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Holy Spirit: Universal Education—P6

“They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction” (Jeremiah 32:33).

Where did the western world get the idea that universal education was fundamental, and that the pursuit of truth and knowledge was paramount? Was it a return to Greek and Roman ideals? An evolved sensibility? No, it actually came about through the Church.

Until very recently in world history, the Church was the driving force behind universal literacy and education, as well as the source for nearly all the great institutions of higher learning. The Church has been the world’s greatest, most persistent, and most effective institution for providing education to the common man across national boundaries in the last 2000 years. And for over a millennia, the Church was the primary way a poor person of low birth could learn to read and be educated.

In fact, the great educational institutions of European and American history were often started as divinity schools that expanded with the Protestant Reformation to explore God’s creation and seek knowledge and wisdom. The role of Christianity in western education is foundational, from Britain’s earliest college, formed by the Celtic preacher St. Illtud in 500 AD, to the great universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Princeton, and Yale—to name a few—all begun and managed as Christian education institutions, spreading true knowledge to mankind everywhere.

Even the printing press was invented so that the knowledge of the Bible could reach the common man in their own tongue, and it brought with it the potential to share all manner of knowledge. As if that is not enough, Isaac Newton applied his Christian education

in his approach to science (God is a God of order and law, which He requires us to study, so His creation ought also to be governed by discernible laws that can be studied), and the single greatest leap in the Scientific Revolution was sparked, causing everyone to look for the laws of the Creator in nature, establishing the fields of biology, chemistry, geology, etc.

The world likes to claim the Church is a purveyor of ignorance, but the opposite is actually true. The Church has always been and still is the single greatest force in the world for universal education and literacy. Christians were the innovators and creators of modern education with its desire that people everywhere have access to truth, true knowledge, and wisdom, regardless of race, wealth, importance, etc, so they can learn from God’s Word and learn about Him and His creation.

This should be no surprise, for God calls Himself a teacher, and *“Who is a teacher like Him?”* (Job 36:22) As for Jesus, everyone called Him “Rabbi” because He tirelessly taught everyone, poor or rich, and He acknowledged, *“You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am”* (Jn. 13:13). The Bible puts a heavy emphasis on education, pre-eminently valuing the pursuit of truth, wisdom, and knowledge: *“The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge”* (Pro. 18:15), *“for the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding”* (Pro. 2:6).

Unfortunately, as mankind turns its back on God, it undermines its own understanding: *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Isa. 4:6a). By its foolishness, the world is in danger of losing all it attained through the work of the Holy Spirit, which is *“the spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord”* (Isa. 11:2). May they return to God and be restored. Even so, Amen.

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