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# Pro Rege

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Volume 31 | Number 4

Article 2

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June 2003

## Learning to Teach from Within a Christian Perspective

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### Recommended Citation

Kok, John H. (2003) "Learning to Teach from Within a Christian Perspective," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 31: No. 4, 11 - 19.

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*\*Editor's Note: Dr. John H. Kok presented this paper at the IAPCHE conference at Hilltop University in Mikar, Nigeria, in 1999.*

## Learning to Teach From Within a Christian Perspective



**By John H. Kok**

Christians are called to obey and honor God in every area of life, within the church and beyond; for our world (creation) belongs entirely to him, the Creator. In doing so, we are called to use our gifts and talents with discernment in his service, as knowledgeable, competent, caring disciples of Jesus Christ. For those with academic ability, this call demands ways and means of higher education that acknowledge the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom and that equip students for lifelong learning and leadership in service to the King of kings. As students gain insight into the diversity within creation and culture; into the

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interrelatedness of creation and culture; into God, his laws, and his norms for the same; and into their own personal abilities and interests in responding obediently to God where he has placed them, they too will celebrate the purpose and potential of Christian higher education as so much more than an inside track to a respectable life of social and material success. To achieve these ends, Christians in higher education will need to work at learning to teach from within a Christian perspective.

In this paper I consider a few of the many facets involved in Christian higher education. I will refer to the social and natural sciences along the way, but my comments apply in most cases to all of the disciplines. First, I sketch the place of theoretical pursuit, in the various sciences and academic disciplines, within the context or framework defined by a *Christian perspective*, a biblical worldview. Then I turn to a number of observations and suggestions related to *teaching* within a Christian perspective. The last section touches on just a few factors that play a role in *learning* to teach from within a Christian perspective. The text that follows this article is *The Educational Framework of Dordt College*, which I take to be an excellent example of the kind of articulated foundation any institution of higher education needs to define its purpose and focus as holy to the Lord. Much of what follows is not, as such, my own but belongs to me as a benefit of on-going discussions about learning to teach from within a Christian perspective, discussions in which I've been privileged to participate for some twenty years at Dordt College.

### The context cut by a biblical worldview

A worldview may well be defined as one's comprehensive framework of basic beliefs about things, but our *talk* (confessed beliefs or cognitive claims) is one thing, and our *walk* (operative beliefs) is another and even more important thing. A lived worldview defines one's basic convictions; it defines what one is ready to live and die for. We know and live within the context cut by this perspective. And for Christians, Scripture ultimately defines the contours and framework of that perspective. In the light of Scripture, Christians boldly claim that God, his law, and the cosmos can all be grasped to the extent that these things are made known to us in scriptural and creational revelation.

However, there is knowledge and there is knowledge. Most mathematicians know what complete induction is and how it can be applied to prove various theorems. Most children know what mud is and how it can be applied to various and sundry surfaces. Not only is the *knowledge* in each case different—the first is knowledge of something one can see only with the mind's eye, while the second is knowledge of something most people, at least once in their lives, actually get in their eyes—but the *kind* of knowing is in each case different. A mathematician's mathematical knowledge is a theoretical kind of knowing, whereas a mathematician's knowing to avoid getting mud in her eye is an everyday kind of knowing.

People's knowledge of parents, siblings, relatives, and neighbors, as well as of those animals, plants, and physical things with which they have had contact, to mention just a few examples, is an everyday kind of knowing. This nonscientific kind of knowing is the concrete, ordinary knowledge that everyone has. It is foundational for all other kinds of knowing. Like all knowledge, everyday knowledge is not something had instantly or from the start. It always comes as the result of human activity: through experiencing, listening, trusting, watching, thinking, learning—through coming to know. Perceiving, recollecting, and expecting are important contributing factors to this process.

