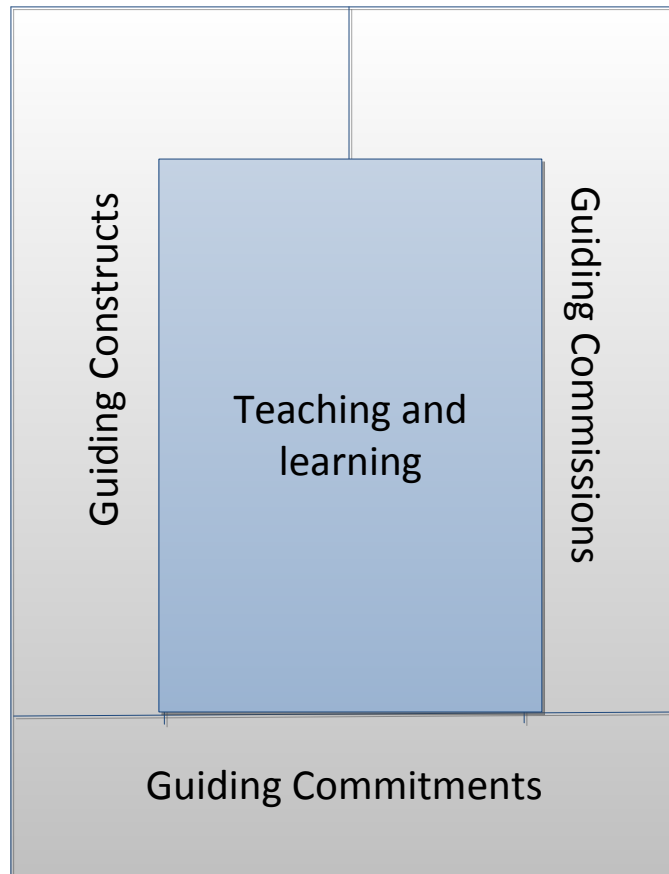




CHRISTIAN
EDUCATION
TRUST

**Philosophy of Christian
Education**



Philosophy Framework

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This document outlines the foundational philosophy of Christian Education motivating all the operations of the Trust.

It aims to encourage its readers to glorify and enjoy God forever by knowing, worshipping and serving Him in responsible, loving and faithful community. We thus aim to live out the great Biblical commandments and commission.

Providing Biblically based, Christ-centred education forms the heart of the mission of the Christian Education Trust. Our approach to teaching and learning is shaped by our Guiding Commitments, Guiding Commissions and Guiding Constructs, as represented in the diagram opposite.

Accordingly, the document consists of three main parts:

Part A outlines our **Guiding Commitments**

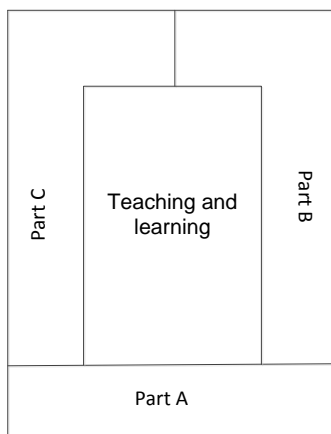
- The commitment to search for the Truth
- The commitment to Scripture as foundational
- The commitment to glorifying God

Part B outlines our **Guiding Commissions**

- The Creation Mandate – the formation of culture
- The Great Commission – the formation of disciples
- The Great Commandment – the formation of community

Part C outlines our **Guiding Constructs**

- The purpose of Education
- The people involved in Education
- The process (pedagogy) of Christian Education
- The context of Christian Education



The Guiding Commitments (Part A) and the Guiding Commissions (Part B) are derived from Scripture. The Guiding Constructs (Part C) obtain their meaning and content from Parts A and B. Through working together, these three parts provide the framework for our educational practice.

PART A OUR GUIDING COMMITMENTS

1. TRUTH

We are committed to the search for Truth:

A commonly received wisdom today is that there is no such thing as absolute truth and that truth is what we perceive it to be. Not knowing what absolutes were, Pontius Pilate could have been a twenty first century philosopher when he asked Jesus “What is truth?”(John 18:38). On another occasion Jesus had said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Since then, many philosophers have fruitlessly searched for Truth elsewhere. The Postmodernist consensus is that “one can be absolutely sure of nothing”, but can one be absolutely sure about that?

