



A STUDY ON THE COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LEARNING

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I. Introduction

This study investigates the compatibility between Christian faith and learning in the context of Christian education. The relationship between Christian faith and learning has something in common with that between virtue and learning, which was dealt by Socrates in Plato's *Meno*.¹⁾ Because of this corresponding relationship between the two, *Meno* will be explored as a basis for the investigation of the compatibility between Christian faith and learning.

Since the issue of compatibility between virtue and learning was already dealt with in Plato's *Meno*, a critical reflection on that issue will yield helpful insights into our investigation. Thus, a theological critique of Socratic epistemology is needed. After this, we will attempt to provide a theoretical foundation upon which we may delve into the compatibility between Christian faith and learning.

The main corpus of this study is geared toward answering the following key questions: What does it mean by Christian faith? To what extent can Christian faith be taught? What aspects of Christian faith cannot be taught? What do all these questions mean in the context of Christian education? As a final step, meaningful implications for Christian education will be drawn.

1) Plato, *Meno* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1981).

II. Socratic Epistemology

1. A Dilemma Exposed

For the study of the relationship between faith and learning, *The Meno* will be explored as a basis. Meno begins with the following question: “Can virtue be taught?” It is obvious that Meno exposes a dilemma mentioning: “A man cannot inquire either about that which he knows, or about that which he does not know; for if he knows, he has no need to inquire; and if not, he cannot; for he does not know the very subject about which he is to inquire.”²⁾

A significant dilemma is raised to Socrates by Meno. Thus, Socrates admits to Meno by saying that he cannot tell what virtue is. At least Socrates is willing to join Meno in the inquiry. Socrates maintains that if the question, “What is virtue?” can be answered then Meno’s problem of whether virtue can be taught or not can be solved.

Since the Fall, human beings have suffered from the difficulty of communicating genuine knowledge one another. In the Platonic dialogue, Meno, the question of how we attain virtue leads into a heated debate on the nature of knowledge.³⁾ Is virtue innate or is it acquired after birth?

Socrates confesses his own difficulty and persuades Meno of the

2) Ibid., 80.

3) Ibid., 128.

perplexity of the issue, “Is virtue innate or can it be taught?” In their search for the nature of virtue, Meno wonders how anything can be known that is not already known.

Socrates endeavored to overcome the dilemma exposed by Meno. Thus, Socrates chose for another possibility, being confronted by two equally unappealing choices. We can learn new things because the knowledge resides within us. In a sense, we already have a certain amount of knowledge concerning what we seek to know. What we forgot is that we have that knowledge. We, therefore, merely need to recollect. Like this, Socratic theory of knowledge is that of recollection.⁴⁾

According to Socrates, the basis for this recollection exists in the preexistence and the immortality of the soul. The soul survives after it leaves the body. It journeys between this world and another world where it learns all there is to know. When the soul enters a new body, it forgets everything in the process. The knowledge, however, remains latent in the mind. The new person, starting from something consciously known, can remember all the rest. This recollection is “the process which is commonly called learning.”⁵⁾

2. Critique of Socratic Epistemology

A short, perhaps simplistic, critique of Socrates’ position is in or-

4) Ibid., 104.

5) Ibid.

der. His theory of knowledge as recollection requires belief in the immortality of the soul and in reincarnation. Several difficult questions emanate from such ideas. If Socrates' defined immortality to mean that the soul is eternal and uncreated, when did the eternal soul not know something? If it always knew all, it would not have to migrate from this world to another world to learn anything. As Socrates suggests, if it had to learn, then at some point it knew less than everything. So, at that stage of development, it could not recall in its embodied state anything that it had not yet learned in either its incarnate or disembodied conditions.

Socrates probably took the soul to be a created, indestructible entity. As such, it had a beginning. If so, without arguing whether or not the creator is a superior being, isn't he assuming that the soul knew little or nothing at the moment of creation?

Let us think about reincarnation for a moment. Let us assume that the soul of Meno's slave boy jumped into its first body an instant after its creation. If we follow Socrates' logic, his soul could not have learned everything. How could the soul recall what it did not know?

