

# **Institutional Ethics for Bible Colleges in Africa**

Prof. In Whan Kim, Ph.D.,  
President/Vice Chancellor(CEO),  
Swaziland Christian University,  
Mbabane, Kingdom of Swaziland  
20 June, 2017

- 1 Introduction
  - 1.1 Motivation of my presentation in spite of my lack of experience in Africa: to share my own experiences I had as professor and various administrative position holders including president of two Christian universities and seminaries in Korea and one in Swaziland.
  - 1.2 Aim of the presentation: not to present any concrete answers to institutional ethical issues involved in the Bible colleges in Africa, but to propose overall ethical principles for the Bible colleges in Africa from the Reformed perspective.
  
- 2 Biblical Foundation
  - 2.1 Biblical foundation of Ethics
    - 2.1.1 Since God created man in His image and established a covenant relationship with the man, man's life is to reflect and imitate God in his life, carrying out the God-given missions under the covenant relationship. "Man's likeness to God is a demand to be like God" (Meredith G. Kline). Hence, the foundation of man's ethical life is God himself.
    - 2.1.2 Man has to know who God is and what He wants to do, if man has to do justice to his identity as God's image-bearer.
  - 2.2 Divine Purpose of Creation and Redemption
    - 2.2.1 God created the heaven and the earth to be his temple and kingdom.
    - 2.2.2 He created man and woman to be his vicegerent who should fulfill his purpose of creation under the covenant relationship.
  - 2.3 Creation Mandate and New Creation Mandate
    - 2.3.1 God gave him a mandate to fill and to subdue the earth under the covenant administration. We used to call this mandate the cultural mandate. However, since the cultural mandate has a reference to subduing the earth only, I would like to propose to call this mandate "creation mandate" in order to embrace the mandate to fill the earth.
    - 2.3.2 Since man disobeyed God and broke His covenant, he was totally depraved, put under the covenant curse, and he was no longer able to fulfill the covenant.
    - 2.3.3 Nevertheless, God renewed his covenant out of his sovereign love and he committed himself to save the seed of woman through her eschatological seed. God had fulfilled his covenant in the course of redemptive history.
    - 2.3.4 Jesus Christ, the eschatological seed of woman, the Incarnate God, eschatologically fulfilled the covenant of God and the purpose of God's creation once for all, redeemed and recreated the fallen creation and the fallen people of God. He inaugurated the Kingdom of God through his person, life, death, and resurrection. It is a new creation. The word 'new' has threefold implication in the biblical use: renewed, living, and eternal. From this perspective the new creation Jesus Christ has made is the renewed, living, and eternal creation of the fallen creation. He committed himself to give new life to those who believe in him and let them participate in his glory and his kingdom under the new covenant administration.

- 2.3.5 Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, ascended to heaven and inherited the Kingdom of God from his heavenly Father and enthroned himself as the eternal king of His Kingdom.
- 2.3.6 At the time when he ascended to Heaven, he has given his redeemed people the Great Commission, to fill the earth with his disciples and subdue the earth with his teaching. I propose to call the Great Commission “New Creation Mandate,” since the Creation Mandate is renewed and continued in this Great Commission.
- 2.3.7 Hence, the people of God under the new covenant, the renewed image-bearers of God, have to carry out this New Creation Mandate.
- 2.3.8 In this regard, the Christian is bound to live an obedient life in order to fulfill God’s mandate. This guarantees him the ultimate blessings.