Coming to know in an everyday sense can occur in the context of knowledge communicated by others or through personal investigation and discovery. It is true, however, that the truths we

receive from those we trust do establish the "home base" from which we proceed when initiating the investigation of some point or problem.

Scientific, theory-laden knowing differs from nonscientific knowing in that the human activity that precedes scientific knowing proceeds methodically and is not primarily directed to concrete things or specific relations but to a defined (limited) field or domain. It is important to note that no matter how prominent scientific knowing has become, it never stands alone but is continually undergirded and propelled by the nonscientific knowing that chronologically and logically precedes it. Time and place are givens and were givens in the beginning. Human knowing presupposes and builds on more than it will ever know completely.

Knowledge of oneself (one's needs and wants), of other people, of parents, of spouse and children, of what spouse and children may expect of us, and of what one takes to be important in life constitutes what we may call the factual or existential starting point for all scientific, theoretic activity. This point of departure that we leave unquestioned, at least for the moment, does not dissipate; it remains presumed when one turns to theoretical matters and scientific questions.

Science, then, is one way of coming to know. It presupposes, builds on, and is borne by many kinds of nonscientific knowing. Science and theoretical pursuit help us see what otherwise might be impossible to see; they help us articulate what could be said on no other basis. Scientific knowledge, however, is not necessarily a better kind of knowing. Those who think that it is tend to put their hope and trust in science or abstract universal truths. But even then, that faith, as all faith, is a matter of the heart, commitment, and conviction, not of scientific proof.

Christians know, not scientifically but in that concrete everyday kind of way, whom they are to believe, and they are persuaded that only he—the King of kings and Lord of lords—has the key to life. However, knowing that truth does not mean that academic pursuits are out of bounds for Christians. Believing in God, they know that he demands obedience to his ordinances in all of life, including academics, from art history to zoology.

Likewise, science involves someone (a person moved by love for or rebellion against God) thinking methodically (that is, investigating and analyzing correctly or incorrectly; distinguishing that which is different or failing to do so; and keeping in mind or forgetting the context in which these differences occur) about similarities, differences, and relationships, at least some of which are normed, within some limited field of investigation. When someone successfully analyzes a thing—distinguishes among its parts in its contexts—the result will be knowledge about that something, whatever it be. Whereas, when one thinks poorly, the result will not be knowledge but error. In this process, what the person knows already remains foundational, particularly what she knows in her heart (or thinks she knows) to be the case. Scientific or theoretical thinking and knowledge are different from, but not better than, nonscientific knowledge, upon which they are built. In addition, whether or not our thinking results in knowledge or error, we can say that the things we are thinking about were either knowable or unknowable before we thought about them. There are, after all, some things about which we can know nothing—at least not on this side of the grave.

When we take “belief” in the active sense of “believing,” it may be understood in its most basic and important sense as the acceptance of God’s word-revelation or of whatever else one takes to have the last word in life. In other words, faith or belief is not always Christian; usually it is the opposite. This opposition—of belief and unbelief—is of course very important, and Christian thinking can only gain by doing full justice to it. I would claim that as long as this belief has not been undermined by certain influences, every human being believes something, indeed, *believes in* something or someone. Believing, taken in that last sense—giving one’s heart to some one or some thing—comes with being human. In other words, there are thousands of believers, and even more unbelievers; but there are no healthy, mature human beings who are *nonbelievers*.

To take God at his word, or to reject that word, is ultimately what believing is all about. This believing is not simply cognitive, but it does comprise an element of knowing or erring. This

knowing which comes with believing *in* someone or something is never a scientific, theoretical kind of knowing, certainly not in the first place. It is a nonscientific kind of knowing that lays the foundation, that defines the home base and the context within which we live and move and have our being before the face of God.

