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Coram Deo in Christian Religious Education: A Literature Review on Integrating the Christian Worldview into 21st-Century Pedagogical Practice

Nella Mariana Panjaitan
Universitas Kristen Indonesia
Corresponding Author: Nella Mariana Panjaitan nellamarianaraffles@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The development of education in the twenty-first century presents significant challenges to Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly when learning processes become increasingly driven by academic performance and pragmatic outcomes, while the formation of faith and character is often overlooked. This article revisits the concept of Coram Deo living before the face of God as a theological framework that can guide pedagogical practice in CRE. This study employs a literature-review method by examining books and scholarly articles, particularly from the past five years, related to the Christian worldview, faith-learning integration, and spiritual formation. The data were analyzed thematically to identify major contributions, gaps, and possibilities for developing a pedagogical model. The findings indicate that Coram Deo does not merely emphasize individual spirituality; rather, it shapes how learners understand themselves, the world, and their vocation. CRE is therefore understood not simply as the transmission of religious knowledge, but as a process of faith formation that engages cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in a holistic manner. This article proposes a Coram Deo Pedagogical Model that integrates the biblical narrative of Creation–Fall–Redemption–Restoration into instructional stages, and highlights collaboration among school, family, and church as a formative ecosystem.

INTRODUCTION

The development of education in the twenty-first century presents both significant opportunities and serious challenges for educational practice, including Christian Religious Education (CRE). The digital revolution, the globalization of values, the dominance of secular scientific paradigms, and rapid socio-cultural change have shaped the way learners think about themselves, the world, and God. Within this context, educational processes are often trapped in pragmatic orientations that emphasize the mastery of knowledge and technical skills while giving insufficient attention to the holistic formation of character, ethics, and spirituality. Several studies affirm that education in this era cannot merely transmit information; it must intentionally cultivate values, responsibility, and compassion through sustained and intentional formation processes, since character development is essential in responding to global challenges (Komara, 2018). In many cases, CRE is likewise reduced to a moral or doctrinal subject focused on conveying biblical information, yet failing to help students interpret the entirety of their lives "before God."

The concept of Coram Deo offers an alternative and corrective perspective to these tendencies. The term emphasizes that every aspect of human existence thinking, learning, working, relating, and decision-making takes place before God, under His sovereignty, and for His glory. Theologically, Coram Deo invites human beings to understand themselves fundamentally in relation to God: the way we perceive who God is and how He relates to humanity shapes our understanding of life, suffering, ethics, and even education. In other words, perceiving human life "in the vision of God" opens the possibility of transforming how a person views the self, others, and the world (Riswold, 2006). Thus, Coram Deo is not merely a theological category but a way of life that encompasses education in its entirety. When integrated into CRE, Coram Deo reframes education not simply as doctrinal instruction but as the intentional formation of a Christian worldview that directs learners to know God, themselves, others, and creation in the light of Christ.

At the same time, discourse on the Christian worldview has developed significantly within educational literature over recent decades. Numerous authors emphasize Christ-centered education, faith-learning integration, and awareness that all disciplines and life experiences exist within God's redemptive work. However, much of this scholarship remains largely conceptual located within theological or philosophical discussions and has not yet systematically mapped how Coram Deo can function as an operational pedagogical framework within CRE classrooms. This gap highlights the need for a synthesized body of literature that bridges theology and practical pedagogy in the context of twenty-first-century education.

Furthermore, contemporary education emphasizes holistic, reflective, collaborative learning oriented toward character formation. Twenty-first-century pedagogy requires learners to engage multiple sources, develop analytical thinking skills, and collaborate rather than remain passive recipients of information (Komara, 2018). These values closely align with the biblical vision of human beings as God's image-bearers, called to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, morally, and spiritually. Yet without a clear worldview foundation, such pedagogical innovations risk becoming spiritually neutral or unintentionally shaped by secular paradigms. Integrating Coram Deo situates these innovations within a deeper theological framework: education as participation in God's work of renewing creation through Christ.