## 2.4 Definition of Ethics from the Reformed Perspective

- 2.4.1 Ethics is involved in goodness and badness, right and wrong, happiness and unhappiness, and blessing and curse. Hence ethical life is to pursue goodness, right thing, happiness and blessing. Human life is *Coram Deo*. The ultimate goal of ethics is to pursue the *summum bonum*. Secular ethics is man-centered, pursuing man’s ultimate happiness. Man’s interest is the standard to determine the ethical value. But the biblical ethics is God-centered, pursuing God’s glory. The revealed and canonical word of God, the Scripture, is the final and absolute standard to determine the ethical value.
- 2.4.2 Therefore, ethics is defined as “a means of determining which persons, acts, and attitudes receive God’s blessing and which do not” (John Frame) in conformity with the Word of God, the Scripture as the ultimate authority and standard of faith and life.
- 2.4.3 Christian ethics is biblical ethics. “It is not a study of the ethics of people in the Bible. Rather, as John Murray conceives it, the biblical ethics is that manner of life which is consonant with and determined by the biblical revelation. More simply, our attention is on divine demand and not on human achievement. We are not doing Christian casuistry; the focus is on what God has done and commanded, not on what we can do for Him” (Bill Edgar).
- 2.4.4 Christian, the renewed, living, and eternal image-bearer of God, is in substance ethical. It is Christian’s identity. God has given him all the means by which he carries out the biblical ethics. Seeking the righteousness and the kingdom of God first (Mat. 6:33) is self-realization of Christian (Cornelius Van Til).

## 2.5 Bible College: a divine tool/means to carry out biblical ethics

- 2.5.1 Bible College is an educational institution which aims to teach God and His Word to the students and foster them to be His stewards who carry out the New Creation Mandate in obedience to God. In this regard, Bible College is an institution to carry out biblical ethics defined above.
- 2.5.2 Therefore, Bible College is to pursue the development, management/governance, policy and its administration, and to produce ethical students to glorify God in terms of fulfillment of the New Creation Mandate.
- 2.5.3 We have to carry out our ethical responsibilities in the spirit of worshipping God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:22-24).

## 3 Overcome the Secularization of Science

### 3.1 Validity of Science/Scholarship and Its Secularization

- 3.1.1 Biblical Perspective: Word of God as the source of the knowledge and the fear of the Lord as the foundation of knowledge. So knowledge is valid as long as when it conforms to the biblical truth. This is seriously challenged by the autonomy of reason which was developed through the ages of enlightenment, rationalism, historicism, and current post-modernism.

- 3.1.2 Modern Scientific Perspective: Neutrality of Science. Knowledge is valid when it is objective and neutral, departing from and not subjecting to any religious faith or any form of presupposition, prejudice, cultures, customs and national ethos, etc. Valid knowledge can be only gained when a man who is free from religious sets up a hypothesis, gathers and analyzes all the relevant brute facts applying a scientific method, synthesizes the results of the analysis to prove the hypothesis and it is recognized by the public investigation until the public say otherwise. This position is predominant in the arena of science. This is the secularization of science. Today's Bible colleges or universities, accepting such a position of neutrality of science in a general sense as a theoretical discipline, are historical and nominal.
- 3.1.3 Dualistic Curriculum of Bible Colleges: Bible and Secular Science are hand in hand in the curriculum of Bible college and Christian college/university.
- 3.2 Integration of Faith and Learning
  - 3.2.1 No neutrality Possible from the Reformed Perspective: Reformed position is to "preach the total counsel of God," holding the position that "all truth is God's truth, and that humans should seek to apply God's truth to every area of learning, every social system, and every realm of human life."
  - 3.2.2 God created the world and man in his own image
  - 3.2.3 Sovereign Lordship of Christ over the entire sphere of life including science, learning, and behavior and man's response to it in obedience.
  - 3.2.4 Faith in Action: faith is neither an abstract imagination nor a psychological/mindful/emotional attitude toward the invisible but it is realistic and factual though unseen. It demands to put into action and practice it in all the spheres of life to bear its fruits to glorify our Lord (John 15:8).
  - 3.2.5 Definition of Theology: "Theology is an application of word of God by person to all the spheres of life" (John Frame). Theology is not a merely theoretical but a practical discipline as well. All the theoretical and practical disciplines are theological.
  - 3.2.6 Theology is foundational for all the disciplines of science. Science of philosophy, law, economy, politics, business, physics, art and culture, etc., is in this regard an applied theology. It must be in conformity with the biblical truth.
  - 3.2.7 Biblical truth must permeate into institutional identity, vision, missions, charters/statutes, governance, policies, strategies, administration, curricula, academia, criteria for hiring faculty/supportive staff, campus life of the faculty/staff/students, etc.
  - 3.2.8 This was not easy in my experiences. When I served Chongshin University and Seminary as its Vice President and President, I legislated the pursuit of the integration of faith and learning into a faculty obligation, organized a permanent committee to train non-theological faculty members to understand and practice the integration in their teaching and research. However, it was not successful due to external and internal situations. Internally, we were lack of understanding in the part of theological faculty and ignorance of theology in the part of non-theological faculty. Externally, there are no good model and materials for our reference. Bible colleges and Christians colleges/universities in USA, lamenting the secularization of the scholarship, have been attempting to integrate the faith and the knowledge since early 20<sup>th</sup> century initiated by Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI and there have been so many organizations to support this attempt such as Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) and Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE), Lilly Fellows Program (LEP) and many others. However, they have not produced scholarly materials which cover all the subjects of sciences yet, even though Bible colleges and Christian colleges/universities teach courses of integration of faith and knowledge to freshmen or senior level of students. The integration movement is now still

