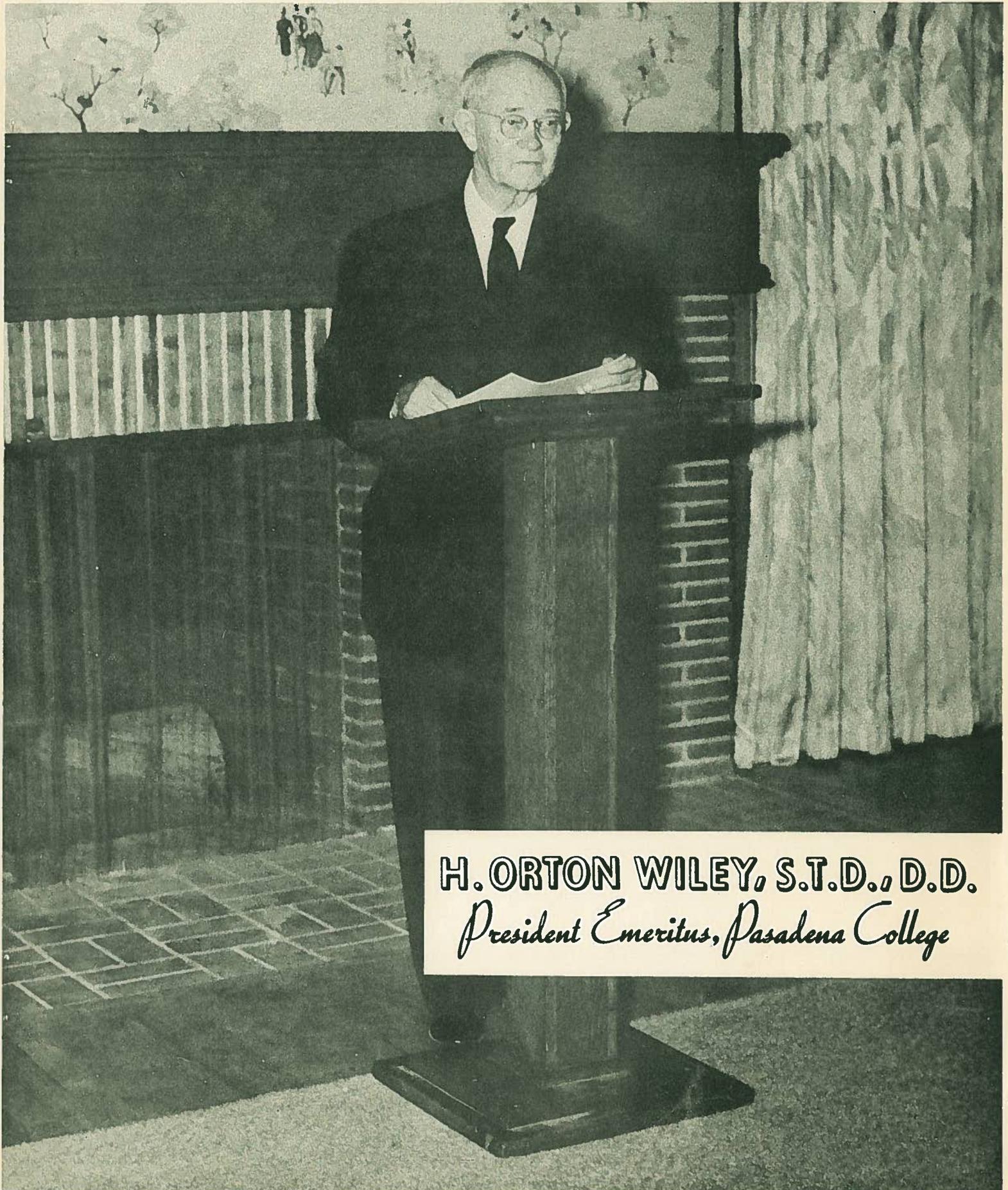


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☆ CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ☆



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## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

By Dr. H. Orton Wiley

### I. INTRODUCTION: THE ANCIENT HEBREW LEGEND

There is an ancient Hebrew legend that Enoch, who walked with God and was not for God took him, being forewarned of God that the world would be twice destroyed--once by water and once by fire--caused two pillars to be erected upon which he had written "all the knowledge that had been revealed to or invented by men." These pillars became the center of learning--the first university of the world and an ancient landmark. Kings and princes came to study and to learn, and as a consequence peace reigned on earth for two hundred and fifty years. When the flood eventually came and had receded, it was found that the pillars still stood. Two things are here set forth: first, the wisdom of divine revelation, and second, the wisdom acquired by human experience. Evidently the purpose of Enoch, at once a great scientist and a great teacher, was to elucidate and convey both divine revelation and human acquisition, and in this he set the goal for all future religious education. These pillars, like those of the ancient temple, should have their place at the gates of every Christian college and university.

