Evangelical Review of Theology

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

Volume 39 · Number 2 · April 2015

Articles and book reviews reflecting global evangelical theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith

Published by

Paternoster:
thinking faith

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

for
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

ERT (2015) 39:2, 100-112

Education and Learning in Christian Perspective

Thomas Schirrmacher

I The Bible and Holistic Education

The question of education[1] is inseparably bound up with the central meaning of the written Word of God for Jesus' church. The particular New Testament text which most clearly teaches the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures unmistakeably describes the educational mandate of the Bible: 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting [or teaching] and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Tim 3:16-17). The verses prior to the ones just quoted (2 Tim 3:14-15) address the practical task of educating the next generation.

The Old Testament law, in its own name for itself, had already significantly addressed the need for education. This is seen in the fact that the Hebrew word for 'law', which is *torah*, actually means instruction. God instructs people through his Word and his law. This Old Testament theme is developed in the New Testament, where we are told that the law was designed to be a tutor [Greek: paidagogos] to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24).

Is education as described in the Bible only a matter of conveying biblical knowledge? Does it have to do only with educating character and spiritual qualities? Is it a matter of education only in the intellectual sense?

No, it has to do with all these things simultaneously. That is to say, it has to do with comprehensive, holistic formation and education, including all the spheres of life, and with making an individual 'thoroughly equipped for *every* good work' (emphasis added). This holistic orientation to education is seen in both the Old Testament *torah* and

1 This essay was originally in the German language in which the terminology for education (usually school-oriented) and child rearing (usually family-oriented) are more closely linked with each other than is usually the case in English terminology. In this light, the author perceives close links between the theological and ethical principles of parenting and the principles of schooling. Ed.

Thomas Schirrmacher *(Dr. theol. Dr. phil.), Executive Chair of the WEA Theological Commission, is Professor for Sociology of Religion at the University of Oradea, Romania, Professor of Ethics, Martin Bucer Seminary, Bonn, and Director of the WEA International Institute for Religious Freedom. He is the author of many books and articles. This article was translated by Richard McClary and revised by Thomas K. Johnson.*

in the New Testament description of God's purposes in giving us the scriptures. This holistic orientation should influence even how we define what theology is. John Frame appropriately defines theology as 'the application of the Word of God by persons to *all* areas of life' (emphasis added).[2]

Many Christians have a divided faith. While the Bible is responsible for internal, religious questions, varying standards are followed in questions relating to commerce, education, politics, or church policy. As fathers in the home some may live according to other values than those they pursue as representatives in parliament; as business men some may live according to other values than they pursue as church elders. Christians all too often have separated their knowledge of character, their knowledge of ethics, and their doctrine from each other.

What is so often asked for today, at least in the area of education, is a comprehensive, holistic view of life and the world—precisely what is often missing. Christian *parents,* at least in many cases when it comes to practice, educate the character of the child, while the *church* teaches them biblical knowledge, and the *school* conveys learning. Too seldom do we ask if these three entities educate according to different standards and to what extent this is helpful for the child.

In the Bible the comprehensive responsibility for education lies with the parents. They are responsible for teaching the children biblical knowledge, while the church's educational programs can be only a supplement. Parents are to provide education to their children and to deal responsibly with this, in such a manner that teachers are always only an extended arm, mediating knowledge on behalf of the parents.

Here are some examples of what is to be learned

> Deuteronomy 31: 12: '… so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law'.
>
> Proverbs 1:2: '… for attaining [or learning] wisdom and discipline …'
>
> Proverbs 15:33: '… teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honour'.
>
> Isaiah 26:9: '… learn righteousness.'
>
> Isaiah 32:4: '… know and understand.'
>
> Titus 3:14: '… learn to devote themselves to doing what is good …'

In the Bible the words know, learn, understand, and teach are all terms which include one's intellectual side as well as the ability to practise correctly what has been learned.[3] This becomes particularly clear from the fact that the word 'know' can be used also to designate the consummation of marriage (Gen 4:1,17,25; 19:8; 24:16; 1 Kgs 1:4; Mt 1:25).[4] At this point, knowing comprises equally intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects.

2 John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), 81.

3 Comp. Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 32-34.

4 Also according to Friso Melzer, *Das Wort in den Wörtern* (Gießen: Brunnen, 1990²), 112-113.

John M. Frame has shown that knowing in the Bible always expresses a covenantal relationship; for that reason, knowing God not only includes knowing something about God but also having a personal relationship with him and following him.[5] In the Bible, knowledge is always both holistic and relational.