Against this background, this study critically reviews literature from the past five years on the Christian worldview, Coram Deo, and CRE practice, synthesizing key insights to develop a conceptual model for integrating Coram Deo into pedagogy. The guiding research questions are:

1. How does contemporary literature articulate the relationship between Coram Deo, the Christian worldview, and education?
2. How can these concepts be translated into concrete pedagogical principles and practices within CRE?
3. What integrative model can help CRE teachers nurture students to live Coram Deo in twenty-first-century contexts?

This study employs a literature-review method examining books and scholarly publications focused on Christian education, faith formation, faith-learning integration, and worldview-based pedagogy. The literature was analyzed thematically and synthesized to construct a coherent, applicable conceptual framework for CRE.

The primary contribution of this study lies in reframing Coram Deo not merely as a personal spiritual doctrine but as a pedagogical framework that shapes instructional planning, classroom interaction, and faith-reflection processes in CRE. In this way, CRE is no longer fragmented from broader learning experiences but becomes a formative force that shapes life holistically. Students are invited not only to "know about" God but to know, love, and live God's truth across all areas of life.

Ultimately, this article argues that integrating Coram Deo within CRE has far-reaching implications: deepening students' spirituality, nurturing ethical and social sensitivity, and equipping them to navigate modern complexities with reflective and responsible faith. Viewing education as life lived before God restores CRE to its fundamental purpose to enable learners to glorify God and participate in His ongoing renewal of creation.

METHODS

This study employs a literature-review approach that combines elements of systematic and narrative review. This approach was chosen because discussions on Coram Deo, the Christian worldview, and Christian Religious Education (CRE) are widely dispersed across theological and pedagogical publications, requiring both structured selection and interpretive synthesis.

Data were collected through major academic databases, primarily Google Scholar. In addition, several influential classical works were included to provide theological grounding for the discussion.

The search process used the following keywords, individually and in combination with logical operators: Coram Deo, Christian worldview, religious education, Christian pedagogy, faith integration, and Christian formation.

The inclusion criteria consisted of:

1. Per-reviewed journal articles or academic books
2. Relevance to CRE, the Christian wouldview, faith formation, or faith-learning integration
3. Availability in full-text from. Popular publications lacking strong academic grounding were excluded from the analysis

The selected literature was then analyzed through several stages: screening titles and abstracts, full-text reading, thematic categorization, and conceptual synthesis. The results of this analysis were subsequently used to construct a conceptual model for integrating Coram Deo into CRE practice within the context of twenty-first-century education.

Christion Religious as Faith and Worldview Formation

1. The Role of CRE in Shaping Christian Identity

   Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a role that extends far beyond cognitive instruction. Its purpose is not merely to ensure that students know the content of Scripture, but to help them develop their identity as disciples of Christ. Christian

identity is not formed instantly; it develops through a long process of self-awareness before God, recognition of sin, experience of forgiveness, and commitment to live in obedience.

From a Coram Deo perspective, this identity is understood as a calling to live continually before God in school, at home, in church, and within society. CRE helps students realize that their values, choices, and life decisions never occur in a spiritual vacuum. Everything unfolds in relation to God, who calls human beings to holiness, love for others, and responsible care for creation. Thus, CRE shapes a way of seeing that integrates faith and daily life, rather than confining faith to religious spaces alone.

Identity formation is also strongly influenced by the broader learning ecosystem outside the classroom. Research indicates that families play a strategic role: parental example, shared prayer, participation in worship, and the experience of belonging to a faith community help children internalize Christian values from an early age (Novianti et al., 2023). Through everyday practices, faith is not only taught but lived gradually shaping a child's identity as part of God's people.

These findings show that Christian identity formation is the collaborative work of family, church, and school. Therefore, CRE must function as a partner that strengthens faith formation at home while deepening the theological reflection nurtured within the church. Furthermore, Christian identity includes the development of character rooted in Kingdom values such as honesty, humility, justice, and compassion. These are not merely moral ideals but expressions of faith in response to God's saving work in Christ. Hence, CRE should not only communicate doctrine but also create spaces for reflection, dialogue, and real-life practice.