The earliest Christian thinkers believed that truth was revealed from the Creator God, and that the Holy Spirit would lead them to it. Prophets and teachers like Paul and Luke would receive ‘another’ i.e. ‘from above’. They did not need “that man should teach them” (1 John 2:27). This idea was to receive a major challenge in the 13th Century when Thomas Aquinas began to stress the need for *Bible plus Reason* as the intelligent, scholastic route to truth. By the time of the Renaissance, the paradigm had subtly shifted to *Reason plus Bible*. Descartes exploited this in doubting everything except his own intellect, “*cogito ergo sum*” (I think therefore I am). Only a century or so later, with the writings of Locke, Berkeley and Hume do we reach the intellectually narcissistic triumph of human *Reason Alone*. In all ages and times, there have been challenges to the Biblical teaching of how Truth is revealed. Some of these include:

- Other spiritual sources
- People’s own reason without reference to Godly absolutes
- Some combination of these with each other and the Bible

Meanwhile, modern science was arising as a means of listening to the voice of God by careful observation of ‘God’s book of creation’. God’s other book of scripture was cast off by many as a source of truth. Observation and reason were considered the sole source of truth. Bolstered by the Darwinian concept that we could have originated by chance processes alone, the West began to move into a climate of thought where the God of truth was deemed to be effectively dead. Naturalism and Evolution, randomness and the denial of any ultimate purpose were to rule the academy. Writers like Nietzsche, Kafka, Beckett and Hesse introduced intellectuals of the 20th Century to nihilism, meaninglessness and the theatre of the absurd. Godless despair was even venerated by Camus and Sartre.

In New Zealand, traditional Christian orthodoxy and Biblical truth came under assault from liberal theologians such as Lloyd Geering. Not only has the God of truth been rejected but the very concept of truth is under threat.

Many natural scientists today are Christian or at least theist. However, there are many who continue to ignore spiritual realities. This belief can be seen to be reflected in art, literature, politics and business. These non-theistic beliefs are prevalent in the social sciences, including education.

Despite this bankruptcy of thought, good scientific research, especially recently, is confirming the activity in creation of a 'super intellect' (Hoyle, 1983) who, according to Michael Behe (1996) is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the face of this context, the bold challenge for Christian educators is to:

1. recognise the intellectual climate into which modern academia has descended where the only accepted paradigm seems to be secular naturalism
2. consider research whether it fits or defies secular naturalism.
3. return to Judeo Christian roots of revealed Truth in the unchanging Christ (Hebrews 13:8).
4. recognise that education is a spiritual endeavour. It is not philosophically or pedagogically neutral, nor is it limited to cognitive, physical, social or emotional components.
5. commit to the imperative of a Biblical basis for education and the need for a stated 'meta-narrative' framework for Christian curriculum (Col 2:3).

2. SCRIPTURE

We are committed to Scripture as foundational:

Key Scriptures: 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Colossians 3:16; Psalm 119; Hebrews 4:12; Deuteronomy 5:32-33; 6:4-9; Psalm 19:7-11; John 17:6-19; 2 Timothy 2:15

The Scripture is essential for life and foundational for learning. It is divinely inspired, trustworthy, revelatory and active. King David affirmed that the words of God are true (2 Samuel 7:28). Jesus added that the word of God is not only true but “truth” itself (John 17:17). The Scripture is authoritative for all of life, including the life of the Christian Education Trust (CET) community.

It is both a subject to be studied in itself and it also shapes the goals for and the processes of Christian Education.

Throughout time scholars have committed themselves to be faithful in translation, bringing the Biblical story to everyday people. Scriptures in their original form, when properly interpreted will be shown to be true – whatever domain of life is being considered. God speaks to us through them and consequently reveals his moral law, just as creation reveals God’s physical and biological laws.

Inspiration of Scripture - 2 Timothy 3:16

Saying that the Scripture is inspired or ‘God-breathed’ indicates that Scripture is the product of the creative Spirit of God and emanates from He who does not and cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). The authors of Scripture did not invent what they wrote. They did not merely give us their interpretations of God’s powerful work – rather the Holy Spirit guided them as they wrote, so that they wrote according to the will of God (2 Peter 1:19-21) – and yet they could do this in a way which reflects who they were, their own writing styles, abilities, personalities. They were not passive secretaries, writing down by dictation whatever God spoke or whispered into their ears.

Sufficiency of Scripture – 2 Timothy 3:17

The sufficiency of Scripture means that in its original and subsequent faithful translations, it contains all that Christians at any stage in history need in order to know God, to love Him and serve Him in a pleasing manner. In practical terms, this means that Christians cannot subtract or add anything from Scripture, nor ignore any of its teachings (Revelation 22:18-19).

This is important to Christian education because part of understanding Truth through God's revealed Word is learning to interpret it accurately.

Scripture is essential for living and learning – given to us to learn how to fear the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and to hear and obey what Jesus taught (He being the Word). This is to lead to the freedom of service through love in all dimensions of life (not just for cognitive assent). Along with Creation, it helps us to know who God is and what His priorities are (Jeremiah 9:23, 24; 2 Peter 1:3). It shapes our view of the world, our commitments in it, and the way people ought to relate and live in that world.