Academics may study these matters, realizing, of course, that they will at most gain only some limited insight into these things. Theoretical reflection can also ponder the place and task of heartfelt believing and the resultant beliefs. But you don’t need an expert to tell you what “heart”

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refers to: your innermost being, the gut of your self, the deepest center of your existence, what gets transformed when one no longer conforms to the patterns of this world, the wellspring of your thoughts, feelings, and actions. And, as even Marxists and Capitalists are well aware, what lives in your heart is going to make a difference in what you say and do and don’t do. Basic beliefs that are not just confessed but also operative will influence everything you do.

Knowledge of fundamental realities, commonly received through the nurture of parents and schooling, delineates the horizon of a person’s life. So too, the *basic realities* of creation, sin, wrath and grace, and re-creation, once grasped and understood by the Bible-believer as major issues, exhibit an all-inclusive character. Concepts of these realities do so as well. These nonscientific, *circumscriptive concepts* help to define the framework within which the Christian lives and moves and understands his being. What we are talking about here, in other words, is *worldview*.

Worldview, of course, is more than a collection of concepts that rests on a gradually widening horizon, on repeatedly meeting other people, on expanding the extent of one's sense perception. Worldview is the vision that one gets from home or from the public square, the vision that one has assimilated for oneself with difficulty or has grown up with, so much so that one almost takes it for granted. It is not a scientific or theoretic conception but a view, a sense—of God, the world, life, human nature, one's neighbor, oneself—that has become second nature, as obvious as the nose on one's face and as ready at hand as an instinctual reaction. And, of course, it marks one for life (or death).

The vision that I am calling "worldview" as well as the beliefs and circumscriptive concepts it includes are all nonscientific in character. They are also prescientific, not only in the sense of being prior to (and not dissipating during) theoretic investigation but also in the sense of determining the basic contours of the presupposed foundation from which the theoretician proceeds and to which she returns. What one finds through scientific, theoretic, possibly highly abstract research fits in there eventually.

A Christian (theoretic, discipline-focused) conception, then, not only will contain thoughts concerning the nature and the task of basic beliefs but must also completely agree or comport well with what we know to be the case in the light of Scripture. In other words, a Christian's disciplined conception ought to be scriptural or, if one prefers, in line with Scripture.

Therefore, what one considers tenable and reliable ultimately depends on the lived worldview or perspective that defines one's basic convictions that mark the meaning coherence, the frame of reference, of everyday living. "Perspective" here does not mean, first of all, *what* one, standing in a particular historic tradition and situation, sees, accepts, expects, and understands but rather *that which predisposes* one to see what one sees, to understand what one understands, to choose what one chooses. One's perspective is that which discloses one's situation and that which directs one and makes one take sides in a situation. One stands within a perspective as within a light beam; that perspective illuminates one's existence, one's situ-

ation, and one's world and thus enables one's sense of everyday orientation. As one matures, the framework that this perspective provides becomes intuitively immediate, second-nature if you will—something that we have learned over the course of time and which now, so often, "goes without saying."

We have come to know the difference between a house and home; we know when a storm is brewing; we know how revolting sour milk tastes. The meaning of these things as well as our understanding of them lies interwoven in a rich fabric of reference to still other things. For example, one probably cannot understand what a nail is without knowing what a hammer is. The things we experience every day stand in internal relation to each other—an experience of things rooted in our sense of authority, respect, and allegiance; in the regularities and expectations operative in our life; in our past; and in our vision for the morrow. But they are also rooted in how we came to know these things. Our responsibility is to teach all of these: the what and the how and the why.

### **Teaching... from within a Christian perspective**

Teaching our students requires that we *lead* them into ("intro-duction") places and ways unknown or less known to them when they begin; that we *guide* them through what more often than not seems initially to be a maze of theories, concepts, facts, and procedures; and that we do this all the while with an eye to *enabling* them to walk these paths confidently on their own—in community—in the future. (John Van Dyk, *The Craft of Christian Teaching*, Dordt College Press, 2000.)

Along the way a number of things need to be tended to. I will mention two: the need for what Dordt College calls "curricular coordinates" (*Educational Framework of Dordt College*) and the importance of exposing the nature of methodic analysis and theory formation.