2. CRE as Transformation Rather Than Knowledge Transmission

   CRE grounded in Coram Deo views learning as a process of transformation. The primary goal is not simply that students can reproduce material, but that their ways of thinking and acting are renewed. Transformation occurs when learners interpret their life experiences in the light of Scripture, recognize God's presence in everyday situations, and are guided toward morally responsible decisions.

   This perspective is consistent with historical research demonstrating that from the early church onward, Christian education was always intended as formation rather than mere information. Throughout history, faith education has adapted to social, political, and cultural contexts while remaining oriented toward shaping attitudes, character, and spirituality. In other words, relevant CRE is rooted in the Gospel while remaining responsive to changing times (Edrika & Gulo, 2025).

   Consequently, CRE pedagogy must be participatory and reflective. Teachers serve not only as transmitters of information but as spiritual mentors who accompany students in interpreting their experiences before God. Discussion, faith reflection, case studies, acts of service, and contextual learning projects become essential avenues through which students not only understand Christian teaching but embody it in daily life.

The Relationship Between Church, School, and Family

Faith and worldview formation cannot take place through schools alone. Effective CRE must be understood as the shared responsibility of three primary communities: church, school, and family. Each plays a complementary role in nurturing children as disciples of Christ.

The church provides a spiritual foundation through worship, preaching, sacraments, and fellowship. Here, children encounter the story of faith and experience life within the believing community. Christian schools, through CRE and cross-disciplinary learning, help students integrate faith with knowledge and academic life. Meanwhile, the family serves as the primary space where faith is translated into daily habits prayer, parental example, work ethics, and loving relationships.

Research indicates that CRE practices within the family have a direct influence on children's behavior and spirituality. When parents consistently teach Scripture, model faith, and cultivate a loving home environment, children more readily develop spiritual habits and behaviors aligned with Christian values (Antonius & Sihotang, 2021). Conversely, the absence of faith formation at home often leads to moral confusion and difficulty living out faith taught at church or school.

When these three environments operate in isolation, faith learning becomes fragmented. Children may understand Christian doctrine in church yet fail to see its relevance at home or school. However, when church, school, and family share a unified vision and collaborate, faith formation becomes consistent. Children begin to see that discipleship is not an occasional obligation but a lifelong calling that shapes every aspect of life.

Thus, CRE cannot be understood merely as a curriculum program. It is part of a broader ecosystem of spiritual formation that integrates children's faith experiences across contexts. In the light of Coram Deo, this ecosystem reminds us that God works through His community to shape a generation capable of living, learning, and serving before Him.

Intergrating Coram Deo into Pedagogical Practice

Integrating Coram Deo into pedagogical practice means situating the entire educational process thinking, teaching, learning, mentoring, and assessing as activity carried out "before the face of God." Education is not aimed solely at academic success, but at forming persons who live faithfully before God in every aspect of life. Within this framework, the classroom becomes not merely a space for transmitting knowledge, but a place where hearts, minds, and actions are shaped.

Gaylen J. Byker (2012) emphasizes that living coram Deo involves three interrelated habits: piety, engagement with the world as a gift of common grace, and awareness of the reality of sin. These must remain in balance so that education remains Christ-centered and does not drift into secularization. In this sense, faith integration is not rhetorical spirituality; it is a way of seeing all of life as belonging to Christ.

In the same direction, Griffioen (2020) notes that the vision of coram Deo developed by Van Belle helps believers make meaning in a secular age. Living "before God" gives life a deeper orientation than academic or career achievement, because all human activity is interpreted as a response to God. Without this awareness, education easily becomes pragmatic and loses its spiritual foundation (Griffioen, 2020).

1. Principles of *Coram Deo* Learning
    a. Wholeness (Cognitive-Affective-Spiritual)
    Christian education does not separate knowledge from spirituality. Coram Deo rejects dualism that confines faith to worship while treating knowledge as "neutral." Every discipline science, the arts, language, and technology is part of God's creation and must be studied with reverence and responsibility.
    Byker (2012) reminds us that the practice of "loving God with all the mind" must be accompanied by humility, honesty, and intellectual courage. Without genuine piety, faith–learning integration becomes a slogan rather than classroom practice. Thus, teachers are called not only to convey concepts, but to help students see how God's truth guides critical, honest, and wise thinking.

b. Relationship

Coram Deo situates education within living relationships: with God, others, and creation. These relationships foster classroom environments marked by respect, compassion, and openness to dialogue. Teachers are not sovereign authorities over knowledge, but companions on a journey of faith.

