spoke to Christ, who is Israel, the Servant. "I shall write My law on their inward parts." (Jer 31:33). Teaching by symbols should not be predominate with those born of God. We are to preach and teach by word. We are ready for articulate meaning in Christ.

Medieval churches taught predominately by symbols, with stained glass windows and frescoes depicting Bible stories. The people were religiously impacted, but knew little of the truth in Christ. God intends that detailed instruction is given to ensure symbols are rightly understood.

In a Post Modern society it is said that education should be personalised by the use of the arts, symbols, dramas and stories without clear interpretation. People are drawn to churches by the use of colours, smells, visual displays, music and emotion, which all highlight the experience. It is existential, meaning each one "learns" by his or her personal feeling in the "worship experience".

After the service people will say, "I felt this way or that way. I felt sad, I felt happy. I cried, I laughed.". They may not say, "This was true, but that was not.". Feelings and experience are definitely a part of worship, but they are not the basis of it. The biblical pattern for education in God is to preach, teach and heal by the power of the Spirit of Christ. No cultural view of education can change this.

Joshua commanded that stones be taken out of Jordan and set up as a memorial symbol: the purpose stated that children would see the stones and then ask the meaning and be fully instructed by their parents. (Josh 4:6) The Levites were instructed to move around Israel teaching. The law was to be read every seven years, with all children present with parents (no breaking into age groups). (Deut 31:10-11, Josh 8:34-35, 2 Chr 17:8-9, 2 Chr 30:22, Neh 8:3-8.)

Teaching in children's services is sometimes inadequate. It may be better for children to sit with their parents in church and then later the parents discuss the message with them in detail. If children cannot understand the preaching then the preacher might speak more plainly. If church is too boring for children then it should be closed. Unless parents are preaching they should sit with their family and not on a platform.

In Christ there is greater enlightenment of mind. Learning is not just memorisation, but inward understanding; "...may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know..." (Eph 1:17-18). With inward faith we learn the substance and not the old symbol (2 Cor 3:3, 6). "The veil is taken away in Christ." (2 Cor 3:14). We have understanding of the principles of God rather than legalism and apply them in life.

Christian education is not by rituals and vague symbols. The shadows of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Christ. We have the internal, the substance, Christ in us. Ritual is not part of true Christian worship (Col 2:17, Heb 11:1). Christian education through preaching and teaching develops the understanding by the Holy Spirit within. The purpose of all teaching in the church is to reveal Christ's finished work and to establish us in that and not in Old Testament types, symbols and rituals or pagan philosophy;

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord (by faith as a gift), so walk in Him (by faith as a gift): Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith as you have been taught, abounding therein with *thanksgiving*. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy or vain deceit (Jewish ritual or Greek humanism). (Col 2:6-8).

Christian life is a celebration (*thanksgiving*) in what Christ has done, rather than trying to establish the victory yourself.

Being free from the *letter* of the Old Covenant does not mean that theology is progressive. The parameters and principles of faith and morality do not change. In Neo Orthodoxy it is claimed that theology changes as circumstances and cultures change. Theology does not change. There has only ever been one change – that *Christ fulfilled the law and the prophets!* God's view of marriage, adultery and homosexuality, for example, do not change.

So in education there is a fixed standard of external truth and a transformed heart which is enlightened and able to personally apprehend and apply that truth to daily life and changing circumstances. There is an objective truth, but also personal development, free thinking and discovery in understanding God's truth. God's truth is not forced into us. It is subjectively enlightening, meaning it is personal and made real and alive to the heart and mind.

### God is the Teacher

The Bible shows that education is not just conceptual, but also about values. This means possessing a heart to understand the mind and purpose of God with regard to His values in faith, love, godliness and good works, which glorify Him.

This shows that no matter how good our teaching methods are in encouraging a conceptual, moral and spiritual understanding of principles, this is not of itself Christian education. No matter how well the student can do in any assignment and exam given to him, in understanding and applying knowledge, this does not show that the student has been taught by the Lord.

