

INTEGRATION AND BEYOND: A CHALLENGE TO ACADEMICS FOR SEEING GOD’S TRUTH IN ALL DISCIPLINES

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Introduction

Integration is the joining or mixing of things. The *Cambridge Dictionary* says integration is designed “to combine two or more things in order to become more effective.”¹ In most Christian schools, integration is the mixing of what we often call “spiritual truth”—the truth of our Christian faith and “secular” or non-spiritual truth.² However, in this presentation I will try to go beyond that and address how Christian academics can see, appreciate, and articulate God’s truth in their disciplines in a non-Christian educational environment.

I have done three things in this presentation. First, I have provided a brief history that attempts to show how the sacred and secular have intermingled in the past. I have also looked at integration as it has been practiced in Christian institutions and by Christian teachers and lecturers for the last 50 years or so. I have finally suggested a refined understanding of the relationship between spiritual truth and non-religious truth.

History of Integration³

The comingling of the sacred and the secular is not a new practice. The interlinking of these has been practiced many ways through history. The following are relevant samples.

The Old Testament Period

In studying the Old Testament, one sees clearly the joining together of faith and everyday life. There was no separation of the sacred and the secular at that time. The Old Testament people had a very holistic view of life. This is illustrated in many ways.

- The test for Adam and Eve’s obedience of God, a spiritual activity, was eating a fruit, which was an ordinary non-spiritual activity.
- Noah’s service to God was building a boat and collecting animals and food, rather normal human activities that required no spiritual action but faith and obedience.
- The calling God gave to Abraham was to start building a nation, which was a political entity, not a temple or an altar or other religious facility.
- That nation of Israel became the vehicle through which God did his work on earth during that particular period, to perform both spiritual and non-spiritual activities.
- The most important characters in the Old Testament like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David and Daniel, were government officials or related to governments in some way.

¹ *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus*;

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/integrate>. Accessed on 2 February 2018

² The word “secular” normally implies a separation of religion from non-religious practices and disciplines. My Christian worldview does not view anything as truly secular because I believe God is in all things. However, I have occasionally used “secular” in this paper in its popular usage to refer to all non-religious truth or activities.

³ This overview is over-simplified for this presentation. There are many variations of how the Church and State have interacted throughout history as well as ways other religions have been integrated in their societies.

Integration and Beyond

- In the Ten Commands, there is a combination of responsibilities to God and responsibilities to fellow humans.

During the kingdom period, there were three major officers.

- The prophet was the voice of God to the leaders and the people.
- The priest was the person who helped people worship God.
- The king was the administrator over the civil, military and spiritual national affairs.

There is little indication that one was more important than the other. There seems to be little difference in the Old Testament period between sacred or spiritual things and ordinary or non-spiritual things.

The New Testament Period

Jesus came to bring God's kingdom to the earth (Matthew 4:17) but that kingdom took a new form during Jesus' ministry and afterwards. It required diverse duties of its citizens.

- People of the kingdom were to submit to political leaders (Romans 13:5; Titus 3:1).
- People of the kingdom were to pray for kings and other authorities (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- People of the kingdom were to be loyal to the political authorities (1 Peter 2:13-15).
- People of the kingdom were to have a higher loyalty to God and his kingdom than to the nation (Acts 5:29).

The Church, which was a new phase of God's kingdom, was a new entity. It was not synonymous with the nation. In fact the Church would exist within the boundaries of various nations where it was found and the Church and the State were assigned different functions. Paul said that certain duties like defense and justice were the responsibility of the nation and not the Church (Romans 13:4). Jesus also declared that his followers were not to participate in violence (Luke 6:29) but the government could use the sword to fulfill their duties. And there is evidence that followers of Christ also served their respective nations as well. For example the soldier Cornelius continued in the Roman army (Acts 10:1-48). Those of "*Caesar's household*" were almost certainly government employees (Philippians 4:22).

Thus, in Jesus' new kingdom there was a division of responsibilities. The nation would focus primarily on what have been called "secular" things while the Church focused on "spiritual" issues—duties related to God, including evangelism, discipleship, worship, and exercising God's compassion through helping with social needs. However, this did not mean the Church and particularly individual followers of Jesus had nothing to do with the nation or the nation had nothing to do with the Church. This was simply a convenient division of essential activities of what God was going to do during this next phase of his kingdom. This model of government and the Church basically existed for the first 300 years of church history.

The Constantine Period

Constantine was a general who became a Roman emperor. While fighting a battle against Maxentius, Constantine claimed to have seen a vision containing a symbol like a cross that said, "*in hoc signo vinces*" (In this sign, conquer).⁴ He won the battle and gave credit to Christ. He became supportive of Christians and granted them freedom from persecution and

⁴ Dan Graves, "In Hoc Signo Vinces [In this sign conquer]" Christian History Institute website. See <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/incontext/article/constantines-cross>. Accessed 2 February 2018

even restored some of their property that earlier emperors had taken from them. He was not baptized until shortly before his death but he became what many consider to be the first Christian emperor. After Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and what later became known as the Holy Roman Empire.

