

The History of the Integration of Faith and Learning

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Abstract:

The focus of this article is to examine the history of the integration of faith and learning (IFL) within Christian Education for the purpose of determining the origins of the IFL. The journey of the IFL will be traced from the fall of man to the 20th century. The three manifestation of the IFL will be discussed which are true IFL, counterfeit IFL, and the disintegration of faith and learning. Each of these manifestations happened at some point in history and had an effect on the true goal of education, which is the restoration of the image of God in man.

Introduction

In the world of education, there has been a call for integrating of faith and learning. Christian educators are entrusted with the heavy burden to incorporate the teachings of Christ into the academic discipline they are attempting to inculcate into their students. White (1903) stipulates that education must be holistic in that it must include the development of the spiritual, mental, physical, social aspects of an individual's character. Through such a balance education, the image of God can be restored within man so that he is prepared to dwell with Christ for eternity.

This article analyses the development and history of the integration of faith and learning. The idea of integrating faith and learning has its origins in the fall of man (Lawrence, Burton, and Nwosu, 2005). The journey of this concept continued through the early church, Dark Ages of Europe, the Renaissance, and the 18th to the 20th century. From the beginning of time until today, the IFL has manifested itself in one of three ways. One manifestation of IFL is the true IFL that God gave to the Kingdom of Israel and His modern Church. A second manifestation of the IFL is the disintegration of faith and learning that has been depicted in during the Renaissance and Enlightenment and is still seen in the Secular West. Lastly, the IFL has manifested itself through a counterfeit form of integration of false faith with learning that was seen during in the days of Christ, the early church of the dark ages, and persists in Eastern cultures where spiritual concepts are openly accepted in the public.

Faith and learning integration has become important today in Christian education. An understanding of the origins of this concept will help teachers realise the significance of integration and the repercussions of ignoring such a critical component of education.

Heaven and Before Christ

From the Christian perspective, throughout the annals of human history there has been a war happening, a war between the forces of good and the forces of evil, a war between Christ and Satan. This war first manifested itself in heaven and is explained in the following passage from Scripture

And there was war in the heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. . . Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, (Revelation 12:7-10 NIV)

One of the Devil's claims was that the angels were holy and intelligent and they did not need to obey God to maintain their dwelling (White 1880). This was the first separation between faith and learning. The Devil's claim was that the angels were intelligent, or in other words, they had learning. The Devil continued by stating that they did not need to obey or have faith in God to maintain this. With this, there was a controversy in heaven from which Satan was defeated and forced to leave heaven, a heaven he thought he could keep without God.

From the ashes of his defeat, the Devil was able to gain a major victory by bringing about the fall of man (Genesis 3). With this fall came separation from God. An additional problem that occurred from the fall of mankind was the disintegration of the wholeness of man through the absence of an integrated education. This education manifests itself through the cooperation of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of man with the education that He provided. With the divide that has happened between faith and learning, the Devil has been able to handicap the development within man of the image of God. Without the demonstration of the restoration of the image of God in the character of man, human beings are not ready to dwell for eternity in heaven. Every day that faith and learning are separate it is another victory for the Devil and another loss for humanity. White (1923) states that to separate God from education creates a one-sided education that makes man incapable of receiving immortality through Christ. This implies that the battle over the destiny of men is decided in a large part by the integrity of the education he receives.

During the history of the Old Testament, God attempted to re-establish a relationship with His people with the intention of using education to help achieve this goal. This culminates in the Old Testament with the Israelites inheriting the promised land. Before the Israelites conquered the promised land God instructed the Israelites with the following admonition

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7 KJV)

Within these two verses, all of the aspects of man's character (spiritual, mental, social, physical) are addressed. Teaching God's word to the children involves the spiritual and mental aspects of man's character. Sitting in the house and talking involves the social aspect of man. Lastly, walking by the way involves the physical aspect of man. This was the integrating of faith and learning that the Lord wanted for His people.

