

A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
for the
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Prepared by:

THE COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

Adopted by:

THE GENERAL BOARD

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A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

(Detailed Statement)

Any philosophy of education has its roots in a philosophy of life. An educator's philosophy of education is but the outworking in his teaching goals and methods of his general philosophy, or his view of reality, of true knowledge, and of true value -- the most profound problems of life.

There is a Christian philosophy to which we are committed. It differs from all other philosophies in that it is God-centered, not man-centered. This is the key for all Christian thinking.

The Christian view, of reality is that God is the ultimate reality -- man and nature are God's creation; and that God is revealed perfectly only through Christ -- Christian metaphysics. The Christian view of knowledge is that God is the original, perfect Knower, and that supernatural revelation, through Christ and the Scriptures, is the one ultimate source of true knowledge -- Christian epistemology. The Christian view of value is that God is Absolute Good, that true happiness consists in becoming Godlike (holy) and in doing the will of God; that man is enabled to do that will through the saving and sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ -- Christian ethics. Three corresponding areas constitute the field of Christian education: Christian experience, Christian thinking, Christian character.

The Christian philosophy of education discriminates clearly among the available approaches to truth. Science discovers facts and classifies knowledge in the field of sense perception; religion reveals God and moral truth (metaphysical facts); philosophy is the organizing principle which recognizes the worth of each approach in its own field. The Christian approach involves both faith and scientific investigation.

The goals of a Christian education are personal and social: personal, (1) to effect and retain a saving. Intelligent relation between the student and God, and (2) to create the best possible man by educating the whole man; social, (1) to create a good society by providing leaders for Christian activity and examples of Christian grace,, and (2) to create and maintain the good life by preserving Christian Ideals.

The methods by which these goals are to be achieved are (1) objective study of the arts and science, (2) evangelism, and (3) character training.

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The philosophy of the Church of the Nazarene is Christian. It may be phrased succinctly in statements by one of its veteran educators:

“The training of the intellect is not the sole function of an educational Institution. Of greater importance is the culture of the heart, which is the fundamental principle upon which any system of true education must rest; the true and legitimate purpose of education is to cherish the mentality with which God has endowed us in loyal relation to the Divine.” “On every school, on every book, on every exercise shall be stamped, ‘Loyalty to Christ and the Bible.’” “Intense and enthusiastic devotion is a help instead of a hindrance to intellectual development.”

-- Dr. Phineas F. Bresee

Our educational philosophy is based on the creed of the church -- in particular, its doctrines of Deity, man, and redemption; and it is consistent with the avowed purpose of the church to build the kingdom of Christ by faithful propagation of scriptural holiness. It is concerned, thus, with two areas: (1) the personal development of the individual, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, and (2) the social directive of Christian service.

Confident that all truth is one and self-consistent and will ultimately be so demonstrated, but certain that Absolute Truth Is revealed In the Holy Scriptures and in Christian experience, this philosophy surveys all fields of knowledge but avowedly finds its center in Christ's teachings and His redemptive work for man.

It therefore insists on thorough Intellectual and, so far as practicable, vocational training in a fervent Christian atmosphere, but more -- it concerns itself with enabling young people to organize their total: thinking in relation to the cross of Christ and to live in the light of all its implications. In other words, its goal is developed Christian personality directed to Christian ends. The educational objective of our college is to be recognized as a fusion of holy character and sound education.

SPECIFIC AMPLIFICATION

A. Foundation Principles

1. We believe in God as unlimited (or self-limited) infinite Personality; in Christ as atoning God-Man; in the Holy Spirit as personal, and personally receivable for regenerating, cleansing, and energizing. We believe that man is sinful but savable through divine grace; that by the death of Christ a lost race has been redeemed to the possibility of heart and life here and now.

We believe that the basic undertaking of true education is to help young people to realize in personal experience as fully as may be the provisions of this redemption.

2. We believe in the Holy Scriptures as the unique, authoritative divine revelation of saving truth. They reveal God's full will for sinful man in his return to God's favor and his winning of eternal bliss. We believe that no authentic fact of natural or social science can finally contradict any fact of ethical or spiritual law; meantime, we believe that what claims to be scientific truth should be brought to the test of scripturally revealed truth, and that students should be so guided in their study. We regard the Holy Bible as the divine revelation of God's will for man. We accept it as the final tribunal of truth. Man through his varied experiences and mental abilities interprets it, but he has no right to renounce, delete, or modify any part of it.

3. We expect members of college faculties to think and live, and to help students to think and live, in the light of these accepted beliefs. It is absolutely essential that all departments or fields in our educational program be in accord with the doctrines of the Church of the Nazarene and in harmony with the adopted Philosophy of Education" of our denomination. It is not only desirable that the departments of theology, Biblical literature, and philosophy be in harmony with the doctrine of our church but also that such be the case with the fields of psychology, sociology, education, history, as well as all the sciences both social and physical.