During the next thousand years or so, Europe returned to something like the Old Testament model whereby a king ran the civil affairs of the government and a spiritual leader, the bishop of Rome (the pope), directed the spiritual affairs of the nation.

It is much too long a story to explain in detail in this presentation but over the next thousand years, the State and the Church worked closely together. Few if any kings were appointed in any part of Europe without the pope's blessing. And few if any popes were appointed without the acceptance of the European kings. The Church was theoretically a passive non-violent body. However, whenever there was an opponent who was a threat to the Church, the Church would hand that person over to the State, which would use its means to torture and even execute people who failed to follow the Church's beliefs or practices. This led to many abuses and serious persecution of non-conforming Christians throughout the Middle Ages. The official Church became a corrupt body working with corrupt political leaders to rule Europe for their own advantage. Though there was theoretically a difference between the State and Church, they worked so closely together practically they were indivisible.

The Protestant Reformation Period

The Protestant Reformation was primarily a reaction against the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. One of the byproducts of the Protestant Reformation was the creation of a longing for freedom of religion. All nations of Europe had adopted an official church at that time. If persons chose not to participate in the state church, they could be severely persecuted by the state military apparatus. It is beyond the purpose of this presentation to explain the great suffering individuals and groups outside the official churches experienced during that period. However, they included ridicule, physical torture, loss of property, exile and even execution. This type of persecution led to two inter-related responses by Christians.

First, many of these persecuted Christians on the continent chose to flee to the "new world" so that they could get away from the discrimination and persecution of the State. Many if not most of the immigrants to America during this period were seeking for a place where they could fulfill their desires to worship according to their convictions.

Second, when these new immigrants in America decided to create a government they designed one that was "secular" in nature. Secularism is the practice of separating government from religion. The way this was interpreted in the early days of America was that there would be no official national church. The people in this new nation would be able to worship any way they wanted without government interference. The State would protect the free exercise of religion and allow people to worship any way they felt compelled and the Church would not interfere in political affairs. This resulted in a gradual and greater separation of Church and State.

Most new immigrants to America personally were Christians but did not attempt to control the government based upon their own specific Christian theological or denominational views. Of course the personal Christian convictions of these citizens helped create what was acceptable morality in America and thus did influence certain government laws and policies. This happened because the majority of people shared similar Christian convictions.

There was little or no government opposition to Christianity at this time. In fact, the primary purpose of secularism, as it was originally envisioned, was to protect the free exercise of religion.⁵ However, over the next 200 years, the secularism of America gradually resulted in more and more separation between the Church and the State.

One of the “secularism” issues I personally remember was a decision by the courts that one could not pray or read the Bible in public schools. It was reasoned that to pray a specific prayer in school might discriminate against a person from another denomination who prayed in a different way.⁶ One of the major arguments against any kind of religious activities in the public schools was that the government should not use taxpayer money to perform any kind of religious function or promote any religious doctrine. To do so may result in citizens paying taxes to support a religious practice that was contrary to their own faith.

The secularism originally created to protect religion gradually pushed religion into its own small corner of society. In other words, the evolving secularism taught that the Christian faith should be practiced only in the quietness of its devotee’s homes or the religious buildings that were part of their religious tradition. In fact, some definitions of secularism portray a negative attitude toward religion. For example, The *Miriam-Webster Dictionary* defines secularism as “indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations.”⁷

The American Christian Day School Movement Period

In the 1960s and 70s, many Christians in America became concerned that government schools were forcing Christian students to do things they felt they should not do and refusing to allow them to do things that were essential for their Christian development. They were also concerned that their children were required to interact with students and teachers who were a bad influence on them. In addition, the inability to pray and the removal of Bible reading from public schools caused many Christian parents to feel that their children were getting only a partial education and one that was slanted against Christianity.

Therefore, individuals, churches and coalitions of Christians started opening Christian schools that would enable them to teach the Christian content they wanted to see their children receive and also create a more wholesome Christian atmosphere in which their children could thrive and grow into mature Christians. I personally attended one of the early Christian schools in the US that helped to develop a Christian philosophy of education.⁸

⁵ The National Secular Society says, “Secularism seeks to defend the absolute freedom of religious and other belief, and protect the right to manifest religious belief insofar as it does not impinge on the rights and freedoms of others.” See <http://www.secularism.org.uk/what-is-secularism.html>. Accessed 15 October 2020.

⁶ In 1962 the US Supreme Court in the case, *Engel v. Vitale* ruled that a certain prayer which had been approved for the public schools of New York violated the First Amendment by constituting an establishment of religion. In 1963 in another Supreme Court case, *Abington School District v. Schempp*, the reading of the Bible was also considered a violation of the First Amendment. See <http://religionandpolitics.org/2012/06/25/when-the-court-took-on-prayer-the-bible-and-public-schools/>. Accessed 2 February 2018.

