

THE CHRISTIAN ETHOS OF AN ECS UNIVERSITY

By Dr Ruth Eade

Ethos: “The characteristic spirit of a community, people or system”.
Oxford English Dictionary definition.

The Nature of Ethos - In a university setting ethos is at the interface between education, values, principles and beliefs and the practical expression of an institution’s purpose, rationale and core values. Therefore, it is potentially a mechanism for the enhancement of the well-being of the university community – individually and collectively. When constructed to support both *emotional* and *cognitive* development research indicates that it has the capacity not only to contribute to successful education, but also to the healing of emotional deficits. By implication this suggests that ideally an ECS University should be a *safe place* where a positive relationship would exist between faith and criticism; and where *trusting* and *testing* would be regarded as equally valid aspects of educational, spiritual, rational and personal growth.

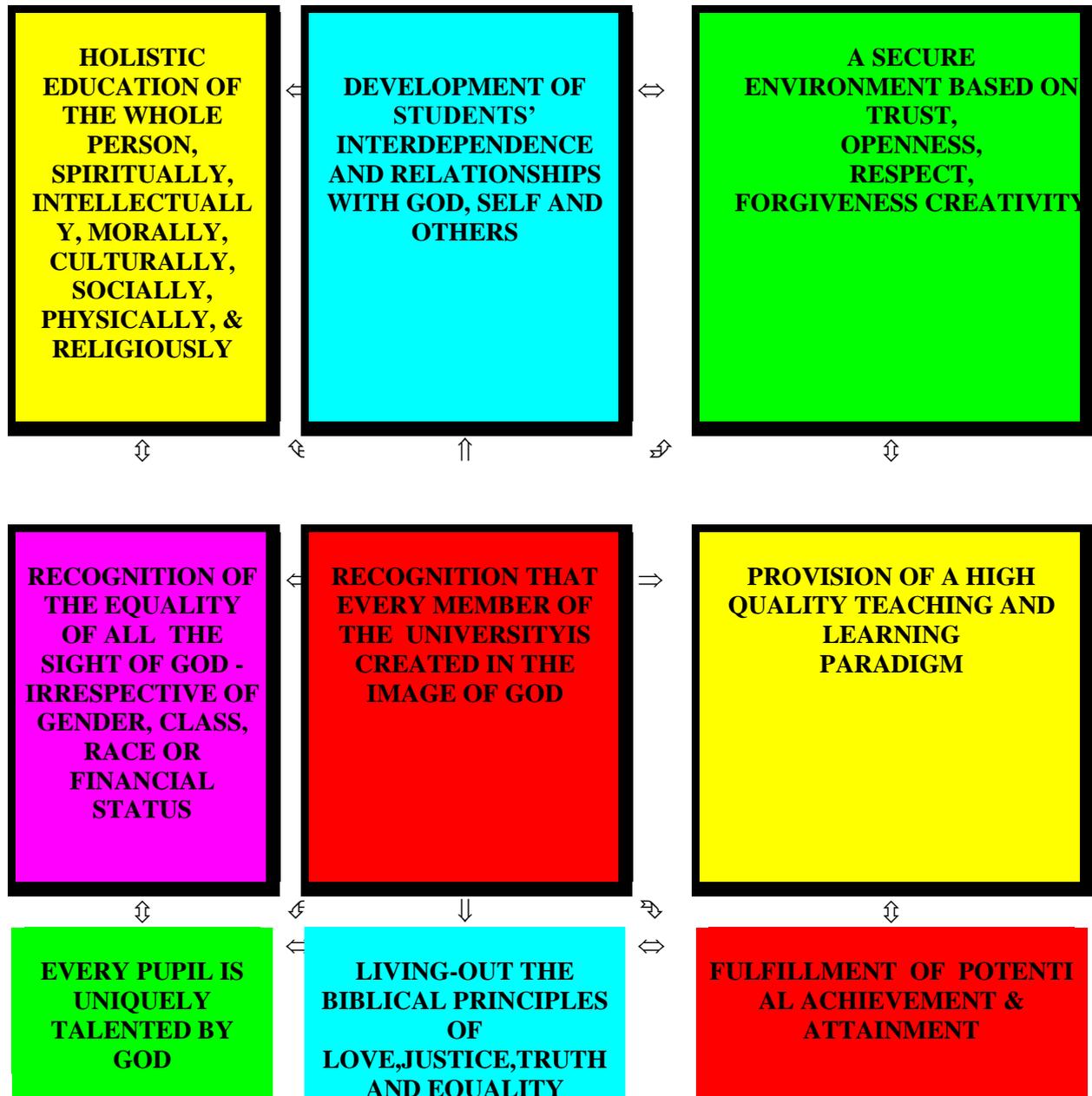
Ethos is an inescapable phenomenon. It is self-generating in all institutions and influences their life and work – for good or ill. The realisation of a positive ethos does not happen by osmosis. Like anything of central importance to the life and work of an institution, it requires strategic planning and quality assuring. Accordingly, it is an indispensable necessity for the fundamental shared and Christian values of an ECS University to be clearly articulated from the outset and that these should be consistent with a Christian world-view. Potentially, this would provide an ECS university with a sense of institutional vision, direction, and a common aim.

Christian ethos also has implications for the *learning lives of students* since an ECS University should not be merely a *conveyors of information* but provide students with a mutual framework for the exploration and handling of ideas and for meaning making.

Such an understanding of the role and function of institutional ethos does not imply any measure of indoctrination or prejudice. Implicit in a Christianly informed education is the commitment to the raising horizons in a stimulating environment where academic freedom fosters discussion and exploration of ideas. By implication an ECS University should be a *safe place* which actively encourage a positive relationship between *faith* and *criticism*; and where *trusting* and *testing* are regarded as equally valid aspects of educational, spiritual, rational and personal growth.

WHAT IDEALLY INFORMS CHRISTIAN ETHOS IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING?

**PRACTICAL EXPRESSION
OF THE C-O-N-N-E-C-T-I-O-N-S BETWEEN
CHRISTIAN FAITH
AND THE TECHNICALITIES OF UNIVERSITY LIFE**



RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the ECS should identify the elements which would comprise the Christian ethos of and ECS University and the ways in which they should be implemented.