

ADDRESS TO THE FACULTY  
POINT LOMA COLLEGE  
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A minister, whose wife was an invalid, came home after each service to share with her regarding the preceding service. She was always interested, asking him about his text, and about the subject of his sermon. One day when he arrived, she startled him. After asking about his text, rather than asking him his subject, she said, "What was your object?" That would be a refreshing kind of question to ask about a lot of sermons, my own included. But there are many other areas of life that could stand such scrutiny.

It is always appropriate for us to reach back to our statement of purpose, and especially at the beginning of a school year. Along with that is a feeling that we need, at this place in our college history, to look carefully to our foundations, to be sure we are going in the direction we want to go, and fulfilling our own ideals as they relate to this school.

I want to talk to you about our institutional purpose. But when we use the phrase, "institutional purpose," it sounds too academic and formal. What we are really asking is involved in the simple question, "What are we here for?" What is the object of all this work, and this collection of people, and this campus and this student body?

To have a clear goal of what we are attempting is important. To all be united in attempting to reach that goal is also important. If we know where we are going and what we are trying to do, and then if all of us unite in aiming toward that goal, we will be greatly helped in our progress toward reaching an approximation of the ideals for which we strive. The goal should always be beyond our grasp, else it is not an

adequate goal. But there should be some measurable steps along the way by which we can judge our movement in the right direction.

I would like to summarize our purposes in just two or three statements that I trust will find agreement in all of our minds, and with the commitment of our hearts.

I. Our object is to create a dynamic Christian liberal arts college.

This is not to deny that we already share in such an experience right now. It is to emphasize that an institution such as we are trying to build is never a static thing (done once and forgotten), but that it must experience an ongoing life that grows and develops and changes in order to fulfill more nearly each year the ideal that we envision. It must be dynamic to adjust to the changing needs of the society we serve, without altering the basic commitments that are unchanging.

I was challenged deeply, as I hope you have been, with the book by Dr. Holmes. His emphasis on what liberal learning, in a Christian perspective involves, is the best I have read. We are experiencing, once again, the swing of the pendulum in higher education toward the pragmatic, technical and vocational emphasis. I am not trying to negate the worth of some of that emphasis. I refuse to admit that it is "either-or." But as I see our world and its real needs, more technical, vocational skill is not our great need. The moral, ethical lostness of our society cries out for some kind of answers. Jean Paul Richter once wrote, "I wandered to the farthest verge of creation, and there I saw an empty socket where an eye should have been, and I heard the shriek of a fatherless universe." The chaos and turmoil in our world is the shriek of society that has lost contact with its heavenly Father, and has no hope that there is an "all-seeing eye" watching over it all. We have the technical, vocational answers to nearly

every imagination of mankind. All the while our cities become slums, our moral fabric putrifies, our aimlessness becomes more apparent.

I find a strange contradiction in the demands upon higher education from the popular press. We read and hear repeatedly that the "future shock of change" is creating jobs faster than we can educate people for those jobs, and that those now in college will probably be employed in tasks that are not now in existence. Dr. Purkiser, in his address this morning, reminded us that 70% of the employable skills that were needed at the beginning of this century are no longer carried on. At the same time, I hear this clamor for a more vocational focus in higher education. Is it not appropriate for us to lift up the values of the truly liberal arts concept. As Dr. Holmes has said, "I would think it worthwhile if a student, when asked what he learned in college, could reply, I learned what it is to see and think and act like the human person God made me to be."

If the liberating arts are to aid in the formation of a whole person who is liberated by learning to move anywhere in God's world, then it strikes me that such an educated person is much better adapted to face the future, whatever strange and mystifying shapes it assumes, and to make a positive contribution to that world.

I am not denying in anyway our responsibility to aid in counseling, in the classroom and in placement, to assist our students to find gainful employment both during and after their college experience. But that is done best in our framework by doing a first rate job of making men and women who are educated with eternity in view.

Alfred North Whitehead wrote, "Mankind can flourish in the lower stages of life with merely barbaric flashes of thought. But when civilization culminates, the absence of a coordinating philosophy of life, spread throughout the community, spells decadence,

boredom, and the slackening of effort." Can I repeat that? Decadence, boredom and the slackening of effort! No three words more nearly describe our day. The porno literature that bombards our people is one of the clear hallmarks of our decadence. Gangs rioting in the cities, wanton destruction of property and the rush to sensate pleasure underline our boredom. What has happened to the pride of workmanship, and the innate sense of the value of work highlights our slackening of effort and has its resultant effect in lowering of production and concomitant inflation.

A recent survey conducted by the Gallup Poll people related to the "Attitudes of College Students on Political, Social and Economic Issues, 1975." The closing paragraph states, "this survey presents cogent evidence that the four years that typical students spend in typical colleges and universities tend to disillusion them about their country and to increase their alienation with its institutions." In this kind of school, we cannot be content with allowing that to be the resulting impact of college for our students.

In the most recent book from the pen of Dr. Earl Pullias, he writes, "Man by his very nature is painfully uncomfortable with ignorance and ineptitude; his hunger for wholeness is insatiable; his need to know and to be has a throbbing urgency. In individuals or societies those hungers may be deflected and distorted by fear, superstition, greed, sensuality, violence; but again and again man picks himself up (inspired, I believe, by the most gifted artists, poets and prophets; also by scientists) and continues the search for truth. Such is the nature of man."

