

The church and education

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Throughout human history, wherever the church has gone, education has followed.

The heart of Christian education was summarised by St. Anselm of Canterbury in the 12th century:

“Education is faith seeking understanding” (to which I may add, “with a view to application”).

God made Himself and His ways knowable and created man in his own image as those capable of knowing.

As knowers we have been endowed with reason and an innate longing to express our experience of faith intellectually and to apply our knowledge systematically in order to discover meaning in our role in this world with God, fellow human beings and creation.

The book of Proverbs explains our quest for knowledge and education: “Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance” (Prov. 1:5); “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7); and “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

In the New Testament Jesus Christ is referred to in John 1 as the “logos”, meaning the “word” or “reason” in the sense of being the divine reason permeating the known world.

As the embodiment of “logos”, Jesus understood and demonstrated the essential need of being a learner whilst growing up and became the most famous teacher on earth.

His teachings changed the world, including the arena of education.

He gave the Great Commission to His church and empowered them at Pentecost to disciple and baptise nations and to teach them to obey all that He had taught. This included salvation, discipleship in God’s ways and extended to all other forms of education.

Jesus’ motive was to love, serve and transform societies for God’s glory and was inclusive of men, women, children, the poor and the outcast of every nation, culture and tongue.

By the 8th and 9th centuries, basic education in Latin grammar and Christian doctrine was provided in cathedral schools.

By the 11th century many of these schools emerged as centres of higher learning.

With the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century, Martin Luther stressed the vital importance of youth education so “that there will always be preachers, jurists, pastors, writers, physicians, schoolmasters, and the like, for we cannot do without them.”

This focus on the importance of education resulted in the founding of many colleges in the UK and North America in the 17th and 18th centuries by Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

There are some excellent public and private schools in our metro. Within these there are also some excellent Christian Schools which are endorsed and supported by a church, by Christian parents and teachers.

These continue fulfilling a vital role in shaping the education landscape of our country.

Biblically, the primary responsibility for the education of our children vests in us as parents and this right is protected by South African law.

Evidence seems to indicate that sound education of young people is enhanced by active parental involvement.

Regretfully there appears to be a general apathy and lack of parental involvement in their children’s education.

As one who has witnessed the positive benefit of parental involvement, I urge all fellow Christian parents to engage actively in furthering your child’s education and future.

You have the right and responsibility of checking on the content of the subjects your child is being taught at school. I also encourage you to take an active role by becoming part of a parent/ teacher association or by volunteering to serve on your school's Governing Board (SGB).

During the dying years of the Apartheid era in 1987, at a time when it was still illegal to do so, Ivan Vorster, the founding pastor of Harvest Christian Church and his eldership took a bold step of faith and started a non-racial Christian School.

Despite government disapproval and the threat of arrest by the security police at that time, Pastor Ivan and his eldership, with an intrepid group of parents and teachers, embarked on the adventure of establishing and growing a Christian School with the view to educating and discipling children of all races with a Biblical worldview and an excellent academic program within the framework of an accredited national curriculum.

This year Harvest Christian School celebrated its 37th year of existence through the grace and favour of God and the commitment of elders, parents and teachers who poured out their hearts and finances into the cause.

We have witnessed thousands of students from all cultures being sent into the world with minds and hearts shaped by a Biblical worldview and an excellent education, where they, as current citizens and parents are now fulfilling their God given calling to make a positive and lasting contribution to our Rainbow Nation and its future.

Some would argue that academic learning and spiritual truths are incompatible and that all forms of religion should be relegated out of the classroom. However, we who have a heart for Christian education believe that God's truth permeates every area of our lives and relationships.

Christian education and Christian schools are here to stay.

For some Christian parents out there, it may be time to invest in your child's future by enrolling them into a Christian School where all the teachers share and endorse your world view.

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