

---

# Providential Perspective

Vol. 15, No. 2 March 2000

The Teaching Journal of *The Providence Foundation*

---

## The Principle Approach

James B. Rose

The material in this *Perspective* is excerpted from the book *A Guide to American Christian Education for the Home and School, the Principle Approach*. Jim Rose is the primary writer and editor of this work, which also contains sections by numerous other educators who have been involved in the Principle Approach for many years. To obtain a copy of this invaluable book use the enclosed order form or contact our offices.

What is the Principle Approach to American Christian education and government, and how is this approach distinguished from other methods?

Just as God gave the Old Testament with its Moral Law and rules to govern Moses and the children of Israel—a comprehensive body of laws or principles by which they could direct their personal and national lives, and determine the rightness or wrongness of their choices and actions—so God gave the “whole counsel” of both the Law and the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile for the salvation and direction of all men and nations.

As God’s eternal Word was translated into the English Bible, our American Christian forefathers discovered therein not only the way of salvation through Christ Jesus but the Biblical truths, laws or principles by which they too could direct or govern their individual and public lives; and they reasoned from these spiritual principles to determine everything from the right kind of education to

the right form of government for America.

In its contemporary meaning, the Principle Approach refers to the re-discovery and re-statement of the historic truths or principles of God’s Word on which the *character* of our original peace, order, liberty and prosperity, both individually and corporately, were built. It refers also to the Christian method of reasoning from the Holy Bible (the proper and primary authority concerning our view or philosophy of life and living), and how to comprehend all subjects, inclusive of education and government in the home, church, school and society.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle. (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

America’s traditional Biblical principles were first restored and explained in *Teaching and Learning America’s Christian History — The Principle Approach* by Rosalie J. Slater. It summarizes this approach in seven key principles which may be concisely rendered as follows:

1. *God’s Principle of Individuality* declares God’s infinite individuality and diversity, and reveals that God created distinct and unique identities consistent with His nature and character. It exposes the error not only of secular collectivism but of any individualism separate from Christ.
2. *The Christian Principle of Self-Government* shows that man’s capacity for governing himself, then his family, city, state and nation depends upon man’s obedience to “the spirit of the law of Christ” in each

expanding sphere of government. (Rom. 8:2)

3. *America’s Heritage of Christian Character* is maintained when the attributes of God and His Son so mark the affections and actions of Christians, in conflict and contrast with the carnal world, that they express the same principle of Christian character revealed in the lives of the Pilgrims and Patriots.

4. “*Conscience is the Most Sacred of All Property*” sums up the traditional American conviction that the Christian citizen’s most precious possession is his internal God-given sense of right and wrong, of the ultimate lawfulness or unlawfulness of his own actions and affections. He also has a God-given right to own external property, and a Christian responsibility for its stewardship.

5. *The Christian Form of Our Government* is revealed when we discover that America’s civil government grew out of Biblical Law and the Gospel. The Biblical principles of self-government, conscience as property, and voluntary union gave rise to a Christian Republic based upon individual representation, separation of powers and federalism in both the states and the nation.

6. *How the Seed of Local Self-Government is Planted* is seen in America’s Christian History: individuals planted and preserved the seed of Christian self-government and enjoyed the fruits of local sovereignty by teaching and practicing — in each sphere of local government — industry, charity and obedience to all laws

not contrary to the Biblical principles of truth and righteousness.

7. *The Christian Principle of American Political Union* is the Biblical principle of voluntarism, which shows that God wants His children to cooperate and work together politically, commercially and in meeting community needs through voluntary consent, without compromising a Christian conscience or Scriptural separation.

Modern day Christians can agree with our Founding Fathers on the definition of the word *principle* in Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language: "The source, origin or cause of a thing; that from which a thing proceeds." The more deeply contemporary Christians probe America's Christian history, turning to authentic source materials which are now readily available in the compilations by Verna M. Hall, the more confirmation they will find that an array of Biblical principles truly were "the source, origin or cause" of America's original philosophy of education and government.