Scripture provides the basis for a world view, a view of reality in which God, through His Word (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6, 9; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Titus 1:1-3; Hebrews 11:3) is the Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of all things (Acts 17:16-34; Colossians 2:8; Joshua 1:8, 9; Romans 1; Hebrews 1:1-3, 10).

Scripture is an active component of learning

While all systems of philosophy require a measure of faith, Scripture provides the most internally consistent system, accurately fitting the external data. Therefore, it provides a robust system on which to build a moral and purposeful life.

Scripture is understood through the metaphors of both 'lamp' and 'light' (Psalm 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19). It illuminates our way of being and working - both for the close-up, immediate aspects of life, as well as those which are in the future. However, for it to be effective in shaping our view of reality, relationships and the future, we need to read, meditate on, memorise, study and be committed to it (Psalm 119; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Peter 2:1-3; Colossians 3:16) so that it will build our faith (Romans 10:17), transform our thinking, and, indeed shape our way of living in the world.

In practical terms within the educational task, we do not seek to add proof texts or to tack on the word "God" into each lesson. Rather we seek to interpret all components of the education task, such as its goals, content and method, through the Scriptural lens (2 Timothy 3:16).

By God's grace, our active and continuous study of Scripture will lead to thinking and perceiving which is aligned with God's character and priorities (1 Corinthians 1:16; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 3:16, 17).

3. GLORIFYING GOD

We are committed to glorifying God

In considering education that is Christian we must begin by acknowledging that education is merely one expression of our overarching purpose for existence. Therefore, before we can consider the purpose of education, we must firstly consider the purpose of life, and why we are created.

The first question in the Westminster Larger Catechism is, "What is the chief and highest end of Man?" and the answer is: Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and fully enjoy him forever."

- We were created for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7; Ephesians 1:11, 12) and therefore we are to do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- We are to enjoy and take delight in Him and in our relationship with Him (Psalm 16:11; Psalm 73:25-26; Psalm 84:1, 2, 10; John 10:10).
- We are to know Him intimately (Proverbs 2:5; John 17:3; 2 Timothy 1:12), worship Him (1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 96:9; John 4:24) and serve Him (Deuteronomy 10:12; Matthew 4:10; Ephesians 2:10).
- We are to live our lives responsibly (Proverbs 9:12; Romans 14:12, 1 Peter 4:5), lovingly (Deuteronomy 10:19; John 13:35; John 15:12; 1 Peter 1:22) and faithfully (Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Peter 4:10).
- We are to live in community with one another (Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10) as we strive to fulfil the great Biblical commandments and commissions as set forth in the Scriptures.

PART B

OUR GUIDING COMMISSIONS

Christians should view and relate with people, creation and work in a distinctive way. Since the purpose of humanity is to glorify God and the Scripture informs us of this, we look to Scripture to guide us as to the way we fulfil this purpose. God has provided some major directives that shape the way in which we pursue the kingdom of God – the rule and glory of God in all things.

1. THE CREATION MANDATE: CULTURE FORMERS

Key Scriptures: Genesis 1: 26 – 28; Matthew 5: 13-16

Other foundational passages: Exodus 20: 1-20; Psalm 8; Matthew 5 – 7 and Romans 12

In Genesis 1 we see God call people to steward the created order. This can only be achieved by humans working together, using their God-given differences to complement one another. Thus, as part of this call to be stewards, God also calls us to develop social order. The Scriptures clearly outline principles and 'ways of being' so that our cultural formation fits God's design and brings him glory. For this reason, we recognise these two important aspects for our consideration. In Christian Education literature the two foci may be referred to as the *Creation Mandate*, and the *Cultural Commission*.

a. THE CREATION MANDATE ASPECT:

Stewardship and leadership of creation involves disciplined study of that creation. We have come to call this science, research and technology. Their purpose is:

- i. to reveal the character of God (Romans 1:19-20) and thus enhance our **worship**.
- ii. Romans 1 reminds us to keep our eyes on the Creator and not the creation. It is not a matter of *if* we will serve, but rather *whom* we will serve. Contemporary thinking tends to reduce everything to its physical components with the end result that God is ignored and people start to believe that it is they who are great. This seems to be ignoring the discovering of the physical components and the more metaphysical work of attributing first cause to the components – the Creator to teach us how to think and live (Job 12: 7-9; Proverbs 6:6-8; Philippians 2:12ff; Matthew 10:16) and thus enhance our **wisdom**.

Consideration of creation leads to understanding how to think and live (Job 12:7-9; Proverbs 6:6-8; Philippians 2:12ff; Matthew 10:16). The point made by Kuyper¹ should be noted and is important. It doesn't make sense then if we proceed to treat school subjects, which are derived from the created world, as if they had nothing to do with God. This is one particular place where the language of the educational space (classroom, learning space, lecture room, field visit) is critical.