Can an individual, however, truly educate a child with only a Bible in his hand? Of course the answer is no, for the Bible does not say anything about many typical modern issues facing us. The Bible gives us the divine sense and the foundational orientation of educating a child, but nowhere does it go into detail about the specifics of a child's education. In the same way, the Bible prescribes an ethical framework but does not prescribe exactly how to live life.

Parents should bring up children 'in the training and instruction of the Lord' (Eph 6:4). They should make God and his Word dear to them (2 Tim 3:14-17) and prepare them to live a life on their own under God's authority within the order of creation. However, underneath this basic orientation there are only isolated commandments and pointers relating to the education of children. Christian parents are also called upon to implement this basic orientation toward education in daily life. In order to do this, they revert to the experience of past generations (tradition) as well as to advice and studies in the present, and they utilize their God-given talents in order to find the best possible path for their children.

For example, it is God's desire and command that every individual utilize his God-given abilities and gifts (Ex 31:1-6; 35:30-35; 1 Pet 4:11). But how should parents put this into practice other than by utilizing their reason and by observing and learning from others how to find out which talents and preferences their children have and then encouraging, challenging, and accompanying their children in them?

I consider child-rearing to be an example of a certain authorization of the so-called 'natural law'—admittedly valid only in a relative and mitigated sense. With that said, child-rearing provides an authorized location for a natural ethic as well as for a manner of situational or experiential ethic.[6] If the basic biblical mandate for child-rearing is accepted, parents will simply learn much from the 'nature' of things.

The growth and physical and spiritual development of a child provide many decisions to consider, leading parents to compare their children with others' children—even if this cannot be done completely. And many dimensions of child development can be accurately described by people who are not Christians, so that it is proper for Christian parents to take counsel from such people, even while we acknowledge that their descriptions of child development may be influenced by worldviews we do not accept.

The Old Testament book of Proverbs is an example of a large educa-

5 Frame, *Doctrine*, 40-49.

6 For a more detailed explanation, see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Leadership and Ethical Responsibility: The Three Aspects of Every Decision,* The WEA Global Issues Series, vol. 13, Bonn (Germany), 2013. Online: http://www.bucer.org/resources/details/leadership-and-ethical-responsibility.html

tional book in the Bible (e.g., Prov 4:1-9). It is not by chance that it draws from the wisdom of many cultures, not only from the earlier parts of the Bible or other Hebrew sources. Comprehensive education found there includes the ability to survive independently in everyday life. This is comprised of work, forethought, working for peace, and bringing about justice. Everything, however, leads back to this point of departure: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge …' (Prov 1:7).

II Between the Spirit of the Age and Evangelical Pharisees

Are Christian child-rearing and ethics conservative or progressive? Christianity is very conservative when it comes to the preservation of God's creation ordinances, but it is very progressive and revolutionary when it comes to surmounting false traditions and unjust regulations which stand against God's Word, wrongly lay claim to be God's commands, and enslave people. A pure conservatism to appease the older generation is as foreign to the Bible as is change in order to satisfy the younger generation.

Christians should be neither automatically conservative nor automatically progressive but should attempt to pursue education and child-rearing from a biblical perspective. This means they should not try to overcome the spirit of our age with the spirit of a previous age and should not try to overcome the spirit of a previous age with the spirit of this age. Following Romans 12:2, they know that only the person who is ready and willing for constant growth through the renewal of the mind by means of continuing examination of the will of God is set free from the scheme of any age: 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

Justice in the godly sense in society has to be maintained at any cost; injustice has to be combated and eliminated, regardless of whether this is perceived to be conservative and outmoded or progressive and subversive. The biblical picture of lifelong monogamy is perceived in Germany today to be backward-looking and conservative, and in Saudi Arabia it can be charged that it would destroy an established thousand-year culture in a revolutionary way.

Whoever wants to practise Christian ethics based on the Bible today cannot let it be defined according to a pattern that is conservative or progressive, as one directed toward restoration or revolution, as one oriented toward the past or the future. Christian ethics cannot allow itself to be grist for the mill between today's millstones of the spirit of the age and the millstone of Evangelical Pharisees. To emphasize the point: Christians cannot conquer today's spirit of the age with yesterday's spirit of the age, nor *vice versa*!