Recognizing every person as God's image-bearer encourages inclusive, just, and empathetic educational practices. Healthy relationships help students learn that faith is not only spoken, but embodied within community.

c. Discipleship in Everyday Life

Discipleship means that learning leads students to obey Christ in concrete actions: moral choices, technology use, social relationships, and environmental responsibility. Education becomes spiritual accompaniment rather than curriculum delivery.

Within this perspective, teachers function as mentors of faith. Through reflection, prayer, and personal example, they help students interpret daily decisions as responses to God.

2. Classroom Practices Shaped by Coram Deo

a. Faith Reflection

Each lesson may conclude with simple reflective questions such as:

i. What did I learn about God through this topic?

ii. How does this knowledge shape my attitudes?

iii. What decisions should I reconsider?

Reflection helps students recognize God's presence in learning not only during worship moments.

b. Integrating Scripture across Disciplines

Integration does not mean forcing Bible verses into every topic. Rather, it means reading reality through biblical lenses: creation, human responsibility, fall, redemption, and restoration.

For example, in science students recognize that nature belongs to God and therefore must be cared for. In history, they are invited to evaluate events with justice and compassion.

c. Experience-and Service-Based Learning

To live coram Deo is to bring faith into public life. Service projects, group work, social observation, and environmental initiatives help students practice love in tangible ways. Byker argues that Christian educators are called to become "agents of transformation," building justice, peace (shalom), and compassion in society. Such education forms faith that bears fruit, not merely doctrinal knowledge.

3. Implementation Framework: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration

The biblical narrative (Creation Fall Redemption Restoration) helps teachers integrate faith consistently.

a. Creation Understanding Truth

Teachers guide students to see the world as God's good vreation. Learning becomes an act of worship that uncovers God's wisdom.

b. Fall Awareness of Sin and Culture

Students are encouraged to critique cultural forces contrary to God's will: consumerism, violence, injustice, and misuse of technology.

c. Redemption Practicing Love and Justice

Faith takes shape through acts of service, social concern, and academic integrity as participation in Christ's redeeming work.

d. Restoration Participation in God's Mission
Education prepares students to serve God in various vocations doctors, teachers, artists, scientists, and leaders working not for self-glory but for God's glory.

Griffioen (2020) stresses that coram Deo calls believers to view the world not as spiritually neutral, but as a space where God's presence invites faithful response. Accordingly, Christian education helps learners read reality including modern culture in the light of God's presence.

4. Challenges and Affirmations

Integrating coram Deo faces real challenges: curricular pressures, academic standards shaped by secular assumptions, and a persistent tendency to separate faith and knowledge. Historically, many Christian institutions began with strong spiritual vision but gradually lost identity as they pursued academic recognition without spiritual grounding.

Byker (2012) warns that failure often occurs when faith integration becomes rhetorical while educational practice lacks deep spiritual discipline. Therefore, coram Deo requires continual renewal through prayer, reflection, faith community, and fidelity to Scripture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Major Findings from the Literature

The literature review indicates that discussions on the integration of faith and education within the Christian tradition have significantly developed over the past two decades. Scholars such as Byker and Van Belle (through Griffioen's review) emphasize that Christian education cannot be separated from the awareness of living coram Deo before the face of God in every aspect of life.

The literature also reveals that:

a. Christian Religious Education (CRE) carries a formational, not merely informational, function.
b. The Christian worldview functions as a lens that shapes how learners interpret reality.
c. Coram Deo provides theological depth for educational practice by framing learning as an act of worship.
d. Effective faith formation consistently connects the roles of family, church, and school as an integrated ecosystem.

However, many studies note that Christian education practices often remain partial. Faith tends to be separated from academic learning, so integration occurs only at a symbolic level through prayers, verses, and rituals rather than shaping pedagogical structures and thinking patterns.

