



Principle Approach Education

MASTERING THE LEADING IDEAS OF THE “RED BOOKS”

by Carol G. Adams

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In a past edition of the FACE periodical, *Principle Approach*[®] *Education*, the lead article created quite a reckoning among Christians concerned with a Biblical worldview. In the article were test scores revealing the Biblical worldview of Christian students in public, Christian and Principle Approach schools. These results showed a dramatic difference between the public and Christian school students on one hand, and on the other hand, the Principle Approach students who outscored in all categories.

This study, the PEERS Test created by the Nehemiah Institute, calls us to confront the fact that it is difficult, seemingly impossible, for this generation to form a God-centered perception of matters of government, politics, economics, social issues, education, and public policy in the midst of a godless society. Christians bear the weight of the Great Commission compelling them to take the Gospel into all the world and every area of life. Why is it so hard for us to apply the Gospel in interpreting the world around us? Many Christians find “world-issues” confusing—find themselves unsure of how to discern the signs of the times—and too often take on liberal, anti-Christian positions by osmosis.

Our founding fathers had the ability to reason from a broad, sweeping Christian worldview to such an amazing extent that God was able use them to form the government that established the first Christian constitutional liberty in the history of the world. This form of government became the protector and channel of the Gospel in missionary efforts to the whole globe. What factor made them so able? They possessed a thorough knowledge of the scripture and a thorough knowledge of Providential history. Because they knew and understood how God had dealt with man and nations across centuries and recognized his hand, they guarded the whole counsel of God in their wisdom.

How Can We Heal Our Ignorance and Reach the Stature of Biblical Thinking?

God has provided twentieth century Christians who lack the knowledge of Providential history, with a course of study carefully laid out in the basic leading ideas held by the founders. This course is in two “red book” volumes that have been making their way into the studies and libraries of American Christians for thirty years. The first of the two basic volumes is Verna Hall’s *The Christian History of*



the Constitution of the United States of America, Vol I: Christian Self-Government, lovingly known as “CHOC” by thousands of its students. The second volume is the study guide to CHOC, *Teaching and Learning America’s Christian History: The Principle Approach®* by Rosalie Slater, called “T&L,” which is guiding the recreation of American Christian education in this generation.

What is a “Leading Idea?”

Webster’s 1828 definition of “lead” says that “leading is guiding or showing the way or introducing by going first.” A Leading Idea then is an idea that leads the reasoner down a pathway.

Verna Hall’s setting for teaching us America’s Christian History was to show the impact of Jesus Christ on history and government—the progress of the Gospel, through leading ideas which would immediately be understood. “Above all, let our youth be instructed in all that appertains to the vital principles of our Republic to appreciate the blessings they enjoy. They should be led by the hand of history through every scene of trial and hardship where our fathers acted and endured.” (*The Christian History of the American Revolution: Consider and Ponder* by Verna Hall, p. 255)

There is good news for those who find themselves daunted by the prospect of an exhaustive study of the two basic volumes. There is a course—a beautifully planned and thoroughly presented study guide—that takes you through both volumes directed by the very Leading Ideas that are the outcome of years of study.

“The Christian History Study Course” which constitutes Part IV beginning on page 305 of T&L, has been used by study groups, faculties, families, Sunday School classes and individuals for a basic course in the principles that found a Biblical worldview. This course, amazing in its accomplishment of being both comprehensive and succinct, lays the foundation of a thorough understanding of Providential history and Biblical ideas of life and government.

The course is complete in eight lessons and in a format that cultivates mastery of the complex yet rudimentary leading ideas. Its format leads the student through the steps of learning. It is keyed to the *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America, Vol I: Christian Self-Government*, directing the reader to key passages in the compilation of primary sources that identify the Christian foundation of the United States. In exemplary Principle Approach style, it emphasizes expressive language in discussion, debate, reasoning Biblically and writing essay.

The Study Guide’s first leading idea, “The Christian Idea of Man and Government,” begins with the core truth of the Gospel—our Sovereign God making man in his Divine image, destining him for immortality, giving the individual an independent value. This core truth is so simple yet profound, and when considered in light of the issues of government, it floodlights the many disguises of tyranny.

In Lesson Three on page 317, “The Principle of Representation” begins with concepts to be observed, such as three kinds of nation-making, two of which are pagan and one Christian. The concept of taxation and property lead logically to an understanding of “the great and chief End . . . of Men’s uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the Preservation of their Property,”



(John Locke). The ultimate outcome of this one concept is the realization that we have a property in our consent and that a Godly form of government must protect that property of consent by providing for representation for every citizen. This one lesson, which might take an hour or two of reading and discussion, establishes a clear and rudimentary understanding of why the Gospel fully applied to the government of men results in government from the bottom up, not the top down. It identifies the Biblical roots of this concept and gives many historical examples in Montesquieu, Locke, Connecticut, the Town Meetings and Sam Adams.

The genius of this Study Guide is that it can be shared in groups to give opportunity for collaboration in understanding.

Are you wishing you had the time to tackle a study of the “red books?” Take a plunge with some friends with the Study Guide and allow the Lord to open up your vision to encompass a thoroughly Biblical worldview and reestablish for yourself the Hand of God’s Providence in History.