Only fruit in the long term shows whether someone has been instructed by and therefore is known by the Lord. Jeremiah stated, "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: *was not this to know Me?* says the Lord. But your eyes and your heart are only for your covetousness." (Jer 22:16-17). No exam or college evaluation system can ascertain who is learning from God. "Wisdom is known by its children", its fruit. Paul said, "Godliness has this seal, God knows those that are His."

This means that *person-centred* ideas about education, such as *hook, look, took*, meaning get the student's attention (*hook*), make it relevant to their life (*look*), make it emotional to lodge it in their memory (*took*), will go far in causing students to understand and remember your point and prompt

them to make a commitment of their life to the Lord in living it out, but will not help one bit in genuinely turning the heart of the person to God.

Secular ways of instruction do not teach a person about God. Only God can teach a person.

The only test of fruit is a 50 or 70 year life span. Are we still living in God's ways 70 years on? If we are then we were taught by the Lord. It is not how we start that counts, but how we finish. Christian education is *God-centred*. He calls the teacher and He also calls the student. Learning is according to His calling and teaching is according to His gifting. Both student and teacher must be called by God. This is *un-Renaissance* type thinking, but it does take into account the scripture.

"Blessed are you Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt 16:17). "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight...no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, except the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." (Matt 11:25-27).

Secular principles will not make us a good teacher of Christ. A heart touched by His call and filled with His love for people is the only thing that helps, for it is not you, but the Lord who moves through you as He wills.

### Behaviourism

In the secular world two theories of education are called *behaviourism* and *developmentalism*.

Behaviourism claims that man learns through external conditioning. External punishments and rewards are used to train the student's responses and thus his behaviour. So here education is *behavioural modification*. The person changes behaviour, not because he understands inwardly, but so that he will enjoy the rewards and forgo the punishment.

A Russian man named Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) was among the first modern behavioural scientists to develop the theory of behaviourism. He used a dog in his experiments. Each time he fed the dog he rang a bell. By such conditioning the dog began to associate the bell with food. Finally the dog's mouth would salivate when the bell rang, even when there was no food present. This new behaviour was trained into the dog's responses.

Behaviourists say that behaviour patterns can be trained into people by rewards for good behaviour and punishments for bad behaviour. Many economists and politicians hold this view, claiming that we can control everything by its price, interest rate or tax level. "People's drinking habits are due to the cost of alcohol." Many psychologists hold this view, claiming that people will behave according to how they see a cost/benefit analysis of various actions, such as adultery.

This is used in primary school, when children are promised rewards for learning their alphabet or multiplication table. Or they are punished for not learning them on time. This type of "motivation" is carried right through school and is present in all areas of life. For example, people are docked pay for turning up to work late. The theory is that people are basically selfish and will respond only to external stimuli, because they do not have internal values.

Here "knowledge" of what is right or wrong, or what is true, such as the multiplication table, is drummed into the student from the outside. The student is a passive recipient of that knowledge and does not question it. They receive it and learn it or they suffer the consequences.

There is nothing wrong with an element of this approach in school, families and societies. Many will only respond to behavioural control and without it society would be anarchy. Ultimately society cannot be controlled this way. There must a revival so people are governed by God's values inwardly.

“Train up a child in the way he should go...” (Pr 22:6) involves a form of behaviourism to a degree, along with love and understanding as the child grows. “Training” in the book of Proverbs means to *narrow the path*, as we do when we shoot an arrow. We carefully aim it in one direction.

We train a child by giving him or her no options. That is how we round up cattle or sheep, with fences restricting them to where we want them to go. With children its prods and cuddles. A Hebrew word for teach means to *prod*. Psalm 23 has several Hebrew words for *teach*. He *leads* us, He *makes* us and He uses His *rod* and *staff*.

