



Principle Approach Education

DESIGNING A CURRICULUM FOR A CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION

A CURRICULUM FOR A CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION BEGINS WITH GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF MAN AND GOVERNMENT

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There are three important educational definitions to be dealt with when we consider how to restore the quality of life which supports the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are: Christian, Civilization and Curriculum.

If we look to Noah Webster for definitions we find ourselves in agreement with his sense of these words.

CHRISTIAN: A believer in the religion of Christ. A real disciple of Christ. One who believes in the truth of the Christian religion, and studies to follow the example and obey the precepts of Christ.

CIVILIZATION: The act of civilizing, or the state of being civilized; the state of being refined in manners, from the grossness of savage life, and improved in arts and learning.

John Locke, the Christian philosopher of the American Revolution, indicated that man is always under the government of God, even when he is in “a state of nature.” Thus a Christian civilization begins with the Christian idea of man and government. It will thus incorporate that sense of government that was apparent among the churches of the first century—namely that because they were local, self-governing bodies, they were in fact little republics, all decisions being made by the congregation. This is the beginning of constitutional government.

What are the constituents of constitutional liberty in a Christian civilization? We believe that these must include first, the Christian home where the foundations of Christian character and government are laid. Secondly, families form churches, and here the Republic is sustained and supported by careful instruction in God’s principles and precepts. Thirdly, in order “to lay Christ at the bottom of all sound knowledge and learning,” institutions of learning and colleges and universities, must be established in order to complete the education of future magistrates and ministers—and all leaders in a Christian Constitutional Republic—the essence of a Christian civilization.



WHAT IS A CURRICULUM?

CURRICULUM: [The origin of the word from the Latin is a racecourse.] b. A second meaning: The whole body of courses offered in an educational institution, or by a department.

While the term “curriculum” is not defined in Noah Webster’s 1828 first American Christian Dictionary, the word “course” is.

Course, n. “A methodical series, applied to the arts or sciences; a systemized order of principles in arts or sciences, for illustration or instruction. We say, the author has completed a course of principles or of lectures in philosophy. Also, the order pursued by a student; as, he has completed a course of studies in law or physics.”

The external or first part refers to the order of a body of knowledge. The internal aspect of curriculum is: “Manner of proceeding; way of life or conduct; deportment; series of actions.” These two aspects, internal and external, indicate that a curriculum is both the body of knowledge taught and the means, or method, of teaching. The goal is to cause an effective growth in the Christian character of the students.

The Principle Approach® is a Biblical manner of teaching and learning, of Christian living. Thus a curriculum which includes a number of courses teaching Biblical principles can indeed be consistent with Paul’s statement in Acts 20:24, in which he envisioned his life work as a runner on a racecourse. He prayed, “that I might finish my course with joy.”

THE TEACHER AND CURRICULUM

Some of the first questions newly inspired Christian teachers and home schooling parents ask when introduced to teaching and learning America’s Christian history, literature, science, and all the classical subjects of the Principle Approach, are: “What will I teach? Is there a prepared curriculum? Do I not use any texts except the major Christian History volumes?” Here are some answers to these important questions.

Twenty-five years ago no curricula had been developed for the Christian History program. Teachers who had long been educated to use texts and workbooks developed by “experts” in each field, found themselves released from what might be termed ‘their Egyptian bondage’ to professional textbook curriculum writers, but still in the wilderness of not knowing how to proceed. Few teachers, especially in the elementary grades, had mastered any subjects which they felt they could organize and develop on their own.

Principle Approach schools believe that teachers need to be nurtured and gently led before they are ready or able to develop courses of study on their own. In the early years of the Principle Approach, the first courses of study were written by enterprising teachers with patience and persistence, providing models and encouragement for other teachers to do their own research and writing. These courses of study are gradually being published for the field.



The StoneBridge Art Guide was the first curriculum guide to be published. It is unique and reflects the efforts of an individual teacher to re-think the field of art as it appears on the Chain of Christianity® moving Westward with greater individual liberty and productivity. This course of study also represents the creativity of a Master Teacher seeking to inspire students to expand and express their own talents as they study the works of the great masters of painting.