### II. THE CHURCH AS THE MOTHER OF COLLEGES

It is well known that the church is the mother of colleges, and that religion has furnished the motive for all true education.

1. The earliest Christian schools were catechetical. Later there grew up those great schools at Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea, Nisibis, Edessa, Constantinople, and Athens.

2. Higher education in our own country began under the auspices of the church. Harvard College began with one hundred men and was founded because the people dreaded the thought of an illiterate ministry, when their present ministry had passed on. The motto of Harvard College at this time was "For the Glory of Christ." It has been significantly stated that before the first baby boy born in the new world was twenty-one years of age, they had a college ready for him.

3. Yale was founded at Newtown, the governing board consisting of twelve men, of whom Thomas Jefferson was one. A company of ministers marched around a table, each laying a few books upon it, saying, "I bequeath these books for the founding of Yale College." For some time four-fifths of the students at Yale College were preparing for the ministry. While in New Haven, it was interesting to learn that the green where the old churches stand was definitely specified to be held in trust as a meeting place for the saints when our Lord should come.

4. Columbia was founded for the dissemination of religious truth and its courses were specifically stated to be open to men of all denominations. In the earlier days of the University of South Carolina, the students were required to take examinations each Monday morning on the sermons of the previous Sunday.

5. Of the first 119 colleges founded in this country, 104 of them were church colleges. In 1860, less than a century ago, there were 250 colleges in the United States, and only 17 of these were state institutions. Then began the process of the secularization of learning until the state colleges and universities have taken the lead in numbers and material equipment, but not in the true purpose of education. As to the church colleges, Dr. Van Dusen in a recent article in Religion and Life points out that most of these have sloughed off the last vestiges of ecclesiastical control, and the remainder find themselves greatly embarrassed and uncomfortable in their present circumstances.

6. What is the cause of this secularization of education? The author cited above, Dr. Van Dusen, attributes it

to the following causes;

(1) The rapid expansion in the numbers of students, tenfold in the last forty years.

(2) The multiplication of courses--in the universities, a multiplication of divisions; in the colleges, a multiplication of departments.

(3) Specialization which stunts large-mindedness and threatens any comprehension of truth as a whole. Against this multiplication of courses Professor Whitehead says, "The increasing departmentalization of universities during the last hundred years, however necessary for administrative purposes, tends to trivialize the mentality of the profession," and Dr. Van Dusen adds, "but hardly less by contagion and reflection, the mentality of those who are taught."

Dr. Van Dusen has this significant paragraph. "The present day curriculum in many universities reminds one of nothing so much as a lavish cafeteria, where unnumbered tasty intellectual delicacies are strung along on a moving belt for each student's choice, without benefit of dietary or caloric balance. 'The bargain counter theory of education,' someone has called it." He says: "I have myself confronted a transcript from a respectable state university which testified to the student's competence as a Bachelor of Arts, to pursue postgraduate in philosophy and theology, by the fact that he had successfully completed courses in Band, Military Science, Folk Dancing, Swimming, Animal Husbandry, and Mortuary Science. The prevailing assumption plainly testified by the structure of the curriculum and the manner of teaching, even when not openly avowed, consists of countless fragments of truth, spread forth higgledy-piggledy, to be savored or swallowed like so many morsels of miscellaneous pabulum. And the result in the mind of the student? All too often, obesity or mental indigestion; or it may be malnutrition and even pernicious intellectual anemia." (Van Dusen, *Religion and Life*, Summer, 1951)

7. Dr. Louis Evans in a recent address attributed the causes of secularization to the following:

(1) To the French infidelity that early pervaded the colleges of this time, until there was at one time but one professed Christian in Yale College.

(2) To the German conception of colleges and universities, i. e., the multiplication of courses until the worth of the institution was judged by the thickness of its catalogue. Majors and minors, he continued, hopped about like grasshoppers without any pretense at unity. Everything became superficial. The underlying spirit was gone and only the form remained. One student spent three years studying the proboscis of a mosquito. They taught many things but they did not teach the distinction between right and wrong. The moral quality being gone, the B. A. could well be interpreted, "Builders of Alibis."