The behaviourist theory is the *only* theory of education for dictators, such as Hitler or Stalin. We “learn” their point of view or we go to prison camp. They would “teach” by imprisoning people’s families. Dictators have such a low appreciation of human life that they do not believe that people can learn any other way than by force. This is not genuine learning, for the “student” does not have personal understanding. God wants His people to learn inwardly and be changed in the heart.

We all need a certain level of behaviourist style teaching in theology too. Scripture memorization for children is a start. Also learning by catechism is good. A catechism is a systematic presentation and explanation of Christian faith and doctrine. Children should have it at school, at a level that they can understand.

With *freedom* in education today learning by catechisms is not common. But neither is a good theological education common and all people need it, even if they are not saved. It will still help shape their lives into better citizens.

But catechism needs to be understood and this can only occur by the new birth. We need clear and solid biblical teaching with new birth, so it becomes real and alive in us. Life is not the acceptance of right doctrine, but it is Spirit baptism. This makes the truth internal and personal.

Religion, culture and peer pressure are *behaviouralists* approaches to controlling others, as is fascism and socialism. Christian *Dissenters*, such as the Reformers, Anabaptists, Puritans and first generation Quakers were against this approach of controlling the masses. They believed in free thinking and gave their lives so that men could live by their conscience and the word of God, rather than be forced to conform to the state’s “truth” or political correctness.

### Developmentalism

The principles of behaviourism, including an external and objective body of truth and passive learning of a conservative theology faithfully transmitted are good, but only partly describe the education process. A secular theory known as *developmentalism* has made some other observations about how people learn.

*Developmentalism* attempts to describe how children and students develop mentally, emotionally or spiritually and learn to perceive truth differently. A recent Swiss researcher Jean Piaget (1896-1980) experimented on how children develop intellectually (cognitively), as they experience life and relate these experiences and new facts into their evolving world view.

The theory claims that by understanding this developmental process, teachers can help the student onto their next level. This means two things. First, teaching is more about working with the student in their learning process and less about ramming content into them. Second, teaching considers each student separately in their own learning process rather than adopts a “one size fits all” approach, meaning teachers assess where each student is at personally.

If we can relate developmentalism to Christian education then it is about how each student thinks and develops their understanding internally. A teacher then serves two functions. One is to direct the student into what is true theologically, while understanding the thinking processes inside the student

to help them learn. The other is to teach the student skills in study, research and evaluation of data, so the student can self-educate while being guided by the truth in God's word.

In theological education this includes writing essays where the students research and analyse issues and apply them to life and ministry. The teacher shows the student how to learn, where the knowledge is, how to use the available resources and how to evaluate different ideas from a biblical perspective.

In theological education we move the student from *description* level learning to *evaluation* level learning. Diploma level studies help students to learn and describe the main doctrines, such as the trinity, the nature of Christ, the baptism of the Spirit, etc. Degree level studies move the student to evaluating the various theological positions relating to these doctrines. Masters education and above should progress the student into further research skills.

Evaluation means that we take a doctrine and then briefly describe all the ideas that people have about that doctrine and then evaluate each idea from a biblical perspective showing logically which one is correct and which ones are wrong. So as we move on in education the content of our essays should be less about a simple description of doctrine or of history and more about an evaluation and analysis of these.

It is in evaluation and analysis that the student is strengthened and developed the most internally. Here he or she is forced to look closely at what they believe, in the "light" of the views of other people and be able to biblically defend the truth and be assured of it.

This is important because as the student moves on in life and ministry they will certainly meet all these other views, especially as they age and they must respond fairly to them. If they are unable to they will certainly be poor pastors of other people's souls.

Secular *developmentalists* believe in the goodness of man, claiming that each person teaches himself and develops his own truth within, without external truth or guidance. The teacher provides the environment to stimulate self-discovery, but does not interfere with the views the student adopts. This is a misunderstanding of human nature.

We do believe that students need to develop individually and inwardly with regard to God's truth and knowledge and understand and apply it to personal context, but we do not believe that a student decides for himself what is true. Our task is to discover God's truth, not to invent it. Many developmentalist approaches to education are relativistic, meaning that they believe truth is determined by perspective, by cultural or personal world view.

