A REVIEW OF FRANK E. GAEBELEIN'S *PATTERN OF GOD'S TRUTH*

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Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Pattern of God's Truth: The Integration of Faith and Learning* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009), 118 pages, $9.99.

Anyone who has spent more than half a minute around an ACCS school has heard of Dorothy Sayers and her Oxford lecture, "The Lost Tools of Learning" (1947). The fame of this lecture is well deserved, since forty years later it launched an international renaissance of classical, Christian schools.

But few in ACCS circles have heard of Frank E. Gaebelein and the part he played in Christian education. One year after graduating from Harvard in 1922, Gaebelein founded Stony Brook School, a Christian school in New York. He then served as Stony Brook's headmaster for the next four decades. By the time Sayers gave her lecture in Oxford, Gaebelein had been wrestling with the implications of Christian education for twenty-five years.

In 1952, Dallas Theological Seminary invited Gaebelein to lecture on the problem of integrating Christian faith and education. Gaebelein eventually published these lectures in a small book, *The Pattern of God's Truth*, which came to press seven years after Dorothy Sayers doubted whether the educational reforms she proposed would ever be implemented.

Though Gaebelein's book never mentions the Trivium, its central topic is Christ's lordship over every area of human knowledge, or, as Gaebelein phrases it, the "integration of faith and learning." Integration is something every ACCS school strives to attain, but realizing this ideal is much harder than affirming it. Gaebelein's book lays out a roadmap for making this ideal a reality in our schools.

INTEGRATING THE TEACHER

For Gaebelein, integration begins with the individual teacher. He stresses that the worldview of the teacher inevitably conditions the worldview of the student, and so there can be no Christian education without Christian teachers. Unfortunately, Christian teachers are not immune from secularism: "Though they themselves have received newness of life through faith in Christ, the categories of thought in which they have for years been nurtured are not so readily sloughed off" (40). Even teachers educated at the best Christian colleges often fail to see how their subject area relates to God. They have no idea how the gospel changes the way a Christian reads literature, studies history, or does math.

There is only one thing for such a teacher to do—he must have his mind reformed by Scripture: "It can be built up through that personal study of the Word of God to which every believer is obligated; through the study of great Christian thinkers; and . . . through faculty discussion of the Christian frame

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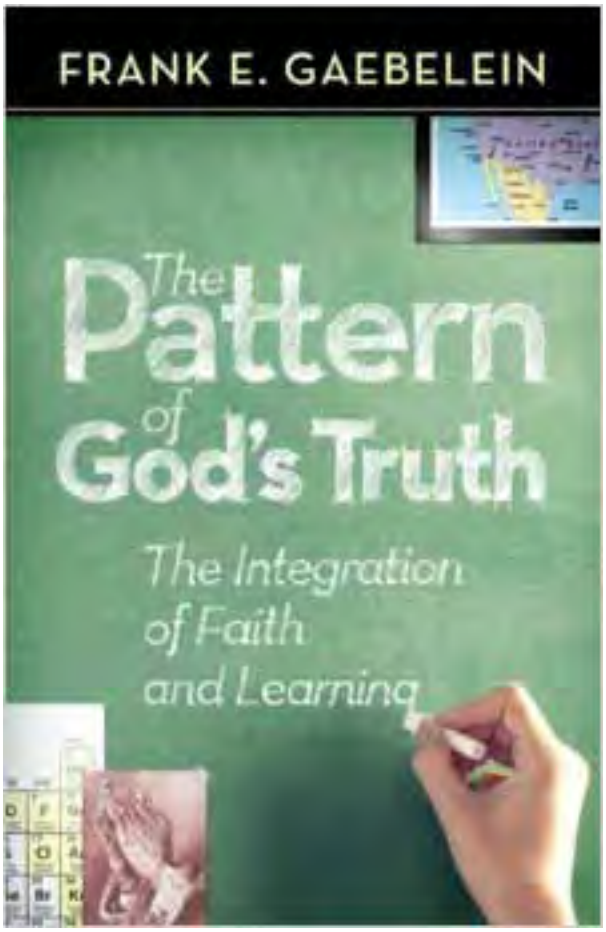
of reference" (44). So the teacher begins studying Scripture regularly and thoroughly, making it "his true intellectual and spiritual home" (47). As his intimacy with God's Word grows, he considers what the Bible and Christian theology have to say about his particular subject. He meditates on the place that his subject material has in God's creation and what it says about the world and the One who made it.