The effort to free the teacher from programmed curricula in which they have made no contribution, has taken time. Through careful education in the Principle Approach® teachers are encouraged to research the subjects they will teach. As they learn the relationship of the Biblical principles of government upon which America was founded, and as they understand that the character of a Christian self-governing people depends upon helping students to become more productive in reading, researching, reasoning, and writing, teachers become more creative in their teaching and learning. With some basic guidelines in curriculum writing and with inspired leadership in learning, teachers become more and more confident of following the Lord's leading in their own research and writing.

Today there are a number of ministries who have developed curricula based upon the Biblical principles of America's Christian History. However, as teachers and students become inspired and empowered to research those fields of learning that especially interest them, they are reading and writing more and more of their own curricula. We are always happy to see the results of these individual studies, and at the same time, encouraged to pursue the Lord's leading in our own study-lives.

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IS A PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT

A philosophy of education is a philosophy of government. It determines the character of the next generation and identifies in its teachers and students those qualities of character which will produce a Christian Republic. In a Christian civilization, therefore, curriculum begins by recognizing the effect of the Christian idea of man and government on how the subject is researched and taught, and how it might affect the character of its students.

Second, the providential history of our nation becomes an intricate part of our curriculum as it is identified with the westward course of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the appearing of our Christian Constitutional Republic. Subjects are taught in the light of their relationship to this appearing.

As we have discussed, one's philosophy, or life-convictions, play an important role in choice of curriculum and how one teaches God's Truths through the subjects. We are endeavoring to reach students—at their heart and soul levels first—then at their mind and vision levels. This means we are working with the Lord in shaping character. If we know a Providential God—beginning in our own lives—and then in the life of nations—we are comfortable with recognizing the Bible as the source of Truth and Knowledge. And if we desire to serve and glorify Jesus Christ, we do not want to be forced into the bondage of curriculum standards which cancel out Christian conviction and mock God.



The Principle Approach® identifies those foundational Biblical truths which moved our Founding Generations to produce, under God’s guidance, the American Christian Constitutional Republic. As we have indicated, each subject formed a link in the Chain of Christianity® as it moved westward to lands of liberty.

HISTORY OF CURRICULUM

Curriculum began with creation and the first lessons God created for Adam—learning obedience and its consequences, learning dominion, learning nature, work and relationships. Just as teaching and learning are built into the fabric of the human nature and soul and are as natural as eating or laughing when practiced masterfully, curriculum is common-sense, natural, inspiring, practical and effective when set upon Truth—Biblical principles.

There have been many courses of study for young learners created by teachers throughout the ages—only one was ever written in stone and later written upon the tender hearts of men, the Ten Commandments of God’s eternal, essential law. All other proposed curricula came out of time and space needs of human society. It seems appropriate to examine some curricula that served a particular people concerned for a Christian civilization in the past as we consider our curriculum needs for today. The first is the Boston Latin School.

The spirit of the mission of the Boston Latin School is represented in this quote from an address of one of the later masters, Phillips Brooks, 1881:

One wonders . . . what is to be taught here in the years to come. He is sure that the books will change, that the sciences will change, that new studies will be developed, that new methods of interpretation will be discovered, that new kingdoms of the infinite knowledge are to be opened to the discerning eye of man, in the years that are to come. He knows it is impossible for any man to say what will be taught in these halls a hundred years hence; but yet, with that unknown development he is in deep sympathy, because he knows that the boys of a hundred years hence, like the boys of to-day, will be taught here to be faithful to the deep purposes of knowledge, will be trained to conscientious study, to the love of knowledge, to justice and generosity, to respect for themselves, and obedience to authority, and honor for man, and reverence for God.¹

The definite curriculum of this school that helped shape the leadership of our founding generation was not recorded until the 18th century, but references from the period tell us that the classics and the elementary subjects of reading, writing, cyphering, and spelling were taught at the school with a view to the entering requirements of Harvard College. An account of the course of study at the Latin School from 1766 to 1773 has been recorded by the Reverend Jonathan Homer:



Entered Lovell's school at seven years . . .

We studied Latin from 8 o'clock till 11, and from 1 till dark . . . The course of study was, grammar; Esop, with a translation; Clarke's Introduction to writing Latin; Eutropius, with a translation; Corderius; Ovid's Metamorphoses; Virgil's Georgics; Aeneid; Caesar; Cicero. In the sixth year I began Greek, and for the first time attempted English composition, by translating Caesar's Commentaries. The master allowed us to read poetical translations, such as Trappe's and Dryden's Virgil. I was half way through Virgil when I began Greek with Ward's Greek Grammar.

