

PERSONAL THEOLOGY
AND PHILOSOPHY OF
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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This paper will address my personal theology¹ and current philosophy² regarding Christian Education and its implications for ministry practice. My current philosophy is defined by my existing foundational Christian theology³ which is composed of five theological doctrines to include Bibliology⁴, Theology Proper, Hamartiology, Christology, and Eschatology⁵. Christian Education thus begins with the Word of God as authoritative⁶, is processed by teaching and learning through the power of the Holy Spirit and is aimed at the transformation of the whole person to become mature⁷ disciples of Jesus Christ⁸ for the glory of God⁹.

A Christian definition of *epistemology* is that God is the source of all knowledge and truth. Epistemology then informs my teaching practice by establishing the foundation that God Himself who is truth and cannot lie by His very nature reveals Himself through Scripture establishing that the Bible is authoritative in every matter it reveals. Bibliology then leads both the Christian Educator and student that the Bible can be trusted as the primary source of written truth when engaging in any matter of truth. *Bibliology* then is foundational¹⁰ to all other theological doctrines informing a Christian educators' content, curriculum and teaching methods.

A Christian definition of *metaphysics* is the study of the nature of reality. Metaphysics informs my teaching practice by establishing that everything that exists both seen and unseen is created and sustained by God, who is the source of all knowledge and thus is the supreme reality. Metaphysics is based on the doctrine of *theology proper* which explains the Triune God's nature and attributes who is the source of life's meaning and answering life's most meaningful questions.

A Christian definition of *axiology* is that God determines what is right and wrong. Axiology informs my teaching that the final authority of all moral and ethical issues to include their consequences are decided by God Himself. Axiology is then defined by the theological doctrines of *hamartiology*, *Christology* and *eschatology*. Hamartiology is the theological doctrine of sin, explaining that humanity was created in God's image, who freely chose to disobey God, and as a result lead to humanity's separation from God. Christology is the doctrine of Jesus Christ¹¹ who is the Son of God was born in human form who was sent to reconcile humanity back to God, show us how to live, save humanity from sin and establish His church. Eschatology is the doctrine of end times looking forward to Jesus' return who will bring final judgement and creating a new world under His rulership. The doctrines of *hamartiology*, *Christology* and *eschatology* explains our need for Jesus Christ who is a loving, redeeming Savior sent to save us from sin, death and eternal destruction who wants us in His perfect kingdom, in harmony with God and His creation. A deeper understanding of our sinful state and helpless position because of sin, Jesus' sacrifice to pay our sin debt and looking forward to the end times in light of Jesus' work and promises, affects how we treat one another and our commitment to follow Jesus.

Christian education's purpose is to glorify God through its entire ministerial approach while its objective is toward transformational maturity in Christ.¹² The role of a Christian teacher is to be an example of Christian service, a leader endowed and called by God to teach, a diligent student of Scripture, and a mentor of those placed in their care.¹³ The role of the student is being a balanced learner, disciple, and apprentice in full devotion to Christ.¹⁴ The teacher-student relationship is one of respect, primarily spiritual, formative, and ecclesiastical.¹⁵ The curriculum content must be Christ centered, Scripture focused, reliant on the Holy Spirit and applicable in transformation to be like Christ.¹⁶ The learning environment can be anywhere since the church is not the location but rather the people of God, and learning methods will vary depending on the learning objective.¹⁷ The means of evaluation must be both quantitative and qualitative.¹⁸

In conclusion, Christian Education thus is teaching and learning through the power of the Holy Spirit with the authoritative Word of God at its core which transforms people into mature disciples¹⁹ of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

¹ *Theology* in the context of this paper will generally be defined as a discourse about the triune God of the Bible which broadly covers the entire field of Christian belief. This definition was partially taken from the definition of *theology proper* which is the Doctrine of God according to The Moody Handbook of Theology. See Paul Enns. *The Moody Handbook of Theology: Revised and Expanded*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014). 189.

² According to Britannica.com, philosophy, (from Greek, by way of Latin, philosophia, “love of wisdom”) the rational, abstract, and methodical consideration of reality as a whole or of fundamental dimensions of human existence and experience. Taken from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/philosophy> (accessed April 15, 2025). Everyone has a philosophy stemming from the core beliefs because every human being believes something and makes decisions based on those beliefs, thus everyone has a philosophy whether sensical or not. According to John Chaffee's book, *The Philosopher's Way*, Chaffee lists six traditional/major branches of philosophy along with their major questions to include "Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Political and Social Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Logic". Chaffee acknowledges that these divisions or branches are "somewhat artificial because philosophical issues and modes of inquiry overlap and interrelate". See John Chaffee, *The Philosopher's Way: A Text with Readings: Thinking Critically about Profound Ideas: Third Edition*, (New York: Prentice Hall, 2011). 24-25. My personal philosophy overlaps and interrelates these major branches into three core branches by precedence to include Epistemology, Metaphysics and lastly Axiology.