#### *Curricular coordinates*

An institution of Christian higher education that holds academic excellence and biblical faith dear will want to equip its graduates to deal insightfully with issues, theories, and problems;

with past alternatives and new movements and initiatives in one's field; and with a depth and breadth of well-versed understanding that is also informed by, and in line with, Scripture. To that end, a planned course of studies—a curriculum defined by principle—is crucial. The curricula will obviously differ per discipline, yet given the common confession that our world belongs to God, it will allow similarities to persist. Whether one teaches physics or theology, the institution's "shared coordinates" will be evident. At Dordt College, for example, we try to make transparent in each of the disciplines the shared coordinates of "religious orientation," "creational structure," "creational development," and "contemporary response" (See The Educational Framework of Dordt College, which I will cite in this section). These should also be evident in the general education program, such that we are wont to say the following of all our graduates:

- They will recognize that everyone, in whatever area of life, career, or occupation, holds dearly to someone or something, to some power or presence, and that whether that allegiance be to fame, fortune, flag, family, money, might, mutiny, the King of kings, the dialectic of history, or whatever has the last word in one's life, it manifests itself in one's everyday as well as academic sense of place, purpose, prognosis, and posterity. But more important, when it comes to *what has the last word* in their lives, graduates will "recognize the guiding role of the Bible in a life of Christian discipleship. They should be familiar with the main themes and teachings of the Bible" (A1), understand the practice as well as the confessions of the Christian faith and a biblical worldview, and evidence a commitment to living a life of Christian discipleship.

- They will realize that almost everyone is familiar with and counts on an abundance of regularities in life, nature, and society and that many academic disciplines study these recurrent themes and patterns, for most acknowledge that at least some things hang together, and few deny the order and structure that are present in their world. Of course, not everyone agrees that norms are adequately grounded in consensus or the com-

mon weal or that laws of nature are purely emergent or simply constructs of the mind: concerning the *regularities* of and *criteria* for the world as it turns, graduates will have an eye for and appreciate creation in all its diversity and interrelatedness as brought into being by God the Father, as preserved by the power of his Spirit, and as called to an obedience exemplified in his love for the world in Jesus Christ. They will be "competent in one or more specialized fields of inquiry" (B4) and be open and able to integrate ideas, theories, and procedures from a variety of disciplines.

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- Most people readily acknowledge that change happens, that things unfold and become more or less complex or diverse, but to what end? Some people deny that there is an end. Graduates, assessing and dealing with the *reality of change*, will stand ready to articulate their hope for the future and will understand how today's world has unfolded historically. They will "critically evaluate the formative processes and religious spirits" (C3) that have shaped diverse cultures as well as present conundrums, will appreciate both "their God-given responsibility to unfold the potential of creation in stewardly ways" as well as the "interconnected global nature of contemporary life" (C2), and will be able to analyze influences formative today with an eye to contributing to healing and integrity within their particular discipline or vocation as well as in more common areas of life.
- Everybody responds to the time, place, and calling that defines and yet lies open before him or

her. No one can avoid the question, "What should we do now?" However, given the times and *contemporary challenges* facing them, graduates of a Christian college should learn "to exhibit proper care and respect for everything God created" (B3); "be sensitive to the impact of sin and idolatry in their own lives, in...society, and in the world" (D3); stand equipped "to discern, evaluate, and [when necessary] challenge the prevailing spirits of our age in the light of God's Word" (A2) and informed by a biblical perspective on things; and be able "to maintain a balanced, wholesome lifestyle" (B3), while continuing to develop, share, and apply fruitful insights in diverse communities long after graduation.