- iii. to give us understanding of the principles and interconnectedness of the created world so that we can continue to work with it in a way that it continues to “speak forth the glory of God”. Thus our **work** in fulfilling this mandate is enhanced.

The Creation Mandate includes authority under God to use but not abuse creation. We have both the right and the responsibility to work in this manner. (See Greene quote below)²

It is proper and appropriate for us to contribute to conservation and protection of endangered creatures – as they speak forth the glory of God and of his character (Romans 1). As a direct result of the creation mandate, Christian educators remain committed to the care and stewardship of creation and not its exploitation. Such learning and work is ‘blessed’ and also to be for his glory (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17). There is no spiritual/secular split. Management of the earth with its structures and communities is a divinely ordained activity.

b. THE CULTURAL COMMISSION ASPECT

Inherent within the Genesis 1 command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ is the need to develop social order that enables the increasing number of people to live together in a manner that also demonstrates the character and glory of God.

¹ “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” Kuyper, A. (1998). Sphere Sovereignty. In J.D. Bratt (Ed.), *Abraham Kuyper: A centennial reader* (pp. 461-490). Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans. (quote from p. 488)

² “The creation provides the materials we are given to work with. Our environment in the created world, our time, our bodies, minds, and hearts with their skills and potentials – all have been provided as the channels through which to express our love for God and our neighbors as we live all of life in the service of the Lord and for the advancement of his kingdom”. Greene, A.E. (1998). *A transforming vision: Reclaiming the future of Christian education*. Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design (p. 107)

Two important considerations flow from this for the Christian educator. The first is the way we view people, and the second the way we view the task of cultural formation and transformation.

People are image bearers, able to experience relationship with God differently to other components of creation.

We are designed to be relational, communicating, inventive, intentional, moral, thinking worshippers as we live the affairs of everyday life. We know that as a result of 'the fall' the original image is marred. However, the work of Jesus on the cross of Calvary provides a way for restoration of the image.

The qualities of righteousness, holiness and true knowledge are identified with the renewal of the image of God in people (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). Scripture emphasises a call that Jesus' disciples use their God-given authority to serve others in humility (e.g. Matthew 5:8, 9, 44; 19:21; 20:1-16; 26-28; 21:12-13; 23:8-12; 25:14-30).

Scripture clearly indicates that this mandated task to be responsible and faithful stewards was not a meaningless sequence of events without direction, but in fact a 'blessed' task which provides the opportunity for God's people to understand and be involved in what He planned³. Implicit in this command is the responsibility to shape or transform human cultures so that they continue to speak forth God's glory. This includes contributing to effective social order. Scripture clearly establishes principles by which we can fulfill our task.

Matthew 5:13-16 is Jesus' description of the role of believers in affecting culture and outlines two roles - both *salt* (up close and personal, preservers, keeping the original intention) and *light* (standing apart, demonstrating and declaring the right way). When God's ways are followed, people flourish.

It is the intention that the educational process will continually confront the student with the wonder of God and His works. It is our hope that as a result students will turn and see the character and qualities of the Lord of the universe. Romans 1:20 reminds one that *since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse*. Psalm 8 expresses the glory of God's majesty throughout the earth and of humankind's special place as His stewards. This encapsulates all of what education should reflect – of entering into and living out the truth that God *is* God and all that exists is subject to Him and His purposes.

³ That is "the expression of God's intention for creation, in the midst of which God is constantly and effectively active". Groome, T. (1980). *Christian religious education: Sharing our story and vision* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass. (p. 36).

2. THE GREAT COMMISSION: DISCIPLE FORMERS

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20. New International Version)⁴

Jesus commissioned his followers to go and make disciples of people from all nations. This requires three actions - going in His authority, baptising and teaching. The Great Commission rests on the authority of the sovereign, omnipotent Christ – all authority is in the hands of the risen Saviour. It is on the basis of that authority that His followers are to go and make disciples of all peoples. As His disciples, Christians are the vehicle of Christ’s mission to all peoples in all contexts, including educational settings, throughout the world.

In general, it is a church community that baptises people. It is, however the responsibility of all Christians to declare the gospel and to teach others to obey everything that Christ commanded (as found in the whole of the New Testament (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 4:2: 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25).

Indeed, all disciples motivated by love are to learn and do that which Christ commanded and then to teach others to do the same; that the body of Christ might be edified (Ephesians 4:11-13).

In this sense it could be said that Jesus has set up a perpetual ‘schooling system’; a system whereby people can come to glorify and enjoy God forever, knowing, worshipping and serving Him in a responsive, loving and faithful community.

Within the Christian educational context, the Great Commission requires educators to declare the gospel appropriately and faithfully, and to teach students to obey Christ’s commands, including those found in Matthew 28:18-20. It is encouraging that Jesus assures His disciples that He, the ‘great I am’, is with us always, in the midst of every learning context.