As a result of such study, he "indulges in no forced 'reconciliations' between [his subject] and Christianity; instead there is in his teaching a natural communication of Christian allusions and attitudes, flowing from a mind and personality steeped in the Bible" (47). His teaching then "shows the student the unity of truth and that brings alive in his heart and mind the grand concept of a Christ . . . who 'is before all things,' and by whom 'all things consist,' or hold together" (23). Such a teacher has integrated faith and learning in his own being, and is ready to share this integration with his students.

INTEGRATING THE SUBJECT

Gaebelein then illustrates what integration would look like in three common subjects: math, literature, and music. Each of these illustrations is only a sketch, but gives a clear direction to follow.



Mathematics

Math is the hardest subject to integrate, according to Gaebelein. But turning to Pascal, he finds a point of integration on the epistemological level. Pascal argues that the fundamental elements of math, especially of geometry, are "essentially unprovable" (59). The mathematician comes to know them not through deductive logic but through intuition and faith. Once we accept (by faith) certain axioms as true, then we can use deductive reasoning to build the rest of our mathematical knowledge.

Gaebelein argues that the same is true in Christianity: "Its basic postulates are likewise unprovable in human logic, though not in the experience of the heart. Once we submit to them through faith, they too can be defined and used, so as to bear fruit in the illimitable field of Christian life and character" (59). There are further connections to be found between mathematics and Christianity in the "presence of number and order throughout nature and art, and the perfect congruity of the stars" (63).

Literature

Integration is much easier to find in the study of literature because the Bible itself is literature (though divinely inspired), and both the Bible and literature are concerned with "the springs of human character" (64). Because of these similarities, the Bible serves as a model for understanding all other works of literature. It is the "book that measures everything, the yardstick of all literature, the touchstone of the ages" (66).

Furthermore, the Bible is a book that reads us and rewrites us: "Here

is the book the truth of which judges us. Here is the literature of power in a far loftier sense than Matthew Arnold realized. For this book contains the only dynamic that can change a bad man into a good man, a sinner into a saint" (66). The Christian literature teacher who has deep familiarity with Scripture will find points of integration everywhere.

Music

Gaebelein draws on Aristotle, Augustine, and Boethius to begin his discussion of the integration of music. These three ancients agree that music shapes the soul, either for good or for bad. Boethius asserts, "Music is part of our human nature, it has the power either to improve or debase our character" (quoted on 73).

Gaebelein then gives an even-handed analysis of Christian worship music, calling it "third-rate" for its quality, but still acknowledging its impact in the revivals and camp meetings of his day. Gaebelein stresses how important it is for Christian schools to include music in their curriculum: "The Bible schools and institutes must rethink their aesthetics in the light of the plain fact that God should have the best . . . They should look to it that all students hear as much great music as possible, and that an increasing number enjoy the creative experience of making good music" (78–79).

CONCLUSION

In the last section of the book, Gaebelein discusses integration at the institutional level: discipline, advertising, sports, and extracurriculars. He concludes his argument with a call for more Christian schools and "a renaissance of evangelical scholarship" (106).

Gaebelein's brief book is an excellent resource for new teachers who are just beginning to think through what the integration of faith and learning looks like. Board members and administrators of new schools can use Gaebelein to train staff and communicate the vision of classical, Christian education to parents. For experienced teachers and schools, Gaebelein offer several important reminders as well as an opportunity to understand the tradition of Christian education in America.

For everyone involved in classical, Christian education, Gaebelein ends his book with this hopeful encouragement: "Study the great turning points of Christian history, and in every case you will find behind them solid learning used to the glory of God" (105). May God continue to bless our work and bring about another great turning point for His Kingdom.