⁷ See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/secularism>. Accessed 2 February 2018. An even more anti-religious definition is proposed by the gotQuestions.org website which asks the question: “What is secularism?” It then gives this answer: “Essentially, secularism says that man does not need God. It can be defined as ‘a system of doctrines and practices that disregards or rejects any form of religious faith and worship. Its primary objective is the total elimination of all religious elements from society.’” <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-secularism.html>. Accessed on 2 February 2018.

⁸ Although I have always supported Christian primary and secondary schools, I have expressed in other contexts my concern about the increasing segregation of society—the fact that we Christians especially in America have developed our own Christian schools, Christian universities, Christian radio stations, Christian retirement

It was in the context of this emerging Christian day school movement that the term “integration” was adopted to describe the insertion of Christian content into the primary and secondary school curriculums that had excluded such content for decades. Now that Christian schools and teachers were no longer bound to omit religious language and practices from the classroom, teachers started thinking more seriously and creatively about how they could re-integrate the Bible and Christian doctrines and practices into all academic disciplines.

In addition to the Christian day school movement, there were many Christian colleges and universities that were emerging or gaining prominence at that time. Many of these started long before the Christian Day School movement but this movement also encouraged them to rethink their worldviews and make attempts to integrate faith and practice with their academic disciplines that before this time were considered secular.

In the last two or three decades, there has been a movement to help place and support Christian academics in “secular” tertiary institutions. This movement has been championed to a large extent by Global Scholars.⁹ This movement has encouraged Christian academics to think through each of their disciplines from God’s perspective. Most Christian academics today were trained in the traditional mainstream educational institutions which means they were heavily influenced by secularism. In some cases this simply meant that God was ignored in their disciplines and in other cases it meant that there were anti-religious and even an anti-Christian biases in those disciplines. The Society of Christian Scholars¹⁰ was created to serve those who are part of this movement. One of the most important responsibilities of the Society is to call Christian academics to think “Christianly” about their disciplines.

- Does the Bible have anything to say about my academic discipline?
- What can I learn about God in my discipline whether it is in the Bible or not?
- How can I promote a Christian perspective in my discipline even in a secular university?
- How can I glorify God the Creator of my field of study?

Integration

Now that we have seen what preceded the “integration” movement, I will now focus on how Christian teachers and schools have attempted to implement this philosophy of education.

Definition of Integration

To integrate means to mix or join things together that are not the same. Integration means the exact opposite of segregation. Prior to 2001, most communities in and around the city of Jos were integrated. Christians and Muslims often lived on the same street and shopped in the same markets. Each recognized that the other was different but few felt the need to separate from those of another religion or ethnic group. However, as a result of the series of crises that started in 2001, neighbors who practiced different religions became suspicious and fearful of each other so communities have been gradually segregating ever since. That means that both

homes, Christian publishing and media houses, Christian insurance companies and we can even go on Christian cruises or other vacations completely surrounded by fellow Christians. I believe that an over-emphasis on exclusive Christian “togetherness” tends to encourage an unhealthy segregation and reduces the possibility of us being salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-16).

⁹ For more information about Global Scholars see <https://global-scholars.org/>

¹⁰ For more information about the Society of Christian Scholars see <https://global-scholars.org/society-of-christian-scholars/>

Christians and Muslims have removed themselves from mixed communities and moved to segregated communities. Thus, the city Jos illustrates to us the opposite of integration.

Educational Integration

The practice of integrating education materials is not restricted to Christian teachers. Since 1999, I have been involved in doing various kinds of HIV/AIDS advocacy and training. One strategy we attempted was to encourage school teachers to integrate HIV content into their classes. In my book *Fighting Back*, which is a practical book suggesting various ways we can fight the HIV battle from a faith perspective, I listed 12 academic disciplines and gave samples of how HIV could be integrated into these courses.¹¹ These include English, Foreign Languages, Arts, Health, General Science, Computer Science, Agricultural Science, Social Science, Mathematics, Home Economics, Religions Studies and Education.¹² This involved making a deliberate effort to think of natural ways that we could use facts and stories related to HIV and AIDS to teach those academic disciplines.

Various institutions have also developed materials and strategies to integrate other topics into the mainstream curriculum such as integrity, patriotism, and human rights.

Biblical Integration

Our main interest in integration relates to the integration of Biblical or theological content into other disciplines. This can be done two different ways.

Integrating Non-Biblical Content into Biblical Study

The point of this approach is to use what might be considered non-Biblical materials and show how these illustrate and support various kinds of Biblical truth and principles. One of my main mentors in my early years was an educator named Dr. Dale Yocum. He wrote a book entitled *Ask the Animals*¹³ in which he used various animals to teach about Christian character. He demonstrated in a very delightful way that there is a lot one can learn about Christian character from the animals God has created.