If truth is determined by perspective, then approaches in education that develop self-esteem should help improve confidence, perspective and discovery. For this reason, advocates of developmentalism often claim that education is more about therapy than content. They say things like children need Buddhist style meditation at school to enhance their self-esteem and promote personal development. They often attack Christianity, which they say inhibits development.

They are sometimes against standard examinations and claim lack of flexibility in education does not consider some student's personal learning styles. This is true, but efforts to help different students should not lower our educational standards. Recent "Outcomes Based" education means that students are assessed with regard to personal development *outcomes*, but not in regard to a standardised content.

This is greatly harming the overall standard of education. Literacy rates are dropping in many nations as they experiment with the *utilitarian* theories of John Dewey (1859-1952). These theories state that knowledge is subjective and therefore content and assessment of student performance is arbitrary. Education needs to prepare people for the real world with real knowledge.

The goal of many modern educationists is the *deconstruction* of Christian society. Many do not have a genuine interest in education, but in *indoctrinating* others toward a deconstruction of social values. They are social activists disguising themselves as educationalists. Many so-called social workers are also social activists, moving others away from God. Many in the main stream media have this agenda, due to their own convictions.

The result of the so-called science of Freud, Yung and Rogers is *political correctness*: fascism. This is not the liberty that libertarians promise.

### Informal Education

The common form of education for many Africans was originally oral, employing stories. Stories of animals reflected morals and these were passed on to the next generation. This form of education contained the following qualities:

1. It was fluid. The stories could change as the need arose. Being oral they were not rigid. So as the circumstances changed the stories would adapt to the need and context.
2. Learning was contextual or local. Language used many local terms that related to the person's own culture and surroundings and were therefore rich with meaning.
3. Education was informal. Education did not occur in a class, but as they worked on the farm or in the home. This makes education more relational and reinforces the intended meaning by experience.
4. Education was relevant. They did not learn academic concepts not related to their daily life.

All these are very good factors in education. Informal, relevant and contextual stories sound like the kind of teaching Jesus used. They highlight the weaknesses of Western style education that is often too conceptual, too informational, too inconsiderate of local culture, too unrelated to daily life, too formal to impart values that transform lifestyle and too rigid to adapt to individual needs.

Missionaries sometimes claim local contextual stories should be used to teach biblical themes. It may be difficult to find local stories that fully portray biblical ideas. Local stories can reflect some ideas, but careful explanation of the biblical meaning must accompany them for proper interpretation. Jesus always interpreted His parables and gave explicit expositional teaching from the scripture. He did not just use stories.

### Learning Values

Education must be about values. Values are not learnt in class rooms. They are learnt informally: Sons working with fathers in the garden, or painting a house; daughters working with mothers in the kitchen; Jesus walking and living with the disciples. Here conversation in daily life imparts values. The young learn from the adult experienced person, rather than from their inexperienced peers.

One of the biggest problems in Western education is that people are not learning values. The television is on. People do not communicate. They do not eat meals together. They do not spend time cooking in the kitchen, but eat microwave meals.

Our mothers used to make dough and bake their own biscuits. All this was time spent together. But now they are all out working to pay for their modern lifestyle. There is no longer any parenting in many places. Informal education is how godly values are passed on from one generation to the next (Deut 6:4-9). This is vital.

Here we have education by doing. The best way to learn something is to do it, with someone who is more experienced than you. Jesus taught contextually in daily relationships and not in classrooms. Education about important matters is impossible without this. People need to see the teacher live and ask him questions about the values behind the things he does. Daily living is the only way to apply godly values.

### Formal Conceptual Education

Jesus also entered into synagogues frequently and taught often at the temple. He addressed large crowds as He taught. He sent His disciples out on practical missions as well, but then gave them instructional feedback. It is not possible to characterise Jesus' teaching with one style. He employed all useful styles.