A Christian liberal arts college is one that should contribute to spreading that coordinating philosophy of life throughout the community. That coordinating philosophy, we find in the person of Jesus Christ. It should coordinate every aspect of our

campus life, and from this campus reach out to infect other areas of society. A Christian liberal arts college should contribute to the satisfaction of that insatiable hunger of man's heart for wholeness. It comes to my mind in that connection that we are a part of the holiness movement within the Christian church. The words, wholeness and holiness, come from the same source and have many facets of identity. No note should be more appropriate for us to sound than that of the wholeness of life that is created by the living fusion of faith and learning.

The word "Watergate" has become a symbol of moral confusion and ethical relativism for the world. We may, as has been suggested, have only viewed the tip of the iceberg. As underlying layers are peeled off, that same lack of moral discernment seems to run more deeply in our nation than we like to admit. What more cogent, practical, necessary, relevant task could possibly be imagined to challenge our best efforts, than the challenge of sending into our nation a group of young people who have the ability to make moral decisions, who have a clear view of ethical issues, and whose lives are characterized by that beautiful word, "righteousness."

You already know that we are not talking alone about the students in the department of religion. A Christian liberal arts college is one where the teaching of Home Economics is as sacred as the teaching of Systematic Theology. It is a college where the truth of God's presence can be seen in nuclear physics as surely as it can be seen in a college prayer meeting.

If anyone should ask us what our object is--this is our object--the creation of a Christian liberal arts college.

II. Our object is to create a community of the committed.

In saying that we are a Christian college, we are saying that we are unreservedly, happily, and totally committed to Christ. Does that destroy academic freedom? Not in the least. I believe it enhances it. No individual, least of all, no teacher lives or teaches without a basic commitment of some kind. I have come to believe deeply that the school that takes an open and advertised stand as to what their basic commitments are, is simply being more academically responsible than the school that attempts to maintain a stance of "objectivity." Not everyone has to agree with us, and not everyone will. Point Loma College is admittedly not for everyone. The coordinating philosophy that builds us into a community is our common commitment to Christ, in the educational task.

We are a growing faculty and staff. Growth involves more individuals with individual personalities, and individual traits. It is perfectly natural to have closer feelings of kinship with some than with others. The factor that will mold us together in increasing strength and will produce an increasing warmth of personal relationships is our dedication to the common task in which we are sharing. You have probably heard me say it to our students, that it is difficult to understand a generation of young people who talk so much about love and community, who then violate each other's personalities, and all the values connected with love, in personal relationships. In a sense, I have the same concern about faculty members. We talk about love and community as a desired goal, and violate that love in community through negative criticism of each other.

A young man, graduate of our College and now a medical doctor, volunteered his services for a year with our medical missionary work in Africa. He was welcomed



enthusiastically by an overworked staff to give them a little respite. He was immediately caught up in the round of visiting wards, operating and caring for the sick from morning till night. I received a letter from him in the middle of the year telling me of his experiences, in the midst of which he suddenly asked himself why he was there. He had gone with a sense of urgency to use his medical practice to minister as a Christian testimony. He found himself caught up in the same kind of secular work that he could have been doing at home. He said, "I asked myself why I was here. And then realizing the answer, I found that I could take a few minutes to pray each morning; that I could find a way to witness to the patients that were under my care." Through his ministry he was able to lead a few of them to know Christ personally. That is not intended to deny that his medical practice itself was a witness, but he knew his commitment involved more.

You could be teaching in another college or university, probably. You could no doubt have a sense of fulfillment through the sanctity of leading young people toward truth. It might be a good practice to begin each morning in your classroom-- five minutes early, by yourself, and ask, "Why am I here?" You came to this college because of a commitment to the kind of Christian community you felt could be created, and of which you wished to be a part. Recognition of that commitment will lift the sense of meaning and the sense of joy you have in your work.

What is our object? Our object is to create a community of the committed. A Christian education is the means by which we are doing it.

In closing I want to read a paragraph from Holmes. You perhaps have already read it. It will be good to hear it again. "The relevance of Christian higher education to life should inspire vision. I dream about Christian college students and their

future roles in life. I dream of those who go on to graduate school to teach at the college level, and I see them as a generation of Christian scholars and teachers strategically located in the colleges and universities of this and other lands, penetrating the thought patterns of their culture with Christian beliefs and values. I dream of those who go into law and medicine, into business and education, into the armed forces, into government, into marriage, and I envision their influence in reviving the Christian foundations of Western society. I dream of those who go on to seminary to preach and teach the Word of God and I pray that they may bring to the church a new sense of relevance. I look for the voice of the prophet, speaking from the evangelical pulpit about the sins of society: economic injustice, violence and sexual license, self-indulgent affluence, power struggles in politics, education and business. I look for the prophet calling men to turn repentingly to God and to practice justice and compassion not only in this land but among the nations. I dream of the massive impact for truth and righteousness that God can make both in this world and for eternity through them, with their educational opportunities."

Such a dream as that is ours--yours and mine. This year we can do something about making that dream come to life on our campus.