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“I Have To Study What!?”

Roger Chambers

Why do I so often find myself defending general studies at the Bible College? I know: It's because **most** students come with a built-in enthusiasm for Bible study (“why can't I take all Bible courses?”); **many** are champin' at the bit to get into the pulpit (“you mean I can't take Art of Preaching until I'm junior!”), but **few** come to us panting after English grammar, history, and philosophy (“who cares when Rome fell? I gotta memorize the Sermon on the Mount and my Toyota's got a flat”).

Our generation of the Church is childish. Too often we play word games in the pulpit, sing syncopated nonsense and call it church music – or worse, praise, and fight over who pays for the hot dogs when the God Squad goes on it's next spiritual retreat at Circus World. Secular society doesn't hate the Church; it doesn't take the Church that seriously. The world knows it's in deep trouble, so it can't take time for our stained glass amusement centers; it doesn't see that we have very much to do with reality. We're in this fix because too many of our leaders are intellectual children.

We have intellectually mature people out in front, but not enough. We must have more – many more – who can move down to the deep end of the pool. It's not enough for the preacher to be a nice guy who means well; congenial pious incompetence is a greater threat to the Church than is atheistic Humanism. Yes, it is.

A child is one who, for all practical purposes, dates the beginning of time from his own birthday and believes that all useful knowledge lies within his own common-sense perceptions. Wisdom is what works – or pays. Modern theories of education have tended to produce a high school graduate who is focused on his own feelings and ready to elevate the slightest whim that happens on his brain. He has a vague, pseudo-scientific image of prehistory (something close to Fred Flintstone), and a poorly outlined picture of the present. Between the cave man and the space shuttle lies only a shadowy and unimportant region peopled by ghostly shapes of Roman emperors, gold-seeking Spanish galleons, Napoleon (who went somewhere and fought someone over something), and George Washington standing up in the boat because every time he sat down someone gave him an oar. This offspring of modern pedagogy often believes he is going to do something significant in the present without bothering with the long perspective of the centuries. He's wrong.

Christianity is a historical as well as a dynamic religion. It is true, and all truth plays by the same rules. At CFBC we teach the Bible and how to teach and preach the Bible. And we keep the whole thing in the real world where it belongs, the world of man (anthropology), languages, literature, history, geography, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and communication skills. We call it Man and His World and it's one-third of our curriculum.

A religious education without what we call general studies might prepare a man to play with the other kids (or enter a third-rate monastery); it won't get him ready to take the real Gospel to the real world.