

Why Christian Education? Or: The Myth of Neutrality

“Christian education” is something that confronts us in small ways throughout our Church life – in our offerings, in the occasional sermon illustration, even in small pamphlets at the back of the Church building.

But what is this “Christian education”? And do we support it?

Last week, I had the privilege of leading chapel at Hills Christian School, and I asked the students that same question: Why do you attend a *Christian* school? What’s wrong with “public” school? What makes Christian schooling so important that your parents scrimp and save and sacrifice to enroll you *here*?

But I didn’t just tell them the answer. First, I gave them a related lesson.

I held up a newspaper. Most of you know that I worked for a few years as a newspaper reporter. Like most reporters, I was proud of my work. I tried to be a relatively good writer, was scrupulous about quoting sources accurately, and sought to fairly represent opposing sides of issues.

And I asked: Is this newspaper *neutral*? Can you trust what you read here to *not take sides*?

The answer, of course, is: “Absolutely not.” No matter what the writers and editors might say to the contrary, newspapers are not *neutral* – nor can they be.

Think about it. The writers and editors can only cover so much – so they choose to cover some stories and to ignore others. That’s a judgment as to what’s important ... and what simply isn’t. They decide what goes on the front page and what gets buried on D-9, revealing the degree of importance they attribute to various matters. They choose what to emphasize in the headlines, who to quote, how to characterize people, and what examples to highlight.

There’s nothing *neutral* about that process. It all rests on – and reflects – a series of judgments about the events in the newspaper’s community.

The same is true of television news ... radio news ... and even *textbooks*.

In processing and conveying information, “neutrality” is a myth.

And when it comes to educating our children, that fact needs to play a *significant* role in the choices we make.

Jesus said: “He who is not with me is against me” (Matt. 12:30). He also said that those whose hearts are evil cannot speak what is good, because their hearts determine the character of their words (Matt. 12:33-37).

Addressing the same truth from a different direction, Paul said *all men* understand that God *is* and that God is *all-powerful*. However, they “suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18). He adds, “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools” by turning aside from the knowledge of God.

That’s the world in which we live: a world filled with those who hate God, deny His existence, and speak according to the depravity of their hearts.

There is no neutrality. Thus Paul warned the Church in Colosse against those who would “deceive [them] by fine-sounding arguments” (2:4). The world is filled with those who despise God, so the Church must “see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

This false *philosophy* – this way of *thinking* and *believing* which appeals to human tradition and the principles of the world, rather than resting on Christ – where do we find it more *abundantly* than in an educational system which will not acknowledge Christ or appeal to Scripture? Where do we find it more *truly* than in a system that studies the creation without reference to the Creator, and which teaches children to search for truth apart from Him who *is* truth (John 14:6) and the Word which sanctifies us in the truth (John 17:17)?

Instead of this, our children need to learn that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). They must be taught to “trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6).

And they cannot learn that in a school where teachers are legally prohibited from opening a Bible and revealing the Truth.

Of course, that leaves some questions unanswered.

- ✓ Must we use Christian day schools? Or can we achieve a Christ-centered education from homeschooling?
- ✓ What about Christian schooling for elementary children, followed by public school for mature high school students?
- ✓ How about colleges? Might a “secular” college be a viable option for discerning Christians – or not?

But those are questions about *application*. The *principle* upon which we must focus is this: Christ calls us to *begin* our search for knowledge with the fear of the Lord. Or as Paul puts it: “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Col. 2:6-7).

That requires confessing Christ in every aspect of the education we give to our children. And *that* is why Christian schooling is such an important emphasis of the Church.