

## **EDUCATING THE WHOLE PERSON FOR THE WHOLE WORK OF GOD: A CHRISTIAN DEFENSE OF GENERAL EDUCATION**

The purpose of the General Education curriculum at a Christian University is to integrate Christian faith into all areas of learning and life, and such curriculum can be supported by theoretical and missiological arguments. The theoretical defense highlights the integration of God's Truth into all areas of learning, and the missiological argument engages the holistic nature of God's work in the world.

### **All Truth is God's Truth: Theoretical Assumptions for Christian General Education**

1. God's authorship of all Truth and the necessity of a Christian perspective of each discipline.

St. Ambrose said, "All truth is God's truth." Since Truth and untruth are found in each subject, these need to be discerned by Christian scholars. Secularized scholars disregard God's authorship of all Truth and create secular disciplines. From a Christian perspective, there are no secular things, including secular disciplines, because God is the Creator of everything in the universe. One mission of the Christian university is to reclaim Christian Truth from the secularized truth in different disciplines.

2. God's image on humanity and the necessity of Christian growth into the statute of Christ.

God creates human beings according to His image (Genesis 1:27; 5:12 & 9:6), and each Christian is called to be more like Him and grow into the statute of Christ (Ephesian 4:13). Because God is omnipotent, omniscient, and full of love, to grow fully into the statute of Christ each Christian should pursue all subjects that help them grow holistically in one's head (i.e. mathematics and philosophy), heart (i.e. religion, literature, music, and art), and will (i.e. applied sciences) rather than only subjects about either one's head (i.e. knowledge) or one's actions (i.e. skills).

3. Loving God is the first commandment and the necessity of studying foundational subjects

From a secularized educational perspective, each subject can serve different social needs. From a Christian perspective, each subject reflects a different part of the universe created by God. Therefore, each subject presents a different way to know a different aspect of God. To avoid the consequences of the blind men touching the elephant, each Christian student, as a prospective leader in society, should learn different ways to know God as the source of all wisdom/knowledge from a panoramic view.

4. Loving one another as Christ's body and loving our neighbors as light and salt in the world

Because of limited capacity, human beings receive education piece by piece or from one subject to another. For the same reason, we easily consider what we learn from one subject to be

superior or the totality of knowledge. Consequently, broken knowledge and overgeneralization cause all kinds of conflicts among different academics and professionals. Christian general education will include organic/holistic knowledge that can unite people's minds. Furthermore, both the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment and the new commandment from Jesus will unite all God's people from different professions into Christ's body and work as light and salt in the world. This is what professional education means, but it cannot be accomplished without Christian faith uniting people's hearts and wills.

5. Without Christian general education, professional education degenerates.

Without integrating Christian faith into general education, secularized general education becomes elemental and irrelevant to different disciplines. As a result, people cannot see the organic structure of different subjects. Without Christian general education, professional education has no solid foundation for intersecting with other disciplines or panoramic support from other disciplines. Hence, this not only decreases its panoramic impact on all the other disciplines, it also disadvantages its capacity for creativity. Eventually, professional education degenerates and serves only secular purposes (i.e. individualism, nationalism, etc.).

### **God's Holistic Mission: Missiological Assumptions for Christian General Education**

The Bible reveals that God's work in the world is holistic. God's mission addresses the entirety of human nature (spiritual/moral and physical); it intersects with every human activity (sacred and secularized); and, it reconciles both dimensions of human relationships (vertical and horizontal). God calls His people to participate in this holistic mission, and if we are to be faithful and effective, we must embrace God's holistic work in the world. The General Education curriculum at a Christian university seeks to cultivate this holistic engagement of God's work in the world by forming the whole person for well-rounded participation in God's mission (see Item 1 below).

1. God's Work Includes the Whole Person

An accurate understanding of human nature is necessary for faithful participation in God's holistic mission. Humans are not only or primarily physical beings. Rather, according to Genesis, humans were created with physical **and** spiritual natures. This means that humans were created as moral creatures with a spiritual nature and an innate God-sense which are to be reflected in moral behavior. Because humans are both body **and** spirit, any attempt to separate these natures or emphasize one over the other is unbiblical. Yet, this dis-integration of human nature is common in the contemporary world and within the Church. While the world often fails to appreciate humanity's spiritual and moral nature, the Church frequently neglects or under-values humanity's physical nature. The General Education curriculum is meant to counter these distortions by cultivating moral behavior in the world.

2. God's Work Extends to All Human Activities

God's work in the world also extends to every human activity, so there should be no distinction between "sacred" and "secular." Because God's sovereignty extends to all areas of human life, all of life is under His lordship and all of life is to be lived for God's glory (Col. 3:17).

Consequently, what are often considered "secular" activities—business, art, science, etc.—are also realms of God's activity, and Christians must be prepared to identify and participate in God's work in these human experiences. In this sense, every human activity should be considered "sacred," that is, set apart for God's purposes, and the General Education curriculum instills this holistic understanding of all human endeavors.

### 3. God's Work Reconciles All Human Relationships

Just as God's mission includes all human activities, so it also includes all human relationships. God's work is to reconcile the world through Jesus Christ, and this includes two dimensions of human relationships, vertical and horizontal. This is reflected in the two greatest commandments taught by Jesus (Mt. 22:37-40): to love God (the vertical dimension) and to love our neighbors (the horizontal dimension). The vertical dimension is one's relationship with God, in which individuals are reconciled to God through individual forgiveness and transformation. The horizontal dimension is the social dimension, in which entire groups (families, churches, societies, etc.) are reconciled with each other. Because God's mission includes both dimensions, Christian faith must always be personal but never private. One's faith must positively affect all one's relationships. The General Education curriculum fosters this holistic understanding of God's reconciling work for individuals and societies.

#### ITEM 1

In order to integrate Christian faith into all areas of learning and life, the General Education Curriculum helps students to:

1. Understand the World more Accurately (Cognitive Learning)
  - Courses in Bible/Theology, History, Science and Social Sciences
2. Appreciate the World more Deeply (Affective Learning)
  - Courses in Arts, Literature, Ethics, African Traditions
3. Engage the World more Effectively (Behavioral Learning)
  - Courses in Math, Communication (oral & written), Computing