

The Trojan Horse in Christian Education



by
Mike and Carolyn Riggs

a survey of contributing thought trends

A Child Perceives



Listening to the world,
And storing up sounds;
Looking at the world,
And seeing the wonder;
Tasting and smelling the world,
And calling it good or bad;
Feeling the world with the whole body,
And discovering how it fits;
These are the ways
A child perceives.

Providing pleasant sounds to hear,
Wonders to see and explore,
Treats to taste,
Fragrances to smell,
Loving arms to feel,
These are the ways
A parent teaches.



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Publisher: Lamp and Quill International, 1241 Edgemere Dr., Keller, TX 76248-1213; (661) 295-9786, lampquill@lampquill.com; www.lampquill.com.

Country: Printed in the United States of America.

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Scripture references: All Scripture is from the King James Version of the Bible.

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PREFACE

In the garden of Eden, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, was pleasant to the eyes, and was said to be able to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life were in full evidence.

Adam and Eve rejected the goodness of God, evidenced by His complete and abundant provision for them. They believed God was withholding something from them and disobeyed His one command. The utopia in which they had lived became a cursed world, including suffering and pain, and the life designed for them soon included death and judgment (Gn. 1-3; Rm. 6:23).

Man is still trying to achieve, or recover, that utopian state of living and functioning apart from God. Man is still trying to avoid judgment, often by ignoring that it exists.

Children begin as autonomous human beings with innate sinfulness (Rm. 3:23). According to God's curse sin requires punishment by death and separation from God. Children cannot stop sinning on their own. When should children be taught about right and wrong and man's innate depravity in every part of his being?

Only the blood of Jesus Christ can cover sin (Heb. 10:12). Individuals must come to God in repentance of their sins and in acceptance of God's gift of salvation for their sin to be covered (Rm. 5:8). Should we not want to begin teaching children about their Creator and His requirements, as well as the provision of His Son, Jesus Christ, from the earliest possible moments in as many ways as possible?

To what point is the "love of God" all a child needs to know (Jn. 3:16-17)? The secular world will certainly not miss any opportunity to help maintain their autonomy and allegiance. One trip to the grocery store provides plenty of things to entice the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16-17). Not only that, but daily living at home offers numerous ways for a sinful nature to bud and grow.

The contrasting secular and biblical presuppositional foundations provide a clear picture of the issues at stake. Humanistic thought processes and goals have been evident throughout the ages in opposition to godly thought processes, as detailed in God's Word. This opposition is evident in the ongoing debate between Creationists and Evolutionists. On one side of the debate is the model of God's creation of the earth and all its beings with judgment following death and individual salvation only available through repentance and the blood of Jesus Christ. The contrasting model considers man to be naturally good, having gradually evolved from lower forms of beings and currently in need of pursuing society's utopian salvation without regard for life or judgment after death. There is nothing compatible between these opposing viewpoints.

Deuteronomy 6 mandates that parents instruct their children. Does this absolve the church, the pastor, the Sunday school teacher, and even the academic teacher from all responsibility to present the truths of God and His Word to children correctly? It is our premise that each of us should be the best mirror of God's truth as possible to each and every child we encounter. But what does this mean, and what does it look like?

When should children be taught about right and wrong and man's innate depravity in every part of his being?

... But what does this mean, and what does it look like?

Audience and Purpose

The Bible is the history of mankind from God's perspective. Humanistic scientists, philosophers, psychologists, lawyers, politicians, historians, educators, and the like have tried to write and promote a different history. It is one thing to stand outside the church and throw stones against it. It is another thing to live comfortably and blissfully inside the church and have the same presuppositional thinking as those outside the church. Christians in both the scientific and counseling disciplines have been exposed to this contrast for many years.

Every individual has a basic philosophical foundation; unfortunately many Christians are comfortable and accustomed to a different foundation than the one they think they have. Helping individuals identify these foundations is the primary concern of this book. Many who have grown up in the church are being deceived unawares.

The Trojan Horse in Christian Education shows the framework for the contrasting philosophical presuppositions throughout the ages. It shows how man's humanistic presuppositions are being consumed unawares inside many churches today, particularly in the Christian education realm. In actuality, those in the church are being devoured from within by those humanistic presuppositions, disguised as acceptable values.