And the more Christians today study America's Christian history — which for a century has been obscured and untaught — the more evidence they will see that this type of Biblical reasoning is indeed America's historic method of reasoning which distinguished the educational philosophy of learning of colonial Americans and which subsequently, under God's Providence, produced America's Christian history and, finally, its Constitution.

The Holy Scriptures and God's Providence, working in the hearts and minds of the American colonists — many of them earnest born-again Christians — produced the Principle Approach; and in turn, the Principle Approach, as a method of Biblical reasoning, produced these seven principles of America's Christian history and government.

### **Occupy Till I Come**

By the grace of God, this approach will be used by today's Christians, as the Lord tarries, to ful-

fill the command to "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13), and to restore this Republic to its Gospel purpose: to spread the Gospel and its implications for both individual Christian liberty and the resulting civil liberty to *all nations* of the world and enable them to testify to the dominion or sovereignty of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The more the Principle Approach is understood and applied in contemporary America, the more God will be glorified. The more widely this approach is grasped and put to work by today's Christians, the more evidence we will see of American renewal, or the restoration of our Republic.

As vast numbers of unsaved Americans begin to perceive that this Bible-based Principle Approach — the application of Biblical wisdom to our educational and governmental choices and actions, and the solving of our social problems — comes directly from the Word of God, and meets urgent human needs which no worldly wisdom knows how to meet, they will have more reason to respect the supernatural wisdom of Christ and Biblical Christianity, and to turn to the Lord to be saved.

The more any individual studies the Principle Approach, the more reason he will have to search the Scriptures, and the more he will learn of the vastness of Biblical truth, and of its remarkable relevance to a surprisingly wide range of subjects and aspects of life, including his own spiritual growth.

For example, the more anyone thoughtfully pursues the Principle Approach, the more he will learn about the real nature of government, of "the government that shall be upon His shoulder," upon the shoulder of the Prince of Peace, and the more he will understand why Isaiah said (Isa. 9:6-7) "of the *increase* of His government and peace there shall be no end." In particular, the Christian who studies this approach will find that the same spiritual process that produces a self-governing *citizen* — learning how to know and do the will of God, and to be absolutely governed by Him — is inseparable from the process that produces a

*saint*, i.e., a sanctified mature Christian.

### **Preparing the Free and Independent Individual**

This approach enables the individual to *think governmentally*, that is, to think in terms of "who" or "what" is controlling, restraining, directing or regulating; to discern whether the operations of government (direction, regulation, control, restraint) are being confirmed by, and exercised with, the operations of education. It compels one to ask, "Who is governing, first, internally—from the heart or mind?" Then, "Who is governing externally, in social and civil activities?"

The Honorable Robert Charles Winthrop (1809-1894), Massachusetts orator and legislator, explained why American Christians should think governmentally:

All societies of men must be governed in some way or other. The less they may have of stringent State Government, the more they must have of individual self-government. The less they rely on public law or physical force, the more they must rely on private moral restraint. Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled, either by a power within them, or by a power without them; either by the Word of God, or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible, or by the bayonet.<sup>1</sup>

This approach enables the individual to extend Biblical principles of government and the doctrine of Providence into every sphere of life, that in all things Christ, the living Word of God, may have the pre-eminence, the rightful place, power and influence.

### **The 4 R'S**

In method, the Principle Approach begins by restoring the four "R's" to teaching and learning.

**RESEARCHING:** studying God's Word to identify basic principles of life and living, and those principles which govern the "how" and "what" in teaching.

**REASONING:** reasoning from these Biblical principles so as to

identify them for the student in each subject of the curriculum.

**RELATING:** expounding to each student the Bible Truth in the subjects of the curriculum; relating the truths of God's Word to individual Christian character, self-government and stewardship of God's gifts.

**RECORDING:** the use of writing, by both teacher and student, to account for and elucidate the way in which these principles are being applied to life and living, as well as to a given subject.