God expected the Israelites to integrate His teachings into the daily lives of their children. As they went about their daily work, instruction and training in the word of God was an important part of the lessons given to the students. God commanded the Israelites to do this because of the separation and disintegration that happened between God and humanity at the fall, which also resulted in a separation and disintegration between faith and learning. Holistic education leads to holistic people restored to the image of God and prepared for the return of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of Israel neglected God's admonition, which would eventually lead to their destruction at the hands of Babylonians. The Jews' unfaithfulness in developing an integrated education cost them just as the Devil's disintegration of faith and learning cost him heaven.

After the Jews returned from captivity, they took seriously God's call for integrating faith and learning. Idolatry was cast out of the promised land, but a form of legalism replaced it. During the days of Christ, the Pharisees and Sadducees controlled the ecclesiastical affairs of the Jewish nation. To protect the law they created man-made laws to ensure that the Torah was strictly obeyed. The average Jew studied the law and knew it well. Despite this knowledge, many Jews were far from God, and they found the requirements of the Pharisees' laws burdensome, (White, 1898).

Times of Christ and the Early Church

The life of Christ was a true example of the IFL. Christ's relationship with God was paramount and the love between Him and His Father flowed out into the lives of the people around. Christ lifted up the true law and educated His disciples to live a life of service. He was able to destroy the legalistic counterfeit IFL that the Pharisee had given as a yoke to the Jews. Through Christ's ministry people were truly set free and able to integrate faith and learning in the way God had originally planned.

Christ integrated faith and learning through the living of a Godly life and teaching from a Divine worldview. People saw the fruit of the Spirit in the life of Christ and this is what inspired them to live a similar life. When Christ taught anything, it was always in a way that pointed others to God. Living like Christ in order to integrate faith and learning in the incarnational approach and teaching from a Christian worldview is called the worldview approach (Badley, 1996). When these two methods are employed together, students are experiencing the integration that Christ employed.

In the years after the death of Christ, the debate over the integration of faith and learning was reignited and the method of Christ was forgotten. The 2nd century Church Father Tertullian was against Christians studying Greek and pagan philosophies which Paul describes as foolishness in 1 Corinthians. He worried that uniting faith with pagan learning was erroneous. Integrating faith and learning does not mean that one integrates faith with any learning

but with learning that is filtered through a Christian worldview. Christians are called to compare everything with Scripture to determine the quality and veracity of the information. Tertullian's warnings went unheeded and by the 5th century, there was a synthesis between Christian faith and secular philosophies. This synthesis was the beginning of a counterfeit integration of faith and learning in which the pagan learning and philosophies of the world compromised the Christian faith. This happened for at least two reasons, first, the Christian tried to legitimise their faith by accepting these pagan philosophies. Second, the Christians wanted to accommodate the pagan believers who were flooding into the church, which began after the conversion of Constantine the Great of the Roman Empire (Badley, 1994).

Dark Ages and Renaissance

By the time of the Dark Ages of Europe, the Christian world had achieved complete integration of faith and learning. However, it was an amalgamation of pagan Christianity and pagan thought and not the true IFL that God had commanded of the Kingdom of Israel or modeled by Christ in His ministry on Earth. The Roman Catholic Church was the leader of Europe and Canon law was the law that controlled every aspect of a person's life (Shelley, 2008). This law was the traditions that replaced the word of God as the guiding principle of people's lives. From the cradle until the grave, life was full of ceremonies and superstitious rites to earn salvation. The church controlled education as well because in many places only the clergy knew how to read and write. Through this grip on education, the Pope and his bishops licensed teacher to teach (Davis, 1991). People were educated in a world steeped in a Christianised darkness that was integrated but in a way that did not connect or reconnect people with the true God. God's image was not being restored in man and the system of education was a failure.

By the time of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, the faith of the Roman Catholic system was beginning to lose its control over minds of the people of Western Europe. This was due in part to the Protestant Reformation and the printing of the Bible in the vernacular languages of Europe. During this period, the Roman Church also lost its control over education and now theology was a second-class subject in the scholarly world (Lawrence, Burton, and Nwosu, 2005) because it was not based on what the senses could discern. With this development, science and reason were replacing faith and superstition as the governing power in the minds of many in Western Europe (Badley, 1994). This exaltation of reasoning was due in part to the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation stressed rationalism as a way to discern the truth of God's word versus the error of the Catholic Church traditions (Iselin and Meteyard, 2010). The Pope lost control of the universities with the governments now conferring degrees on students (Davis, 1991). This is an example of how education was taken out of the hand of those of faith and placed into the hands of those who were secular-minded. The false integration of faith and learning that had been pivotal for the success of the Roman Catholic Church was replaced with an equally damaging system of all learning without faith. Faith was dead in the minds of many educated people and the reasoning of human beings was made the new 'god' of the people. During this period, the world went from a counterfeit IFL to a manifestation of the disintegration of faith and learning through the displacement of the Church from education.

