

# A RETHINKING OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS\*

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1.0 *Basic assumptions.* The evaluation of any practice, procedure, or program can best be done if a set of criteria has previously been prepared and accepted. Such a set of evaluative criteria gives meaning and direction to the evaluative process. But the orientation and relevance of these evaluative criteria depend upon the evaluator's value systems, beliefs, and ideals, most of which normally find expression in the culture patterns of the group.

Acting on this premise, we have posited a set of assumptions in the form of a statement of beliefs, which we personally cherish and hold to be self-evident. We do not propose to convince the reader to accept these beliefs. We propose, rather, to use them as the frame of reference in the development of the topic: "A Rethinking of the Philosophy of Christian Education in the Philippines."

These beliefs are:

- (1) We believe in God, who revealed himself in Jesus Christ.
- (2) We believe in democracy as a way of life, that the best cure for its admitted and/or avowed imperfections is better interpretation and implementation.
- (3) We believe in the personal worth and dignity of the individual, that he is essentially free to grow, to develop, and to choose.
- (4) We believe that freedom and responsibility are

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inseparable, that freedom without responsibility is empty, and that without freedom one only reacts, not responds.

- (5) We believe in the sanctity of the home, which is the basic unit of society.
- (6) We believe in world peace and brotherhood among all peoples of all nations, based on the concept of the Fatherhood of God.
- (7) We believe that Christian morality must regulate the personal, family, social, economic, political, and international life of men if civilization has to endure.

#### 1.1 *Interrelation of the individual, the school and the state.*

This statement of beliefs must however be considered in the light of another social theory — the theory of government. Religion, if seen as man's ultimate concern and as the *elan vital* of his beliefs and values, and education, if seen as the guidance of personal growth and development, are inevitably interwoven with the existence and functioning of the state, which, in theory and practice, is the concrete expression of this social order. In fact, we take it that the political theory of the state determines its educational philosophy, and that educational philosophy in turn, determines the types of schools, their objectives and purposes. This brings out the perennial conflict between the individual and the state, which, we very well know, has occupied the minds of thinkers and philosophers from Plato through Hobbes to Hamilton, Jefferson and the late Dean Francisco Benitez. This means that a re-examination of the educational philosophy of Christian schools in this country has to be made in the light of a complicated pattern of personal beliefs and values, and within the framework of the national aspirations and goals of the state. Fortunately, for us as a people, such goals and aspirations as have been mandated in our Constitution are rooted in ac-

cepted ideals and mores of the people, in whom Article II, Section 2, provides, all sovereignty resides. This idea is implied in an article by the former Undersecretary of Education Miguel B. Gaffud:

“...education has an obligation to give each individual every opportunity to develop up to the level of which he is capable and to make decisions of what to make of his life and what to make of education to achieve his aspirations. And in this, our time of technology which is hastening man's control of his environment and bringing to countries and peoples the blessings of the good life, education can no longer be left to chance if it has to be effective in realizing national purposes. There is an increasing demand that education be used deliberately as an instrument of national goals and to help pursue them.” (5)

2.0 *Objectives of education in the Philippines.* In broad terms, the official objectives of education in the Philippines are embodied in Article XIV, Section 5 of our Constitution, and are redefined in an official statement of the Board of National Education, which, by virtue of Republic Act No. 1124, is responsible for formulating national objectives of and basic policies on education. The Constitution states:

“...All schools shall aim to develop moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience, and vocational efficiency, and to teach the duties of citizenship.” (3)

The Board of National Education has re-stated this broad aim of education in the Philippines as follows:

- I. To inculcate moral and spiritual values inspired by an abiding faith in God
- II. To develop an enlightened, patriotic, useful, and upright citizenry in a democratic society
- III. To instill habits of industry and thrift, and to prepare the individual to contribute to the economic development and wise conservation of the Nation's natural resources.

- IV. To maintain family solidarity, to improve community life, to perpetuate all that is desirable in our national heritage, and to serve the cause of world peace
- V. To promote the sciences, arts and letters for the enrichment of life and the recognition of the dignity of the human person" (1)

2.1 *Generally accepted broad objectives of higher education.* A survey of the literature on the general objectives of higher education in the United States reveals that there are no essential differences between them (6) and those officially enunciated by the Educational Policies Commission in 1957. The Educational Policies Commission summarizes these objectives as follows:

- “1. To help realize the dream of individual opportunity
2. To preserve and enrich the cultural heritage
3. To help translate learning into equipment of living and social advance
4. To serve the public directly by helping them to provide solutions for society's problems” (4)

3.0 *Suggested rationale of the formulation of broad education functions of Christian higher education.* On the basis of a statement of beliefs and values, such as perhaps, the one stated earlier in this paper, the national goals and aspirations of our country, and using as a frame of reference the generally accepted purposes of higher education, the trustees, the administration, the faculty, and possibly the patrons or their authorized representatives, may come together and formulate a broad statement of the purpose and philosophy of the school. No doubt such a broad statement will include the (a) general-education and professional education of the student, (b) transmission, conservation, and the extension of the cultural heritage, and (c) service functions. Properly defined and interpreted, they

will not be in conflict with the aims of education in our country, nor with our national aspirations. The differences will be one of orientation. The involvement of the trustees, the administration, the faculty, and the patrons — a tedious, slow, but certainly a democratic process — will insure greater communication and acceptance, develop a greater sense of belonging among all concerned, and possibly result in greater morale.