### III. THE TASK OF THE CHURCH COLLEGE

Since the worldly colleges and universities have secularized knowledge, it is evident that the first task of the Christian college is to set forth and maintain a spiritual view of life. Like the pillars of Enoch of old, its purpose is, first, to cherish and preserve knowledge; and second, to convey this knowledge to others. It must then gather into great libraries what the church has gained from men of wisdom and experience through the past ages. Following this it must adopt means for conveying this knowledge. In the first instance it becomes a great elucidating and establishing agency; in the second, an equally great evangelistic and missionary agency. The church college is thus at the opposite pole of the Communistic line which is first of all to break with the past, destroy all the old books, and substitute in their stead the new and untried ideologies. The schools and libraries thus become institutions for propaganda. Only the Church stood out against these false teachings, and be it said to the honor of those with a deep and abiding spiritual experience, they stood firm, esteeming the reproach of Christ better than life itself.

#### Dr. Keppel on the Difficulties of the Task

The difficulties of maintaining a spiritual view of life in the face of present world conditions are ably set forth by Dr. Keppel as follows:

1. The task of interpreting truth in a time when ingenious, vicious, and poisonous propaganda, the world over, poses in garments of truth.
2. The task of teaching life, when the present philosophy is a philosophy of death.
3. The task of guiding the growth of personality in a time when personality itself is apparently the object of annihilation.

4. The task of building a co-operative commonwealth of nations, when as in no other time the world's peoples are torn asunder by suspicions, hatreds, and atrocities.

5. The task of educating for peace when today all the world appears to be a school for war.

6. The task of helping to build a Christian world order when the foundations upon which the structure is to be builded is nothing but pagan quicksand.

7. And the most baffling task of all, that of attempting to surmount the barriers by helping today's youth to become a leaven that will permeate and raise the world-culture, when as a matter of fact educational institutions are very largely becoming places where there are no youth who desire to become the subjects of such leaven. These are some of the appalling tasks which sober and humble educational as well as the spiritual leaders of the land.

#### IV. MISCONCEPTIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Before attempting to define the nature of Christian education, it may be well first to give attention to some of the misconceptions concerning this important subject.

First, Christian education does not consist in a multiplication of courses in the Bible and cognate religious subjects. That there has been too little emphasis upon these subjects and too few of them offered we freely admit; and we take pleasure in the fact that our colleges are enlarging and strengthening their curricula along these lines.

Second, it does not lie wholly in what is termed "religious environment." College catalogues have long boasted of this "religious influence" without being able to clearly define it. Its importance, however, cannot be overestimated; and any firsthand knowledge of Christian students coming from worldly institutions must recognize their appreciation of this wholesome environment. No, the seeds of decay are in the system of education itself, and given time it will destroy the holiest of environment and lead to moral degradation. On the other hand, a true Christian education, even in situations which are not conducive to its welfare, will eventually purify and mold its own environment. This has ever been the history of Christianity in its onward spiritual progress.

#### V. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

We shall now attempt to set forth the more positive aspect of this important subject. By Christian education we mean the complete overhauling of the educational system itself, and its establishment upon the sound basis of Christian principles, interpreted in both their spiritual and intellectual character. Any true system of education must recognize the moral and spiritual character of the intellectual processes. Its primary purpose is to shape character while it furnishes the mind with truth, and its ultimate goal is to bring the student to the full Christian consciousness of duty and privilege.

Perhaps a quotation from the words of our Lord may serve to give us a proper point of view. He said to His disciples on one occasion, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so with you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28) Here it is perfectly clear that Christ makes service to men, rather than authority over them, the true standard of greatness. The present turmoil and strife in the world is a struggle for authority and power. It is born of a false conception of greatness and is anti-Christian in the extreme. Totalitarianism by subjecting its people to false ideological standards makes them slaves of the government, destroys human freedom, and contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

As in the governmental realm, so also in the realm of education. Colleges and universities which were the outgrowth of spiritual motives and based upon sound Christian principles have only too often, in their desire to advance the standards of education, allowed the emphasis to change from the sincere Christian desire to serve, to the worldly ambition of maintaining high standards regardless of their effect upon those they should serve. Christian education then, we may say, is first of all an emphasis upon service rather than authority, whatever the nature of this authority may be--govern-

mental, ecclesiastical, or scholastic--and it rests ultimately upon the character and mission of our Lord himself, who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

