

BEYOND INTEGRATION: A HIGHER STANDARD FOR SEEING GOD’S TRUTH IN ALL THINGS

**presented at the Hillcrest Christian Educator’s Conference
at the Hillcrest School, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria
on 3 February 2018 by Prof. Danny McCain**

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

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

History of Integration³

The mixture of the sacred and the secular is not a new issue. The intertwining of these has been practiced many ways through history. The following is a relevant sample.

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 object.
- Noah’s service to God was building a boat and collecting animals and food, a rather ordinary activity 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.
- In the Ten Commands, there is a combination of our responsibilities to our God and our responsibilities to our fellow humans.

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 the word “secular” in this paper in its popular usage to refer to all non-religious truth.

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.

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 that helped the people worship God.
- The king was the administrator over the civil and military affairs of the nation.

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 but that kingdom took a new form during Jesus' ministry immediately afterwards. The new kingdom had several features.

- People of the kingdom were to be loyal to the political authorities (1 Peter 2:13-15).
- People of the kingdom were to pray for kings and other authorities (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- People of the kingdom were to submit to their political leaders (Titus 3:1).
- 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 the next 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 (Cornelius - Acts 10:1-48; "Caesar's household" which were likely staff – 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—those related to God, including evangelism, discipleship, worship, and assisting with social needs. However, this did not mean that the Church had nothing to do with the nation or the nation had nothing to do with the Church. This was simply a convenient division of responsibilities for what God was going to be doing during this phase of his kingdom. This model of government basically existed for the first 300 years of church history.

The Constantine Period

Constantine was a general who became the 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 defeated Maxentius in the battle and gave credit to Christ. He became supportive of Christians and granted them freedom from persecution and even restoration of some of their property the empire had taken away 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.

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

During this time, Europe returned to something of an Old Testament format 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 empire.

It is much too long and complicated a story to explain in detail 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 secular 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 were considered heretics or failed to follow the Church's 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 one could see little difference.

The Protestant Reformation Period

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 reactions.

First, many of these persecuted Christians on the continent chose to flee to the "new world" so that they could get away from the 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 the 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 the new world 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 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 religion.⁵ However,

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>.

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 that prayed in a different way.⁶ One of the major arguments was that the government should not use taxpayer money to perform any kind of religious function or promote any religious doctrine.

The secularism that was originally created to protect religion gradually pushed religion into its own small corner of society. In other words, 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 Christian Day School Movement Period

In the 1960s and early 70s, many Christians became concerned that the government schools were forcing Christian students to do things that they felt they should not do and refusing to allow them to do things that were essential for their Christian development. On the activities side, many parents were not happy with what might be called the “worldliness” in the school which involved certain kinds of music and dancing and other activities that were offensive to some Christians. They were also concerned that their children were required to interact with students who were a bad influence on them. In addition, the inability to pray and the removal of the study the Bible 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 allow 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.

In 1965, I gave my life to Christ in an old-fashioned camp meeting in Mobile, Alabama. I had just completed the eighth grade. I felt strongly impressed at that time that the Lord wanted me to go to a Christian high school. The only Christian school that my parents and I knew about at that time was 1500 kilometers away in Florida. So as a 14-year new follower of Christ, I left home to live in the boarding school of a Christian high school far from home.

Though these Christian schools did not always produce the results the Christian parents wanted them to, my participation in a Christian school was successful. I received the kind of

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.

teaching and discipleship and experienced the positive examples and opportunities of service that enabled me to grow in my faith in that setting. In addition, while in that school, I met a young lady that was later to become my wife. So in my case the segregated Christian day school movement functioned as it was designed to function.⁸

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. Now that Christian schools and teachers were no longer bound to omit all religious language and practices from the school, 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.

Integration

Now that we have seen what preceded the “integration” movement, I will now focus attention on how Christian 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 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 the integration of Christian material into non-religious topics. Since 1999, I have been involved in doing various kinds of HIV/AIDS advocacy and training. One of the strategies we attempted with school teachers was to encourage them to integrate HIV content into all of their classes. In my book *Fighting Back*, which is a practical book related to 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

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 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).

integrated into these courses.⁹ These include English, Foreign Languages, Arts, Health, General Science, Computer Science, Agricultural Science, Social Science, Mathematics, Home Economics, Religions Studies and Education.¹⁰

Various institutions have also developed materials and strategies to integrate other topics into the mainstream curriculum like 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 truths and principles. One of my main mentors in the early years of my life was an educator named Dr. Dale Yocum. He wrote a book entitled *Ask the Animals* 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.