Paul set up temporary Bible Colleges wherever he went. He taught in a school for two years in Ephesus and this allowed the word of God to spread throughout Asia. Bible Colleges were used since the very beginning of the church and have always been used to spread the gospel in all cultures where the church has gone.

### Objective Truth

Some anthropologists have also said that African culture does not have a concept of objective truth, which can be applied to propositional scripture, since they are used to stories that adapt, oral histories that "evolve" and subjective spiritual experience in spiritism. They have said that truth in this culture does not relate to a right or wrong hierarchal structure, but to the "felt need". They claim that truth is relative.

Personal experience has told us that this is false. Definitely, the superstitious element is present, as it is with all men, but the concept of truth is not cultural but universal. Millions of Africans we know easily accept the Bible as the inerrant word of God and expect God to be faithful to His word in its plain meaning. They also expect us to be true to our word and take our word as it is spoken. This is how they treat God's word.

### Integration/Marginalisation

The benefit of formal education is that it integrates us into the world market. This is the need for most people. We need skills that will give us a marketable value in the work place and allow us to compete on the world stage. This is not a sinister motive in education. It is the reality of life.

If in missions we say that formal education should be withheld from people in order to maintain their culture, then we are withholding from them an equal place with others in forging the future of the world. They want to be able to earn a proper wage, educate their children, be healthy and live well, like anyone else. They want to and should have an equal part in deciding our future.

Christians are *the head and not the tail*. We are to *occupy* till Christ comes. We are not to come out of the world, but go into the world and change it with faith and God's principles. To do this we must take part. We must be educated. Daniel took part in Babylon because he was filled with the Spirit and he was educated and appointed by God. Whatever *Babylon* we are in we must go to the top of it.

The benefit of education is that it prevents marginalisation. Marginalisation means people cannot fend for themselves, but need aid. It means that people do not have a future but continue to manifest past problems each generation. Education brings people into the mainstream. Dictators do not want people educated, because it weakens their grip over them.

A nation and people who do not provide competitive educational facilities destroys its future. Lowering pass marks and replacing real science in curricula with politically motivated propaganda on evolution,

carbon emissions, homosexuality, anti Christian religion and blasphemy, destroys lives and a nation's competitive edge in industry. Commerce and industry begin to shift to other nations.

People who live in the minor language groups need to be integrated. A Christian can not go far if he or she can only read a portion of the scripture in their language, but not benefit from all the Bible resources we have in other languages. We cannot go far if we cannot be educated in other skills, such as science, law and engineering and use a language that allows us to communicate with many.

Local cultures and variety are important and we do not want to lose them. But romantic views on this will cut off many people in various pockets who need a greater opportunity to participate. Every small group should have their own Bible and every person should be proud of their group identity, where they were born, their culture and people. But so should every group have schools that bring them into international competitiveness.

### Theological Education

In this section we look at some of the changes that have occurred in theological education in Western nations since the development of colonial America in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. We start with the Presbyterian style revivals of the *First* (1730's-1740's) and *Second Awakenings* (1790-1840's) and then look at the Methodist influence that developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. We will show that the emergence of Arminianism and pragmatism were major factors in the change in modern theological training.

While America was still a colony of Britain preachers like George Whitefield (1714-1770) went over to America during the *First Awakening*. William Law in the UK was one author that significantly impacted the period. We need to know which of his works were written before he was born again and which were written after his new birth. See especially his *Affectionate Address to the Clergy*.

The Presbyterian/Congregational revivals were a main factor in finally establishing America as a free democracy. In early American history universities were established initially to train pastors. Not long after that the universities became academic and liberal. Jonathan Edward's (1703-1758) followers found that they had to train pastors in what they called the *School of the Prophets*.

Pastors from this were instrumental in spreading the gospel in America in the *Second Awakening*. Many of the earliest missionaries from America were trained through the influence of Edwardsian evangelical Calvinist theology and practical ministry. Their influence brought revival to the American Indians and to Africa, Asia and India through men such as Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) and William Carey (1761-1834).