The Trojan Horse in Christian Education is for students and individuals who have questions about the interactions of philosophy, religion, and Christianity in today's world. It is a foundational text for undergraduate and graduate **students** regarding current and historical educational presuppositions.

It provides an overview of biblical presuppositional issues, and offers alternative thinking and strategies for Christian educators, administrators, Sunday school administrators, teachers, high school and college students, missionaries, and related professionals.

Pastors with strong theological and historical training may find the part up to the nineteenth hundreds rather familiar; however, they may find it useful as a reference tool for recognizing where those they are shepherding are coming from. Those who are not specifically familiar with the Sunday school materials their teachers are using may find some statements preposterous; however, we would challenge them to find and read three lessons in a row of any book and look at the lists provided (p. 136-7) to evaluate what is being used authoritatively in their classrooms. Is it teaching them what they want their flock to be learning, or is it undermining their teaching?

Teachers have found the concise chronological attention to presuppositional positions especially helpful when they are directly involved with guiding students in the Christian church and school arenas.

For **parents** it provides necessary background information to better understand the significance of what they are and should be passing along to their children.

This text highlights how easy it is for man to succumb to false educational presuppositions unawares, and offers clarity for establishing a sufficient, trustworthy, educational foundation for a lifetime.

Some people regularly operate in a crisis mode of fear and frustration. Others have a peaceful, trusting mode even in the midst of turbulent events. What makes the difference? A hospice caretaker explained that individuals who know they are approaching death have one of two modes: fear or faith. This book deals with the foundational presuppositions that underlie differences between fear and faith.

This book has two major sections.

Part 1 is a chronological overview of the pursuit of knowledge throughout man's history, beginning with the Old and New Testament ages and continues unfolding century by century. Such people as Maslow, Dewey, and Piaget provide examples of what the philosophical world has pursued and how it has impacted Christian education today. The final chapter in Part 1 speaks to where we are today.

Part 2 is a biblical look at the contrasting pursuit of knowing God. Its final chapter provides a detailed review of a familiar Bible lesson along with lessons based on appropriate presuppositional foundations. It is our premise that God wrote His love letter to individuals regardless of their age. Some passages are certainly more pertinent at times than others, but the concept of trusting and obeying God is on every page.

Appendixes include additional specialized information and helps useful to educators and individuals involved with training others.

- Each chapter begins with a related Scriptural focus.
- Bold words and side bars help highlight important points throughout.
- Summaries conclude each chapter, highlighting the major points.
- Questions follow the summaries, providing an opportunity to pull together and elaborate on the highlights.
- A glossary defines important terms.
- There are three indexes: Subject, Name, and Scripture.
- There is a high school study guide for a one year study.

The Trojan Horse in Christian Education has grown out of our training and experiences in working in schools and Sunday schools across the country, as teachers, administrators, and parents. Carolyn's undergraduate training provided an education degree. She has been certified or credentialed in several states from coast to coast and taught for many years in the classroom. Mike's undergraduate training provided a business degree with an emphasis in psychology. Our children and grandchildren have provided further training and motivation for this project.

We are indebted to many authors of books and articles and to individuals in the Christian education world throughout the country. We are particularly grateful to Jim Owen, author of *Christian Psychology's War on God's Word*, history professor at The Master's College, and former pastor, for his careful review and most helpful insights and guidance.

We gratefully thank our children, along with their spouses, who have been supportive and exemplary in numerous ways.

We wish to acknowledge and thank some, among many, who have particularly guided and instructed us in preparation of this project:

- Dr. Wayne Mack, former head of the Biblical Counseling department at The Master's College, and author of numerous valuable instructional books
- The late Dr. Henry M. Morris II, gifted scientist and author
- Dr. John Street, Head of the Biblical Counseling department at The Master's College

Scope and Organization

Special Features

Acknowledgments

INTRODUCTION

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Joshua 1:8

Having worked with men in the military and in college for a number of years, Mike (coauthor of this book) began to see how the ministry of churches and Christian families actually played out in the lives of some who were raised in the church environment. Away from home for the first time, these young men were finally able to make their own choices. In this new environment their real personal convictions were revealed. Their manner of life made it obvious that their true convictions were not much different than those raised outside of churches and Christian families. This book speaks to how this can happen so much easier than many realize.