As a theologian, this is the kind of integration I practice. I do not have to worry about integrating Christian or Biblical studies into my discipline because that is what my discipline is about. However, I do seek to find non-biblical information to illustrate certain theological truths and also show how theology applies in the real world. Like my mentor, Dr. Yocum, I have also attempted to use animals to teach spiritual lessons with a little book entitled

¹¹ Danny McCain, *Fighting Back: Winning the Battle Against HIV and AIDS With a Faith Perspective*, Africa Christian Textbooks, 2008; pp. 145-148

¹² McCain, p. 145. To give some ideas of the way HIV could be integrated into the English curriculum, I suggested the following sample activities:

- Require students to read stories related to HIV/AIDS or those living with HIV/AIDS. This requires research by the teacher or lecturer to make sure appropriate stories are available.
- Assign students to write short stories, poems, or essays about HIV/AIDS issues.
- Have students evaluate HIV/AIDS materials for grammatical correctness, language appropriateness and stylistic suitability. This will require collecting HIV/AIDS materials and making them available to students.
- Require students to create jingles related to HIV/AIDS.
- Sponsor and conduct debates about various HIV/AIDS related topics.
- Do Internet research on the evolving literature that involves HIV/AIDS themes.

¹³ Dale Yocum, *Ask the Animals*, French-Vineyard Publishers, Ltd. 1982

*Lessons I Learned from a Mamma Chicken.*¹⁴ This book simply narrates lessons I observed watching a mother chicken and her biddies grow up in my compound.

However, this technique is not limited to just theologians. Those of you are Christian academics with expertise in any academic discipline should show how that discipline magnifies the Creator and supports specific Christian principles. I challenge all of you to think through your discipline, specifically about ways it can teach godly lessons and be a spiritual blessing to the broader body of Christ.

Integrating Biblical Content into Non-Biblical Disciplines

This refers to the practice whereby lecturers teaching non-theological or “secular” courses deliberately insert Biblical or theological content into their courses. Note these examples:

- **Integration into English Courses**

- For studying grammar, one can analyze Biblical sentences to point out nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions and other parts of speech.
- One can find many kinds of literary genres in the Bible including narrative, fiction, drama, biography, autobiography, poetry, epistle, allegory, parable, legal writings and others. These can be used to illustrate and support the teaching of those topics.
- In English composition, teachers can ask students to write on Christian themes.
 - Students can write their testimonies or testimonies of others.
 - Students can record and bring to class notes of sermons they heard.
 - Students can write stories on Christian values such as honesty, humility, forgiveness, respect, kindness and similar moral qualities. One can do this in a “secular” environment without even stating that these are Christian values.
 - Students can write on Christmas, Easter and other Christian holidays.
- In English literature, teachers can look for many things in the writings such as:
 - Christian themes and doctrines and acts of God
 - Christian characteristics and qualities (like kindness, forgiveness, etc.)
 - Sinful acts and attitudes (like anger, pride, disobedience, gossip, etc.)
 - Christian or non-Christian beliefs or experiences that had influenced the writer.
- Teachers can use the Bible to teach poetic and figurative language.
 - There are many types of figurative language in the Bible including: simile, metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, personification, synecdoche, apostrophe, rhetorical questions, irony, euphemism, litotes, pleonasm and anthropomorphism
 - There are many kinds of poetry found in the Bible with various kinds of parallelism, dramatic and colorful language, unique structures and similar things.

- **Integration in Science Courses**

- One can look for illustrations of scientific principles in the Bible. These could include things like the law of gravity illustrated by the soaring eagle. (See references to eagles in Job 39:27, Jeremiah 49:22, and Obadiah 1:4.)
- Weather related issues and natural disasters including floods (Acts 25:15-20), rain (Genesis 7:12), droughts (Haggai 1:11), locust plagues (Joel 1:4-12), crop diseases (Amos 4:9), earthquakes (Acts 16:26), and other phenomena. All of these things do the bidding of God (Psalm 148:7-8).
- Physics including the radio waves that are used in our phones and other electronics. These illustrate the spiritual world which is also hidden but real.

¹⁴ Danny McCain, *Lessons I Learned from a Mamma Chicken*, ACTS, Bukuru. 2020

- One can teach a lot of biology from all of the animals in the Bible. These could include domesticated animals like: camel, cow, dog, donkey, goat horse, pig, and sheep. It could also include wild animals like: bear, gazelle, hyrax, leopard, lion, deer, wolf. One can also find in the Bible flying things like a bee, bird, grasshopper, locust, and moth and crawling things snakes and scorpions.¹⁵
- **Integration in Mathematics Courses**
 - This is one of the more difficult courses to try to integrate faith concepts because mathematics is used every day and is so common place. However, I challenge you to develop ways to integrate Biblical truth into the teaching of mathematics.
 - Mathematics shows order, consistency, and predictability. These are qualities of God.
 - Here is a sample exercise from the Bible: After Paul was converted, he later went back to his hometown and waited for the Lord to open the door for him to begin his real ministry. A good mathematics question is: How long did Paul wait in Tarsus? There is enough information in the New Testament to answer that question.¹⁶
- **Integration in Art and Music Courses**
 - Music and art appeal to the aesthetic part of the human nature.
 - We learn about God's aesthetic nature in two major places.
 - First, there is much music in the Bible. Singing is referred to 162 times in the Bible (NIV). The Book of Psalms contains 150 songs. Several hymns are found in the New Testament (Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 2:22-25).¹⁷
 - Second, we see God's perspective on beauty in nature. In the nature God created, one sees beauty, symmetry, and things that appeal to the "higher nature" of humanity. The place of God in art and music needs much more research.