In imitation of Socrates, this philosophic novice will also avert Meno's attempt toward paradoxical dilemma. As intimated by the above, the theory of recollection is hereby dismissed. A personal belief in how we accumulate knowledge rests on the particular and unprovable assumption that Creative Intelligence exists. Many people, however, refrain beginning with this theistic view point.⁶⁾

6) Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1983), 25-43.

Consequently, we can say that Socrates' resolution, however, ought to be considered as inadequate because of the following reasons: 1) it necessitates the notion of an immortal soul but as a matter of fact this is incompatible with Biblical teaching that humanity are created beings. 2) Socrates' conclusions lead to a dualism between the soul and the body.

III. Theological Reflection on the Dilemma

Since this study explores the meaning and purpose of learning in the context of Christian education, it is needed to reflect on some theological ramifications of Meno's dilemma. Nevertheless human nature was depraved after the Fall, still human beings have access to the reality since they exist as a living part of God's created order. In addition, human beings are provided with an intuitive apprehension of the hidden meaning explicated by the Apostle Paul. More relevant understanding concerning Meno's dilemma has something to do with the Apostle Paul's statement to the Romans: "ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse."⁷⁾

It is impossible that Meno's dilemma can be resolved without the

7) Romans 1:20, NRSV.

condition of this intuitive insight. As with positivistic epistemology Plato, a proponent of Socrates, provides an example which shows that inquiry is not possible when all knowing is confined to the explicit dimension.

Michael Polanyi is an exponent who exemplifies that an individual need to inquire into hidden dimensions of order and meaning to have a clearer understanding of this ability of creative insight. He maintains that “we are guided by sensing the presence of a hidden reality” in all pursuits of discovery.⁸⁾ Tacit dimension enables us to “know more than we can tell.”⁹⁾ According to Polanyi, tacit knowing signifies existing in an irreducible relational unity with explicit knowledge. Tacit and explicit levels of knowledge are essential for indwelling an object of investigation. However, the tacit dimension exhibits a marginal control over the explicit dimension. Tacit dimension empowers an individual to make the intuitive, non-logical leap which transcends one’s frame of reference revealing a pertinent truth. Since inquiry is limited and reduced to the investigator’s frame of reference, counting on empirical evidences through the principle of causality cannot open any possibilities for new discovery and creativity. In this case, the inquirer would be confiscated into Meno’s dilemma as a sheer paradox. Thus, the imaginative leap empowered by the tacit dimension would be the only way for inquiry into unknown subjects.

This sort of bipolar inquiry is maintained by the heuristic passion

8) Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1986), 24.

9) *Ibid.*

of the inquirer. This passionate desire to discover the hidden intelligibility of the universe motivates individuals to keep on their investigation in the risk of failure. The intellectual passion of a scientist is grounded upon her belief that the universe is ultimately intelligible. This fiduciary element of intellectual passion is what commits individuals in their search for discovery and what makes them “cross the logical gap between a problem and its solution.”¹⁰⁾

The view that there is inherent relation between knowing and being are held by such theologians as Augustine and Kierkegaard. Both of them maintain that the thinking person is an existing individual. Charles Stinnette takes this assertion as providing a point of departure for consideration of knowledge as an act of discovery. In talking about philosophy of knowing Stinnette insists that Socratic and thus Platonic epistemology is a way of recollection:

“[It is an] effectual and dramatic means in which one encounters what he already knows. It is the vision of the whole asserting itself in a moment of clarity and insight. ... F. M. Cornford interprets this process as one of raising to the level of consciousness that which has been present already but latent and unconscious. What is called ‘learning’ or the discovery of truth is the recollection of this latent knowledge raised to the level of consciousness. The soul is guided in the search by its own divine vision of a truth that is always present,

10) Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 143.

needing to be seen more clearly and coordinated with other parts of the whole system of truth.”¹¹⁾

Stinnette lays an emphasis on the model for knowing when he asserts the following:

“The model for knowing most appropriate to that learning in which the person is changed by what he knows is praxis. Action is the primary context of knowing. In knowing we are engaged in changing the world — as well as ourselves. Knowledge involves changing reality as a way of understanding it. The meaning of event is discovered in the course of remaking them. For the Christian, as well as for the pragmatist, the purpose of thought, is action, decision, and deed. ... If knowledge is viewed as human action, as praxis in which one appropriates knowledge as a participator-reflector, [hu]man is actively engaged in his knowing. His knowledge is obtained through response as well as reflection — through practical judgment as well as analysis. The knower is no longer simply a passive recipient; he is engaged in doing the truth — and the act itself is a moment of creative re-union of subject and object.”¹²⁾

Soren Kierkegaard’s understanding of human nature seems quite helpful for drawing a theological insight to the understanding of Me-

11) Charles Stinnette, *Learning in Theological Perspective* (New York: Association Press, 1965), 27.

12) *Ibid.*, 30, 32.

no's dilemma. Kierkegaard recognizes that human beings are finite as well as infinite. Human beings were created to live in relationship with another as a bipolar unity grounded in the trinitarian God.

As a result of the Fall, however, "the same two polarities are operative but they are split, perverted, caught up in fantasy, or rejected outright."¹³⁾ The separation from God results in making an individual seek out an adequate foundation for the "self" in order to minimize the despair. This search is the concern of Kierkegaard's epistemological stages, which are a series of truth producing errors leading to the realization of an individual's distance from God.¹⁴⁾ The degree of despair reaches the climax in the stage named "Religiousness A."

There is a similarity between the dilemma of "Religiousness A" and that of Meno. In Religiousness A, the person realizes that it is impossible to humanly know God. There is an unbridgeable abyss separating human nature of finitude from God's infiniteness. Just as with Meno, the individual is faced with a paradox of reason.

Kierkegaard's answer to this dilemma is similar to Polanyi's resolution explicated above. Polanyi's resolution makes a non-rational, "intuitive leap in order to discover new truths." Kierkegaard's seeker chooses to make the non-rational leap of faith by allowing the absolute paradox to define one's existence. The bipolar relationality of the finite and the infinite, therefore, are taken into an asymmetrical unity and grounded

13) James Loder & Jim Neidhardt, *The Knight's Move: Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Helmets & Howard: Colorado Springs, 1992), 88.

14) Ibid.

in the trinitarian God.

In both cases the key to overcoming the logical dilemmas of human reason is the supra-rational leap which allows the individual to transcend narrow and insufficient frame of reference and perceive truth from a wholistic viewpoint.

IV. The Compatibility between Virtue and Learning

In the Platonic dialogue, Socrates encourages Meno to be involved in the inquiry of what virtue is. The conclusion of the inquiry is “that virtue is neither natural nor acquired, but an instinct given by God to the virtuous.”¹⁵⁾ Based upon Meno’s limited definition of teaching, one can say that virtue cannot be taught. A detailed study of the dialogue, however, seems to reveal that Socrates had succeeded in making Meno more virtuous through the dialogue between themselves. Brumbaugh considers Socrates as a master of motivation who is able to inspire the most uninterested student with a desire to inquire. Brumbaugh contends that teaching involves four kinds of technique as follows:

“It must begin with motivation; it must be as clear and efficient as possible in its moment of skill and precision; it must organize its content in proper sequence for learning; and it must give the stu-

15) Plato, *Meno*, 37.

dent a feeling of being together with the teacher in a shared creative present time.”¹⁶⁾

He maintains that the need for motivation and some ways to achieve it is exemplified by Plato in *Meno*. Brumbaugh perceives shades of meaning of the dialogue as being multiple by mentioning:

“In the first place, the argument shows that values cannot be taught either by instruction or example. But in the second place, the dialogue shows that virtue can be taught by shared inquiry of the Socratic method, if that sharing is real.”¹⁷⁾

It is obvious that *Meno* becomes more virtuous through his dialogue with Socrates as a matter of fact.