⁴ Biblos. (n.d.). *Matthew 28:18-20*. Retrieved from <http://niv.scripturetext.com/matthew/28.htm>

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT: COMMUNITY FORMERS

Key Scriptures: Mark 12:28-31; John 13:34-35; Acts 3:42-47

Jesus described the commandment to love God and to love one another as “the most important one” (Mark 12: 29). He emphasised that “to love God” was at the heart of the entire law. By quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 he was stressing what God has eternally asked of His people (Deuteronomy 10:12; 11:1; Psalm 31:23; Micah 6:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Jude 21) and that love for one’s neighbour will emerge as a consequence (1 John 4:19-21). The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-21) underscore the concept of loving God in the first four commandments and loving others in the remaining commandments. It should be noted that the love of God comes first, and is then followed by the love of others. When one comes first into a loving relationship with God, then he or she will be able to clearly comprehend love for oneself or for others - for “God is love” (1 John 4:16). Hence, a caring Christian relationship with others can occur only within the context of a loving relationship with God.

Numerous passages in Scripture teach us how we are to love, communicate with, and treat each other (e.g. Ephesians 4-6; Colossians 3). In order for Christians to understand such passages in their historical context they must gain a clear Biblical understanding of Christian fellowship thereby enabling them to serve the Lord in ‘responsible, loving and faithful community’. Christians of the first century Mediterranean world lived in closer physical community and intimate interaction than the typical 21st century westerner. The privatised, individualistic, transient and consumer-oriented lifestyle typical of many Christians today would no doubt appear quite confusing to those in the early Church. Christian education must strive to be conducted in a manner consistent with this understanding and therefore must have a focus on social relationships that glorify God.

PART C

OUR GUIDING CONSTRUCTS

1. THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

In a nation in which education for children between the ages of six and sixteen has been compulsory for generations, it is easy to lose sight of why we do education. We fall into the trap of doing it because that is what we do between the ages of six and sixteen – it has become customary. Or, we lose sight of the real reason we educate and in a pragmatic and short-sighted society, put up reasons such as to produce more qualified workers, or to help raise our standard of living, or to ensure we do not fall behind other civilised societies, or so that children may have choices in life about what they do. Any one of these reasons has some validity but on its own is insufficient. This approach to education also affects what happens in the early childhood and tertiary sectors.

To understand Biblical Christ-centred education we can go back to Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 6:4-9 where God gives a clear outline of why parents (and by implication, societies) must educate their children. It is to ensure they come to understand life's chief purpose as being to love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind, to keep His commands and decrees about how to live. Moses instructs the nation of Israel to impress these commands and decrees upon their children at all times so that they do not forget them. In Psalm 78 the Psalmist reminds us that telling the story of God's work in creation leads children to, "... put their trust in God and ... not forget His deeds but ... keep His commands."

In the New Testament we find this emphasised again by Jesus and the apostles culminating in Paul's great exposition in the letter to the Romans. Here he reminds his readers of God's plan of redemption for the Jews first and then for the Gentiles (Romans 1:16; Romans 11), and calls those who accept Christ as Saviour to be transformed by the renewal of their minds (Romans 12:1,2) through submitting themselves wholly to God's purpose and plan as set out in Deuteronomy.

So what is our purpose then as Christian educators? It is to teach our students to understand God and the cosmos He created so that they too may come to worship Him and follow Him with their whole being. We do this by taking them on a journey of discovery of the world and themselves, pointing out to them along the way the wonders of God the Creator and how life should be lived in relationship to Him.

On this journey the students may also discover aspects for themselves which even the teacher has not noticed before.

Through the basic three “R’s” and on into the realms of Physics, Mathematics, Philosophy, Sociology, Literature, History and the practical realms of Arts and Technologies etc., we unfold with students the wonders of the cosmos and of themselves, giving every opportunity for them to bow before their Maker in worship and dedicate their talents to serving Him and others.

Education can only truly be transformative when each student encounters the Living God and submits to Him. However, even an unregenerate student can learn, grow and be challenged about the type of person they should become and be equipped to live according to Biblical principles in life.

2. THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN EDUCATION

a. THE NATURE OF PERSONHOOD

Key Scriptures: Genesis 1: 26-28; Psalm 8; Psalm 139; Ephesians 4; Romans 1

Our view of people involved in education shapes our way of being together – including our expectations of each other. Each person by design is: a worshipper and image bearer and therefore one who chooses, thinks, feels and works.

People are worshippers: It has often been said that people have a God sized vacuum at their centre. They are made in such a way that they cannot exist without worshipping. Related to worship is the notion of wonder (Psalm 8) and the attitude of gratitude (Romans 1). When we worship God, we are grateful and express this gratitude in service and worship. If we worship created things (including human beings) it leads to pride and a misplaced sense and use of power. The triune God who lives in loving relationship, created us so that, as the book of Ecclesiastes concludes, human life is futility unless it is lived in relationship to the Creator God (also Jeremiah 9: 23; John 17: 20-26).