Strengths and Limitations of Existing Approaches

The literature highlights several strengths:

a. a strong theological awareness that Christ is the center of reality;
b. emphasis on moral, character, and spiritual development;
c. encouragement for Christian educators to critically engage with educational secularism.

Nevertheless, some significant limitations emerge:

a. Many studies remain conceptual and do not clearly explain how integration principles are implemented in classrooms.
b. There is limited pedagogical mapping, making teachers uncertain about how to adapt concepts into practical learning activities.
c. Several approaches remain teacher-centered, reducing meaningful student engagement.

These limitations open the way for developing a more operational conceptual model.

A New Conceptual Model

Based on the synthetic reading of the literature, this article proposes a Coram Deo Pedagogical Model that situates the entire learning process within four reflective stages:

a. Seeing the World through Creation
   Teachers guide students to recognize that knowledge and lived experience emerge from God's created world full of meaning and worthy of care.
b. Recognizing the Impact of the Fall
   Students are encouraged to critically examine cultural values, social structures, and moral struggles distorted by sin including the misuse of knowledge.
c. Living Out Redemption
d. Learning is directed toward concrete actions: practicing love, responsibility, justice, academic honesty, and social service.
e. Participating in Restoration
f. Students realize that learning is part of God's mission to renew the world, and therefore vocation and profession are understood as forms of service.

This model does not position students merely as receivers of information, but as agents who learn to interpret life before God. Teachers function as spiritual companions who help connect Scripture, experience, and practice.

Implications for Teachers, Schools, and Curriculum

For CRE Teachers:

a. develop reflective, dialogical, and experience-based learning.
b. serve as role models and spiritual mentors.
c. design assessments that evaluate cognition, attitudes, and lived practice.

For Schools:

a. Cultivate a school culture that affirms all activities academic, relational, and social as lived before God.
b. Provide training on faith–learning integration across disciplines.

For Curriculum:

c. Embed The Creation Fall Redemption Restoration Framework as a Guiding Orientation.
d. Allow Space for Service Projects, Faith Reflection, And Interdisciplinary Integration.
e. Ensure that Cre Does Not Stand Apart, But Animates the Entire Educational Process.

Thus, the Coram Deo model does not merely add a religious dimension to learning; it offers a renewed way of thinking that views education as participation in God's work of restoring His creation.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the concept of Coram Deo provides a robust theological framework for Christian Religious Education in the dynamics of twenty-first-century schooling. Living "before the face of God" is not merely a personal spiritual doctrine but a vision that shapes how learners think, study, and make decisions. In this perspective, education is understood as participation in God's redemptive work, rather than simply a means for academic achievement or pragmatic success.

The literature demonstrates that Christian Religious Education plays a central role in shaping Christian identity, character, and worldview. Yet, many educational practices remain trapped in informative and fragmented models in which faith stands apart from academic learning. Integrating Coram Deo bridges this gap by fostering awareness that all fields of knowledge, relationships, and human activities take place before God and are directed toward His glory.

Through the synthesis of literature, this article proposes a Coram Deo Pedagogical Model for Christian Religious Education, integrating the narrative of Creation–Fall–Redemption–Restoration into pedagogical practice. The model guides teachers to structure learning progressively: recognizing the world as God's creation, critically examining the effects of sin in human reality, embodying love and justice as expressions of redemption, and cultivating awareness of participation in the restoration of the world. Thus, CRE is no longer perceived merely as doctrinal instruction but as a holistic process of faith formation.

The implications are clear: teachers are called to serve as spiritual companions and learning facilitators; schools should nurture a culture that acknowledges all activities as lived before God; and curricula must intentionally provide space for reflection, service, and interdisciplinary integration. Future research may further develop this model into operational teaching designs, evaluate its impact in classroom practice, and explore more deeply the complementary roles of family and church.

Ultimately, integrating Coram Deo into Christian Religious Education reopens the vision of Christian schooling as a means of forming a generation capable of living with reflective, responsible, and relevant faith learning, working, and serving before God throughout the whole of life.

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