These are just a small sample of the courses where we can integrate Biblical and theological and spiritual content into non-religious courses. We also need to integrate the Bible into social sciences, management sciences, physical sciences, medical and pharmaceutical sciences, architectural and building sciences, legal studies, languages and linguistics, history, education, communication, technology and all other disciplines taught in tertiary institutions.

¹⁵ *Africa Study Bible*, Supervising Editor: John Jusu, Oasis International, Ltd, Wheaton, IL, 2016, page 862

¹⁶ The following verses supply enough information to solve the problem of how long Paul remained in Tarsus which can be described in a mathematical formula as: **14 years – (X + Y) = TiT (Time in Tarsus)**

- Galatians 2:1: *Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also.*
- Acts 9:9: *"For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything."*
- Acts 9:19b: *"Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus."*
- Galatians 1:15-18: *"Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter . . ."*
- Acts 9:23-24: *"After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. . ."* It was at this time that the phrase in Galatians takes place: *"after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter . . ."* Paul traveled from Damascus to Jerusalem. It is about 135 miles (217 kilometers) between the two cities
- Galatians 1:18b: *"Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days."*
- Acts 9:28-30 describes that same visit to Jerusalem: *"So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. . . When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus."* It was about 55 miles (88 kilometers) from Jerusalem to Caesarea, a 3-day walk.
- Galatians 1:21: *"Later I went to Syria and Cilicia."* It was 190 miles from Caesarea to Syrian Antioch.

¹⁷ Joshua W. Jipp, "Hymns in the New Testament," Bible Odyssey, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/passages/related-articles/hymns-in-the-new-testament> Accessed 15 October 2020

Advantages of Integrating Scripture with Non-Religious Subjects

Integrating Biblical and spiritual content into non-theological classes has many advantages.

Integration shows the bigness and beauty and wisdom of God. When one sees the intricate and expansive and precise nature of God's universe, illustrated in all disciplines, this encourages one to rise up and give thanks that God is not just a powerful God but a wise and intelligent God who is characterized by beauty and diversity and creativity.

Integration presents a holistic message of Christianity. If God is the God of the whole universe, then the study of the whole universe is not only legitimate but essential to understand and please God. If God is the God of the whole universe, then the followers of Jesus should be interested in the whole universe and should be engaged in understanding that universe and utilizing the resources of that universe and protecting that universe.

Integration brings disciplines together. Integration normally brings theology together with a discipline not normally associated with the Bible. Bringing these together helps teach both. Thus teaching an integrated chemistry curriculum will also teach certain Biblical concepts.

Integration helps people to have a better understanding of the Bible and their faith. The Christian faith is not just about sin and repentance and forgiveness and going to heaven or hell. It includes a comprehensive collection of truth about all things God has created. If this is the kind of God we serve, it means we should be "big" Christians who are interested in and should learn about and engage in all the universe can offer. Seeing ourselves in light of God's bigness should help to reduce pettiness and small-mindedness and self-centeredness.

Integration helps to bring freshness and creativity in our discipline. If you seriously integrate Christian themes in your research and teaching, this will get people's attention because they are not accustomed to hearing that discipline taught that way.

Integration helps to generate fulfillment, joy and satisfaction. When you are able to see God's perspective in your discipline, that helps to achieve that "self-actualization" Maslow's hierarchy describes as the highest human achievement. Is there any greater fulfillment than discovering and teaching new things about God in your non-theological discipline?

Let us commit ourselves to make more creative efforts to integrate the Bible and theological truths with all of the other truths we teach.

Discovery

As important as it is to integrate the Bible and theology into all parts of life, the attempt at integration has some limitations and potential perils.

- Lecturers must not turn their classrooms into a Sunday School class. This would be unethical. Professional ethics demand that we properly cover our syllabi.
- Lecturers must not take advantage of their position of having a captive audience to force students to learn about Christianity against their will. This would be unfair.
- Lecturers must not use this kind of integration in some kind of artificial, forced manner. This would be unprofessional. Integration should be normal and natural.

One of the biggest limitations of integration is that it still preserves some sense of secularism. Integration is the mixing or combining of two things that are not exactly alike. This implies in a subtle way that the mathematics that we teach and the Christian content we integrate together are somehow different. I believe a pure Christian worldview would reject that thesis.