People are image bearers: Since God is incorporeal (without physical body), our image bearing is in terms of our *structure* – the way we *are*, and in terms of our *function* - the way we *act*. For example, as God is holy, so we are created to be holy in both being and doing.

People are sinners with the hope of redemption: Originally, at the point of creation, humanity's image bearing flowed from the nature of God who is perfect and without fault. But due to the fall (Genesis 3) it is tainted by sin (Romans 1:21; Romans 3:23). We have a bias to selfishness and destruction (Jeremiah 17:5-10; Romans 7:7-25). The work of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary provides us with healing for our past, the promise of redemption for the present and hope for the future (Romans 8).

People are active choosers: We are morally responsible. As image bearers, we have a built in sense of right and wrong: a passion for justice, and creativity as well as worship. We can choose to reflect the nature of God. To do otherwise is to fall short of our original purpose and destiny. The Scripture continually calls people to choose, especially when it comes to wisdom (Proverbs 4:7; 9:1; Hebrews 13; James 1).

People are relational beings: We are communicating, emotional and relational beings. God has graced us (Ephesians 4: 1-16; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31) as enabling ministers with ways of serving - contributors to God's work and people (Ephesians 4:12). We are created to be active contributors, members of a charitable community, living and expressing the love of God.

People are meaning seekers: Recent studies in neuroscience confirm that people are designed/wired to seek and make meaning. Our health and wellbeing depend on being able to approach the world through a framework of meaning and therefore assimilate new experiences into that framework. This is one reason why 'story' is so important in education. People seek to 'connect' the past, present and future to make meaning of life. As the writer of Ecclesiastes expresses, true meaning is only found in relationship to God – His person, plan and priorities.

People are evaluative thinkers: We are created to be thinkers, not robots. Our thinking is reflected in our actions; consequently it is important to know what we believe and why we believe it. The Bible clearly links thinking to the way one acts - as we think, we act (Proverbs 23:7).

Positive observable change comes from transformed thinking (Romans 12:1-2). We are called to be like the Bereans (Acts 17:25) who evaluated what they heard by searching the Scripture to see if it be so. Key to this role is the need for us to saturate ourselves in the truth of the living Word of God (see Colossians 2: 6-8, 16-23).

People are purposeful: God's plan for people may be described as working with creation in ways which develop and participate in its redemption for God's glory. Following Jesus' example, the way we live here on earth is to demonstrate the kingdom of God (His rule) on earth (Matthew 6).

In structure and function, elements of our humanness are the way they are because God is the way He is. There are implications for Christian education in all of the above. Understanding these important characteristics influences its purposes and its processes.

b. THE NATURE OF PARTICIPANTS

Key Scripture: 1 Cor. 2:12-14

A valid mathematical and logical thesis requires content which meets these two criteria, namely, that its elements must be both necessary and sufficient. For participants in Christian education (broadly speaking learners and teachers), the Scripture passage cited above would seem to be critical. It would suggest that God's truth cannot be understood by the unregenerate mind. Biblical scholarship in itself is not enough. Many modern Bible scholars today are atheists. In keeping with 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 the ideal for "Biblically based, Christ-centred" education is for Spirit-filled students to be taught by Spirit-filled teachers who are thoroughly grounded in their knowledge of the Bible, which then also shapes the goals, content and processes of their endeavours.

If this be the case, there must be an evangelistic thrust to any Christian educational programme so that all who are engaged in it are exposed to the power of the gospel and the reality of the living Word. The end product of such a process should be well informed disciples of Christ able to serve and lead in a world often bereft of such quality and integrity.

Proverbs 22:6 Train up (lit. dedicate) a child in the way he should go; when he is old he will not depart from it. This verse is much quoted by Christian educationalists. It implies the agreement of three essential participants in the "career pathway" of a student - parents, child and teacher – about "the way he should go".

If these can prayerfully agree on God's programme for the future of the pupil, our hope is that lifelong learning and service for the LORD will result and those "wasted years" avoided.

3. THE PROCESS (PEDAGOGY) OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Key Scriptures: Proverbs 2:1-11; Colossians 2:2-3

The Christian educator is not swayed by bandwagon pedagogies which come and go. Rather, one's choice of pedagogy is an important aspect of one's intentionality (Ecclesiastes 12:9-11) and is chosen to increase the likelihood of fulfilling our vision and mission. The same root word is used for teaching and learning and so teaching and learning are viewed as reciprocal processes where 'to teach' means 'to cause to learn' (e.g. Deuteronomy 4:10).

Throughout Scripture we read of three key interrelated aspects of learning: knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Our pedagogy should target the development of each of these.