³ A Christian theology seeks to understand God revealed in the Bible, which provides a distinctly Christian understanding of God's creation, particularly human beings and their condition, God's redemptive work through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit through the church of which Jesus Christ is the head and with Scripture as its starting point. See Millard J. Erickson. *Introducing Christian Doctrine: Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001). 15.

⁴ Bibliology is the study of Scripture (the Bible) which comprises 66 canonical books, and is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). See Gregg Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2016) 38. Scribd. Bibliology includes its canonization and inspiration (2 Tim 3:16) as Norman Geisler asserts that “Christ is the key to the inspiration and canonization of the Scriptures. It was He who confirmed the inspiration of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament, and it was He who promised that the Holy Spirit would direct the apostles into all truth. The fulfillment of that promise resulted in the writing and collection of the New Testament.” Taken from Geisler, Norman and Nix, William, *A General Introduction to the Bible*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986). 142. Bibliology also includes the doctrine of its inerrancy (Ps 119:160). authority, and sufficiency (2 Tim 3:15; Jn 5:39) which provides a framework for understanding the Bible as the Word of God, which we can always trust. Bibliology should lead both the Christian Educator and student that the Bible is reliable, authoritative, and sufficient thus it is powerful in transforming our lives when trusted while accurately shaping our understanding of the world.

⁵ Millard Erickson provides a definitive summary of implications regarding eschatology stating, "The future, eternal condition of the human individual is largely determined by the decisions made in this present life. For the righteous, eternal life in the presence of the Lord will be the result. For the wicked, eternal punishment constituting banishment from the presence of God will be the consequence. The judgment of both the righteous and the wicked will also include degrees of reward and punishment." See Erickson, *Christian Doctrine*, 406.

⁶ Scripture is the Word of God according to 2 Tim 3:16, and 2 Peter 1:16-21 says that Scripture did not come from a person's interpretation but rather from men who spoke from God, carried along by the Holy Spirit.

⁷ See 1 Timothy 3:6.

⁸ Christian Education's aim and purpose is to fulfill the Great Commission to "make disciples", which was commanded by Jesus in Matt. 28:19-20. James Estep Jr says the purpose of Christian Education (CE) is disciple making (a formative, holistic approach to teaching for spiritual growth) through a wide-ranging spectrum of teaching. James Riley Estep Jr., *Christian Education: A History and Heritage*. 2nd Edition. (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2024) 351.

⁹ See Matt. 5:16 and 1 Cor. 10:31.

¹⁰ The Bible does not address everything specifically, however because it is reliable and authoritative, it can be depended on to sufficiently guide in shaping an accurate understanding of the world.

¹¹ Jesus is the head of the Church, the only way of salvation, full of truth and Lord of all.

¹² Estep states "*Education that glorifies God is one that transforms individuals into mature followers of Jesus Christ while the objectives...reflect this God-centeredness in terms of how it endeavors to transform*". James Riley Estep Jr.. *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008) 265.

¹³ See "*the Christian teacher's five roles*" in Estep's *A Theology for Christian Education*, 270-272.

¹⁴ Estep states these three student roles (*learner, disciple, apprentice*) shapes the Christian mind, heart, and service which *moves* (the student) *toward having an increasingly God-centered life in three main ways: (1) diligently studying God's Word; (2) being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ; and (3) becoming an equipped servant of the kingdom.* Estep, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 273-276.

¹⁵ Estep Jr. *A Theology for Christian Education*, 276-278.

¹⁶ Estep Jr. *A Theology for Christian Education*, 279-283.

¹⁷ "Any learning environment...classroom, home, or school, is a microcosm of the church. Instructional methodologies vary depending on the learning objective. Instructional method, whether lecture, discussion, or self-study, must be used to promote the spiritual formation of the student. The method should fit the learning objective, the students (in terms of life need, developmental level, commitment), and the teacher's capability to use it. If these three basic criteria are met, then instruction should be effective and beneficial to all involved." Taken from Estep Jr. *A Theology for Christian Education*, 289-290.

¹⁸ According to Estep the means of evaluation should be both *quantitative and qualitative to include self-evaluation, subordinate evaluation, peer evaluation, and superior evaluation using a numerical rating scale and in words to enable each viewpoint to express how well a program brings glory to God, edifies the body, how biblically and theologically sound it is, and whether or not the program encourages personal development of the individual. Once a comprehensive picture is made clear, the final step in evaluation calls for commendation, change, or at least affirmation by the pastor.* See Estep Jr. *A Theology for Christian Education*, 291-293.

¹⁹ Four imperatives can be observed from Jesus' commands in Matt. 28:19-20 to include: 1. Go make disciples of all nations, 2. baptize the disciples in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 3. teach disciples in a way that both teachers and students observe Jesus commands, and 4. acknowledge Jesus' presence always. The implications are that a Christian educator is to teach by actively "making" a person into a disciple of Jesus Christ, thus to "transform" and merely "inform".