

Education

Article XII

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

Key Text:

Deuteronomy 6:1-10: “Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and

when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. “So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build.

Deuteronomy 31:12-13: Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.”

Nehemiah 8:3: Then he read from it in the open square that *was* in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* to the Book of the Law.

Nehemiah 8:8: So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

Job 28:28: And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.’”

Psalms 1: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. (Not in article)

Psalms 19:7-14: The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Psalms 119: 11: Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

Proverbs 3:13: Happy *is* the man *who* finds wisdom, and the man *who* gains understanding.

Proverbs 4:1-2: Hear, *my* children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.

Proverbs 8:11: For wisdom *is* better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.

Proverbs 15:14: The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

Matthew 22:37-40: Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Not in article)

Matthew 28:19-20: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5: For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (Not in article)

Philippians 4:8: Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Colossians 2:8-9: Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Colossians 3:1-2: If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (Not in article)

2 Timothy 2:15: Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:14-17: But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

James 1:5: If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 3:17: But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

1 Peter 3:15: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

Baptists are a peculiar people. According to the *BF&M*, a Christian view of education expresses a doctrinal commitment. Perhaps a doctrinal understanding of education is not strange once a person considers the history of Baptists in America.

First, Baptists formed their first church in America in 1638; they established their first college, Rhode Island college – now Brown University, in 1765. Second, concerns about doctrinal teaching by educators precipitated all three editions of the *BF&M* (1925, 1963, 2000). In 1925 it was evolution. In 1963 it was the doctrinal teachings of a professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The *BF&M 2000* clarified key issues such as biblical inspiration, the exclusivity of salvation in Christ, the substitutionary atonement, as well as ethical issues like abortion and homosexuality.

What are the distinctives of education according to Article 12? We highlight three.

First, the *BF&M* affirms a Christo-centric understanding of education; that is, Baptists believe that Christian education centers on Christ. The first four sentences of the Education article, original to the 1925 edition of the *BF&M* but omitted in the 1963 edition, set forth a proper theology of education.

The *BF&M* claims, “Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence.” Rather than advocating anti-intellectualism, Christ commanded his followers to love God with all their minds (Mt. 22:37). Further, in the Bible the term “enlightenment”

means “revelation.” Christianity, then, is a revelatory enlightenment of the mind. The Bible underscores the life of the mind. We love God with our mind. The renewing of our mind leads to transformed living (Rom. 12:2). In the context of spiritual warfare fought in the realm of the mind, Paul challenged Christians to “take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5 *HCSB*). We are to seek and cultivate “the mind of Christ” (Phil 2:5).

“In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Dallas Willard serves as a philosophy professor at the University of Southern California. Willard maintains that following Christ entails a belief that “Jesus is the smartest man who ever lived.” Willard strongly affirms the deity of Christ, yet following Christ means following the world’s smartest individual. Our term “university” literally means “unity in diversity.” Baptists concur with the founders of modern European universities that Christ, the embodiment of truth, provided what Dallas Baptist University professor David Naugle called a “seamless robe of interdisciplinary thought.” Christ reigns as Master of history, art, literature, all fields of science, business, healing arts, legal thought, and technology.

The *BF&M* asserts, “All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage.” All truth is God’s truth since God Himself is the truth. Satan, as the father of lies (John 8:44), actively opposes truth. The Christian faith opposes a false dichotomy of sacred and secular. Sometimes our enemies help us to see things in a clearer manner. Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the 19th century’s archenemies of Christianity as an atheistic philosopher said, “Christianity is a system, a consistently thought out and complete view of things.” Christianity is consistent. Christianity is more than the salvation of souls;

the Christian faith is a complete interpretation of the universe, a world view, a specific way of viewing life.

“The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge,” the *BF&M* says. According to Paul, rejecting God affects the mind. “Their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened” (Rom 1:21 *HCSB*). Theologians refer to this “nonsense thinking” as the “noetic effects of sin,” from the Greek word for mind. In the new birth, the Spirit counteracts this aspect of the fall into sin by opening the faculty of the human mind to think rightly.

Second, the *BF&M* sets forth a Kingdom vision of Education. The risen Christ commanded the church to teach (Matt. 28:19-20). Like evangelism and missions, Christ presented the teaching mandate to the local church and individual believers. Christian education begins in the home (Deut. 6:6-9). Moreover, the church has a mandate to teach members. In 2 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul commanded Timothy to teach faithful men who then had responsibility to teach others. Paul used teaching as an evangelistic methodology (Col. 1:28-29). Baptists established educational institutions as church partners to assist churches in “the causes of missions and general benevolence.”

Third, the *BF&M* advocates a balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom is not an absolute. Freedom requires parameters. The *BFM* identifies three limitations to the freedom of a Christian educator: 1) the pre-eminence of Jesus, 2) the authoritative nature of Scripture, and 3) the distinct purpose/mission of the educational institution.

The difference between secular and Christian education is seen in the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian education, the unique content to be taught, and the different presuppositions regarding truth. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, believers

are shown the truth of God's Word. Both secular and Christian educators may use similar methodologies, but the basic issues related to truth and truth claims make them quite different.

Christian education is Christian when teachers and learners are committed to the Bible's authority and sufficiency and when they are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the learning environment. It is Christian when the purpose and goals are honoring to the Lord and his kingdom. It is Christian when the curriculum is developed from the teachings of the Word of God and from an understanding of biblical theology. It is Christian when there is an overall understanding and perspective that God is in control and that teachers and learners are sincerely seeking to fulfill God's will and purpose in all things.

The purpose of Christian education is to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, to train them in a life of discipleship and to equip them for Christian service in the world today. It is to develop a biblical worldview in believers that will assist them in making life decisions from a Christian perspective.

The purpose, goals and values of Christian education are derived from a theological foundation that is biblically based. Worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and service are all drawn from the Scriptures and are included in any purpose and value statement for Christian education.