We can take as an example the effects on education of the so called '1968' student revolt in Germany, along with similar events at that time in other western countries. Not everything prior to that time was good, but not everything before that time was bad. Conservative Christians tend to romanticize earlier times, and progressive Christians tend to demonize those same earlier times. However, if we

think in terms of the Bible we cannot allow ourselves to be pressed into such a mould. At those points where the 1968 student revolt toppled immoral authorities or brought about the collapse of bourgeois facades, Christians should be grateful. At those points where biblical values were destroyed, Christians should have regrets.

To be more specific, take the concrete example of anti-authoritarian education. Anti-authoritarian education was taken *ad absurdum* by some who were influenced by the ideas of '1968', but today it is rarely practised in a comprehensive manner. There are still many who give lip service to the ideology of the student revolt, but in the realities of family life, kindergartens, schools, and professional life, the values now promoted are the abilities to co-exist, to integrate, and to exercise self-discipline, lest one receive a bad evaluation. Because Christians believe in creation, in which God, the highest authority, established the state and parents as secondary authorities, they have never been able to straightforwardly endorse anti-authoritarian child-rearing and education. And Christians should not be surprised that social realities have led many to step back from fully implementing the ideas of '1968'.

However, does that automatically mean that what was previously practised as authoritarian child-rearing was entirely correct with nothing to improve? Was the penchant for draconian punishment and the use of force sometimes unbridled? Was parental authority sometimes viewed as unlimited, without judging whether it served the goal of the well-being and the growing self-responsibility of the child? And were children all too often treated according to fixed formulas without taking their individual differences into account?

Besides the negative side effects, has it not also been a benefit of modern pedagogy that every child is seen as an individual and that education is to be adjusted to every child? Is it not also a benefit that we today treat children in a manner corresponding more to their age, specifically calibrating educational material according to their stage of development, and not just offering doctored-up, adult-oriented material?

Apart from that, one has to note that on the side of evangelicals, the word authority is used often. However, there are seldom explanations of what authority actually means when taken in the context of the Bible. In spite of a lack of good sources, Hans-Georg Wünch has analysed the concept of 'authority in the Christian school'[7] as commonly seen in the current Christian school movements. Wünch has shown that evangelical schools, as they often call themselves, are shaped by modern anti-authoritarian pedagogy to a much larger degree than they are often aware. They have also achieved only very little in the way of justifying a biblical-theological sense of their understanding of Christian pedagogy and biblical authority.

Wünch surely differentiates between schools at this point, but that changes little in relationship to the overall result. Wünch shows how much can be said with the Bible as the *norma normans* as far as authority is con-

7 Hans-Georg Wünch, *Autorität in der christlichen Schule* (Bonn: VKW, 1995); (ET *Authority in the Christian School).*

cerned[8] and how little of this has been developed and assimilated by Evangelical schools. Looking at this question more than 15 years later, there is nothing which has essentially changed with respect to this situation.

Paul makes it clear in two passages that child-rearing does not give parents *carte blanche*. Rather, authority is for the child's benefit, and will be measured against a future goal. Here are the two passages:

> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4).
>
> Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged (Col 3:21).

How is it that so often in Christian circles there is talk of necessary obedience on the part of children, but so seldom mention of the warning against hard-hearted education which provokes children to rebellion (Eph 6:4) or takes away their courage to live (Col 3:21)?

Consideration for the well-being of the one to be educated is recognized in the Bible as the central motivation for education (Prov 3:12; 1 Thess 2:7-12).[9] Child-rearing and education are not primarily about punishment. Rather, light punishments (in contrast with the punishments the state can impose) are permissible and appropriate only if they are embedded in what is essentially a loving relationship and are avoidable by the parents' having set up sensible and understandable rules beforehand.

The necessity of correction and punishment is justified in many biblical texts by saying that the child has evil possibilities or malicious plans or is otherwise in some manner a threat to himself because of negative developments (e.g., Prov 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15). The teaching of original sin is of great significance for Christian pedagogy. If children are evil from the time they are small (Gen 8:21, Ps 51:5), and sin, as in Sodom and Israel, can be committed by 'young and old' and by 'the least to the greatest' (Gen 19:11; Jer 8:10), it is also appropriate to address the problem of evil inside a child.