The *Yale University* website claims about Edwards;

Jonathan Edwards has proven to be the most influential religious thinker in American history. His work gave birth to the first indigenous school of American theology, referred to as the New Divinity, Consistent Calvinism, the Edwardsian tradition and the New England Theology.

His early disciples, led by the Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) and Joseph Bellamy (1719-90), spread his views far and wide by means of their "schools of the prophets", ecclesiastical reforms, publications, concerts of prayer and frequent revivals...During and after the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, Edwards's views spread even further, largely through the teaching and writing of Yale's Nathaniel William Taylor (1786-1858).

We will say more about the *School of Prophets* below, but first we will note the change that occurred in theological education in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

## Compromise

In the 1800's in America there was a push for ecumenicalism among the churches. Ecumenicalism means bringing all churches and denominations together. They thought this would bring greater unity and maturity to the churches. In order to achieve this it was thought that less emphasis should be given to theology and each church's statement of faith. Statements of faith were seen as divisive.

This was one reason why theological education has shifted more towards the humanities since the mid 1800's. It was felt that there should be less division in theology and the way to achieve this was to place less emphasis on it. Instead of going too deeply into theological matters, students could cover the basics and then study mainly practical ministry and acquire skills. College curriculum started to change to reflect this new direction.

They also thought that putting less emphasis on theological matters made one more mature or spiritual. It was claimed that the student should be interested in practical matters such as service, soul winning, prayer and devotion. This shift also occurred in Britain at the same time. Iain Murray discussed this in his *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, "The ascendant evangelicalism of the 1870's was non-doctrinal in emphasis and disinterested in the historic creeds."

The English Baptist Union at that time declared, "We feel the imposition of theological tests or a human creed would...defeat the objects of the Union." (See Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*.) They forsook Reformed Calvinism and went via Arminianism into liberal theology.

Murray said, "Arminianism, experience-centred rather than truth-centred, has shown itself far more compatible with non-evangelical and non-Protestant traditions than the old Reformed Evangelicalism, which because of its definite formulation of the Biblical doctrines of sin, grace and justification could not be so amalgamated."

Murray claimed that this new faith was at times, "Strong in earnestness and faithful in preaching the need of a conversion experience, it was nevertheless especially vulnerable to the old error...that man could have a true Christian experience apart from what he may or may not believe..."

Murray continues, "The prevailing attitude has been to frown on distinct and definite propositions of truth and to contend for obscurity and indefiniteness as though the latter were more spiritual and Biblical and more preservative of unity."

Timothy George in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (TEET) described the trend, "The former theology covered content and the latter emphasised 'contemporary application' where students should do their own thinking, rather than be indoctrinated by a body of divinity."

They claimed that "no prescribed creed should be employed". George described the result, "The appeal to individual experience and private judgement correspond to the shift away from biblical authority and the dogmatic consensus of historic Christianity."

Melvin Dieter in TEET added that this gave a "greater weight to the testimony of experience than the test of creed to authenticate one's claim to Biblical Christianity". Dieter showed the new "primary role (of Bible Colleges) was to prepare pastors who could care for people with a wide variety of spiritual, social, psychological and physical needs, rather than to produce minister-theologians".

Gary Smith, also in TEET, added, "The failure to teach, or defend a theological system eventually contributed to a lack of direction and a diminished spirituality."

Failing to study theology in order to be spiritual must lead one to a diminished spirituality. We need to be Spirit filled people who know the word of God and who live it out in daily life. Arminianism has opened the door first to a *secularism based on liberal theology* in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which Charles Spurgeon warned about and then in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to a *Neo Orthodox secularism*, which Martin Lloyd Jones warned us about.

Jones characterized this “post-critical” (Post Modern / Neo Orthodox stance) as one that claims “We must accept and believe the *message* (of scripture), but we can ride very loosely to the *facts*.” (Jones in *Authority*). This gives rise to Clark Pinnock’s observation in *The Journal of Pentecostal Theology* (Vol. 12, N. 1, 2003), “Diversity seems to point you only to endless bounty and richness of Spirit...Spirit orientation to religious pluralism.” i.e. syncretism.