The best example I have ever seen of this was material produced by the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts which developed a fascinating set of magnificent books entitled *Character Sketches: From the Pages of Scripture Illustrated in the World of Nature*.¹¹ Each of the chapters of this book has the following components:

- Definition of a Biblical concept like cautiousness, contentment, gratefulness, punctuality, resourcefulness, thriftiness, and kindness.
- A nature story (about an animal, plant or other natural object)
- A key scripture related to that concept
- A brief description of a Biblical character and animal that illustrate the concept.
- A story about an animal that illustrates the concept
- A description of the characteristics of the animal (4 or 5 pages)
- A story from the Bible about a person that illustrates the concept
- More information about that Biblical character
- Character sketch of the Biblical character
- Beautiful colored sketches all throughout the chapter

⁹ Danny McCain, *Fighting Back: Winning the Battle Against HIV and AIDS With a Faith Perspective*, Africa Christian Textbooks, 2008; pp. 145-148

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ *Character Sketches: From the Pages of Scriptures Illustrated in the World of Nature*, Volume III, First Edition, Institute in Basic Conflicts, 1985.

This is obviously a good technique for teaching the Bible. We bring the information from all other disciplines to illustrate and support various teachings of the Bible. Some of the most fascinating preaching and teaching I have ever heard have used this technique.

Those of you 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 bless the whole body of Christ.

Integrating Biblical Content into Non-Biblical Study

This means that teachers who are teaching non-theological courses or “secular” courses will deliberately insert Biblical or theological content into those courses they are teaching. 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.
 - In English composition, one 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.
 - In English literature, they can look for many things like:
 - 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.)
- 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.
- Integration in mathematics courses

This is one of the more difficult courses to try to integrate faith concepts. In reviewing one of the most popular Christian mathematics textbooks, I found only two references to Christianity, one related to paying tithes and the other related to going to church. Otherwise, this could have been a secular textbook. However, I challenge you to develop ways to integrate Biblical truth into the teaching of mathematics.

Here is a sample exercise: After Paul was converted, he later went back to his hometown of Tarsus and waiting 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 come very close to answering that question.¹²

¹² 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.*

We also need to integrate the Bible into social studies, geography, physical and health education, literature; home economics, agricultural studies, computer science, foreign languages and every other course taught in primary and secondary schools.

Advantages of Integrating Scripture with Non-Religious Subjects

Note these 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 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.

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.

-
- 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 about 190 miles from Caesarea to Antioch in Syria.

- Teachers must not turn their teaching into a Sunday School class. This would be a mistake. We want to be professionals in our disciplines and cover our syllabi.
- Teachers must not use this kind of integration in some kind of artificial forced manner. Integration should be normal and natural.

Integration should use concepts that students from Christian families know or have the ability to know about and thus should be done very naturally. One of the biggest limitations of integration is that it still preserves some sense of secularism. Remember 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 stresses the unity of truth. This passage states a truth that we all know—that there is one God and that 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.

And if God is already 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 illustrate 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. That suggests that everything in the world has God’s stamp on it. Every mountain and river and chemical 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.

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 clear that everything in the universe is 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 thing in the world, including every academic discipline is good. And if all of these things are good, they are worth researching and studying and teaching to others. Obviously, there is a priority of truth. 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 attempt to discover the stamp of God in all things.

This is where we depart from integration. Integration is satisfied to combine similar or even diverse things together. It tries to mix the spiritual truths we find in the Bible with the non-spiritual things that we find in nature. However, true academics seek to discover the stamp of God, the creativity and beauty and power and consistency and goodness of God in all things.

- 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.
- Mathematicians see God in the order and consistency of numbers.
- Teachers of anatomy see God in the intricate unity and diversity 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 stamp on the variety of animals 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 key points 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 have a hierarchical dichotomy about the things of God. That means we divide people into different groups and then respect one above 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 all disciplines.

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 nature which will 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 us two things about truth. First, it teaches us that you can do something that 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 enjoyment 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 that 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 found the emir's palace. I had a very interesting visit. The most fascinating thing about time with him is that practically the whole time I was there, the Emir was asking me 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.

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 are involved in 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 will set them free?

Some of you did not choose education as your first career choice. You really did not want to go into the teaching profession. You went to the university to study something else but that course was full so you were offered a position in the Faculty of Education. However, it was God himself, in his infinite wisdom, who led you into the most rewarding profession.

I challenge those of you who are teachers . . .

- 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.

Beyond Integration: A Higher Standard for Seeing God's Truth in All Things

- 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.

- Jesus said, "***I am the way, the truth, and the life***" (John 14:6).
- Jesus also said, "***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 enable us to fly 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 perverted or distorted.
- 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 arguments without serious thought and study. That is where our Christian academics and school teachers in the various disciplines become important. It is the duty of our Christian academics and school teachers 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 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.”¹³

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 thing God has created.

That is a big responsibility. And this is the responsibility of the teacher. 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 school teachers and 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

¹³ 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 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 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.

- Are you willing to start searching out God's truth in your discipline?
- Are you willing to challenge others, including your students and staff to do the same?
- Are you willing to treat 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.

However, it will bring about the greatest joy and fulfillment any teacher could experience. Discovering the truth in all things is God's call to the Christian school teacher. Are you ready to fully accept it?