The gaining of knowledge is important – but not sufficient. Knowledge of and for itself leads to arrogance and pride (1 Corinthians 8:1), but without knowledge we wander ignorantly through life. Knowledge in Scripture is always for the purpose of living (Matthew 7:24-29; James 1:22-27). A Biblical pedagogy is holistic and values learning which can be lived in day to day life with wise choices and Godly responses to the situations around us.

We choose pedagogies which enable the development of understanding, skill and faithful character through which each student may bring glory to God (see Exodus 31 and the example of Bezalel).

The passages above clearly indicate a wide range of pedagogical approaches from didactic to discovery with the desired result that one will be wise. Such wisdom comes from God and so all teaching approaches seek to model and call for learning which integrates relationship with God through prayer, reading His word and consideration of His creation which speaks of His character (Romans 1:18-23). Throughout Scripture, reference is made to over 25 different pedagogical approaches.⁵

Our teaching approaches aim **to** develop students' ability to think and consider, with the goal of understanding who God is, what He has done (Psalm 8:3; Psalm 78:4) and to choose wise ways of living from such consideration; whether that consideration be about creation (Proverbs 6:6; Matthew 10:16; Philippians 2:15), other people's lives (Job 2:3) or the things around us (e.g., Exodus 3:3; Proverbs 24:30-34).

⁵ Chadwick, R.P. (1998). *Teaching and learning: An integrated approach to Christian education*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H Revell. (pp. 186-191)

The Scripture is also clear that effective pedagogy includes teaching **and** modelling. As we understand Luke 6:40, we realise that, in one sense, the Christian teacher is the pedagogy as it is one's life which teaches.

4. THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Key Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:5-7; Acts 17:25-27

A context provides the setting within which activity occurs. For Christian education such a context begins with the familiar and the close by and unfolds to the unfamiliar and distant; but always is chosen with the motivation to understand, know, experience, care and love – so that people may know God and find shalom.

The context should be *inspirational* as indicated in Psalm 78, where the stories build knowledge of who God is, and what He has done. It is a place where adults invite students into a context enriched with testimony (stories, narratives) which demonstrate their own commitments. It is a place where that which we have heard and seen is what is known and shared (Acts 4:20; 22:15; 1 John 1:1, 3).

The **physical context** of Christian education is that environment in which God has placed the student. This reality is created by God and continues to be dependent on Him. Students should be learning in a manner which enables them as often as possible to be 'hands on' with the physical creation. This is for at least two reasons. Firstly, the physical creation is an important context for education because it is as the learner works with creation they are exposed to the 'invisible characteristics of God' (Romans 1).

Secondly, as the student works with creation in an inquiring thoughtful manner, creation can teach them of God's ways (Job 12:7; Proverbs 6:6; Matthew 16:10, etc.). In particular this 'hands on' inquiry and consideration should be of the immediate environment in which God has placed them – including an understanding of how historical events have been influential.

Similarly, the **social context** of Christian education is that environment in which God has placed the student. Deuteronomy 6: 5-7 indicates that, at least for the education of the young, it should emerge from the immediate setting – the family and the local community. This signals the need to engage with the student's immediate community – either by venturing into it, or bringing members of that community into the formal learning environment. Learning should not be individualistic or be alienated from the very real needs and issues which face those within the local reality where the student lives – including the influence of historical events.

As the student develops foundational understanding, the context should expand into the international. Both the physical and social international reality should be known, understood, experienced and appreciated within a creation, fall, redemption framework.

Each specific learning environment within the school (classroom, garden, landscape, environs) should be carefully established as one which is educative. Contexts outside of the school environs, including the range of institutions which combine to make the local community (business, law, church, media, local government, etc.) should also fulfil this role.

Thus each component of the educational context is intentionally developed as a place where students can experience and practice living out their God given responsibilities.

The **current ideological context** in which Christian education occurs includes many influential factors which either help or hinder our endeavours. These include, but are not limited to, the place of spirituality in learning and the changing emphasis from knowing to being, including engagement with the perceived needs of the 21st Century learner. Currently, Christian educators are challenged to understand and critique socio-technological trends and the paradox of an over reliance on ICT⁶ together with a reluctance or tardiness to explore the potential that lies in educational technologies for learning, service and mission.

As Christian educators we need to recognise that as a result of the dualism referred to earlier in this document, the predominant stance in education is to ignore the place of spirituality. However, much of what we aim for flows out of a spiritual reality and relationship.

For example, the current NZ Curriculum document ignores the spiritual dimension with its only mention being within the glossary to interpret a Whakatauki (Proverb) related to Te Reo Māori⁷. Significantly, Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, the equivalent version of the curriculum for Māori-immersion schools, integrates consideration of the spiritual aspects of life and living throughout - especially in terms of well-being.