#### VI. THE SCOPE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Closely related to this emphasis upon service is the fact that Christianity demands the surrender, not only of the intellect, but of all the powers of redeemed personality. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark: 12:30-31). Christian education, therefore, must deal with every aspect of personality. To exalt one of these to the disparagement of others is to fall short of Christian standards. In particular, our danger is rationalism, which exalts the intellect to the detriment of the affections and the will. Hence the student on entering college is greeted with a barage of tests, battery after battery. If he succeeds he is rated high, while his brother with less intellectual ability but with far more character and worth must take a lesser place, if admitted at all. What is the result? Intellectual giants and moral pygmies. One of our leading educators recently wrote: "We have now educated man to the place where he can destroy the world; perhaps we should begin to educate women to save it." We have no objections to tests insofar as they serve to help individuals; we strongly object to them when they become masters instead of servants.

The danger of course lies in the fact that the tests are one-sided, emphasizing generally mere intellectual ability, and too often only in particularized fields. Only last week, President Purkiser in a chapel address, unique and informing, called attention to Reuben, the first-born son of Jacob, who was "excellent in dignity" and "excellent in power," but, being unstable as water, he could not excel. Likewise Issachar was quick of perception; "he saw the goodness of the land," and also saw "that rest was good." But he was weak in that he bowed down between two burdens, and became a servant unto tribute. Of Joseph, on the other hand, it is written that he was a fruitful bough by a wall, whose branches ran over the wall; and of Judah, that the scepter should not depart from him, "nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Gen. 49:10). I think one of the keenest disappointments of an instructor is to find that too frequently his brilliant students are "unstable as water" and fail hopelessly; while others less gifted intellectually have qualities of heart and life that make for the greatest success. True Christian education destroys egotism with humility, and superficiality with inherent worth.

#### VII. THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian education depends, further, upon the challenge with which it confronts its students. Our Lord recognized the differences in ability found in men, but He made a challenge to all. To one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, with the instructions to improve the gifts bestowed upon them. One gained other five talents and received words of commendation. Another gained two talents and received the same words of commendation. Who will say that had the man with one talent gained one other talent he would not have received the like commendation? The point is, all were given an opportunity, and all were rewarded according to the progress made.

In our commendable struggle for higher standards and more efficient service, should we not guard against the danger which has overtaken so many church-related colleges--that of losing our earlier vision of service to all, especially the lowly? Was not this what St. Paul meant when he said, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate"? Our Lord chose His twelve apostles from the common class of ordinary workmen. They were called "ignorant and unlearned"

solely because they had not received instruction in the rabbinical schools. And St. Paul also drew a lesson from the history of the early Church for our instruction, when he wrote: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and the things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26-29).

Still further, we are Nazarenes and, as our name implies, were called out to minister to the lowly. No Christ-redeemed young man or woman should be denied entrance to our schools and colleges. The all-important entrance test should be, Are these young people in hearty sympathy with the moral and religious standards which we maintain? If so, we are to challenge them as did our Lord and, through our ministry in things intellectual and spiritual, seek to bring them to the highest levels of which they are capable. The humble men whom our Lord chose soon filled the world with the knowledge of the Son of God and the good news of full salvation. Who knows but that among these lowly ones there may be an Uncle Buddie Robinson or a Harmon Schmelzenbach.

#### VIII. THE STANDARDS OF OUR FOUNDERS

We have a right to be justly proud of the educational principles set forth by our worthy founders. Not only did Dr. Phineas F. Bresee stand as a tower of strength for those who suffered from the opponents of the doctrine and experience of holiness, but the fact that he had served on the governing boards of colleges and universities led him to see the futility of much that passed for higher learning. We sincerely hope that our educational institutions will never deviate from the goals set by our founders, nor ever allow themselves to become the means for the dissemination of false doctrines in the churches. The statement to which we refer is as follows:

"The promoters of this work recognize that the training of the intellect is not the sole function of an educational institution. They recognize the greater importance of the true culture of the heart, which is the fundamental principle upon which any system of true education must rest; that 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.' The great need is for an institution where spirituality is at the front, and where it is clearly seen that an intense and enthusiastic devotion is a help instead of a hindrance to intellectual development." This emphasis upon the development of a symmetrical Christian character and a fervency of devotion to Jesus Christ was born out of a deep concern for the propagation of the gospel, and is exceptionally broad and farsighted. May the principles and purposes here stated be our guide as we seek to make our colleges and our seminary the sources of increased service to the church.

--Keynote Address delivered at the Third Educational Conference, Church of the Nazarene, held at Pasadena College, Pasadena, California, October 17-19, 1951