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## Thanks for Nothing

Of all the things I have to be thankful for, I am most thankful for the things I didn't get. In the 1940s and 1950s, I am most thankful that I did not get polio. This was an epidemic during which thousands of youngsters were afflicted with the crippling killer disease, but I was spared.

*Thanks for nothing.*

As a young girl, I was keenly aware that I was being brought up in a Christian home with both parents living happily under the same roof, but many children in my neighborhood had only a mother, a grandmother, or an aunt in the home. Quite often there was no father. I was not given a single-parent home.

*Thanks for nothing.*

Many people have homes that are strategically located under bridges, in abandoned cars, or in discarded refrigerator boxes. Their only means of transportation is an old decrepit grocery cart and a pair of worn out shoes. Their food comes from the leftovers of others, a nearby dumpster, or maybe, a local soup kitchen. They may get the opportunity to come in from the cold and the rain if they can find a shelter that is not crowded. I never got a chance to experience these aspects of life.

*Thanks for nothing.*

I have some friends whose sons and daughters are hooked on drugs and some are even in prison. Some of these friends have had to take

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All teachers know the value of education. But consider how valuable education is to those who are denied the opportunity to learn, to those who have to surmount obstacles to receive even the most basic education.



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BALANCED PERSPECTIVES  
IN EDUCATION

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Janella Murry

**Illustration**

Brannon McAllister

**Photography**

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1.800.845.5731  
**web site** www.bjup.com  
**e-mail** t2t@bjup.com

# Education and Black History

**For some**, learning meant painstaking labor. Lott Carey, a slave in Richmond, Virginia, in the early 1800s, heard his pastor preach on the story of Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3). So eager was Carey to read that account for himself that he memorized the passage and then agonizingly compared what he had memorized to the printed word until he puzzled it out. Determinedly, Carey continued to labor over the Scriptures, teaching himself to read by this method. Over a

decade later that doggedness of character served him well when, freed from slavery, he went as a pioneer missionary to Africa.

**Likewise, consider** the case of Charles Tindley. Born into a slave family in Maryland in the 1850s, Tindley was hired out as a worker to different families, some of whom, Tindley recalled, were cruel and refused to allow him to have even a book. Nonetheless, he picked up scraps of newspaper by the road, hid them in his

shirt (he had no pockets), and at night secretly studied them by the light of dying coals. His love for learning never left him. Although he had little formal education, he read constantly. “He seems nice,” one acquaintance said, “but he don’t get his head out of a book long enough to let you know him.” Rising from slavery, Tindley eventually became an outstanding minister in Philadelphia and wrote numerous gospel songs, such as “Nothing Between.”

**Learning for** African Americans often involved disapproval or sometimes even danger. Daniel Payne, born a free black in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1811, longed not only to learn but also to teach. A carpenter, he saved his money to buy books. He would bolt down his breakfast and lunch so that he could spend time reading. After work Payne read until midnight and then arose at 4:00 a.m. to read more until he went to work at 6:00. Finally, with great pride, he opened his first school. His students found an eager and inventive teacher, one whose classroom methods included vivisectioning an alligator. Then the Nat Turner slave rebellion led Southerners to fear the education of blacks and to outlaw black education. Forced to close his school, Payne went north to finish his education. There he eventually became president of Wilberforce University in Ohio.

**Francis Grimké**, like Payne, was from the Charleston area, and he was the son of a slave and her master. After the Civil War, Grimké’s intellectual keenness earned him a trip north to attend Lincoln University. After graduation, he announced his call to the ministry and graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary. Yet his own

upward climb by means of education did not blind Grimké to the need for the right kind of education—a God-centered education. “Brain power is all right,” he said, “and all that can be done to develop it, to set it forth in all its fullness and morals. If under it is no reverence for God and for things that are true, just, lovely, and of good report, its influence will be evil and not good.”