In the tertiary spectrum and with particular reference to learner engagement, the spiritual dimension is silenced. The exception to this scenario is the Early Childhood sector where the national curriculum, *Te Whāriki*⁸ is shaped by the aspiration for children “to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body **and spirit**, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society”.

⁶ Information Communication Technology

⁷ Ministry of Education (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*, (p. 14). Wellington, NZ: Learning Media

⁸ Ministry of Education (1996). *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mo ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa, Early Childhood Curriculum* (p. 9). Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.

As indicated earlier, a Biblical epistemology demonstrates that we know something by living it (e.g. James 1). Consequently, effective Christian education focuses on wisdom or what might be described as ‘lived learning’. Inherent in this consideration is the challenge to consider what it means to be a Christian educator and learner within the 21st Century where necessary literacies in terms of media, science, politics, culture and finance stand alongside traditional literacies such as Language and Numeracy. Recent movement in curriculum paradigm and documentation provides Christian educators with opportunities to be educational leaders. However, it is often easier to continue doing what has always been done, or doing what we have ourselves experienced. The current NZ curriculum paradigm, although intrinsically post-modern, provides Christian educators with open opportunities to seek God’s leading. For in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). This includes pedagogical and curriculum initiatives which align to a Biblical focus on “becoming like Christ” (Ephesians 4).

CONCLUSION

This statement of philosophy has been designed to capture the essential thinking around Biblical Christ-centred education that the Christian Education Trust seeks to deliver to students from Early Childhood to Tertiary level. It is in accord with much of the thinking that has shaped the Christian education movement around the world which has been growing in significance since the 1950s. The theology is drawn from mainstream evangelical and reformed traditions.

The purpose of this Statement is to act as a guide to present and future educators operating within the Trust’s various entities, thus ensuring a continuity of thought which began with the founders in the mid-1980s. While not claiming to be definitive it is hoped that it will form the foundation for the philosophy, principles and practice of all operations under the umbrella of Christian Education Trust.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Absolutes	Those beliefs which do not originate from people but exist apart from them and endure in spite of people's adherence to them or not; they are self-existent, self-sufficient
Axiology	Concerned with the question, What is of ultimate value? Theories of value
Biblical Excellence	That which pleases God and demonstrates his attributes
Christ-centred	An approach to education which acknowledges Christ as the originator and sustainer of life and that purpose and meaning are only to be found in submission to His will
Christian	That belief, practice or characteristic which originates from or is founded on, the teachings of the Bible and sets the owner apart from the non-Biblical, a Christ-follower
Commission	A command or instruction, given by God, which is expected to be carried out by humankind
Community	Any defined gathering of people connected by a common cause, belief set, purpose or origin
Creation	Those things brought into being by the spoken command of God, sustained by the power of God and experienced or known in some form by humans
Culture	That set of commonly held beliefs and practices which define a group of people from another
Curriculum	The planned outline of an educational programme

Disciple	A close follower of another who seeks to emulate them
Epistemology	Concerned with the question, "How do we know?" Theories of knowledge
Evolution	Development and change through incremental means often instigated by chance or a reaction to certain conditions
Integration	The blending of one set of beliefs into another such that they become intertwined; combining parts so they work together or form a whole
Mandate	A binding commission
Meta-narrative	An explanation or framework sufficient to explain the totality of humankind's existence and contain the narrative of any individual's life
Modernism	A philosophy of the twentieth century grounded in scientific materialism and which denies the immaterial or supernatural
Narrative	A 'story' which explains aspects of life
Naturalism	A philosophy which explains life by natural means only i.e. it denies any supernatural or metaphysical state
Nihilism	A state of being or belief in which no purpose or meaning is believed to exist
Ontology	Concerned with the question, "How do we exist?" Theories of being
Pedagogy	The art of teaching and learning
Philosophy	The discipline focused on seeking after wisdom or knowledge especially that which deals with ultimate reality. A structured belief or set of beliefs developed to explain an aspect of life
Post-modernism	A philosophy which moves beyond modernism and calls into question absolutes, even those apparently established by scientific materialism

Responsible	Being answerable or accountable for an action or state of being
Scholasticism	Providing an intellectual basis for something on the ground of the human intellect without reference to the Word of God
Scripture	The collection of 66 books making up the Bible and believed by evangelical Christians to be the inspired, inerrant and infallible word of God to humankind
Teleology	Concerned with question, "What is the purpose of life?" Theories of destiny or ultimate purpose
Unregenerate	The fallen and unredeemed state of all humankind caused by the failure of Adam and Eve in the Garden to obey God's instruction to them
Worship	The veneration of a being, object or idea and the offering of a sense of allegiance to that being, object or idea such that the worshipper believes themselves to be inferior to that being worshipped

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“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:15, New International Version)⁹

⁹ Biblos. (n.d.). *Colossians 3:15*. Retrieved from <http://niv.scripturetext.com/colossians/3.htm>

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