Key Scripture: Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The key thought in this passage is the unity of the body of Christ. However, verse 6 adds another aspect of unity when it says “*one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*” This passage stresses the unity of truth. It states a fact we all know—that there is one God and this God is a part of all things. He is over all things because he is the creator of all things. He is through all things because there is no place where one can go or concept one can think about where God is not present. He is in all things because if he created all things, then all things have the stamp of God’s creation on them.

If God is over and in all things, how is it possible to integrate God into things where God already exists? That is why I am suggesting that Christian academics must go beyond integration to the discovery of God’s truth in all things. Let me support this theologically.

Theological Foundation of the Holistic View of Truth

God is the source of all things because he created all things.

“*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). That means God created all physical material things and all laws of nature and everything else that is part of the universe. There is nothing that exists that was not created by God. John states a similar truth in the introduction to his gospel: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*” (John 1:1-3). This passage reiterates that there was nothing that was made, including physical substances or scientific principles or anything else that was not made by the Word. Every mountain and river and chemical compound and animal and bug and scientific principle has stamped on it, “Made by God.” Since that is true God is the author and creator of every subject you teach. That means, therefore, you should seek God’s perspective on whatever discipline you research and teach.

If God created everything then everything God created is good.

If everything thing in the world is made by God and God is good, it is very obvious that everything in the universe was originally made good. This is also clearly stated in the Bible. We are told that on the sixth day of creation “*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good*” (Genesis 1:31). This means that everything God originally made in this world, including every part of every academic discipline, is good. And if all of these things are good, they are worth researching and teaching to others. Obviously, there is a priority of truth.¹⁸

¹⁸ When the teachers of the law asked Jesus about the most important commandment, he answered that the most important one was: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*” The second is this: “*Love your*

Integration and Beyond

Some of God's truths are more important than others. However, nothing legitimate that God has created is off limits to the servant of God who is curious about it.

If everything in the universe is good, we must try to discover the stamp of God in all things.

This is where we go beyond integration. Integration is satisfied to combine together similar or even diverse things. It tries to mix the spiritual truths we find in the Bible with the non-spiritual things we find in nature. That is certainly a worthwhile exercise. However, the most serious Christian academics seek to discover the stamp of God—the creativity and beauty and power and consistency and goodness of God in every academic discipline.

- Astronomers see God in the incredible size and power of the universe and how the earth is in just the right place in the solar system to provide life for its inhabitants.
- Teachers of anatomy see God in the intricate unity and diversity and functionality of the human body.
- Linguists see God's own ability to communicate replicated in human beings in an almost endless variety of ways.
- Biologists see God's imprint on the vast variety of animals he created and the way each one is uniquely adapted to its environment.
- Historians who are people of faith see the hand of God in working out all the details of life on this earth to the point where we are now and specifically see the hand of God in directing the key events in history.

When all of these disciplines are taken together, we see the picture of an intelligent, creative, highly organized, powerful being who is interested in beauty and order and justice and us.

If we must seek to find the stamp of God in all things, we must restructure our teaching and learning practices to achieve that.

We must re-learn our basic theology. Most of us were reared with a hierarchical dichotomy about the things of God. That means we tend to divide people into different groups and then place a higher value on one over the other.

For example when I was younger I believed that there were two kinds of Christians—laymen and full-time Christian workers. Obviously the full-time Christian workers were more important to God than the laymen. There were two kinds of full-time Christian workers—pastors and missionaries. Obviously those who made the sacrifice to go to the mission field were more important than the pastors who stayed at home. There were two kinds of missionaries—the evangelists and church planters and theology teachers in the seminaries—those who worked with “spiritual things” and those who do practical ministries like digging wells and serving in hospitals and teaching agriculture. Obviously that was an incomplete understanding of God's reality.

What I am saying is that we must un-learn all of those artificial divisions that many of us inherited as children. All truth belongs to God and anyone who is working with any area of truth, in fulfillment of the will of God for his or her life, is just as important as anyone else.

We must rearrange our objectives. The primary purpose of education is not just to help our students to make a better living in the future. Education is designed to help discover God in

neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31). With this statement, Jesus confirmed that there is a priority of truth. All truth is equally true but not all truth is equally important.

all disciplines. If we can develop this theocentric view of our discipline, that will affect our motivation, our attitudes and the work ethic we bring to our academics.

We must re-design our teaching methods. We must take our students beyond just memorizing the basic facts that are interesting and important. We must try to awaken their inquisitive minds and challenge them to seek for God's answers in all areas of life.

We must teach our students to think; we must teach them how to search out truth; we must convince them that God has created their minds to understand and appreciate the incredible universe God has created. We must illustrate this through our own search for knowledge.

I challenge you to think again about your worldview and see if you need to rethink some of these things and develop a more holistic view of life.

Two Key Mandates

I will now point out two key verses that provide two sacred mandates for us.

Mandate One: Truth is hidden and must be sought out.