18th Century to Today

By the 18th and 19th centuries, colleges in America and Europe were abandoning the Christian worldview for interpreting information because it was considered too narrow (Lawrence, Burton, and Nwosu, 2005). Intellectuals turned their attention to an empiricist approach to knowledge in which only ideas that could be tested and proven were accepted. Since God was unverifiable through an empirical process, He was not deemed worthy of the attention of scholars and educators. With this desire for tested knowledge, by the end of the 19th century Universities were becoming more and more research-centered rather than ministerially driven (Badley, 1994). This was the reality of higher education despite the fact that many of the oldest universities in the world were originally founded to develop ministers and not researchers. Faith and learning continued to be separated and disintegration was the approach educators took during this period.

At the dawn of the 20th century, many scholars began to see the error in his ways by bringing about a disintegration of faith and learning. People began to demand for the reintegration of faith and learning in Christian education. Two men who began the debate for bringing back the IFL were Alexis Bertrand

and Guy Maxwell. These men both wrote theses about the IFL in the late 1890's. They made a claim for developing connections between subjects for the sake of the child (Badley, 1994). This was a call not just to bring faith back but also to develop a multidisciplinary approach to teaching. In 1903, Ellen White, in her book *Education*, called for a holistic education that addressed a student's physical, mental, and spiritual development. White continued in her book with the idea that true education includes knowledge of the God of the Bible. In addition, White (1977) states that the true value of education is determined by whether a child understands the divine revelation of the Bible and accepts Christ. The IFL was returning to the world of education with the goal of bringing or keeping students in Christ.

According to Badley (1994), after World War II, the Christian evangelicals of America developed two goals for the IFL. The first was that schools should embrace their conservative theological convictions while having a relationship with academia. This is characterised as a dialogical approach to faith and learning (Hall et. al, 2009). The second was that all academic fields of study should be acceptable in schools. While such ideas seemed promising and looked as a way to return faith to education, for the most part these goals have been ignored in Christian schools. In the world of Christian education, one will see that there is a two-realm theory of truth. The first realm is the knowledge that is acquired through science and empiricism. This came out of the days of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The second realm is knowledge acquired through religious experience, which is what many Christians today base the reality of their connection with God upon (Holcomb, 2006). The first realm mentioned speaks of traditionally learning which happens through the senses and comes from the Greek philosophy of realism. The second realm comes from faith and is defined as something that happens outside of the empirical world of science and this is echoed in the philosophy of idealism. True IFL was beginning to return to the domain of Christian education.

It was during the 20th century that the phrase 'integration of faith and learning' was developed. Frank Gaebelein (cited in Badley, 1994 & 2009) first used the phrase "integration of faith and learning" in 1954 in the book *The Patterns of God's Truth*. In this book Gaebelein, address problems that impede the IFL. The next major use of this term was in Arthur Holmes book *The Idea of a Christian College*. Holmes (1975) argued that a Christian College should be an arm of the church, which entails evangelistic, missionary, and humanitarian responsibilities in addition to academic goals. Evangelicals knew they wanted integration but they never defined what integration was. The clarification provided by Gaebelein and Holmes has helped Christian educators determine what the IFL is.

Conclusion

True education involves the cooperation of faith and learning in a way that leads students to a knowledge of God. Throughout history faith and learning has played a role in education. From the true IFL of the early Kingdom of Israel, to the counterfeit faith and learning of the Dark Ages, to the disintegration of faith and learning during the 18th-20th century the IFL has been in the realm of education. God has used the IFL to reach out to his people so that His image can be restored to them. With this knowledge, educators are being called to bring faith into the classroom to provide young people with an education that will last throughout eternity.

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