3.1 *Statement of Purpose.* The purpose and philosophy of the institution must be stated in broad unequivocal terms. We at Central have formulated the following statement of purpose, presented here, to provide detail to what we are explaining. We submit that this meets the basic requirements of a broad statement of purpose for any Christian school, although the details of this broad philosophy should be relevant to the capacities of individual Christian school and to the community in which they operate.

“Established as a Christian institution, the aim of the University is to educate the heart as well as the head, to develop students morally, intellectually, socially, and physically, to the end that they may become men and women who are imbued with spiritual ideals and with the desire to serve God and man. To accomplish this purpose, the University seeks to provide the students with a stimulating atmosphere permeated by the spirit of the Great Teacher, and with an educational program of high standard where the students may search for truth and knowledge, unhampered by prejudice, superstition, skepticism, or dogmatism.” (2)

3.2 *Statement of general-education objectives.* Rethinking the philosophy of Christian higher education and its educational functions does not stop with a simple statement of a broad purpose, such as the one perhaps, suggested above. It will not be meaningful unless defined into narrower objectives. We shall, then, present our definition of one of the functions previously suggested: the general-education of the student. Normally each narrower

objective should be derived on the basis of student and community needs, and no single objective should be in conflict with posited beliefs, the philosophy of the school, nor with the national aspirations.

#### GENERAL-EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

Pursuant to the above purpose, the objectives of the general-education program of the University is to encourage and enable the student to develop capacity and skill in:

1. Exercising the privileges and responsibilities of democratic citizenship;
2. Developing a set of sound moral and spiritual values by which he guides his life;
3. Expressing his thoughts clearly in writing and speaking; and reading and listening with understanding;
4. Using the basic mathematical and mechanical skills necessary in everyday life;
5. Using the method of critical thinking in solving problems, making decisions, and discriminating among values;
6. Understanding and appreciating his cultural heritage so that he may gain a true perspective of his time and place in the world;
7. Understanding his interaction with his biological and physical environment so that he may adjust to and/or improve that environment;
8. Maintaining good mental and physical health for himself, his family, and his community;
9. Developing a balanced personal and social adjustment;
10. Sharing in the development of a satisfactory home, family, and community life;
11. Achieving a satisfactory vocational or professional adjustment;

12. Taking part in some form of creative activity and in appreciating the creativity of others.

3.3 *Definition of the foregoing general-education objectives.* The foregoing general-education objectives are still too broad and should be defined into still narrower objectives. Objective No. 2, Moral and Spiritual Values, might be analyzed by asking: What should these spiritual and moral values be by which the student guides his life? This is most difficult to decide because it involves the problem of values, and people have quite different standards. We submit that these guides should be as follows (9). The student

1. Believes in the existence of God, who, in former times, revealed himself in fragmentary and varied ways, but finally and fully in Jesus Christ.
2. Believes the Bible is the inspired word of God, record of man's experiences with God, and of God's dealings with man.
3. Knows that getting acquainted with valuable records of past racial experiences found in the Bible and other forms of religious literature helps to build Christian character.
4. Has a mind that perceives that in every human experience there is a spiritual meaning leading the person into vital relationship with Jesus Christ.
5. Recognizes the dignity and individual worth of each human being regardless of religious persuasion, social status, or nationality.
6. Understands that the Christian faith has relevance to social, political and economic life.
7. Is aware of the ideals of the Christian faith in his inner life, in his relationship within the family, in his work, and in his intellectual, recreational, aesthetic pursuits.
8. Knows what he believes and has the courage to

- live by his beliefs, recognizing that each individual is responsible for his own acts.
9. Uses time, talent, and possessions as a faithful steward of God's gift.
  10. Understands that science and religion complement and supplement each other if they are properly interpreted and understood.
  11. Participates in the Christian Church which is the manifestation of a growing community that promotes personal development and enduring relationship of good will and service.
  12. Possesses a world-wide concern for peace and brotherhood among all peoples of all nations, based on the belief in the Fatherhood of God.