During college orientation Mike helped start Bible studies with incoming freshmen. He soon learned how important it was to get to them early. Once when he was visiting some freshmen to remind them about the time and place for the Bible study, a couple of their friends showed up to accompany them on a previously planned bar trip. The embarrassed freshmen turned down the bar-hopping arrangement.

From the initial Bible study questionnaire Mike had been excited to meet some students who had grown up in solid conservative churches. Since Mike had not been raised in a church-attending family, he was looking forward to their input in the Bible study and even in his own spiritual growth. He had started his Christian life at the end of his freshman year in college, just before entering the military. Both in college and in the military, Mike had been taught to study the Scriptures, have quiet times, memorize Scripture, and meditate on it daily. He was also taught the importance of sharing his faith with others and serving in some kind of Christian ministry. He was looking forward to the participation of these freshmen who undoubtedly had much more opportunity for Christian growth than he had.

Mike vividly remembers the first week of the study in John 1. After reading the passage, he began to ask questions about the truths in God's Word to get the observations of the students. He was shocked to find that they had "pat" answers and had never learned how to interact with the Scriptures. Mike had to set aside his surprise and begin to help them learn to really look at the Scripture and see the wonders of God's Word. He taught them how to commune with God in quiet times with the Scriptures and in prayer.

However, their initial responses still gripped him as he wondered what had happened to the eighteen plus years these solid churches and Christian families had with these kids. Out of the numerous men Mike worked with in college and military ministries, he found only one occasion where the student had learned how to learn and grow in Christ and minister to others. What had happened to

What had happened to leave such a legacy of anemic Christians with "pat" answers but no real relationship with the Lord?

How can children from committed, church attending families so readily abandon their heritage?

leave such a legacy of anemic Christian life and walk with “pat” answers but no real relationship with the Lord? How can children from committed, church-attending families so readily abandon their heritage?

When Mike and Carolyn’s own children came along, they continued to ponder this question. They began to get a glimpse of what had happened. Their children were being presented with a short story about some Bible hero without any real reference to God’s authority or man’s need for repentance. Perhaps the anemic faith of the college students had started years earlier.

Carolyn (other coauthor) began regularly observing what was being done with the toddlers, in their daughter’s class. Eventually, she discovered answers to many troublesome issues when she began to see how the lessons deviated from the truths of Scripture.

When she started teaching, she found that it took forty hours every week to make biblical sense out of the lessons she was given to use. Class time began with a focus towards the truths in the passage, and the focus was maintained through stories, activities, songs, snacks, etc. until the last child left. Most of the preparation time was spent changing the various parts of the lesson from a man-centered, feel-good, all-is-well activity to an activity that put the focus on God and His attributes, and on man and his need. After several years of struggle, she began using the Bible alone. Having just finished studying Romans herself, that is where she began.

To Carolyn’s surprise, it immediately took half the time to prepare a lesson, which included separate classes of two-three year olds and kindergarteners. Realizing that few teachers could devote that much time to preparing lessons, she began writing down what others would need in order to do what she was doing. The teachers she met with weekly continued to confirm that they only spent one to two hours in lesson preparation with a key factor of beginning early. That question about the anemic faith of the college students has led to a lifetime of searching for answers.



Part I
IN PURSUIT
OF KNOWLEDGE

2 The Trojan Horse in Christian Education



Chapter 1

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor standeth in the way of sinners,
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD;
and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
his leaf also shall not wither;
and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The ungodly are not so:
but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Psalm 1

As an influential Christian thinker, Francis Schaeffer wrote and spoke about the relevance of Christian truth for all of life. In the foreword to Schaeffer's *Trilogy* J. I. Packer presents five perceptions that shaped Schaeffer's work. These perceptions are also relevant to the investigation of the foundations of Christian education. Consider Packer's observations about Schaeffer's work.