Brumbaugh claims a new analysis of *Meno* when he mentions as follows:

“On the face of it, this dialogue offers a surprising proof by Socrates that values cannot be taught, from which it could follow that education and human excellence are irrelevant to each other. In that case, it would be as fraud for schools to claim support on the ground that they are making their students better.”¹⁸⁾

16) Robert Brumbaugh, *Whitehead, Process Philosophy & Education* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 98.

17) *Ibid.*, 100.

18) *Ibid.*

He thinks that this surface argument is neither real point of dialogue nor the final point of dialogue. In this vein of thought, he continues to maintain:

“When Socrates, Meno and Anytus cannot find any teachers of virtue, they conclude reluctantly that virtue cannot be knowledge; since if it were, it could be taught. ... Meno becomes a better and better respondent, more interested in the argument throughout the second part of the dialogue, but ends up puzzled by its negative conclusion. So does the reader; particularly the reader who has picked up Plato’s plot, since Meno himself becomes more virtuous as the dialogue goes on.”¹⁹⁾

Consequently, he draws a conclusion through his critical reading of Meno as follows:

“There is, then, at least one person who can teach virtue, Socrates. His teaching, however, is neither by didactic precept nor by example, but by shared inquiry. Since this falls outside the disjunctive notions Meno holds about possible kinds of teaching, it remains true for his sense of the term that virtue cannot be taught.”²⁰⁾

To say that one cannot inquire about what he knows because he has no need to inquire would imply that what reality is. Nothing can

19) Ibid., 104.

20) Ibid.

be known, however, for certain in the sense of final and ultimate proof which is open and acceptable to all people. Knight insists that “[e]very person — the skeptic and the agnostic, the scientist and the businessman, the Hindu and the Christian — lives by faith. The acceptance of a particular position in metaphysics and epistemology is a ‘faith choice’ made by individuals, and it entails a commitment to a way of life.”²¹⁾

There would be neither scientific nor technological advancement if people perceived that what was known was the ultimate knowledge. In fact, most forms of knowledge change according to the variation of the assumptions on which they stand. Mentioning that one cannot inquire about what he does not know assumes that the only source of knowledge to human beings is inquiry. As a matter of fact, there are many other sources of knowledge such as intuition, authority, revelation as well as rationality. These variety of sources are complimentary to one another.

An astronomer can begin her inquiry of a certain planet. In the process of her inquiry she may discover a new planet whose existence she never knew since she did not have any interest in it. Humanity is a responsive being and thus they can respond to stimulus outside of their environment. The Apostle Paul did not want to inquire who Jesus was. Regardless of his intention, however, he was confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus and then obtained more knowledge about Jesus in

21) George Knight, *Issues and Alternatives in Educational Philosophy* (Berrien Springs: Andrew Univ. Press, 1989), 27.

Arabia.²²⁾ Considering this fact, we can maintain that an individual can acquire knowledge about something or someone that she did not know by employing the various sources of knowledge.

Piaget's saying on education suggests that he thinks that one should neither be content with what he already knows nor be put off by what he does not know. Piaget, thus, emphasizes the following:

“The principal goal of education is to create [humans] who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done — [humans] who are creative, inventive, and discoverers. The second goal of education is to form minds which can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything. The great danger is slogans, collective opinions, ready-made trends of thought.”²³⁾

V. The Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christian Faith and Learning

1. Compatibility between Christian Faith and Learning

Learning has proved to be a more difficult concept to define and

22) Acts 9 and Galatians 1.

23) Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1981), 248.

various learning theorists have arrived at different definitions of learning. Thus, it is needed to make a working definition of learning. For the purpose of this study, learning can be defined as follows: learning is the process that produces the capability of exhibiting new or changed human behavior, provided that new behavior or behavior change cannot be explained on the basis of some other processes or experiences.

This definition does not confine learning into an institutional setting. One may learn as an individual or as a member of learning community. Learning may happen at home, at the church, at school or anywhere and any time. Lawrence Cremin provides a definition of education which is related with our study at hand, when he mentions: “the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort.”²⁴⁾ Groome explicates the helpfulness of Cremin’s definition as follows: first, education is seen as requiring intentionality and second, educational activity is directed toward the whole person.²⁵⁾

Developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Sigmund Freud, and Erik Erikson help us understand cognitive activity from developmental perspective. Freud identifies the primary and secondary processes of the mental apparatus. He perceives the pri-

24) Lawrence Cremin, *Traditions of American Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 134.

25) Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education & Pastoral Ministry* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 86-90; *Christian Religious Education*, 174-75.

mary process as working on the pleasure principle, while the secondary process as being controlled by the reality principle.²⁶⁾

Piaget lays a stress on the organic foundation for cognitive development. He regards sensory motor intelligence as the cradle of learning. For him, the child learns first by sensory motor activity — as a response to external stimuli. Through the stages of egocentric thought, children internalize their activities. When children are able to retrace their steps in an activity, or to move out of egocentrism, they may arrive at the next stage of cognitive ability.²⁷⁾

The Christian faith can be explicated to be composed of facts, beliefs, and attitudes of dispositions. Facts include such stories as Abraham, Israel, and Jesus; beliefs include the Trinity, atonement and the final judgment; and attitudes include honesty, kindness, love, etc.

Relying on Richard Niebuhr, Osmer convincingly suggests a model of faith cube:

“[Faith] is many-sided reality. It is not possible to see all sides of a cube at the same time. It may be possible to see the top and two of the sides, but the bottom and back sides remain out of view. So it is with faith. At any given time, one dimension of our relationship of trust in God can be described, but other aspects of this relationship

26) Anna Freud & Joseph Sandler, *The Analysis of Defense* (New York: International Univ. Press, 1985), 124f.

27) Howard Gruber & Jacques Voneche, *The Essential Piaget* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 200f.

need to be kept in mind.”²⁸⁾

It is Osmer’s strength that highlights the importance of keeping other dimensions of faith in mind when we describe one dimension of faith. Each side of the faith cube “represents an important aspect of a relationship of trust in God.”²⁹⁾ Osmer well explicates the four dimensions of Christian faith. First dimension is beliefs about God which serve as the basis of trust. Second dimension is personal relationship with God which brings a believer into a relationship with other believers. Third dimension is a commitment to God which shapes the way in which believers invest their resources. Fourth dimension is an awareness of mystery which limits believers’ understanding and control of God.³⁰⁾

Christian faith can be learned in the form of organized knowledge which may be taught through the use of the didactic method and text books. Christian faith can also be learned to the extent that those who encounter it can exhibit desirable change in their character, behavior, and relationship with others. One is able to find people who are more humble, kind, and loving since they have learned the Christian faith. Christian faith can be said to be learned because some aspects of the faith can be learned only as certain levels of cognitive development have been attained. For instance, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is an

28) Richard Osmer, *Teaching for Faith* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 16.

29) *Ibid.*, 17.

30) *Ibid.*

abstract idea which may not be learned by young children.

2. Incompatibility of Christian Faith and Learning

In some ways, however, the Christian faith and learning are not compatible. Let us think about the incompatibility of Christian faith and learning.

Except for the churches and Christian schools such as theological colleges and seminaries, it seems that learners are not attracted to the field of Christianity. In many cases people tend not to be sympathetic concerning Christian faith. Rather, many of them are even against Christian faith and churches. In this sense, it is hard to say that Christian faith and learning are compatible.

There is lack of permanence and predictability as far as those who may appear to have learned Christian faith are concerned. Sometimes there is failure on the part of the learner to display the desirable behavior even when the learner is expected to exemplify his Christian faith. It seems that the ability to live Christian faith does not reside in the believers per se. Rather, it comes from the One who invites them to Himself/Herself by grace through faith. It is probably for this reason that Meno, in Plato's dialogue, is said to have gone on to cowardice and treachery even after displaying some behavior change during his dialogue with Socrates.³¹⁾

31) Brumbaugh, *Whitehead, Process Philosophy & Education*, 100.

Christian faith has been subjected to many methods and techniques of presentation. Sometimes even after using the best methods observable learning outcomes are still not noticeable. No doubt, this means that the learning of Christian faith is independent of the learner, guide or techniques.

