

## Meeting our Sacred Epistemological Challenge

At Regent University, our Christian mission and calling requires integrating our faith with a high standard of academic excellence in our courses. One of my major, and most humbling, responsibilities as department chair is to see that we are teaching according to God's truth. This is a major epistemological challenge because, in the extant world of academics, especially in the social sciences, the prevailing paradigm remains one of seeking value neutrality. The actual perspective often is that of secular humanism, frequently with an anti-Christian bias. The worldview of our textbooks is likely to be materialistic and relativistic.

Today's academic reality is that in many areas there are few if any available textbooks written from a deliberately Christian perspective. Even if there are some respectable texts by Christian authors, the generally acknowledged literature of a field often includes secular sources, some with an anti-Christian slant. To properly educate our students in such a discipline, it may very well be necessary to require that they read and apply knowledge from such secular sources. The course materials and instructor should have the ability and commitment to point out biblical perspectives and facilitate the students' assessments and applications of the materials from a Christian worldview. If such texts were banned from the curriculum, we would not only be depriving students of some of the outstanding sources and insights of the discipline, we also would be failing to teach the students to assess their discipline or application areas from a true biblical point of view. We should seek to do neither.

Instructional materials and instructor's teaching guidance should frame the courses we teach from a deliberately Christian world and life view. This is to be a major epistemological emphasis in the course introduction, the course wrap-up, and throughout. Achieving this will often require our adding spiritual dimensions to models and raising additional questions and issues about the text materials, including illustrations and cases. At the same time, our curriculum should not be reduced or weakened in the presentation of secular contributions to the academic discipline. Because texts often omit or even deprecate the Christian perspective and even the objective reality of any truth statement, this will require careful attention to assure that, in each and every course, the materials required and recommended to students are supplemented as required to support our spiritual mission. Our courses might even prove more comprehensive, and certainly not easier to teach or take, than ones from a limited, deterministic secular perspective.

Teaching well by integrating faith and learning is a very difficult challenge. May the LORD guide and strengthen faculty and students, girding us for meeting it for God's glory.

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27 October 2006