



## Individuality Under God

Though all men have in common the fact that they are created in the image of God and have certain traits characteristic of every one who is a member of the human race, there is a wonderful diversity within the human race. Humans have different looks, abilities, talents, tempers, desires, and motivation. (This reflects the One and the Many of the Trinity in the created order--God is One, that is, there is one God; and God is Many, that is, there are three persons in the Godhead). The teacher, therefore, should recognize that the student is an individual with unique gifts that must be discovered, developed, and deployed for the glory of Jesus Christ and the welfare of his neighbor. Though every Christian has the common calling of pleasing the Lord "by humility, forbearance, candor, generosity, and tender-heartedness, he also has a particular focus "to submit or love within his own domestic circle.... Teachers should "expect, welcome and respect differences"--these differences are a testimony to the glory and grandeur of God. Students are not carbon copies of either parents or teachers.

Just as the olive plant (Ps. 128:3) has an independent existence, so does the student. If the teacher is wise, he will not treat every student alike. Some students require little attention; others draw upon more of the teacher's focus and energy. Some students respond to a more stern form of reproof, while others with a more sensitive temperament need an element of gentleness when reproofed. Some students are aiming for the stars in their calling; others are content with a more humble vocation. All these things need to be taken into account by the teacher for he is dealing with unique individuals, not clones of himself or the parents of the student.

Proverbs 22:6 speaks directly to the individuality of the student--"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Some interpret this not as a promise, but as a warning: if the sinful behavior of the child is not restrained--thus understanding the text to say letting the child go in his own sinful way--then he will be confirmed in it. Others see this verse as simply an admonition to train a child in the proper and righteous way, not the

way he wants. But, there are many who understand this from a more educational perspective. A child is to be trained according to "his bent." Children come into this world with different personalities and different temperaments and thus each child can be trained in the way he should go, but not every child can be trained to go the same way. Each child can be trained to the highest and fullest exercise of his powers, but no child can be trained to the exercise of powers which are not his. Parent and teacher must discern weaknesses and strengths and dedicate a child to the way of his individuality and vocation under God. Indeed, one aspect of education is a separation and a devotion of the student in terms of his aptitudes and abilities--there must be respect for individuality and vocation (but not self-will).

~ *John Maphet*