However, it is too one-sided when Christian child-rearing emphasizes only this aspect, as correct as it might be. Authority never exists for its own sake. Rather, it is always given by God and is to be measured against the good for which God has given it. And is it not God the Creator who has made children so diverse and who has endowed them with the most various gifts and abilities?

Judeo-Christian anthropology (the understanding of human nature) exists in a certain tension. On the one hand, humankind is created as the image of God and endowed by God with unbelievable abilities and diversity. On the other hand, sinful humankind has turned from God and is capable of unbelievably evil thoughts and actions.[10]

8 Wünch, *Autorität in der christlichen Schule,* 186-255.

9 For details, see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Moderne Väter* (Holzgerlingen/Stuttgart: SCM Hänssler, 2009), 64-72.

10 This sinful or evil direction within human nature must be addressed both by limitation/restraint and by forgiveness/grace, both by law and by the gospel.

III Complementary Educational Goals

Corresponding to this two-sided understanding of human nature, there are two complementary sets of educational goals which, in our view, belong together, even though some have separated these goals. On the one hand, education and child rearing should develop the self-sufficiency and God-given potential of the individual; on the other hand, education should develop the integration and obedience of the individual into society, restraining sin. Christian instructional method should implement a thoroughgoing complementarity of principles.

Children, in both family and school, are viewed as images of God needing direction and encouragement so that the abilities they have been given by God can unfold and be fully utilized. These are abilities which are artistic and literary as well as interpersonal. Even a self-reliant personality under the Creator as the goal of child-rearing and education is not an end in itself. Rather, the limited goal of unfolding the talents of the individual has a further goal, not only responsibility for oneself but also for other people, as well as for the development of the created potential of society.[11]

Children, in both family and school, are likewise seen as people who, owing to sin, no longer live according to their original God-given purpose and design. For that reason, they need to be trained away from evil. This includes limits and punishments as much as it does counselling, assistance, and gracious pastoral care. Christianity is very self-critical, as well as very critical and mistrustful of sinful human nature. It assumes that parents and teachers as well as those entrusted to their care, not only allow themselves the occasional blunder now and then, but rather, in normal everyday life, every individual is characterized by egoism which injures the self and others.[12]

All too often, authoritarian child-rearing has lost sight of the fact that each child is a distinct and unique personality created by God and that the goal of every form of child-rearing is the healthy unfolding of abilities into independence as a member of a community. Authoritarian child-rearing has sometimes placed the holder of the office in an absolute position without measuring him against the purpose for which he received his authority. No wonder that without God man is ostensibly the final authority.

Authoritarian child-rearing assumes that if one has driven away or restrained evil, something good has been achieved. Authoritarian child-rearing too often became an end in itself, where the father had a right to be served after a strenuous day and obedience had value in itself. This is the only way to explain the fact that the army has been praised as the 'school of the nation', even with its oft brutalizing tendencies.

11 This part of our philosophy of education corresponds with the part of our political philosophy in which we emphasize human rights and human dignity.

12 This part of our educational philosophy corresponds with the part of our political philosophy where we talk about provisions for accountability for those who rule via a separation of powers so that even government officials can be indicted by another branch of government.

The 1968 generation built upon an opposite and extreme educational theory arising from belief in the good in humanity, thinking this goodness would develop on its own. All that had to be done was not to stand in its way and to get all authorities out of the way. Suddenly authority itself was perceived as evil, and setting limits no longer served to protect against what was wrong or to learn the good and the useful. Authority was described as something sinister. The old insight of experience had been lost, that whoever is raised in a loving, good, and intensive manner often becomes a more self-confident person with backbone, whereas little supervision in childhood can lead to unsure and easily manipulated adults.

Christian child-rearing and education should consciously build upon a set of significant complementarities: law and grace, encouragement and boundaries, self-sufficiency and leadership belong together. Whoever sees only the positive side as the scheme education should follow will be brutally overrun by evil in child-rearing (and likewise in school). Whoever sees only the negative side declares child-rearing and punishment to be ends in themselves and loses sight of the goal.

Christian educators in the family, school, and elsewhere have the opportunity to practise the balance and complementarity of encouragement and demands, of freedom and limits, of self-sufficiency and integration/submission, and of consolation and admonishment.