1. "... there are very few basic worldviews, and we need to realize how much our haphazard surface-level thoughts ... take for granted."
2. "Ideas have legs," so how we think determines what we are.
3. The Western mind is adrift on a trackless sea of relativism and irrationalism. Ongoing syntheses, that is embracing the idea that there is no real distinction between right and wrong or truth and untruth, will come to be swallowed up by a category-less "pan-everythingism." (Basically, the idea that everything is okay but Christianity, which is established on absolutes.)
4. It is important to identify the antitheses between truth and untruth, right and wrong, good and evil, the meaningful and the meaningless, Christian and non-Christian value systems, secular relativism and Christian absolutism.
5. We need to live truth as well as think truth in order to demonstrate to the world that the personal, infinite God is really here in our generation.¹

We will consider **Four Basic Premises** of the Christian faith, based on the premise that Scripture is **true** and **reliable**. To oppose, ignore, or compromise the Scriptural definition of any one of these presuppositions is to compromise the Christian faith. The four basic beliefs or assumptions we will consider are:

We will consider four basic presuppositions of the Christian faith, based on the premise that Scripture is **true** and **reliable**.

1. **Scripture:** Scripture is God's special revelation to man about God and about man's relationship to God, to one another, and to God's creation (Jn. 1:1-4). Scripture is the absolute, inspired, infallible, inerrant, plenary, and authoritative truth from God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) with a clear, absolute structure of right and wrong (Ex. 20:1-19; 2 Pt. 1:21).
2. **God:** Almighty, sovereign, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and eternal. God is the Creator (Gn. 1). God is one God who exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. God is holy, righteous, just, and cannot accept sin in His presence (Ex. 11:44-45). However, God graciously reaches out in love and draws people to Himself for eternal salvation through the blood of Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life.
3. **Fleshly Man:** Man was good as God created him, but he sinned and encountered God's judgment, bringing the consequence of death and eternal punishment (Gn. 3). As a result all men are now born with a sin nature that leads them away from God. Sinful man must repent and turn to God as His Lord for salvation (Rm. 3:23, 6:23; Jn. 3:16). This repentance and turning to God is illuminated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Redeemed man wants to serve God by using his spiritual gifts for God's glory because of the mercy and grace he has received. He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and is in a process of sanctification (1 Tim. 4:5; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Pt. 1:2).
4. **Eternity:** God's judgment (Heb. 9:27) occurs after death, resulting in eternal life with God in heaven or eternal punishment apart from God. The only way for eternal salvation is through God's Son Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for sin, a gift of grace because of God's love (Jn. 14:6; Eph. 2:8-9), which leads to ultimate justification (Rm. 4:25).

(A hospice caretaker/manager who regularly sees individuals approach death explained it this way: when a person approaches death, it is either "fear or faith.")

Based on the **premise that Scripture is not true or reliable** we have:

Based on the premise
that Scripture is
not true or reliable ...

1. God does not exist or is no longer involved in the affairs of man. It is more appropriate to describe God as being everything that encompasses the self-existent universe and everything as being God.
2. Man is the source of knowledge and guidance above Scripture.
3. Man, basically good, is at the pinnacle of the evolved state with ultimate responsibility for achieving an ideal utopia through science and socialism.
4. There is no life after death, or if there is life after death, then man determines his destiny by what he does in this life.

As a result, if Scripture is not true, and man is the arbiter "truth," several other conclusions appear:

1. God is dead, uninvolved, or nonexistent.
2. The origin of the universe came through evolution, with man at the pinnacle.
3. Jesus Christ was the perfect altruist, and the stories about His miracles are merely folklore.
4. Morality is in constant flux. Man is basically good, so he needs psychoanalysis to eliminate guilt feelings based on outdated moral values.
5. God is too loving to reject anyone or send anyone to hell.
6. The mind establishes reality. Man can establish truth through systematic dialecticism (thesis, antithesis, synthesis).

7. There is no eternity, so eat, drink and be merry.
8. Man should strive for the ideal utopia as a world citizen.

According to Scripture there is no room for compromise between the two premises. Trying to hold onto the Bible being true and man being at the evolutionary pinnacle is not possible according to Matthew 7:13-14. There is either a Creator God, or there is not. Man is depraved, or he is basically good. The Bible, God's Word, is our blueprint for life, or it is merely a suspicious history book with good moral stories and inherent inaccuracies. There is either life after death, or this life is all there is.