We can say that Michael Peterson's comment is relevant when he insists:

“Judeo-Christian scriptures contain little by way of specific directives for moral education. These we must glean from most reasonable theories, the best empirical research and common sense — all supply insight into our creaturely nature. A complete Christian view of moral education, however, does not focus exclusively on natural channels of moral education and ignore God's grace for moral living. While taking seriously the fact that there are natural means of developing moral capabilities, a Christian view of moral education heralds the concept of God's grace which completes and uplifts nature.”³²⁾

VI. Implications for Christian Education

Kierkegaard, philosopher and theologian who delves into the es-

32) Michael Peterson, *Philosophy of Education: Issues and Options* (Downers Grove: Inter-
 varsity Press, 1986), 95.

sence of Christian faith, explicates the nature of “the knight of faith”, when he states:

“He knows the blessedness of infinity, he has felt the pain of renouncing everything ... his remaining in finitude would have no trace of a timorous, anxious routine ... he resigned everything infinitely, and then he grasped everything again by virtue of the absurd.”³³⁾

It is the knight of faith who takes the leap of faith and lives his life “by virtue of the absurd.”³⁴⁾ The “absurd” signifies the rational absurdity of the absolute paradox. Kierkegaard insists that the knight of faith grasps everything again according to this paradoxical reality: “he does not even do the slightest thing except by virtue of the absurd.”³⁵⁾ The relational frame of reference embodied in the person of Jesus Christ becomes the normative lens through which a believer perceives the world, and it exists as the Christian notion of “the Good.” The virtue of the absurd is essential for the educational task of the church due to its inherent coherence. All the classical antitheses of human existence have been encompassed and transformed by the definitive relationship manifested in God-human Jesus Christ. Examples of antitheses of human existence are such as possibility and necessity, transcendence and immanence, eternity and existentiality, universality and particularity,

33) Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 1968), 40.

34) Ibid.

35) Ibid.

etc.³⁶⁾

This relational epistemology ought to inform every pursuit of learning in Christian context. New Christological context of meaning has many specific implications for the role of education in the church. At least there are three aspects to be considered concerning these implications.

Most of all, the relationality between the eternal and the existential inherent in the nature of Christ points to the necessity of cultivating the often neglected tacit dimension. The tacit knowing enables human beings to overcome the limits of human reason and facilitates the leap of faith. The Christologically informed tacit dimension may yield up a supra-rational wisdom to guide human inquiry. Like an asymmetrical bipolar relationality between the finite and the infinite in the nature of Jesus Christ, tacit and explicit modes of knowing should work in a complimentary manner. This emphasis in Christian education enables learners to push their reason as the explicit dimension to the limits and push further in reliance on wisdom as the tacit dimension.

Through this complimentary and reciprocal interaction between the explicit and tacit dimensions, learners can be facilitated to grasp more profound reality. This confidence in fundamental relationality help learners transcend existing frameworks of knowledge so that they may move toward untrodden region of wisdom and knowledge, i.e.

36) James Loder & Jim Neidhardt, *The Knight's Move*, 196.

discovery and creativity.

The virtue of the absurd can contribute to the advancement of Christian education by promoting tolerance for discontinuity. Fearing the doubt that may arise when they are confronted with dilemmas, many Christians tend to avoid difficult questions concerning faith. God embraced all the discontinuity experienced in the history and transformed them into a continuity in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. This revelation and recognition can empower believers to face paradox with brevity and wisdom. This is possible since tacit wisdom is empowered by the knowledge that the universe is held together and made intelligible through the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The virtue of the absurd can contribute to the realization of the importance of Christ's particularity. Christ was born both fully universal and fully particular. This signifies that the church must allow the universal claims of its faith to be incarnate in particular situations and individuals. Thus, teaching doctrines and spirituality in abstract manner is not appropriate. The truths of Christian faith need to be discovered and appropriated personally and passionately in order for them to have any meaning for an individual.