The antithesis of the philosophy of Nazarene education is that of materialism. From these have come behaviorism in psychology, denying the reality of the self or soul; pragmatism in philosophy, denying a realm of ultimate, stable, and final truth; and humanism in religion, denying the supernatural. Naturalistic evolution is accepted as the explanation of the universe as a growing, developing process finally resulting in man, who is either intrinsically good or neutral -- not sinful or evil. With such a foundation psychological, sociological, and educational pedagogies are developed which are out of harmony with teaching principles based upon the Biblical anthropology that man was created in God's Image and because of willful sin fell, so that all of his faculties have become depraved -- sinful. Because of his present condition more is needed than Christian nurture seeking to develop a Christian consciousness from the cradle; man's nature also must be changed by God's regenerating Spirit -- this to be followed as well as preceded by Christian education.

Therefore it is imperative that all departments within our schools adjust and articulate their teaching with the accepted doctrine of the Church of the Nazarene and its adopted philosophy of education.

B. Primary Objectives

1. Our educational objective for the individual may be viewed as an ellipse with two foci, Christ and youth. It is both Christ-centered and personality-centered. Personality is developed fully only if centered in Christ, and Christ is honored worthily only by a developed personality. The two must be gotten together and kept together in an increasingly vital connection if the will of God is to be realized in human lives.

2. Our social objective relates to the all-embracing purpose of the Church of the Nazarene, to advance the whole cause of Christ in the world. The church is committed to the proposition that the message of holiness, with its emphasis on the second crisis, is indispensable and that its witness can best be maintained in the present age through the organized effort of a distinctively holiness denomination. Therefore, the educational institutions are expected to provide their denomination with a ministry which shall be orthodox in belief, sound in Christian experience, trustworthy in example, wise in counsel, and efficient in practice; and with a laity who shall be intelligent and clear-thinking, loyal to the sacred mission of a holiness church, devoted and earnest -- ministry and laity adjusted in a working unit, with a vision of world needs and a warmth of love for Christ and His kingdom.

The schools, however, are not to consider their task as narrowly sectarian. Wherever possible they are to serve young persons of other denominational affiliation who are willing to co-operate with our emphasis, and so extend the influence of the colleges beyond the limits of our own denomination.

3. The educational institutions are thus to assume responsibility for the adequate preparation of youth for life and service. While their distinctive province is intellectual development, they are to hold themselves responsible also for spiritual growth and ethical training. Their aim is to prepare young people to make the most of their lives physically, intellectually, culturally, vocationally, socially, ethically, and religiously. Our colleges are to consider as their educational blueprint an academic program of standard quality interpenetrated with Bible holiness. The best in higher education is to harmonize with the best in Christianity.

IMPLEMENTATION OF OBJECTIVES

A. For the enrichment of personality by cultivating attitudes and abilities for Christian character and service, the colleges should:

1. Offer a balanced liberal arts curriculum to provide the student an understanding of the social processes of the past and present; acquaint him with the common body of knowledge, traditions, and judgments belonging to civilization; give him a command of communication skills; open to him the nature of the scientific method through some knowledge of mathematics and the natural sciences; make him conscious of the sacredness of the physical body and the obligation to treat it as the temple of the Holy Spirit, all of this to be presented In the light of religious truth and Christian experience with an emphasis on the harmony of truth in all areas of life. Objective study (for Christian thinking.)

2. By classroom emphasis, chapel services, and personal contact encourage students to develop the ability to weigh and discriminate values; to develop an appreciation for, and an understanding of, the spiritual life; to see the necessity of Christian experience and make a full commitment to God for life and service. Evangelism (for Christian experience.)

3. Provide a strong program, both in curricular and in extracurricular areas, to enable youth to recognize and incorporate into life the necessary disciplines for developing character and exerting a strong spiritual impact on their generation. Character training (for Christian character.)

B. For guidance to effective Christian service the educational Institutions should:

1. Maintain an adequate program of Biblical and theological courses to meet a dual purpose: the training of ministers on both the graduate and the undergraduate level, and the preparation of laymen, by a basic knowledge of Biblical truth and doctrine, for efficient leadership in the local church.

2. Assist Christian young people to a view of life as Christian service in many fields of so-called “secular” employment and provide them with the information and skills requisite for the successful pursuance of some honorable vocation.

C. For the most practical and extensive realization of these goals, the colleges should:

1. Make their offerings available to the largest number of persons by keeping costs relatively low and encouraging students to exercise thrift and balanced economy in their college life.

2. Emphasize the key position of the teacher in the holiness college. Christian teachers, with a full personal commitment to God, a firm loyalty to truth, a true appreciation of the Bible as God’s revealed Word, a clear vision of the value and place of the Christian Church In current civilization and in history, and a consecration for guiding youth to personal decision in crisis experiences of regeneration and entire sanctification, and to the development of

Christian character and useful service to mankind – such teachers are a constant “must” for achieving our goals. The Christian college stands or falls upon the character and emphasis of her faculty. The duty of the Christian teacher is to have found his own Christian integration, then to be able and willing to explain how he arrived and lead the way for others.

3. Finally, the Nazarene educational institutions will fulfill their purpose and accomplish their unique objectives primarily by maintaining a sane, positive religious and spiritual atmosphere and emphasis. The administration and staff must carry on a continuous program of self-evaluation and self-improvement in the light of the above stated philosophy, objectives, and methods in order to maintain a current spiritual dynamic on the campus which will challenge each succeeding generation to the privileges, possibilities, and responsibilities of Christian service.

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