

Lesson 4

Nature of Christian Educational System and Development of Philosophy in Christianity

I. Nature of Christian Educational System

Christian education is a process in which teaching-learning takes place concerning Christian faith and beliefs in the lives of the individuals, family and the church as a whole

Purpose of Christian Education

- To help people attain the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ that, they may consciously make a choice to order their lives in accordance with what He would have them to do and be.

Major Tenets of Christian Education

- The development of a Biblical World View
 - The Bible is the primary source for all learning
 - It may not provide the necessary fact required for knowledge's sake, but essential to develop understanding and wisdom necessary for life
 - The Bible (provides) through the principle of Truth, the foundation from which the learner can reason to every subject area of life
- Christian Character development
 - Education really works from internal to external
 - Instill value laden curriculum
 - Encourages everyone to walk in a manner worthy of his/her calling
- Academic Excellence is an expression of Worship of the Almighty God
 - Each child is an expression of God's principle of individuality
 - A child is seen as a unique individual, created in God's image
- Christian Education requires a Christian philosophy, Curriculum and methodology
 - The Christian philosophy gives rise to a *refined* Curriculum and a *strategic* methodology
 - The curriculum and methodology must be **guided** and **grounded** in the Christian way
 - The curriculum has an underlying philosophy that should be **lively** and **appropriate** to the needs of the learner
 - Should be based upon **research** and **reasoning** with care, in line with Christian perspective

- Should be **academically sound** and based upon **truth**; not prejudiced or biased
 - The **scope** (of the curriculum) should be **age/ability appropriate**
 - The **sequence** (of the curriculum) should be in **logical progression**. (pre-requisites before higher concepts of learning)
 - The **goal** is to **attain mastery of the subject with the context of a biblical world view**
 - Teaching is a “relationship” first and foremost.
 - This relationship is based on a Christian love
 - Crowned with mutual respect for each human person
 - The goal of instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith
 - Teacher is seen as a Living Curriculum
 - Teacher recognizes the personality and learning style differences and adapts their teaching methods so that every student has the opportunity to grow to his/her full potential
 - Discipline and order play a major role in efficiency and effectiveness
 - The Christian idea of a child recognizes the inherent value of each individual as well as his uniqueness
- The Principle Approach
 - Provides biblical and historical model of Christian education
 - Begins with a premise that all things are held together by Biblical principle (the Word of God)

II. Development of Philosophy in Christianity

Beginning of Theology in Christianity

- Theology developed in the first centuries of Christianity to reject errors and heresies specifically, and make the dogmas more precise

Definition of Terms

- ❑ Theology – means the study of God: *Theos* means God, and *logos* means study. This implies two approaches; God as a natural object of study and studying God in the light of our faith, thus not only as a natural object known by our natural reason alone, but by divine revelation through supernatural faith.
- ❑ Heresy – any belief or theory that is strongly at variance with established beliefs or customs, in particular the accepted beliefs of a church or religious organization (Wikipedia)

- ❑ Dogma – an authoritative and precisely formulated statement of a religious doctrine that is advanced, not for discussion, but for belief. In its strict sense, the term seems to be peculiar to Christianity (Microsoft student Encarta)
- Theology used the philosophy already existing, the classical philosophy, but correcting it in the light of the faith. Practically in every truth of philosophy, divine revelation had a very original contribution to make, always casting new light
- Christian philosophy is a body of natural truths which are strictly philosophical, but would not have come into being without Christianity.
- Christian theology is the elaboration of divine revelation by reason and faith.

The Original Synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas

- St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is acknowledged as the universal teacher of the Church (Doctor Communis) because he achieved the highest synthesis of faith and reason
- The 13th century was the climax of what we may call the Christian centuries, and it is the century of St. Thomas Aquinas
- St. Thomas taught in several universities like Paris, Cologne and Naples and achieved a great synthesis of the knowledge of his time, taking advantage of the Latin translations of all the works of Aristotle
- Series of translations from Greek, Jewish, and Arabic for the benefit of theology, following the principle that reason is at the service of faith, philosophy at the service of theology. The final result was a perfect harmony of **reason** and **faith**, the natural order and the supernatural order, philosophy and revelation and the teaching authority of the church.

Continuity of Christian Philosophy

- Even before St. Thomas there was already a trend to separate faith (revelation) from reason (philosophy), especially under the influence of Arab philosophers.
 - This tendency obtains philosophical formulation, although now with reason rejecting faith, with Rene Descartes. He formulated a philosophy of pure reason without faith.
 - While Luther had said “only faith”, Descartes said “only reason,” but in both cases there is a separation of faith from reason to the detriment of both.
 - Faith without reason eventually develops into *fedeism*: a heresy also condemned by the Church in the 19th century. On the other

hand, Descartes provide another heresy condemned by the church:
rationalism, or the rejection of everything “supernatural”

- Parallel to those philosophies and those heresis, there has been a development of Christian philosophy. It is intrinsically open, because *it looks at reality*, not at the *human consciousness* of reality. This philosophy is always open to further insights, as long as it remains faithful to its principles: its congenital and methodical realism.