

TRUTH AND EDUCATION IN A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

Virgil Warren, PhD

At the trial of Jesus, Pilate remarked, “*What is truth?*” Jesus had just explained that he came into the world to “*bear witness to the truth.*” Interestingly, the truth issue does occupy the central reason for the personal incarnation of God into the world of human persons. It establishes the agenda for the followers of Christ, for “education that is Christian,” and for ministry preparation through an education process. As goes the view of truth, so goes the nature of education and the process of preparing for that education of the world that is called evangelism.

There are two views of truth: what works and what is. The first is the pragmatic view; the second is the correspondence view. Although the two concepts are related, Christians believe that, in speaking about the truth, what we say must correspond to what is. That contrasts with what is “truth for me” (the “existential” view of “truth”). As far as the truth itself is concerned, Christianity further emphasizes the need to see “what is” as ultimately personal—not god, but God. “God” refers to where everything else originates, where everything else eventually leads to, what everything else depends on, what controls the rest, what gives unity to the whole. In the Christian faith, all these ways of looking at ultimate reality are in a personal context.

The whole creation needs to be understood in relation to personal matters, not because creation is itself personal, but because it came from person, is sustained by person, and is directed by person. The faith does not personify the universe; it personalizes it. Heavenly bodies are not gods, for example, nor do they represent gods; but the stars do declare the glory of a personal God because a personal God created them. Nature is not an aspect of God or an emanation from him, but the cosmos did originate from him.

Genesis 1 personalizes the heavens and the earth by noting that God created them and that the Spirit of God was moving on the face of the water (1:2). Personal presence was there. Moreover, “*God said, ‘Let there be . . .’*” (1:3, *etc.*). God spoke the world into existence; it came from an act of choice. Communication and volition are personal characteristics. The heavens and the earth that now exist are held together by a person (Colossians 1:15-17). Consequently, he was before it; God was before creation; he sustains creation. Personhood precedes, creates, sustains, and gives purpose to the universe.

Creation, then, is never to be mentally abstracted from its personal Creator. It cannot be fully appreciated for what it is by being viewed as something in itself—discretely, by being regarded as an ultimate frame of reference, or by being subsumed under science. Otherwise, there is loss of meaning, erosion of the religious, destruction of truth.

Something “*lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen*”: the personal touch. Personalizing the heavens makes them like a hand-knit sweater from someone you love in contrast to something made by a machine and bought at a store. Christianity has personalism/interpersonalism as its worldview.

All truth must be regarded as God’s truth. It must comprise a unified field of knowledge; otherwise, people are “*always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth*” that means anything. We arrive at no satisfying knowledge without him who is the truth, the way, and the light. If we know the Truth, he makes us free. Knowledge is active; truth is personal; freedom is relational. Actively knowing him as a person allows us to move freely by putting us in proper relationship with all reality.

Every perversion of truth has involved some kind of shift away from ultimate reality as personal. Among other things, Romans 1 indicts mankind for reducing the character of God to something less than personal. Modern materialistic evolution provides one more example of the ongoing cycle of revelation followed by perversion. Likewise, every perversion of Christianity over the last twenty centuries has been some kind of departure from its personal center.

The implications of these things for formal ministerial education seem obvious. We cannot teach everything, but we can promote the personalized worldview within which all further learning must occur.

More specifically, we attempt to equip people with a conscious awareness of the central truth about truth: grace and truth have come through Christ. A personalized understanding of truth has implications for presenting truth: “*speaking the truth in love*,” because love summarizes the positive manner of relationship between persons.

We must center educational philosophy and practice on the personal character of truth and the interpersonal manner of presenting truth.