Remembering the virtue of "the absurd" and its implications for Christian education, it would be recommendable to rethink about the grade system at Christian schools such as seminaries. Of course, it is important to develop explicit knowledge of the people, places, and ideas of Christian faith. It is important to know that such information is

only a prerequisite for remarkable ideas of one's own. Ample opportunities, however, must be presented for the student to draw on the tacit dimension in order to independently discover the wonderful ideas of Christian faith. The essence of pedagogy in Christian education should be to provide the occasions for students to develop their own brilliant ideas.

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Abstract

A Study on the Compatibility between Christian Faith and Learning

The purpose of this study is to investigate the compatibility between Christian faith and learning—i.e., the impossibility as well as the possibility of teaching Christian faith. To what extent can Christian faith be taught? What aspects of Christian faith cannot be taught? These are two key questions which guide the basic development of thoughts in this study.

It is quite interesting to realize that a similar type of argument was dealt with already in Plato's *Meno*. In this book Socrates tried to answer the question, "Can virtue be taught?" Since there are many commonalities between faith and virtue, we can say that "if virtue can be taught, then faith can be taught, too." Thus, it is very important for us to inquire about the teachability of virtue. This will provide a tenable basis upon which we proceed our investigation of the impossibility as well as the possibility of teaching Christian faith.

In order to reinforce a theological dimension of the subject matter,

we will draw upon Soren Kierkegaard's understanding of human nature as a bipolar unity grounded in the trinitarian God. Understanding of human beings as a bipolar unity leads into our discussion of compatibility as well as incompatibility of Christian faith and learning.

As a final step, meaningful implications for Christian education will be drawn from the investigation of the compatibility as well as the incompatibility between Christian faith and learning. These implications centers around the complimentary and reciprocal interaction between the explicit and the tacit dimensions of faith and knowledge. On the top of this interaction, recognizing Christian faith from the perspective of "the virtue of the absurd" enables learners to open toward supra-rational realities such as the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the crux of Christian faith.

Keywords

Compatibility and Incompatibility, Christian Faith and Learning, Soren Kierkegaard, Bipolar Unity, Implication for Christian Education

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The integration of faith and learning is a focus of many religious institutions of higher education. The broad concept encompasses the idea that the Christian worldview, faith, and practices of the student should be deeply connected within the learning experience. That said, different educators build their own visions of education onto the concept, what some call conceptions of faith learning integration. This idea is commonly found in Christian colleges in the United States, and is considered by some as a learning vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools.Â

1. Pre-Modernâ€”Allowed for some compatibility between philosophy and theology, but theology reigned over philosophy and was the ultimate authority.
2. Modernâ€”philosophy reacted against theology and pushed it to the sidelines. Philosophy, natural science, and reason had the upper-hand. Sometimes interaction between faith and learning has been at little more than a defensive level, an apologetic against challenges to the faith from the world of thought, or a Christian critique of its competitors. Apologetics undoubtedly has a place, but the Christian college has a larger and more constructive job than this.Â

Some writers have even developed an aesthetic argument for the existence of God, based on the correlation between human creativity in the arts and the adaptability of the world to this creativity. In Godâ€™s creation every area of the liberal arts has to do with God. Elton Trueblood has said that the Christian scholar is likely to be a better scholar for being a Christian than one would be otherwise. What If Learning is an approach to help teachers re-frame teaching and learning to support the Christian ethos of a school. This article presents the findings of research carried out with 14 teachers, in three state-funded church secondary schools in England. The findings provide an important insight into teachersâ€™ pedagogic practice.Â

In this article I describe a Hospitality Project I assigned that required my students to read and reflect on the Christian practice of hospitality, and then to extend hospitality to someone from another culture. Church has viewed Christian education as a core ingredient in fulfilling its mission. This is evidenced by the prolific writings on the subject of education by Ellen G. White, as well as by the extent of Adventist education, one of the largest denominational systems worldwide, with nearly 8,000 schools, colleges, and universities, and more than 1.6 million students. What is the distinctive and essential ingredient of Seventh-day Adventist education, that makes parents bring their children to an SDA institution? the reason is.Â

Because all truth in every subject area is ultimately Godâ€™s truth (James 1:17), students must connect each topic they study to the Source of Truth. In the sciences, for example, students are to integrate the words and works of God.