A well-situated curriculum, as well as its delivery, involves so much more than covering the material. Course content usually changes with time and often differs with the instructor. What should remain the same is that those who leave the classroom continue to be equipped to tell the difference between what is true, correct, or just accurate. Not everything people grasp and hold for certain is *true*—often it does not promote Christ's lordship of the world (rather than the devil's), and often it does not please Christ. Some of the cognitive claims that are false in that regard can nonetheless be *correct*—the knowledge gained is correct if and when the relative states of affairs that are known are kept relative, limited, and in their proper place in relation to the rest of the world. However, even those whose theories are incorrect can ascertain or highlight things that are *accurate*, for their knowing, too, can agree with the structural laws (which need to be more-or-less correctly articulated by one's community in the light of the Truth) concerning a particular feature or function of a knowable object.

The reality of religious roots, of ordered fields of learning, and of change and constancy over time, underscored with an eye to a sound contemporary response that is in line with Scripture, should constitute the framework for both a general education program and departmental majors. When that framework happens, graduates committed to Christ and his kingdom will be readied for lifelong learning and servant leadership under his banner of truth and grace.

### *The limits and logic of doing science*

There is not a social scientist who lacks the fabric of everyday knowing; none come or go without a worldview. Having a comprehensive framework of basic beliefs about things simply comes with being (a mature, healthy) human. However, science and theory, as we know these, do have a peculiar way of looking at things and relationships. The theoretical perspective is by definition a limited one, focusing on just one or two facets of the fullness of reality. When we put on the spectacles of methodic, scientific, disciplined analysis, a frame of reference different from that of nonscientific, everyday experience is introduced. Every science abstracts from the full fabric of everyday experience, from the coherence of meaning that is a part of everyone's life, bracketing out various properties and relations in order to focus on one aspect or dimension of things. The result is a reality different from everyday reality. Obviously, this difference does not mean that one should downplay or disregard science, for what it can uncover is awesome. But we shouldn't forget what is more important—therapists do get divorced, and cancer shows up in doctors too.

Priorities and the answer to the question "What is real?" depend on the framework within which the phenomena are viewed. In most cases, what we aim to study scientifically is a complex of factors, some of which are more or less independent of, or logically distinct from, each other. For example, in the case of phenology, climate is one thing, and the migration of birds is another; in phonetics, the position of the tongue with respect to the oral cavity is one thing, and the sounds produced another; in sociology, the suicide rate is one thing, and the degree of social integration another. Distinguishing what is different within its limited field of investigation, science seeks to grasp universal, enduring, or resolute relations that obtain within the field. In scientific analysis, many things are left out of the picture for the moment. Many internal relations are either ignored or externalized, coaxed to speak for themselves through a process of theoretical distillation, statistical analysis, or experimentation in the laboratory, all other conditions remaining the same. The sum of the parts of the scientific experience, which aims at a coherent, communicable theory, is thus no longer

identical to or congruent with the whole as it presents itself in the original (prescientific, everyday) experience of individuality and communality, of similarities and differences, of diversity, regularity, and change. It is *more* in that it can deepen our understanding or enhance our ability to describe something; but it is at the same time *less* in that it is the compilation of a limited number of dimensions and not the whole, where it is seldom the case that only one or two things change and everything else remains the same.

For example, one significant ingredient in the natural sciences' peculiar way of looking at things is that it usually assumes the principle of uniformity. In doing so, it presupposes coherence in accordance with a universal law, namely, that like causes have like effects. In other words, adopting this principle predisposes one to look at phenomena from the point of view of causality. And, of course, when one says that every object has a cause, one is indicating what one really means by an "object." Things that do not fit or cannot be made to fit into a causal nexus are then usually dismissed as scientifically insignificant or, given the dictates of methodological naturalism, ruled out of order and are all too often forgotten.

