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The Church and its Educational Task
W. Shelburne Brown

The topic assigned for this period of discussion is so broad, that some limitation must be indicated. Everything the Church does, whether in sacrament or worship, has some didactic element. The Sunday School, a major teaching arm of the church, will be passed over. Our concern, at least for this paper, will be concentrated on the area of education that involves us directly, i.e. the Church in its relation to higher education.

The college and university system that we know in the civilized nations of the world, stem directly from the cathedral and monastic schools of the medieval period. There has never been a time when the Christian Church was not committed to and involved in education. Jesus committed His church to education by the Great Commission. The Greek verbs in that statement clearly indicate a teaching mission in order to make disciples.

Paul evidently had a clear understanding of this basic charge through his commitment to the Master. The Great Commission is clearly exemplified in his life and work. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses the vocabulary of education as he exhorts his followers on to Christian maturity. [1]

It was evident before long in the infant Church that the apostles would need someone to fill their place in the ministry. Added to that was the rapid spread of the Gospel with its consequent demand for more missionaries to carry the good news. Timothy is an apprentice to the veteran missionary, Paul. And Paul instructs Timothy to follow his footsteps in finding other men to whom he can commit the faith and instruct in leadership. The apprenticeship method

grew into the bishop's school, the catechetical school, the monastic school, the cathedral school, and then the university.

Both Church and State needed scholars and professional leaders. The first "university" was an organization of students to protect their own rights. Outstanding teachers became a part of the scene and eventually organized into a faculty. Out of this "university without walls" has grown the complex and diverse educational system with which we are concerned.

An interesting development of the educational mission of the church is developed in a little book by George H. Williams.[2] He picks up the five themes which Calvin built into the Reformed theology which gave status to the intellectual function as a work of God. These themes are the Christological, the Transferential, the Paradisic, the Military and the Critical. The reasoning is somewhat fanciful, but nevertheless has something to say to our day.

The Christological theme argues that intellectual labor is related to the work of Christ who was the Master teacher. He is the Truth, and since by Him all things consist, then all truth is His truth. All the diverse truths in the world must be brought together finally under divine truth which Christ embodies. It is thus "Christly work to subordinate the mind to the fact, to bring truth to the light that all men may be enlightened."[3]

The Transferential theme simply points up the fact that in every generation God has called those whose responsibility is to transfer, to bear, the good news and the theological insights from one generation to another.

Some of the attempted historical continuities from the Greek academics, through Egypt and on through the centuries was rather far-fetched. The attempt was essentially to underline the idea that the transfer of learning was appointed by God.

The Paradisic theme follows the thought that the Fall of Man corrupted his reason and wisdom. The only path to recovery of that heritage of wisdom was through the overcoming of sensuality and pride. Thus the monastic schools and their emphasis on celebracy and discipline. Something of what had been lost in Paradise, might, they reasoned, be restored through the community of discipline.

In the Military theme, those who participate in the intellectual work of the church are seen as soldiers of the Cross, doing battle with every error of man's mind, beating back the darkness of ignorance. They are fighting the Holy War on the battleground of schoarship. The Library is filled with the zest and excitement of warfare as the trained academician engages the forces of darkness.

The Critical theme is developed around the tri-partite arrangement of the church, state and school. It follows the reasoning of the church as the conscience of the state, but continues in developing the notion that the church from time to time needs the corrective function of the critical theologian lest it accommodate itself to the state. The state in turn provides the conditions of stability in which both the church and the school can do their work. This is the matrix out of which arose the idea of academic freedom. Though the medieval university was unintelligible outside of a

Christian society, nevertheless it was not a hireling of the church. The analogy used was the tri-partite nature of man; body, soul and spirit.

> "The true health of the Community of Faith and of the Community of learning, (as well as the Community of Power) requires that they be free of each other in terms of power, but closely conjoined with each other in terms of mutual influence and inter-penetration; in order that the church may be refreshed by new knowlege, in order that the work of learning may be "steadied" preserved from imbalance, from claiming more than learning can accomplish, and from the aridity which can be arrested only in the presence of mystery and by the disciplines of humility."[4]

In tracing the history of the educational task of the church, I would like to follow Bernard Ramm in his book, The Christian College in the Twentieth Century.[5] His method is to pick out five men who have made an impact on Christian education through the centuries. They are Augustine, Melancthon, Newman, Kuyper and Moberly. By summarizing their influence, it may be we will find some significant material for discussion that is relevant to Nazarene higher education.