Similarly, General-Education Objective No. 5, Critical Thinking, has been analyzed as follows: What is critical thinking? What does it consist of? When is a student deemed to be able to think critically? In one of our studies, (8) our faculty agreed on the following:

1. Ability to evaluate facts, to identify data which have no bearing on a given problem, to distinguish between what is true and what is not true;
2. Willingness to suspend judgment or make conclusions until all or at least most facts have been gathered;
3. Ability to draw valid conclusions or universal truths from particular cases;
4. Ability to perceive relationships, such as cause and effect versus simple relation, contrasts, analogies, the relation of the part to the whole, especially in problem-solving;
5. Ability to define a problem, to analyze its component elements, its antecedents and consequents;



6. Ability to apply conclusions or deductions in related problems or situations;
7. Awareness of the need for evaluating the consequences of the alternatives in the decision-making process;
8. Awareness of the need for evaluating standards when one is faced with the problem of discriminating among values;
9. Ability to discriminate or discern facts from opinion, propaganda from what is not propaganda;
10. Ability to tell whether (or why) given generalizations or conclusions or inferences in one situation fit or do not fit in another situation;
11. Ability to draw sound conclusions from certain premises, evaluate the validity of major or minor premises;
12. Ability to think creatively.

#### 4.0 *Implication of these objectives on the school program.*

4.1 *Christian orientation as a dimension in the entire educational program.* Education in Christian schools, by definition, is above all things God oriented. Knowledge, attitudes, skills, motivations — in short, subject matter and method are interpreted within the larger Christian perspective. If, for instance, one of the aims of education in a Christian institution is the development of the individual — we sincerely feel that this should be the focus of its efforts — the program shall be the development of his moral, intellectual, social, physical faculties according to his capacity, coupled with spiritual ideals and with a desire to serve God and man. If one of the aims is the conservation and transmission of our heritage, the Christian school has the responsibility of transmitting and conserving the best in our national and spiritual heritage. That heritage, we submit, must include the history of religion, its tragic defeats and its glorious victories, its magnificent and “unmagnifi-

cent" motivations, its role in man's search for God. In such a school the Christian educator will direct all learning and fashion the total educational experience in terms primarily of the life abundant rather than career and self, in terms primarily of the full man rather than a single corner. It is possible, is it not, to have the students, as Tenyson did, see God in a flower on the crannied wall, or feel with Bryant God's guidance in a waterfowl. The English teacher can help his students to discern in the great works of literature symbolic portrayals of the human situation in all its glory and tragedy, to recognize the unseen hand of God in that glory or tragedy. The natural science teacher, concluding a unit on the heavenly bodies, can bring home the idea that the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). Surely the health and physical education teacher, while teaching the effects of alcohol on the body, can add that we are not to defile our bodies because they are actually God's living temples. Precept and matter are interpreted in terms of the principles of Christian faith, and process or method is governed by the Christian way of life. In short, the entire curriculum is permeated by these. To insure a desired totality of impact, the curriculum should be construed to mean the entire educational program—the curricular offerings, the co-curricular activities, the administration and the faculty, the buildings, the dormitories, the student exchange enterprise.

4.2 *Christian orientation as a dimension in faculty involvement, administrative practices and trustees' policies.* There is no time nor space to discuss the implications of this dimension on faculty involvement, commitment, dedication, their personal life witness and the need for academic excellence; nor on the direction which is expected of the administrator, the Christian image which he must project before his many publics, the exercise of a dynamic Christian leadership, the Christian orientation of his decisions; nor on the wisdom of the broad policies of the trustees like vacation salaries, security in the form of ten-

ure for deserving teachers and staff, academic freedom, sick leaves, and similar fringe benefits. But this we can only venture to state: No Christian school can rightfully claim an image as such if it is Christian part of the time, non-Christian some of the time, and un-Christian in any practice if convenient at the time.

4.3 *Need for a focus.* We have stated that the entire educational program of the Christian school should be permeated by the Christian way of life. The reason for this emphasis is that people today here and in all other parts of the world are dreadfully confused, and this confusion is due to the psychological truth that the whole structure, and consequently the behavior of the human personality, stems directly from principles, concepts, and ideas to which an individual attaches values. Some people value cash, others service, and still others prestige. President Macapagal recognized the reality of this dreadful confusion in our country when he said:

“...Therefore, I first invite your attention to the decadent state of our public morality... I would seek to strengthen the nation's moral fiber through formal modes of reform... Let me, however, add that it is wasted effort to steep the young in virtue and morality only to let them realize as they grow up that their elders are neither moral nor virtuous...” (7)

We submit that the need in our country today is greater emphasis on the inculcation of moral and spiritual values. These values have yet to be supplanted by other dogmas or guides. We realize that these should be constantly evaluated in the light of demands of the time, but we believe that when the crucible of time shall have tested these, the essence of the Christian way of life found in them will remain intact. We should give prime importance to the development of moral and spiritual guides because we are convinced that they lie at the core of the student's personal and social development, their professional effectiveness, their family lives, their competence as citizens in a democracy. We do believe in academic ex-

cellence and performance, but no matter how excellent that performance, it will be for naught if the student or the leader lacks this most fundamental aspect of his total education. Was it not Christ who said, "What profit will it be, if a man gains the whole world and forfeits his own soul?" (Matt.16:36)

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