Proverbs 25:2 says: *“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a thing is the glory of kings.”* This passage teaches two things about truth. First, it teaches us that you can do something God cannot do. You can search out and learn truths that you did not know before. God cannot do that because he knows all things. Therefore, God somehow gets glory or satisfaction or fulfillment in concealing truth and then watching the creatures he has made search out those truths that have been hidden from us.

On the other hand, according to this passage, the greatest thing even a king can do is to search out and discover truth. This means the process of searching out and discovering truth is the most fulfilling thing one can do. Even a king cannot do anything more important.

Several years ago I met the Emir of Gombe in the Amsterdam airport. He invited me to come and visit him in Gombe. A few months later, I traveled to Gombe and went to visit him. I had a very enjoyable visit. The most interesting thing about my time with him was that practically the whole time I was there, the Emir was asking questions: “Is it true that Christians only pray once a week?” “Is it true that when American children turn 18, you force them to leave the house?” This man had reached the peak of success but there was still nothing more glorious or meaningful he could do than to search out and discover truth by asking questions.

This scripture suggests when a person is studying and learning, whether learning about theology or physics or psychology or chemistry or business or farming, he is doing one of the most enjoyable and rewarding and important things in the world—he is learning God's truth.

If learning is the most important thing we can do, then teaching surely must be the second most important thing we can do. Pastors are seeking out and presenting parts of God's truth—the spiritual parts that relate to our relationship with God. However, you who have chosen a teaching career have the full-time responsibility and privilege of helping young people discover truth—all kinds of truth. Is there any greater privilege than that? Is there anything more satisfying than leading young people in the discovery of the truth that sets them free?

I challenge those of you who are lecturers . . .

Integration and Beyond

- To get down on your knees before you go to bed tonight and thank God that he has called you to the greatest profession in the world.
- To search out God's truth in your subject area with enthusiasm and joy.
- To teach your students how to search out God's truth with accuracy and enthusiasm.

Mandate Two: Truth is valuable and must be defended.

Jesus made two important statements about truth.

- ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life"*** (John 14:6).
- ***"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"*** (John 8:31-32).

All truth sets you free. It is not just the truth about Jesus that sets you free but knowing any of God's truths will free you from something.

- Knowing the truth of aerodynamics gives engineers the ability and confidence to make airplanes that overcome gravity and fly from Jos to Lagos in one hour.
- Knowing the truth about radio waves and electronics enables my wife to talk to her mother in the US from Nigeria every day.
- Knowing the simple truth about reading unlocks practically the world to us.

Certainly Jesus is the epitome of truth and the more we learn about him, the freer we become.

Here is another implication of Jesus' statement: If truth is important to God, then one can assume that God's enemy, the devil will try to destroy or pervert truth. Jesus confirmed this when he said that his arch enemy is *"a liar and the father of lies"* and *"when he lies, he speaks his native language"* (John 8:44). One of the greatest weapons the enemy uses is the perversion of truth. Note these facts about God's enemy:

- The enemy is opposed to everything God has created and loves.
- The enemy will attempt to destroy or distort everything that God has created, including truth.
- Every bad thing in the world is a good thing created by God that Satan has perverted.
- Every heresy or wrong teaching is one of God's truths that has been twisted.
- Every sin is a perversion of something good God has created.

Paul also has something important to say about this:

*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We **demolish arguments** and every pretension that sets itself up against **the knowledge of God**, and we **take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).*

In this passage Paul talks about *"the world."* Worldliness is simply thinking and reasoning like the world does. Paul emphatically declares God's people do not think like the world. To show us how strongly Paul believed these things, he used strong military language to make his arguments. However, in this passage he is not really thinking about fighting in either the physical or spiritual sense of the word. The fighting he is talking about here is resisting and attacking the way of thinking and the perversions of truth the enemy is pushing on us. Note these three applications of the military metaphor:

We demolish arguments. The word “*demolish*” is a military word. The word “*argument*” in this context is the word *logismos* which is the word from which we get logic. The world attempts to use various kinds of logical arguments to undermine God’s claims. Paul said that it is our responsibility to demolish those arguments. However, we are not going to demolish any argument without serious thought and study. That is where Christian academics in the various disciplines become important. It is the duty of Christian academics to do the necessary research and give the necessary thought so they can destroy the flesh-based logic of the unbelieving world.

We bring down high things that oppose the knowledge of God. The word translated “pretension” (NIV) in this context is a word that meant “high things.” It apparently refers to arguments that appear to be prestigious and scholarly, using words that intelligent and well-educated people would use. These are arguments couched in professional and academic language designed to undermine the absolute truth that comes from God. Such high sounding arguments are only a cheap imitation of God’s whole truth. We must destroy such arguments.