**Education is** so common today that many students regard it as a burden more than an opportunity. It would not hurt, then, to think of men and women for whom it was a blessing longed for and labored after. And, for all of these men, education was a means to an end—to know better Jesus Christ, whom to know rightly is life eternal (John 17:3). ■

**Mark Sidwell holds a Ph.D. in Church History. He is director of the Fundamentalism File, a research center containing articles for approximately 6,000 subjects relating to religion or current events, at the Mack Library of Bob Jones University.**

**Truth exists.  
Only falsehood has  
to be invented.**  
Georges Braque

on the responsibility of rearing their grandchildren because of these conditions. One friend told me of her son who had tried to kill her in order to get money for his drug habit. And some have told tales of horror in which their grandchildren have been prostituted, starved, and beaten. I have never been given this cross to bear.

*Thanks for nothing.*

After seventeen years at my job, I was transferred to a school on the other side of town. I wondered how that could happen to me. Then I heard that some people would not have jobs for the upcoming school year. I wondered how I would feel if that had been the case for me. I didn’t lose my job, and I found myself instead in a school that I liked much better than my old one.

*Thanks for nothing.*

I have a coworker whose daughter has been diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia. She recently received a bone marrow transplant, but even with the transplant she is not doing well. It would appear that she most likely will leave her children motherless. I had my mother for many years and as of this writing, my children and grandchildren are not motherless. We have not begun to face a tragedy of this proportion.

*Thanks for nothing.*

When I think of all the things I have prayed for over the years and didn’t get; when I remember all the blessings I received and did not deserve; when I think of all I wanted but did not need; when I look back over my life and see all the things I have to be thankful for, I am most thankful for the things I did not get.

*Thanks for nothing. ■*

**Laura Smith is a guidance counselor at Berea Middle School in Berea, South Carolina. She is the mother of two sons and grandmother of three little girls.**

# Halo? Or Horns?

In the business world a biased work review is known as “halo or horns.” (I’m not here to debate the wisdom or theological appropriateness of those terms—they’re business terms, not mine.) Halo error happens when “one positive performance aspect causes the rater to rate all other aspects of performance positively”; horns error happens when “one negative aspect results in the rater assigning low ratings to all the other aspects [rated].”<sup>1</sup>

Let’s face it, we’re all guilty of both from time to time whether either formally or informally, we rate those we supervise. So we can be sure halo or horns happens in the classroom—not only when we are being rated but also when we “rate” our students.

Usually the individual being rated has brought it on himself, for good or bad. You know what I’m talking about: here’s Aloysius, who is a joy to teach. He loves my class, gives good

answers, is inquisitive, and is always prepared. If he’s late to class once or twice, I can overlook that.



Now let’s talk about Herkimer. The word “irksome” comes to mind. Other adjectives include “frustrating,”

“immature,” and “rowdy.” I really don’t want to say anything bad about him. Let’s just say that when he’s absent, I don’t shed any tears. Every time he

comes to class I’m waiting for him to mess up—and he never disappoints.

I’m not suggesting that we shouldn’t deal with students according to their needs. Some of them need more attention than others; individuals respond differently to different stimuli and incentives. I have to come down harder on some students than others because they’re oblivious to warnings or hints.

But what I must guard against is giving darling little Aloysius a free ride; he’s a sinner too. And I must also guard against wounding Herkimer’s spirit. Has he been trying to do better? Has he improved since the beginning of the year? Would I notice if he had? Do I assume the worst about Herkimer while always cutting

<sup>1</sup> Raymond A. Noe, John R. Hollenbeck, Barry Gerhart, Patrick M. Wright, *Human Resource Management: Gaining a Competitive Advantage* (Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill, 2000), p. 304.

Aloysius a little slack? Aloysius may come to believe that outward conformity is the way to get what he wants out of life, yet his heart may be manipulative and self-centered. Herkimer, though disruptive, may be characterized by ingenuousness, a trait that will serve him well through life—if he will allow the Lord to conquer his other areas of weakness. I can recall falling into this pattern of erroneous thinking many times, to my students' detriment, I'm afraid. One especially embarrassing example: "Mary" was talking in class ... again. I called her down for it and then added, "And I also heard about that note you wrote in chapel—you're going to be in trouble

for that too," which, of course, had absolutely nothing to do with the issue at hand and didn't need to be brought up in front of other students. But what was worse was the blank stare Mary gave me and then the explanation from another student: "A different Mary wrote that note." Oops.