### Seven Distinctions

The Principle Approach is distinguished from other approaches to education in at least seven ways:

1. It demonstrates that the history of Christianity and the history of America and her form of government cannot, and should not, be separated.
2. It restores our heritage of Christian scholarship and Biblical reasoning and writing which were characteristic of the Founding Father generation.
3. It brings both the student and the subjects of the curriculum into harmony with, and in subjection to, Biblical Truths.
4. It produces a unity of spirit and principle with a diversity of teachers and subjects, without denying the identity or individuality of either the subjects or the teacher in the home or school.
5. It helps identify the vocabulary and rudiments of a subject, both Biblically and historically, and recovers the Biblical origin and purpose of a subject in every grade level of education.
6. It unifies the Biblical principles of a subject with its correlative ideas and facts.
7. It enables both parent and teacher to produce the Christian character and scholarship necessary to support a Christian Republic, to separate from progressive and secular methods, and avoid producing a character ripe for governmental socialism and religious modernism.

Numerous Christian homes, churches, and schools throughout America have accepted the challenge and the responsibility to restore the Principle Approach and to implement it in the curriculum.

American Christians are urged to personally identify and document *Biblically, governmentally, educationally, and historically*, each of the seven principles of America's Christian history and government.

It took 1620 years from the birth of Christ, as the Chain of Christianity moved westward, before the seeds of Christian self-government, property, and unity and union were planted in America with the Pilgrim settlement. Then, for over 150 years, Colonial Christians used Biblical research, reasoning, relating and recording to produce an independent, Constitutional Federal Republic — one nation under God.

This calibre of Biblical reasoning must prevail again in order to restore what "the locusts have eaten" (Joel 2:25) through our own forgetfulness and ignorance. It will require a willingness on the part of Christian leaders to "Remember His marvelous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth;" (1 Chr. 16:12), to patiently, "with all readiness of mind search" the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11) "that in all things" education and civil government as well, "He might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18)

## America's Biblical Education

### The Need For This Philosophy

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. (2 Cor 13:5)

Where is one to find the philosophy or wisdom to exercise the functions of education — to instruct, discipline, enlighten, correct, form and fit? There can be only two choices for the source of such wisdom: God, as revealed in the Bible, or man. As Christians, we look to the Word of God to reveal "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of

God" (1 Cor. 1:24) as the source and origin of our philosophy of education.

Occasionally a thunderbolt is needed to awaken Christians to examine whether their philosophy and methods are of Christ, and advancing His pre-eminence. Such a summons is issued by Miss Katherine Dang:

In ignorance, Christians are aiding and abetting anti-Christianity in America. More than any other factor, it is the weakness of Christian character and scholarship that is responsible for this country's apostasy from its founding Christian principles of education, government and economics. The pagan remains true to paganism. Spiritual backsliding is a believer's trait, not a pagan's. The dissolution of Christian character has resulted from generations of unbiblical education among Christian institutions of teaching and learning.

Christians are duped to believe that the "forces without" are mightier and inevitable; thus they isolate themselves, calling it separation, only to breed more cowards after their own kind.<sup>2</sup> The battle is within; the enemy is within the camp; that enemy is American Christianity's own ignorance to effect superior spiritual armaments.

Impotent and unequipped to supplant or displace, Christians tacitly consent to creeping socialistic politics in their own institutions: homes, churches, and schools, advancing the kingdom of Satan.

The need is for a soul-searching of content and methods in pastoring and teaching, to consider their implications for home, church, school and state.

The need is for a generation of American Christians who know God and His Word, and by their own scholarship know how to implement their knowledge. It is the duty of Christian educators to lead in advance of their students, not only to stem the tide of anti-Christian socialism, but to seek an effective alternative in schooling parents, pastors, businessmen, and statesmen. American Christianity must first sanctify itself before this nation can be purged of her enemies and reclaimed for Christ.

One of the aims of Christian education should be a Biblical mentality by which every sphere of activity is controlled. This mentality stems from a schooling in Biblical principles

able to detect and reject everything contrary to Christ and Christianity.

It was the Biblical reasoning of the Founding Father generation that produced the only historical alternative to tyranny and oppression of the individual, and which promoted the fullest expression of Christian liberty, rather than pagan license. The Biblical principles that founded America provided for unhindered propagation of the Gospel. Wisdom thus encourages Christians today to identify Biblical principles of civil government as a foundation of their warfare against secular humanistic reasoning.