I am not suggesting that we may not avail ourselves of scientific abstraction. My point is rather that we must remain aware of (and repeatedly show our students) what this artificial way of dealing with reality implies. All of the sciences can be said, in their way, to be mapping created or encultured reality. What their "maps" look like will be similar in some ways, for they are all human artifacts on the one hand and records of an investigation of the same earthly creation on the other. But they will also be different, in part because different disciplines focus on different aspects or fields within that same earthly creation, in part because some cartographers consider their map or their aspect of reality to be the only important one, and in part because some cartographers will confuse the reality of their map with the reality it attempts to map.

Modern technology, for example, as it imposes the "uniformity of nature" onto society in a concerted effort to meet real and perceived needs, all too often fails to critically engage these kinds of foundational questions. For example, while all

theoretical statements of causal/correlative "necessity" ("If x, then y") *can* usually be translated into technological imperatives ("Do x in order to bring y about"), fewer than ought question the validity of such a translation. When "the average" or the majority begins to define the "norm" for Christians, we have lost sight of God's standard.

Likewise, social scientists who do their work well will not only be aware of and follow the methodological rules that hold for their science in general, but also inquire into the presuppositions and conditions that underlie their discipline and

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its methods. A good social scientist will inquire into what the methods used in her discipline presuppose with regard to the reality being investigated (that is, into their implicit ontology and veiled value system). Students may be taught first about scientific practice, but they will never know their discipline well until they understand what their methodic analysis is actually uncovering and what it also leaves out of the picture.

### **Learning to Teach**

Learning to teach has many dimensions. Knowing one's stuff as well as one's students is absolutely crucial: mastering the former and being open to the latter. You don't have to be your students' buddy, but do try to connect with them, poll them, talk to them. You should ask them about themselves and about their aspirations. As a teacher you are responsible for knowing and communicating your material well, but as a teacher you are there, ultimately, not for yourself but for them, to facilitate their learning and their learning how to



learn. You should work with them, pray for them, make time for them outside of the classroom, have them over to your home. This kind of intimacy is sometimes hard to take time for, but it is a great encouragement and inspiration for those given to your care.

Another important way to connect with and engage one's students is to share with them one's vision and sense of vocation. Don't hesitate to share with your students what inspires and excites you, also and even primarily within your field of expertise. One thing that I have found particularly helpful in this regard is to share the journey I've taken along the *thetical-critical* pathway, trying to make plain to them what I stand for, my position positively articulated, as well as my attempts to listen to, evaluate, and learn from what others have to say. This method, which I describe a bit below, has kept me, I like to think, from becoming self-satisfied or complacent and yet has given me a sense of theoretical place and home, such that I have something to profess as professor.

Rather than cursing the darkness, I think Christians should seek with the power and insight of the Holy Spirit to light a candle. In other words, rather than defining one's position in terms of what one rejects, Christians should proceed *thetically*. (According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "thetical" means "Of the nature of or involving direct or positive statement; laid down or stated positively or absolutely.") That is to say, Christians should approach the problems and questions they are confronted with from their own positively stated point of view. Christians should be uneasy, for example, about describing the methodological route of the social sciences as one that rides the line between positivism (i.e., we can know, quantify, and scientifically control all natural phenomena) and skepticism (i.e., we can know little or nothing with certainty). People who acknowledge that God is both sovereign and personal should not be satisfied with a standpoint described in terms of a conceptual mean somewhere in between the extremes of pantheism and deism. Priority number one should be to work out a basic conception of man, society, and public justice in line with Scripture that affirms and articulates as clearly and succinctly as possible one's perspective on the matter in question. In other

words, one should proceed boldly, articulating, clarifying, and honing the coherence of the comprehensive framework of basic beliefs that Christians hold dear.

This thetical procedure—dealing with situations and questions new and old from one's own (communal, Christian) point of view—presupposes an increasingly specific and consciously delineated basic conception such that one can say in confidence, "Here I stand." However, in confidently living out a biblically informed and religiously grounded framework, Christians should definitely avoid the temptation to pontificate: "This is the way I see it and, therefore, that's the way it is." Brazen oracular pronouncements help no one. A related disease is what some call "ethnocentrism": thinking that there is nothing more to the world than that which lies within one's own purview, with its well-entrenched beliefs, attitudes, standards, methods, and procedures. No, in addition to proceeding thetically, Christians also need to work critically.