**W**hat had I done? I had allowed "one negative aspect" of Mary's behavior to prejudice me against her in other areas. Yes, I apologized—to Mary, to the class, and to Mary's mother, who also heard about the event. How much better it would have been had I dealt only with the behavior that was a prob-

lem at that moment and not charged off into other territory.

**L**et's work to avoid classifying students as "near perfect" or "nearly hopeless." Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide us and ask God's wisdom to deal with children or teens the way Christ would have us to. Let's judge others the way we want to be judged (cf. Matt. 7:12; John 7:24). ■

*Steve Skaggs is Product Development Manager for BJU Press. He is also a twelve-year veteran of teaching junior high school.*



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# Can Secular Texts Be Part of Christian Education?

“Christians have, for half a century, been concentrating on evangelism and ‘personal’ Christianity, almost completely abandoning science and education to the evolutionary humanist. It is not enough merely to win individual students and teachers to Christ, important as that may be; we must win education to Christ!”

There is no middle ground. Either education rests on a biblical perspective or it comes from man’s point of view. Every Christian educator would heartily agree that the goal is helping young people love God with all their hearts, souls, and minds. The discussion begins only when we try to define how that goal should be pursued.

## Why Use Secular Texts? Do They Really Teach Students to Discern?

Many believe that they can accomplish the mission with a secular text—just so long as the teacher is skilled in detecting the secular agenda and has the ability to refute the false views and insert biblical views. Some people who want to train ‘Christian thinkers’ believe secular texts will teach students to discern between good and evil.

A good teacher may use God-denying, humanist materials to point out illogic and contradictions in the other side, but the question remains: why would someone so dedicated to developing a Christian worldview use as his main tool one that is written from his opponent’s view? This is reverse thinking, isn’t it?

Biblical truth is the basis for discernment, and then humanistic and hedonistic thinking can be examined and refuted. Secular books ignore the Savior, Who received “power over all flesh” and to Whom “all power is given.” How

can secular texts then be useful in the Christian classroom?

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge.” The “fear of the Lord” suggests that obtaining knowledge is more than a mechanical process; it also requires a relationship. To be truly Christian educators, we turn to Him who is the source of the knowledge we seek.

## Not All Subjects Are Equal, Are They?

Others have different reasons for not using Christian textbooks exclusively. They believe that some subjects are not necessarily “Christian,” that mathematics, for instance, is neither Christian nor secular. But such neutrality is impossible. Every text is written by an author who has his own beliefs which permeate the book.

## Should the slant for Christians not be Christian?

Or others may believe that some subjects are not critical to Christian education. To

illustrate, let’s think of a two-story house. In the upper story we place the “spiritually important” Bible class and the study of creation. In the lower story we are likely to place the “less spiritual” math, grammar, foreign language, and elective classes. The problem is that God does not separate learning into upper and lower levels. There is no learning that takes place aside from values.

## Are Secular Texts More Credible?

Still others feel that the secular texts lend authority to their curriculum. They believe that Christian textbooks are somehow not as credible. Many times it is not the content but the viewpoint itself that causes their concern. They fall prey to the liberals’ tactic of making Christianity seem less than academically respectable.

Frances Patterson, an assistant professor at Valdosta State University, says that “textbooks and materials used in Christian schools are clearly biased toward a conservative fundamentalist outlook.” She, of course, meant this

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as a criticism. To the Christian educator, however, it should be a compliment to his testimony, not a worry, that a secular humanist recognizes a significant difference between a Christian worldview and the secular. Secular texts are biased too.

### Is There a Solution?

The liberal attacks do serve a purpose: they keep Christian publishers on notice. Christian materials must be exactly written, use good pedagogical teaching and learning methods, and have excellent craftsmanship—in all student texts, teacher editions, and ancillary materials.

“As the Author of all knowledge and wisdom, God is not pleased by shallowness, superficiality, and shoddiness. . . . The Christian school principal is not satisfied with picking the spiritually strong but academically weak book over the one that is academically superior but offers little spiritual emphasis. He instead searches for

those books that excel in both areas.” ■

*Jim Davis is Director of Product Development for BJU Press. He has been a teacher and an administrator for public and Christian schools.*

Good words are  
worth much  
and cost little.

George Herbert