The idea here is that we as thoughtful Christians must unmask the high sounding arguments that the worldly scholars present. A. T. Robertson says about this passage, “Paul aims to pull down the top-most perch of audacity in their reasonings against the knowledge of God.”¹⁹

How are we going to do this? We are going to do this by superior research and better logic and more convincing arguments. And we are going to do all of this in the power of the Holy Spirit who has promised to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

We bring into captivity every thought to make it obedient to Christ. I used to think that this passage referred to me forcing myself to bring all of my thoughts into obedience to Christ. I thought this verse was urging us to discipline our minds, similar to the way Philippians 4:8 tells us to think on things that are pure and holy and praiseworthy. However, by examining the context of this passage carefully, it is obvious that is not what it is talking about.

The word translated “*thought*” here is the word *noema* which could be translated simply as “thought” or even an evil thought. I believe this passage is simply saying we Christians must not only demolish the arguments of the enemy and expose the high sounding rhetoric but we must go on the offensive and bring every thought—every academic discipline—every truth under the authority of Jesus Christ and into conformity with the truth of God. We must make sure every discipline is brought in line with the way Christ views it. We are being compelled to discover that stamp of God that is on everything God has created.

That is a big responsibility. And this is the responsibility of the university lecturer. The average layman cannot do this. The average preacher may even struggle to do this. The theologian cannot do this for every possible academic discipline in the world. It is going to take those who are Christian university academics, searchers of truth who are committed to the authority of Scripture. It will take these kinds of people who can thoughtfully study and understand and explain God’s perspective on every discipline God has created.

Summary

Integration is good but discovering God’s truth in every discipline is even better. Thinking creatively about how to insert Biblical and theological concepts into your “secular” discipline

¹⁹ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, electronic version; no page

is an important exercise. However, creating theology through seeing the beauty and power and orderliness and creativity and wisdom and profundity of God in those disciplines where we have not been taught to look for them is *“the glory of kings.”*

Are you prepared to move beyond integrating God’s truth into your discipline to discovering and articulating God’s truth in your discipline?

Conclusion

God is above all truth because he created all things. God is through all truth because God is found everywhere in the world. God is in all truth because God’s divine nature is stamped on all parts of the creation. God is the author and preserver of all truth because his very nature is truth. God is the creator of curiosity and the one who motivates people to search out and discover truth because that is the way he designed humanity.

- Are you willing to start searching out God’s truth in your discipline?
- Are you willing to challenge others, including your students and colleagues to do the same?
- Are you willing to view the truth of your discipline like theology and consider yourself to be a theologian of your discipline?

This will not be an easy task. No important task is.

- It will require time and hard work.
- It will demand creativity and experimentation.
- It will involve lots of frustration and unsuccessful efforts.
- It will generate strange looks and snide comments by less informed academics.

However, this kind of academic worldview and service will bring about the greatest joy and fulfillment any lecturer could experience. Discovering the truth in all things is God’s call to the Christian academic. Are you ready to fully accept it?

This morning I was reading the Gospel of Mark in my normal quiet time and I discovered a fascinating verse. The incident occurred on Tuesday of the Passion Week. Jesus was sitting on top of the Mount of Olives presenting to his disciples what we call the Olivet Discourse. At one point, Jesus describes his second coming: *“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens”* (Mark 13:26-27). What the passage says is that when Jesus comes back to this earth, he is going to send his angels to the ends of the earth to find his elect and gather them to where he is. That suggests to us that the plan of Jesus to evangelize the world will have been successful. The followers of Jesus—the elect of God will be found in every part of the earth.

However, the passage contains another intriguing phrase. It says that the angels are going to gather the elect *“from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”* What does it mean that the angels will gather the elect from the *“ends of the heavens?”* This statement could simply be a figurative and perhaps hyperbolic description of the wide variety of places where angels will find the elect. However, this could also be a hint of something else. Not only are God’s elect going to be found in all the different parts of the earth, some of God’s elect are going to be found at the *“ends of the heavens”* too.

Integration and Beyond

In our modern world, at any given time, there are thousands of people in airplanes in various parts of the heavens. That could be what Jesus is referring to. However, at the present time, there are also people who are living in the International Space Station 250 miles above the earth's surface. Human beings have already been to the moon and more trips are planned for the next few years. In addition, within the next ten years it is almost certain that there is going to be a trip to Mars, one of the earth's closest neighbors.

What this passage is suggesting is when Jesus returns to this earth, some of his elect are going to be in the heavens—in fact in the ends of the heavens and he is going to have to send his angels to those places to get them and bring them back to himself.

I am sure you are aware that only the brightest, the most disciplined, the most courageous and the most curious apply for and go through the rigid selection process and training to become astronauts. However, that is the profile of the elect of God. Jesus hints here that when he returns to this earth, some of his very smart, very disciplined, very hard working people are going to be on the cutting edge of exploration and learning—they are going to be in outer space. Perhaps some of them will be members of the Society of Christian Scholars.

Will you be among God's elect who will be on the cutting edge of innovation and discovery when Jesus comes back to this earth? God is looking for just such persons to be called his elect scholars. Will you answer that call?