After Cheever's Latin Accidence, we took Ward's Lily's Latin Grammar. After the Greek Grammar, we read the Greek Testament, and were allowed to use Beza's Latin Translation. Then came Homer's Iliad, five or six books, using Clarke's Translation with notes, and this was all my Greek education at school. Then we took Horace, and composed Latin verses, using the Gradus ad Parnassum.

I entered college at the age of fourteen years and three months, and was equal in Latin and Greek to the best in the senior class. Xenophon and Sallust were the only books used in college that I had not studied.²

The success of the Boston Latin School was due largely to the character and teaching of its most famous teacher, Ezekiel Cheever, who taught at the school for 37 years. Living to the age of 92, he completed 70 years of teaching in England and America. One of his most illustrious pupils, Cotton Mather, in his tribute to his master wrote in his rhymed essay:

His Work he Lov'd: Oh! had we done the same!
 Our Play-dayes still to him ungrateful came . . .
 Grammar he taught, which 'twas his work to do:
 But he would Hagar have her place to know.
 The Bible is the Sacred Grammar, where The Rules of speaking well, contained are.
 He taught us Lilly, and he Gospel taught;
 And us poor Children to our Saviour brought . . .
 With Cato's he to us the Higher gave
 Lessons of JESUS, that our Souls do save . . .
 How much he did to make us Wise and Good;
 And with what Prayers, his work he did conclude.
 Concern'd that when from him we Learning had,
 It might not Armed Wickedness be made! ³



The Founding Fathers and Mothers of our country were very concerned about the education of their posterity—their own children and the youth who would some day be the leaders of the country. They read Hannah More’s *Hints on the Education of a Young Princess* with relish. They made plans and proposals of their own. Jefferson and Franklin especially, took special steps to incorporate their ideas into the curricula of our nation’s education. We quote the concluding statement from that essay by Benjamin Franklin, one of America’s most remarkable Founding Fathers:

The Idea of what is true Merit, should also be often presented to Youth, explain’d and impress’d on their Minds, as consisting in an Inclination join’d with an Ability to serve Mankind, one’s Country, Friends and Family; which Ability is (with the Blessing of God) to be acquir’d or greatly encreas’d by true Learning; and should indeed be the great Aim and the End of all Learning . . .

Is To have in View the Glory and Service of God, as some express themselves, is only the same Thing in other Words. For Doing Good to Men is the only Service of God in our Power; and to imitate his Beneficence is to glorify him. Hence Milton says, “The End of Learning is to repair the Ruins of our first Parents, by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our Souls of true Virtue.⁴

The achievement of a Constitutional Republic was the result of 150 years of superior Bible reasoning and writing. America’s state papers astounded Europe before the American Revolution. After the establishment of our Constitution, we blossomed in the arts and sciences, and our ministers of the gospel led the way in all fields. We had superior education.

When Noah Webster produced his first little Dictionary in 1807, *The Compendious Dictionary*, for the American people, he included all kinds of information of an encyclopedic nature: tables of moneys, weights and measures, the divisions of times among the nations, an official list of post offices in the United States, and the values of exports, as well as “new and interesting chronological tables of remarkable events and discoveries.” Webster characterized the American trait of being interested in everything, as an aspect of the American freedom to explore all fields of knowledge, being convinced that any field was open to individual opportunity.

A curriculum for a Christian civilization must include the opportunities for individual participation in every possible field of human endeavor. It is the Christian idea of man expressed governmentally in life, liberty, productivity “to the glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith.”

¹ Holmes, Pauline, M.A., *A Tercentenary History of the Boston Public Latin School 1635 1935*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1935), p. 252.

² *Ibid.*, p. 264.

³ Cotton Mather’s *Tribute to Ezekiel Cheever: From the Funeral Sermon, 1708*, Old South Leaflet, No. 177. Published by The Directors of the Old South Work, Old South Meeting-house, Boston, Mass., pp. 26–27.

⁴ Franklin, Benjamin, *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*, from Benjamin Franklin: Writings, The Library of America – 37. Published by Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., New York (1987), p. 342.