That social scientists must analyze and evaluate the claims, data, theories, and theses that come their way is to state the obvious. So what I would have you consider is that for Christians to do a good job of proceeding critically in this first sense, they need to be nurtured in this attitude as Christians long before they become social scientists, lest they analyze and evaluate only some things and not others. Critical thinking is sorely needed within the broader Christian community. Even those committed to Christian day schools need to do a better job of leading, guiding, and enabling the next generation to get to know, question, analyze, size up, and re-evaluate with an eye to determining both the insights and shortcomings of (a) the ethos that shapes the culture in which God calls us to live as his people; (b) what others, for example, what non-Christians, are actually saying and have said; (c) what those dearly beloved within the Christian tradition have said; and (d) what we ourselves communally or individually have held to date to be the case. Discernment is needed in our everyday experience as well as in our scientific work. If we don't know how to examine and test the spirits that seek to impact our lives from day to day, how will we ever be able to examine and test the spirits that permeate the more

abstract realms of our existence?

Data, theories, and theses all arise within a context, usually as answers to questions. None of these are neutral; all come with “strings” attached. No one can even ask a question without making some assumptions. Any question takes for granted many things that remain, at least for the moment, unquestioned. In fact, when listening to other people’s questions as well as to their answers, one must remember to have at least *some sense* of the unstated and unquestioned *presuppositions* which lie at the basis of those questions—some knowledge of what, for them, goes without saying. Our task is not to remove all such presuppositions but to listen for, test, and evaluate them (critically) in the course of our inquiries.

Some Christians I know have a hard time developing an anticipatory and open attitude toward everyday living and learning, let alone toward a life of scholarship. However, the advantages are obvious: we come to understand what is “other” than us but also to better understand ourselves. The reliability of one’s experience and learning in the light of Scripture will nurture an orientation toward new experiences and challenges, helping us to acknowledge the possibility of learning from what is different and alien. Doing so will help us even more to grasp an understanding of what it means to be finite historical beings who are on the way, who must assume responsibility for our decisions and choices, and who also must always be ready to give account of the hope that lives within us, even while we methodically go about the work of doing social science. So, when possible, in your discipline, leave no stone unturned and model for your students the patience and persistence that turning over stones demands. And as they mature, involve them in the discussion of authentic questions—the ones you don’t have clear or definitive

answers on either—all the while making evident which are the nonnegotiables in your book and why.

How one responds to God and his promise-command to his earthly creatures affects everything one thinks and says and does. Values are not added but are part and parcel of being creatures. Obedience in these things requires a wisdom that is defined and informed by Scripture, self-critique, and lived conviction.

Only Scripture can help us keep creaturely diversity and relationships in proper perspective. Without his word, we wonder and wander in a world without God. In its light we must work together at distinguishing differences in their historical, cultural, social, economic, political, and ultimately religious context. We have to realize that science as prosthesis, a scoping device, making what is small large and bringing what is far away near, always gives a warp to reality. Because of this effect of science, scientists and theoreticians should, along the way, concern themselves with the foundations and history of their discipline. If you have not taken time to learn about these things, what will it take to have your students do so? A critical Christian scientist not only makes use of the optical apparatus that the discipline places at her disposal, but should also inspect the apparatus itself. She knows when to use it to enhance her vision, but she also knows when to lay it aside. What the academic pursuit sees must in turn always be evaluated in terms of the perspective of the whole.

This approach implies that Christian teachers and students must together seriously consider the claims bandied about, both pro and con, with an eye to a self-critical evaluation that is rooted in a positively articulated and biblically informed thetical stance. When that happens, the fruits of faithful teaching and learning will follow.