ongoing and influences the public secular universities which seek how to deal both honestly and objectively with the religious aspect of the human condition.

- 3.2.9 Religious activities on campus such as regular chapel services, bible conferences, evangelical activities and bible studies, etc. are not enough, though important and helpful, to make Bible college ethical institution until the integration of faith and learning has been achieved in the entire subjects of curricula and it is taught to students so that they may form and live with the Christian worldview.

#### 4 Management/Governance Policies

- 4.1 Vision, Mission Statement, Purpose, Goal in conformity with the biblical truth.
- 4.2 Set up charter, policies and strategies to ensure for the community the Christian commitment to create “ethical learning environment in which students can learn the principles and traditions of professional practice and develop knowledge and skills to help them become responsible citizens and ethical leaders” (Sara Dodd in *Doing the Right Thing: Ethical Issues in Higher Education*).
- 4.3 Set up ethical standards, stating clearly good and bad, right and wrong, blessings and curses, and execute them consistently in love and rigor.
- 4.4 Provision of ethical responsibilities
  - 4.4.1 Institutional responsibilities in administration: accountability, transparency, reliability, productivity to foster the high quality persons for the future church and society, etc.
  - 4.4.2 Faculty responsibilities in research, teaching, evaluating, relationship with students. From good teacher, best students. Teacher should not be a simple deliverer of knowledge but a mentor who transforms the life of students.
  - 4.4.3 Student responsibilities in learning (diligence, honesty, creativity), practicing in life on and off the campus, serving churches, peoples and society.
  - 4.4.4 Guard against plagiarism in teacher’s research and student’ term paper, etc. and cheating activity on the exam paper.

#### 5 Academic Standards

- 5.1 Bible Colleges: educational institutions to foster the servants of God for the church, society and the nation, not simply to issue certificate for the business purpose.
- 5.2 Curriculum
  - 5.2.1 Reflecting the integration of faith and learning
  - 5.2.2 Balance between theories and practices
  - 5.2.3 Flexibility of curriculum responding positively to the demand of church and society
- 5.3 Team work teaching for organic unity of biblical truth
- 5.4 Consistent, rigorous, thorough application of academic rules and evaluation

#### 6 Discipline of the Academic/administrative Staff and Students

- 6.1 Interrelation between institution and persons: not the institution per se but person who works for the institution carries out the ethical purpose and goal of the institution. It necessitates the thorough, rigorous, and consistent discipline for the academic/administrative staff.
- 6.2 Aim of educational institution: to develop the intellectual, personal and spiritual stewards of God—transformation and development of whole person of the student.
- 6.3 Develop qualified academic/administrative staff consistently and systematically.
- 6.4 Discipleship training of the students to develop their intellect, personality and spirituality in harmony in order that they serve the Lord and to transform the people and society for the expansion and the glory of the Kingdom of God.

#### 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Educational institution as a tool of God to carry out His mission. Therefore, educational institution must be ethical.
- 7.2 Commitment to the authority of Scriptures as the infallible Word of God which is the supreme authority and standard of the faith and life.
- 7.3 Consistent attempt to integrate the faith and learning, and the faith and life and apply it to administrative, academic and training activities consistently, thoroughly and systematically.
- 7.4 Ensure the integrity, accountability, productivity, creativity and hope for the bright future to the society as the ethical tool of God and His Kingdom.