I am convinced that biblical complementarity is appealing for all people, whether Christians or not. We all know how unpleasant it is either to have authorities who are bitterly hard or who never take a stand. We know we did not want parents who always said no or parents who always said yes. We know that our children expect real authority from us, as well as real personal love and support. We can love neither the harsh sergeant nor the dish rag. And, as a Christian, I am of the opinion that God created us in this way.

IV The Use of Reason

Our starting point has been the Bible, therefore faith, but we must also take up the role of reason. However, our discussion of faith and reason is not that of the secular world in which reason, often under the influence of a secular ideology, is seen as evaluating faith-based or Bible-based truth claims. Rather, our discussion of reason starts within the Bible. And in the New Testament a Christian is taught to be consciously and willingly a thinking individual.[13] It is impossible to list all the terms and texts found in the New Testament in which thinking is described as indispensable for living out the life of faith. Christians know, discern, learn, teach, question, answer, ask for wisdom and prudence, understand, grasp, test, and declare.[14]

In the Old Testament, the God-fear-

13 For details, see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Wie erkenne ich den Willen Gottes* (Nürnberg: VTR, 2001), 15-134; Schirrmacher, *Leadership and Ethical Responsibility*, 21-29; John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life* (2nd edition, Wheaton: IVP, 2007).

14 Compare the good overview by Otto Michel, 'Vom Denkakt des Paulus', 211-213 in Michel, *Dienst am Wort: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986).

ing individual is a person who reflects on life, who does not thoughtlessly live for the moment. There is an emphasis on the use of reason before God. This is repeatedly emphasized in the book of Proverbs. For example when the topic of speaking is addressed: 'The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil' (Prov 15:28). Self-control, which both the Old and New Testaments extol, has to do with not following one's impulses but first thinking and then acting. 'A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps' (Prov 14:15).

For that reason, Paul calls upon Christians, 'Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults' (1 Cor 14:20). Indeed, in the Bible it is a matter of submitting all thought to God in obedience (2 Cor 10:3-6). However, that does not mean that one thinks less. Rather, the fact is that one reflects more.

V Schools, the School System, and Home Schooling

European Pietistic Christians in centuries past, along with evangelical Christians worldwide, have always been involved in a wide variety of school systems. And they have given a significant impetus in the whole range of school systems. Committed Christians have always been active as teachers at state schools, while they have also repeatedly started new private schools using completely different approaches. They have also been active around the world in the home schooling movement for several different reasons. Even if these ways can be viewed as parallel paths for Evangelicals around the world, indeed leading to intense discussion among themselves, there are still some common denominators of evangelical involvement:

1. The great significance of well-thought-out and comprehensive child-rearing, i.e., of immense commitment to the next generation.
2. The great significance which is attributed to self-sufficiency and religious freedom for the next generation operates on the assumption that a real Christian is an individual who can decide for oneself at a mature age.[15] For that reason, there is no movement which emphasizes religious freedom as strongly as does Evangelicalism because it begins with one's own children.
3. The considerable importance which is attributed to parental responsibility and which, in relation to the state, comprises an extended and controlling arm rather than any entity which stands over it.
4. A holistic view of child-rearing and education not divided into knowledge, character, and becoming self-reliant. Rather, Evangelical education includes all aspects of life.

VI Conservative Values Return

In the meantime, the '1968' student up-

15 This is true and this is expressed in the teaching of adult baptism or in emphasizing the idea of confirmation introduced by Martin Bucer as the personal confirmation of a child's baptism.

rising in Germany, which substantially contributed to the development of the first evangelical schools in Germany, is over and has been proved to have been on the wrong track, even though no one should say that very loudly, because many of the old '68 generation still hold the reins of power. Now many, even some not usually regarded as either Christian or conservative, are talking about the need for boundaries, values, rules, or discipline within education. Some of the examples are striking.

Focus (a major German weekly magazine) had the following on its cover page (8/2005): 'Verzogen oder erzogen? Kinder brauchen Grenzen,' translated, 'Spoiled or Educated? Children Need Boundaries'. However, no one is supposed to name the inappropriate values being rejected in order to re-establish boundaries. Nor should one name the culprits who undermined value-based boundaries and continue to call them in question.