This practical, personal or pragmatic concern over theology (truth) is pinpointed by Albert Mohler in TEET, where he stated that the danger among Evangelicals is “less a resistance to theology in the name of secularism and more a marginalization of theological concerns in the wake of pragmatism”. James Bradley in TEET shows this clearly also, “The dynamic interplay of piety and theological study...turned out to be the leading problem for nineteenth-century evangelical theological educators.”.

Bradley explained that this emphasis increased, “At the end of the eighteenth century, Adam Clarke...admonished young pastors to meddle as little as possible in controversial writings in theology.”. Bradley concluded that this pragmatic emphasis eventually “failed to prepare them for the onslaught of critical and scientific thought (and) hastened the demise of the pastor as the best-trained and most gifted intellectual in the community”.

Rather than quoting more here from the *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (edited by R. Albert Mohler), we advise that you purchase a copy. It is an excellent explanation of gospel study in preparation for life and ministry. The book speaks of the need for *confessional education*, which means we are able to articulate and live out a definite faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. A student should not go through training without evaluating biblically the main church confessions.

### Convictions

Statements of faith are important. They show our Christian convictions. Convictions are important. They show what we believe and what we stand by. They show our commitments. If we do not have commitments, then we eventually accept anything. This is one reason why the church has gone too far towards secularism. The church often lacks commitment to its beliefs.

Shying away from theological commitments will not bring more unity to Christians. Unity is a heart issue. It is not obtained by compromise. We can disagree with one another and still be in unity in Christ. Unity is in Pentecost, Christ in us. We do not have to break fellowship because we disagree. Mature people ought to be able to disagree without offence.

Neither do we have to abandon our convictions in order to agree. Convictions matter. The problem today is that there are very few convictions. Agreeing on all doctrine is not the basis of unity. The love of Christ between people born of His Spirit and who have a commitment to the word of God is the basis of our unity.

In Australia the *Uniting Church* merged many of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches. These churches compromised their former theological positions in order to become one group. This is unfortunate, as each of these movements has a rich theological heritage.

The merger looked spiritual and mature at first, but in the years that followed the Uniting Church has continued to compromise biblical truth one step at a time. Recently heads of this church approved the

ordination of homosexuals, although such ordinations to date have not occurred. Many Christians in the movement remain strong in Christ. There are many good churches in the movement.

We believe it is right for Christians to have strong convictions. Faith is about conviction. Where there is no conviction there is no Christian faith. Paul said we should be convinced in what we believe (Rom 14:23). The only other alternative is a type of existential or subjective Spirit-centred hermeneutics of scripture that adapts to current taste rather than holds to its original contextual meaning.

Be convinced of what you believe from scripture and love all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and obey His word. Have convictions in love and do not be sectarian. We love people because of Jesus, not because we agree on all doctrine.

### The School of The Prophets

The Edwardsian *School of the Prophets* in 18<sup>th</sup> Century America employed both formal and informal education techniques. The students studied formally in university style education and informally in pastor's homes, living with a strong devotional family and ministering with a Spirit filled man of God.

In formal education the students researched and wrote dissertations (well supported essays). In an earlier chapter we looked at the four main strands of theology. The *School of the Prophets* set their students to study these four.

1. Biblical theology (exegesis on biblical passages).
2. Systematic theology.
3. Historical theology.
4. Practical theology.

Bible Colleges should have modules that assist with biblical theology, such as hermeneutics, original language, culture and historical background studies and doctrinal studies in biblical passages. We should then study systematic theology by comparing biblical passages together. We should then look at historical movements, confessions and councils to compare church leaders of past years with our efforts today.

Students should be assisted and encouraged to study these subjects with commitment, till they reach a high level of understanding and ability. This should not just be a shallow experience for students, but they must be given a love for the truth that propels them into a strong personal research ethic. Only Spirit filled lecturers who know the truth can infuse this hunger and joy into students.

