

Education for the Kingdom of God
“Toward an Extraordinary Christian Life”
For the February 2002 *Chalcedon Report*

Ronald Kirk
Created December 4, 2001
Modified October 28, 2002

Toward Biblical Christian Education

Early in my walk as an evangelical Christian, my church wished to start a Christian school and I took a personal interest in it. Therefore, when a Christian television program featured John “Quade” Saunders, Christian activist and Hollywood movie actor, spoke on America’s heritage of Christianity and education, I listened with rapt interest. Mr. Saunders spoke of many early Americans as dedicated Christians who sought to incorporate their faith into every sphere and activity of life. From the beginning, Americans self-consciously designed their civil governments according to a Biblical standard and “for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith” (*The Mayflower Compact*, 1620). Daniel Webster declared the American Pilgrims sought to incorporate their Christian faith “through all their institutions, civil, political or literary.”¹ Mr. Saunders spoke of Noah Webster and his efforts to preserve and enhance the American English language, a necessity for the support of America’s unique, free, Christian institutions. He said Webster devoted his life to educate Americans in such a way as to perpetuate these free institutions. This television presentation began to change my perspective, my career and my life.

Previously, I harbored the unspoken thought that I could only find appropriate expressions for my faith through service in some church ministry. In my newfound life, I desired Christ to be the center of everything concerning me, but appropriate expressions for my devotion seemed very limited. Not even family life, apart from church activity seemed fundamentally important. My pastor told me I must be content with four nights home a month if I was to serve in the ministry. I must gather with the saints in worship and fellowship, or else I must occupy myself in personal devotion. All other time spent must be futile idleness, mere packing material for the true and spiritual life I desired.

Well, what is wrong with the life of a monk, personally devoted to Christ and laying his life down for Him? What is wrong with the hedonist, who simply seeks to make himself as comfortable as possible while he waits for his reward in eternity? Why should I not conform to the world so that I may get along more easily with it? The one answer is simple: These ways neglect both the soil and the appropriate fruit of the Gospel’s Great Commission. John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ; that is, he prepared men’s hearts. Without Christians exerting the influence of their carefully crafted Christian character and personality on the world around them, the soil of men’s hearts grows fallow, shallow, hardened or choked with weeds. Indeed, when Christians neglect the stewardship of life in all its facets, social, scientific, civil, economic, recreational, and artistic, because we have lived our lives selfishly, then the militant humanists, the God haters, most willingly fill the vacuum we leave. Many humanists are militant for *their* faith. Most humanists are at least consistent with their faith. And why should the world desire the Christian life if it holds no meaning other than to sit and wait for eternity or as mere fire insurance? Have we not then made ourselves irrelevant? Jesus said, “You know a tree by its fruit.” And the seed planted in good soil will produce “some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold.”

Why should a fulfilling Christian life wait until eternity to begin? Instead, what if the average Christian rose to his personal calling and stirred up his gifts? Why not live as if Christ had sent His Holy Spirit to inspire and comfort us so that no challenge is too great, no potential accomplishment too small? God made us complete human beings in Christ. Imagine how will it glorify God when the greatest novelists, the greatest painters, the greatest composers, the greatest jurists, the greatest scientists, the greatest families, the greatest businesses are the result of the self-conscious taking of every thought captive to the obedience of life. Imagine the heroic character which the Holy Spirit will build in the heart of the believer whose whole being seeks to be so worked into the depth of the soul and so filled with Him.

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If this premise is sound, and people of the Reformation and the Protestant faith certainly thought so, then how indeed should we then live? The answer to that question has remained my passion and the quest of my life since John Saunders introduced the idea to me so long ago.

The theoretical answer is simple, while the finished deed requires a lifetime: Christians must again be disciples of Christ in every sense of that term. The acceptance of Christ’s salvation and personal religious devotion mark the necessary, but mere beginning. From there, we must once more learn to read the Scriptures for the commands and principles which will make our lives conformable to Christ. We must master a *method* of Christian scholarship. Fortunately for us, we need not invent such method of scholarship, but rather re-discover that same historic skill which led to the great exploratory, scientific, literary and civil accomplishments and triumphs of the Reformation through the nineteenth century. Thanks to the work of Dr. Rushdoony and many others, this work of re-discovery is quite accessible to everyone, and a primary aim of this column will be to articulate this method in considerable and practical detail for every present level of education, and scholarly development and accomplishment, from beginner to veteran. In this regard, it is very important to remember that a scholar or disciple is but a willing learner, and not necessarily an accomplished one. A truly accomplished scholar is one who has humbly persevered—a mere follower in advance of others.

When we have finally adopted a Biblical method of scholarship and taken seriously Jesus’ admonishment to “learn from me,” we will have begun to learn the science of life. When we begin self-consciously to apply our learning to ordinary life, we will be on our way toward the mastery of the art of life. When Jesus commands us not to worry, do we trust Him? When Paul says to stir up personal gifts, do we earnestly prepare to use them? When Paul says to learn the Scriptures, but not for interminable bickering, do we learn, yet restrain ourselves for the sake of both personal growth and brotherhood (but without compromising our consciences!)? Do we train our children and take pains to have such personal relationships with them that they become our (and others) best friends when mature? Do we study a subject of our passion, master it, and then contribute to it and take leadership in it? Then we have truly begun to *practice* the art of Christian life.

Upon the observations of fulfilled Christian lives in history, we find a legacy of consistent themes or principles. Please stay tuned to this column as we expand and apply these principles, with the result that we further extend the tent pegs of the influence of the Gospel, through the heroic efforts of ordinary people moving toward extraordinary lives.

(Recommended reading: *The Messianic Character of American Education* by R.J. Rushdoony, and *The Foundations of Christian Scholarship* by Gary North (Ed.))

¹ Verna Hall, *Christian History of the Constitution: Christian Self-Government* (San Francisco, Foundation for American Christian Education: 1975), p. 248.