Aurelius Augustine (354-430)

Augustine's basic educational theory is expressed in his book, On Christian Doctrine. He wrote that volume to answer those in the church who were saying that all secular learning could be dispensed with because the meaning of the Scriptures was understandable without such learning. He refutes that argument on three bases: (1) That no other knowledge is acquired in this mystical way and there is no reason to exempt the Christian faith from the laws of learning.

(2) The argument is self-refuting, since if men were taught directly by God, then there would be no need of those who held the doctrine to teach it. (3) There are three things necessary to the correct interpretation of Scripture. i.e., piety, fear and knowledge. Augustine reminded his contemporaries that the Scriptures touched on areas that were concerned with secular studies, such as History. One needed to be well learned in these areas in order to properly understand and to interpret the Scriptures.

In Augustine's time the rhetorician was the highest trained individual in society. In setting out his curriculum for the Christian college, he attempts to reclaim his own training as a rhetorician which includes the seven basic liberal arts of the Middle Ages. These were the Trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy). Beyond the seven basic liberal arts, one progresses to philosophy, physics and ethics. The summit of it all is theology.

This theory is still behind the educational philosophy of the German, English and American systems. Augustine did not see, as did Newman that there was a need for the educated layman as well as those who were to interpret the Scriptures. Nor did he see education as producing an educated person. His was a utilitarian outlook, a vocational training for the ministry.

Phillip Melancthon (1497 - 1560)

Melancthon is the next in the progress of the Christian idea of education. The Reformation began at the beginning of Melancthon's career as a professor. Luther produced his famous theses in 1517 and in 1518 Melancthon arrived in

Wittenberg. When Luther broke officially with the Roman Catholic Church by burning the papal bull, Melancthon was there. "If it was Luther who won the masses to the theology of the Reformation, it was Melancthon who won the educated, cultured and scholarly people".[6]

For Melancthon, one of the responsibilities of the Christian university was the transmission of culture. The Church has had varying attitudes toward culture. One of the recurring attitudes has been that of "Christ against Culture". (Niebuhr's terms) To put it baldly, the church has said, "let the state educate its children in the liberal arts and let the church educate its children in the Bible and theology". This was the basic argument of those who instigated the Bible Institute movement.

Melancthon's total nature would rebel against such a notion. He would reject the idea that the responsibility of education in the liberal arts should be turned over to pagans. The church and state face common foes: Ignorance, superstition and barbarism. The church that does not assist in carrying the battle against these enemies is neither true to itself nor fulfilling its responsibility to the state. In the words of Ramm, summarizing Melancthon:

> "the health of the Church is directly related to the health of the state. No great Christian Church will emerge from a barbarous, boorish, superstitious culture. Only education drives out barbarism, and if the educational institutions of the church do not help in this task, the Church adds to its own difficulties. It was Melancthon's strong conviction that without an educational system a state would lapse into darkness and barbarism."[7]

For him, the state is dependent not only on the church and an educated ministry. It also needs professional men in all the professions that go to

make up a culture. These men have more to do with the health of the state than does the ministry itself. For him a man proceeded from knowledge to piety. Without knowledge, a man would soon lose his greatness in piety. Melancthon and Augustine are in agreement that a Christian college or university is the only proper background for theological training. Quoting Ramm again in summarizing Melancthon:

> "Attempts to educate for the Christian ministry while bypassing the liberal arts results in self-defeat. Such an education cannot produce a great expositor of Scripture. It cannot produce the learned theologian. It cannot produce the minister who can minister to every stratum of society. It would be safe to say as a general observation that the properly educated minister of the Gospel of Christ can minister to the rich and the poor, to the noble and to the humble, to the cultured and to the ignorant. But in most cases the poorly trained man can minister only to the poor, ignorant and uncultured. A theological education which short-cuts the liberal arts ends up in short-cutting the effectiveness of the ministry, short-cutting the effectiveness of the Christian Church, short-cutting the evangelistic and missionary work of the church, and short-cutting the serious and wonderful labor of the theological disciplines."[8]

Melancthon's formula was learned piety. Learning must lead to piety. Piety without learning snuffs out the candle of truth, and learning without piety is but educated paganism.