While some hold to man being born good and then later being corrupted by his environment, others hold to man being born a sinner with salvation possible through the blood of Jesus Christ. This position presumes accountability to a holy righteous God. It is not as though a believer never sins. Sanctification is a progressive process in which believers continually need to have their consciences brought in line with God's truth. Our previous beliefs, along with the influence from the world, compromise our belief structure. We must use the time we have to purge ourselves of wrong thinking so that we no longer accommodate former beliefs that oppose God's truth. It is a constant process of filtering out sin and untruths and living an uncompromised life.

A major focus of this book is to consider the role and influence parents and teachers have over children. While children are born sinners (Rm. 3:23), we need to teach them the truths of Scripture and urge them to respond appropriately. Some teachers think that keeping children happy and safe is their only obligation. Those who teach children because they are more willing than prepared do not realize that children are like sponges, soaking up content, or the lack thereof, as well as adult attitudes and habits. Teachers who enter the classroom without having spent time with God in His Word during the week are dangerous indeed, for themselves and the students. Children pick up and pass on spiritual emptiness, which leads to misguided ideas of the Christian faith and walk. It produces children who creatively fill spiritual and mental voids with unruly behavior.

Unwittingly, many people claim to believe that Scripture is true even though they are largely or partially ignorant of its content. This ignorance allows them to hold onto values that support their lifestyles and reject values that interfere with what they want to do. Their less-than-solid foundation leaves them following the crowd and being blown about by the latest wind or wave of doctrine (Jas. 1:5-8).

To some, God is like a puppet to manipulate or a superhero to access when something is too tough or out of control. On the other hand, some people become angry with God and accuse Him of neglect when things do not go their way. The complaints and hopelessness multiply because of an improper knowledge of God and faulty expectations about the nature of the Christian faith and walk.

Those who do not have a solid foundation in the Scriptures too often listen to the wisdom of the world and bring the world's thinking into the Christian setting. Sadly, they have aided the world's infiltration into Christian thinking and education in the same way it was done to them. This would not happen so easily if believers were truly knowledgeable of and obedient to God, God's Word, and God's principles.

Trying to hold onto the Bible being true and man being at the evolutionary pinnacle is ultimately not possible ...

Unwittingly, many people claim to believe that Scripture is true even though they are largely or partially ignorant of its content.

We expect those in the world to reject or ignore the Scripture.

... God's continual plan of redemption in spite of man's persistent sinful ways.

As we have seen from our two basic premises, we expect the world to reject or ignore the Scripture, placing itself as its own seat of authority with a myriad of options for how to view God, His Word, man, and eternity. Their presuppositions can take any form since there is no foundational authority. They seek out those who support and encourage their way of thinking and reject or ignore their opposition. For the same thing to happen to a Christian is sad, indeed. In a time and place where the Scriptures are so readily available, it is unnecessary for anyone who seriously wants to follow God to be ignorant of His Word and His principles. That is why it is just for God to judge unbelievers who ignore His truth (Rm. 1:18) and chastise believers He loves (He. 12:5-11).

When Jesus warned us to follow the straight and narrow path, He immediately followed it by warning us to beware of false prophets (Mt. 7:15-20). In the following chapters we will chronologically review various ways men have found to reject God and His truth and justify themselves apart from God. We will consider presuppositions in the four basic areas already mentioned: **Scripture**, **God**, **fleshly man**, and **eternity** throughout history century-by-century.

The Old Testament reveals instructive patterns of God's continual plan of redemption in spite of man's persistent sinful ways. These patterns help us identify what is happening today no matter what the governmental, religious, social, or philosophical structures may be. There are repetitive historical cycles that are still inherent and influential today.

Summary Questions

1. When is God's Word relevant, and how is it relevant to you?
(1 Cor. 10:11-13; Ps. 1:2-3) _____

2. What reasons did Packer give for considering the relevance of Christian truth for all of life? _____

3. How would you describe your worldview? _____

4. What are your favorite parts of the Bible, and how does God's Word rule in your life? (Heb. 5:11-14) _____

5. If Scripture is the absolute, inspired, infallible, authoritative truth, then what other premises are also true? _____

6. If Scripture is not true, then what premises also exist?

7. What are some perspectives with the premise that Scripture is not true and that man is the focal point? _____