There are multitudes of principles within the Biblical realm, but not all such principles are applicable to extending Christianity's influence from the individual all the way into a nation's civil government. A comprehensive philosophy of education should include such a body of truth. These truths should govern every teacher in each class and department. Then, all that is effected in the Christian school or Sunday School would issue from a common spirit and vision.

The greatest of these effects would be individuals equipped to walk independently with their God in a perverse and wicked generation.

The strength of an institution, be it church school, Sunday School, club, missions committee, etc., lies largely in the unity of its constituents. Bound by an American Christian philosophy, a great bulwark would be raised for the church to advance Christ and His cause in our Jerusalem, and then to the uttermost parts of the world.<sup>3</sup> . . .

## How to Think Governmentally

Bible-believing people in all nations are encouraged to receive Jesus Christ not only as their Saviour but as the Lord who rules their lives. Born-again men and women everywhere are urged by Scripture to let their minds and hearts be governed by God, to be ever on guard, assessing what it is that seeks to control them, whether the Word and Spirit of God or the insinuations of Satan. *Thus, to some degree, Christians the world over are directed to think governmentally — to be alert to what is governing or controlling first, inter-*

*nally in their own thought-life, and then externally in what is governing their daily domestic, social, political, educational, and economic experience.*

But in traditional American Christian education there was always a special emphasis upon thinking *governmentally* — i.e., in terms of the flow of power and force. Who or what is in control internally *and* externally? Is God or Satan in control of our thoughts? Is civil government or individual self government directing our actions? Unfortunately, however, we do not find that inspired emphasis in most Christian homes, churches or schools today.

Contemporary Christian education is supposed to be at the leading edge of the movement to advance Christ, Christian liberty (salvation) and Christian truth; but for a great many years it has lacked the necessary correlative of true Christian liberty — the clearly, precisely-stated and boldly emphasized Christian idea of *government*.

When government is taught in most Christian homes and schools today, the emphasis is upon the external, the political functions, the machinery and the men who make, administer and judge the civil law. As necessary as this study is, it neglects the whole counsel of God concerning government, and the omission is dangerous.

To understand the constant presence and practice of the government of God on earth, to think governmentally, and to discern how one's philosophy of God, man and government constitutes one's philosophy of education, I believe the following ideas should be taught, illustrated and demonstrated:

1. God ordained three governmental institutions — the home, civil government and the church.
2. God ordained civil government for man's good, and not his harm.
3. The Christian idea of man is primary, and gives rise to the Christian idea of civil government, which protects man's God-given life, liberty and property.

4. A philosophy of education is based upon a philosophy of government, i.e., one's view of the principles of teaching and learning is determined by one's idea of who or what is exercising control and is the ultimate authority and source of Truth.

5. Every form of government is the result of a philosophy of education.

If Christian parents, educators and pastors omit — whether by ignorance or forgetfulness — the full expression of the Christian idea of God, man and government in America's history, our posterity will continue to be ill-equipped to detect and supplant wickedness on all levels of society and government, and will in their ignorance prevent the benefits of Christian liberty, self-government, private property and voluntary union from blessing this nation and subsequently all nations for Christ and Christianity. This ought not to be.

## God's Three Divine Governmental Institutions

There are three God-ordained institutions, divinely constituted for man to administer according to God's Law. Chronologically, they are the home or family (Gen. 2:24), civil government (Gen. 9:6), and the New Testament Church. (Matt. 16:18)

The home or family must be a Biblical institution with Biblical laws to govern it, if it is to be a Christian home. (Prov. 18:22, Heb. 13:4) Even if born-again Christian parents occupy the home, the government of that home is not Christian or Biblical unless the Will of God, i.e., His Law for the family, is administered and obeyed by Christian parents. (Col. 3:20; Gal. 4:1-2)

The family was established for the purpose of procreation with clearly defined governmental rules for the control and training of children. Its educational goal is to build Christian character that glorifies God and represents Christ and His plan and purpose for men and nations. (Deut. 6:6-7; Eph. 6:2,4; Prov. 22:6) According to God's Word, the education