The order of these areas of theology is important. First, the students in the *School of the Prophets* wanted to know God's view on things, by studying rigorously the first three categories of theology listed above. The next step in study was to apply the knowledge of God to practical theology. Only a thorough systematic theology can ensure that our practical ministry is not built on anthropology. In the absence of theology, anthropology and syncretism is the only option pastors have.

As we have seen earlier, Charles Finney moved theological education much more in the direction of anthropology. We have looked through Finney's book entitled *Systematic Theology* and it is in our view more philosophical than theological. The title *A Systematic Rebuttal of Jonathan Edwards* may have been more fitting. Finney signed to agree with the Westminster Confession to be ordained, but later denied it.

## Informal Pastoral Training

The other portion of training in the *School of the Prophets* was the student's informal practical training. At various times during their training each student stayed in the house of another genuinely called pastor. The pastor mentored the student. The student lived with the family, prayed and studied with the pastor, travelled with the pastor in missions and to preach in the church. This way education was developed in the context of daily godly life, church life and practical ministry.

This formal/informal, study/practical mix is important for pastoral training. Pastoral training should be church based. The college must come out of the church and exist for the church, to promote church planting and mission outreach. This means the college must be for those called by God from within the church and who serve the church. Training must not be irrelevant to the church, so that the ministry of the pastors will not be irrelevant to the people in their normal daily lives.

Students should be mentored by men and women of God so they see God working in other people's lives. This is their greatest learning opportunity. Students must also learn *hands on* in practical service and church ministry. Today people often learn too much of their theology from television ministries, without knowing anything about the personal lives of the "ministers". This way they learn the superficial mechanics of church ministry and not the way of a godly and devotional life style.

David Wells in TEET commented on the *School of the Prophets*:

The model of a faithful minister (was) one who preached the word of God for the salvation and edification of his hearers. Teachers reminded their students that however offensive the message may be to some, they were, nevertheless, obliged to preach unvarnished New Divinity (New Covenant) truths.

Here Wells meant that the pastor's primary role is not organiser, or psychologist, entertainer, or expert in any other field. His first role is to know the truth, then live the truth and then preach the truth. Wells continued:

Theological character has rapidly eroded. Now the pastor is not simply a godly person intent upon caring for a flock by feeding them from the word of God, but an institutional manager, a psychologist, a CEO, a denominational politician, an entrepreneur, a personality and perhaps even an entertainer. This transformation of ministry is without precedent, unless we think back to the clerical decadence in the Middle Ages where we might find some parallels.

This means that in our day people cast "ministry" in many different ways. A *success* or a *motivational speaker* is a common form of "ministry". Once we give into the deception that life is about casting a successful image we give way to all forms of worldly values. The ministry of the gospel is not about image. It is about faithfulness to the principles of God.

We should organise ministry in a fruitful manner, but we should give more attention to the word of truth than to pragmatic ways to achieve the appearance of results. What man calls ministry is often not ministry in God's eyes. The appearance of results sometimes seems to be the most sought after goal and is one of the biggest contributors to syncretism. What "works" in man's estimation is not more important than what is true in God's.

We can see some of the shifts over recent history. Richard Baxter's classic book *The Reformed Pastor* has been used for centuries as a pastoral ministry manual. It spoke about practical Pietist/Puritan pastoral ministry. Over time pragmatism overtook the person of Christ leading the ministry. Convictions have given way to performance and results. The main lesson here is concerning theological education:

1. It is essential.
2. It must be thorough and rigorous.
3. It must be formal and informal.
4. Without it all we have is anthropology and human wisdom.

The pastor was once the most educated man in the town. He was also regenerated and Spirit filled. For almost 200 years theological education has been diminishing. What changes lives? Is it the word of God fully preached, by those who are willing to stand by it no matter what others think? Or, is it human skill and method in drawing and maintaining people's interest and involvement? God says it is the former. History says the same.