John Henry Newman (1801 - 1890)

Newman was one of the finest products of the nineteenth century England. He was the early leader of the Oxford Movement, sometimes called the Tractarian Movement, due to the distribution of its theses in the form of tracts. Most of his ideas can be best summarized in the familiar book, <u>The Idea of a University</u>.

For Melancthon, the battle was to save the classics from being swallowed up by theology. So intense was the religious atmosphere in the university of his time that he at times despaired of saving the classics in their proper recognition. The situation had reversed itself by Newman's time. Secular studies were threatening to crowd the study of theology out of the curriculum and out of the university. For Newman, the purpose of the university was to treat universal knowledge. "What," he asks, "are we to think of a university which claims to be a university and omits one of the major components of universal knowledge." For him, a university had no claim to that title unless an appropriate place was given to the study of theology.

If the first evil of the university is the lack of a theological faculty, the second evil is the attitude of indifference on the part of the other disciplines, and the professors in those disciplines toward theology. Newman graphically portrays the specialist who is so absorbed in his manuscript that he cannot take his eyes from the manuscript nor leave the laboratory to attend chapel. His response is "Don't bother me. Can't you see I'm busy? I am a scientist. You are a theologian. You take care of the things of God, and I will take care of the matters pertaining to science."

Newman attacks this position by the argument that all knowledge is cohesive and forms one system. The subject matter of knowledge is the universe. And universal knowledge cannot afford to omit those matters that are the subject of theology and which pertain to the ultimate questions about man and his meaning.

Here again, I am quoting Ramm, in a summation of Newman:

> "Not only must theology occupy its rightful place in the curriculum so that none of the other sciences usurps theology's role and hence loses its own integrity. Theology must be in the university so that the other sciences may benefit from its contributions to the one body of knowledge. Fine arts, paintings, sculpturing, architecture, and music need the help of theology, or they become ends in themselves. When painting loses its great religious inspiration, it turns to pagan mythology, and so ministers to our corrupt natures. The composer, unless he is motivated through theology to compose for the glory of God, composes for the glory of himself. Theology has its corrective word for economics. The science of wealth, studied apart from the illumination which theology brings, leads to sin. Unless the economist learns from Scripture the errors into which wealth can lead us, he will not properly interpret the science of wealth. The same is true of medicine.....In short, every science needs the insights of theology ..... Theology alone can maintain the internal integrity of the entire curriculum."[9]

Some of the finest descriptions of the gentleman were produced by Newman. The idea that education should produce the gentleman found agreement in both Augustine and Melancthon. In Newman's time, the sciences were already creeping in with their emphasis upon the utilitarian aspect of education. Education was being beamed toward vocation. Newman was not altogether in opposition to this idea but asked pertinently about what level of utility education should be aimed. To him, technical education was useful for the short run. The true liberal arts education was useful for the long term. The educated person was more useful to society than the merely trained person. The university should have as its goal the creation of the gentleman. Its highest product was the Christian gentleman.

Newman clearly recognizes the need for close identity between the church and the school, so that the pure and unearthly breath of the church is constantly breathed through all it does. However, he saw it as a danger for the church to give a protected education to its students. The Christian university must trouble the waters of learning. If the university shields its students from all the hard and atheistic and sinful opinions of the ungodly, it will not really accomplish its goal. The student will encounter them the first day he leaves the classroom. Therefore, let the Christian university make it rough, but let it be the roughness of Christian hands. This immediately suggests the confrontation of the authority of the Church with the free pursuit of knowledge. Newman handles the problem by two suggestions: (1) He appeals to the harmony of truth. (2) Controversial subjects should be kept to the scholars. The university must grant elbow room for scholarship, but new ideas are not to be indiscriminately spread.

Abraham Kuyper (1837 - 1920)

Kuyper was a man full of life. His theology and his approach to Christian education underline his zest for life, learning and the wholeness of the truth of God. The report of his teaching sounds like a paradigm for professors in Nazarene colleges. More than once, it is reported, he became so enthused about his subject matter that the lecture merged into a profound devotional hour. Kuyper embraced the liberalism of his time. He was won back to orthodoxy when in ministering to his people he found that the orthodox members of his congregation believed something, knew what they believed, and

lived lives consistent with those beliefs.