Spiegel (also a major German news magazine), which, as one of the great promoters of the 1968 movement is certainly not above suspicion, has written about the current day school situation in a detailed article entitled 'Pfusch am Kind', translated 'Botching It with Children'.[16] In the section called 'Auch Disziplin ist eine Schlüsselqualifikation', 'Discipline Is Also a Key Qualification', it included the following on the consequences of the 1968 movement as far as schools are concerned—on which it was certainly high-mindedly silent with respect to its own complicity:

> Many politicians involved in education have underestimated … the force of the change in values which changed the school system in the wake of the student uprisings. Many an individual has not mustered the courage to learn self-critically from mistakes in the past and to make the overdue policy adjustments…. This attitude still characterizes many old leftists in the education system today, although school has radically changed in the meantime. Even the mildest punishment at school can only be enforced with difficulty, and similar to giving someone detention, these so-called social behaviour grades (for the form of behaviour during instruction) only have a scarcity value. Even stubborn truants—estimated to be 250,000 throughout Germany—remain largely undisturbed.
>
> For this reason, the much 'cherished concept of an enemy' of long ago, the 'crammer school', with its 'teaching approach based on direct instruction', is something which the left has to 'urgently say goodbye to'. Hans-Peter Bartels, an SPD (Social Democratic Party) member of the German Bundestag, has called upon his colleagues to do the following: 'Thirty years of continual anti-authoritarian inspired reform have instead brought about the farthest reaching erosion of limits, deformalization, and de-canonization within the practice of instruction in the school system. Therein, and not in the manner of the alleged authoritarian teacher, lies the problem nowadays.' …

16 Jochen Bölsche, 'Pfusch am Kind,' *Der Spiegel* 20/2002, 96-116, here 104; also see 'Ende der Kuschelpädagogik' *Der Spiegel* Nr. 22/2002, 58-64.

> There is now a heavy price to be paid for progressive pedagogues, for whom writing counted as something elitist, and from time to time only had little writing done and declared a written form of expression secondary in so-called minor subjects …

World War II ended in 1945. The new constitutions of the German states and then finally the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany all contain the right to Christian private schools. And yet, for 25 years there was a type of paralysis in the school question across large sections of evangelical Christianity. It was not until the almost legendary 1968 uprising that a change came about. Scientists began to 'out themselves' (as it is now called) as adherents of creation. For the first time, private trans-denominational theological universities (e.g., the STH Basel, the FTH Giessen) and study centres (the Albrecht Bengel Haus, the Friedrich Hauss Study Centre, among others) emerged initially as alternatives or complements to state theological schools, and the weighty tradition of Christian educational theory returned to the scene.

That what began with the first schools on a biblical basis would become a movement with over 100 schools, for which *Focus* und *Die Welt* predict rosy times, was not suspected by anyone then. While at that time there was a struggle for each individual family, and while discussions in Christian churches became very emotional, nowadays the evangelical school movement, as well as the entire private school movement, is decidedly not limited by one thing: a lack of parental interest.

Finally, in Germany the first evangelicals in the sphere of educational theory left their self-imposed ghetto at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s; their belief was put to the test in the middle of society and everyday life with their own schools. From the beginning, the schools were intensively used by non-evangelicals and non-Christian families, even though, strangely enough, the most frequent charge to be heard was that these schools were ghettos.

Nowadays many of these schools are so integrated into their cities and communities that the charge has become self-defeating. This is because only a tiny number of the schools are insider schools that serve only children from Christian families.

The evangelical school movement has contributed significantly to getting Christians out of the ghetto of their church circles. Belief is no longer an affair only within a believing church community when the devout are among themselves. Rather, it has to face the test in everyday life, taking positions on all the questions with which our society has to deal, continually answering before a critical public.

Christian schools have a long and largely beneficial history to exhibit around the world. Whether it is schools from the early days of Christianity, the schools of the Reformation, or missionary schools around the world, it has always been a matter of course for Christians everywhere to grant their children a good education and to offer this to those who believe differently as well.

VII Humanity in Educational Theory

A reason that Christians cannot simply leave the education and rearing of their children to the state, even if children go to a state school, is that every educational theory is determined by its notion of man and a related form of ethics. There is no pedagogical approach without an approach to ethics and without a worldview by which the respective educational theory orients itself. For that reason Eckhard Meinberg has written in his book, *Das Menschenbild der modernen Erziehungswissenschaft* (*The Conception of Humanity in Modern Educational Science*), 'about the indispensability of notions of man for mankind'.[17]

That behind every educational theory there is a form of ethics, a notion of humanity, indeed a religion and a worldview, does not apply only to such obvious examples as the 'educational theory of the Greens'. Rather, this is generally made clear, for example, in the study by Karl Dienst entitled 'Streams of Educational Theory: Worldview Positions and Notions of Man'.[18] Siegfried Uhl has aptly noted:

> Each of these views of humanity is simultaneously the 'hidden center' of a 'system of educational theory.' For this reason, the respective 'concept of humanity' is the appropriate key for getting through to the details of the tenets of educational theories and to grasp them … with respect to their inner required coherence.[19]

In other words, there is no value-free, neutral form of child-rearing. Every form of child-rearing is oriented toward a certain ethical ideal and rests upon a certain notion of who humanity is, so that rearing the child thus occurs in the direction of this notion of humanity. Christian child-rearing will always include the idea that Christian standards and the biblical notion of humanity form the foundation of the education of children.

Children are shaped not only by the actual curriculum, which prescribes the material to be conveyed. In addition to the official educational theory, the mere necessity of co-existence and cooperation in school has a shaping function educationally, in a positive or a negative sense. This is mostly overlooked, for which reason some speak about a 'second' or a 'secret' curriculum.[20]

> The second curriculum could be designated as the unofficial or even as the secret curriculum since it largely escapes the attention of school educators. This secret curriculum also reflects a happy medium: a basic course in social rules, regulations, and routines. Pupils as well as teachers have to appropri-

17 Section 1.1 in Eckhard Meinberg, *Das Menschenbild der modernen Erziehungswissenschaft* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 1-3.

18 Karl Dienst, 'Pädagogische Strömungen der Gegenwart: Weltanschauungspositionen und Menschenbilder', Information Nr. 70 (X/77), *EZW,* Stuttgart, 1977.

19 Siegfried Uhl, *Die Pädagogik der Grünen*, (München/Basel 1990, 46) using a quote by Otto Friedrich Bollnow.

20 Compare in particular Jürgen Zinnecker (ed.), *Der heimliche Lehrplan: Untersuchungen zum Schulunterricht* (Weinheim/Basel, 1975).

> ate this basic course if they want to make their way through the institution, which is the school, without incurring great loss.[21]

How does one solve problems? How does one respond when one is an outsider? How does one speak with people who represent other views? What is it that counts in order to be acknowledged by fellow classmates? What is truly important in life? How are boys and girls to get along with each other? These and many other questions are not covered in class. Rather, they are answered in the schoolyard.

At many schools, the question of how pupils are to get along with each other and how teachers and pupils are to get along with each other has long since no longer been answered by educational principles and high ideals. Rather, it is answered by the law of the jungle. With the increasing decay of Christian values in our society and the exceedingly limited room for manoeuvring on the part of teachers and pupils at state schools, it is often no longer possible to come to a positive relationship between teachers and pupils. Indeed, sometimes there cannot even be an orderly flow of instruction in the classroom. Teachers at state schools hardly have the opportunity to instruct their pupils when it comes to character and to exercise any influence on how pupils get along with each other beyond the hours of instruction.

VIII Living the Christian Values

According to the Bible, being a role model is of great significance for whatever upbringing is involved. Parents are supposed to set an example for what they expect from their children. The elders of a church should live according to biblical requirements so that they have the authority to lead God's community (1 Pet 5:1-4). Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote the following about the church of the future:

> One must not be allowed to underestimate the meaning of the human 'role model' (which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus and was so important in the case of Paul!); their words receive their emphasis and power not through concepts but rather through 'role modeling' … This thought has almost completely escaped us![22]

From this it becomes clear just what a Christian school is. It is not simply a school which only Christians attend, or which is only under the ownership of Christians, or in which only 'born-again' teachers give instruction. In an impressive book, Jay Adams makes it clear that a Christian school is above all a school in which Christian content is conveyed, lived out by example, and practised.[23]

---

21 Philip W. Jackson, 'Einübung in die bürokratische Gesellschaft: Zur Funktion der sozialen Verkehrsformen im Klassenzimmer', 19-34 in Zinnecker, *Lehrplan*, 29; also comp. John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992).

22 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung* (München 1958[8]), 262.

23 Jay E. Adams, *Back to the Blackboard: Design for a Biblical Christian School* (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1982). This is more clearly defended for a Christian college by Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1987[2]).