In his time, liberalism had taken its narrowing hold upon the university. The interlocking of state, church and school exerted a stranglehold on the university. He and his friends conceived of a free university, separated from both church and state. He could have settled for a seminary for the training of the ministry. With Newman, he agreed that society needed not only a trained ministry, but also men in every area of culture. Otherwise the church would have only a partial witness in society. Kuyper vigorously defends the sacredness of the secular. For him the common grace through Jesus Christ represent the continuation of the rule of God in the world, and for that reason does not permit the Christian to isolate himself from the world. Kuyper argues with dignity the self-denying aspects of the Christian religion. The doctrine of grace enables the Christian to appreciate art culture and education without obscuring the doctrine of sin. In his treatise on The Work of the Holy Spirit he exalts the idea that every vocation, and wherever there is a skilled craftsman, there is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift imples the giver. Every vocational gift is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Kuyper insists on freedom for the university. There must be freedom from pressure from the state. He also insists on freedom from pressures by the church. He was convinced that if the essence of a university is the scientific pursuit of truth, then any pressure corrupts this pursuit, even pressure from the church. "The Church is not to be the trustee of the theological faculty to insure its orthodoxy. Much more important than

officious supervision is the prevalence of a spirit of heartfelt mutual trust between church and theological faculty."[10]

Christianity is not something about which to be sermonized, but something that is poured into our very life-blood. He intends that Jesus Christ shall be the King of every subject matter. "Upon the heritage of our human lives there is not a strip an inch wide exempt from the call of Christ. It is mine."[11]

Sir Walter Moberly (1881 -)

Moberly is among those who believe that the modern university no longer merits that name. On a mass scale it now enrolls thousands of students and after a period of time regurgitates them back into society. Theology in the universities was caught up with the liberal revolution and modern education has become completely secular. Even those colleges that were known as Christian colleges have felt the impact of the liberal theology and the secularizing tendency until even the word "church-related" has little or no meaning. It is within this context that Moberly wrote his book The Crisis in the University. (1949)

His principles of Christian Higher Education include the following: (1) A Christian College, to perform its task properly in the twentieth century must thoroughly acquaint itself with historical cultural and educational factors of modern higher education. One can immediately sense identity with Augustine, Melancthon, Newman and Kuyper. (2) A Christian College of the twentieth century must have an actively Christian faculty. Moberly lashes out at the uncommitted faculty member. For him the greatest danger to the Christian

college is not the atheist, the Communist nor the naturalist. The greatest enemy is the non-committed intellectual. To fail in commitment, for Moberly, is to prove that the individual is not educated, and having arrived at the place of faculty membership with that fatal lack proves that he is uneducable. If the faculty is not Christian in a deeply committed sense, then there is little hope of maintaining a Christian college. For Moberly every faculty member must be a lay theologian and the standards for that designation are: (1) to be able to read the Bible intelligently, (2) to have an understanding of Christian doctrine commensurate with his own academic ability, (3) he must know the world situation and how to interpret it from a Christian perspective, (4) and he must see the correlation between his own specialty and the Christian faith.

Moberly thinks that the Christian professor ought to bear his witness before other faculty members, before the students and in his administrative work. But this witnessing must be done in widsom. The professor must know the difference between witnessing and propaganda. It must be a dignified, honest, non-threatening witness comportable with an academic community.

(3) A Christian college of the twentieth century must have an expert faculty of theology. Theological faculties should be the equal in every way to the faculties in any of the other disciplines.... In a Christian college, the theology faculty should be the finest available in the light of its great responsibilities.

In this historical review, there is enough to stimulate our minds and provide basis for discussion for more than one conference. The same battles that have taken place in the college and university from its earliest beginnings are with us today. The issues are as sharp and as pertinent. The higher educational task of the Church of the Nazarene is to face squarely the timeless issues that confront us now. And we must be able to find answers adequate for our day and our youth.

Footnotes

1. Barclay, William, The Letter to the Hebrews, p 47-50
2. Williams, George H., The Theological Idea of the University Commission on Higher Education, National Council of Churches, New York, 1958, p 70
3. Miller, Alexander, Faith and Learning, Association Press
4. Ibid. p 77
5. Ramm, Bernard
6. op. cit. p 37
7. op. cit. p 38
8. op. cit. p 48
9. op. cit. p 62
10. op. cit. p 85
11. op. cit. p 94

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