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EDUCATION IN RESPONSIBILITY
Chapel Talk on January 25, 1967
by Milo A. Rediger

For a few of you this is a new experience; for most of you it is an opportunity at mid-year to reflect upon why you are here and what you are doing with your opportunities. For all of us it is an opportunity to take inventory. Then we will begin the work of a second semester in the academic year, 1966-67. Some will be graduated at the end of this semester and others will only have made a beginning. In these strenuous days of an uneasy and uncertain world, we should reflect upon the importance of being where we are and of doing what we are doing.

First, think of the importance of being in college, of being in this University. I will speak later of what is important, but first let me reflect on who is important. There would be no University if you the students were not here. There would be no University if you the teachers were not here. Also, there would be no University if I and my administrative colleagues were not here to bring students and teachers together in a framework which makes formal education possible. So, who is important? Aren't all of us important in this great enterprise? Let us then beware of overformalizing or impersonalizing the process in which we are engaged, because all of the importance of the entire venture relates to people.

Students should remember that we do not necessarily become educated people just because we live in dormitories, meet in groups in classrooms, or do busy-work in laboratories. Teachers should remember that we do not educate people, change their ideas and redirect their behavior, just because we lecture in 50 minute blocks of time or do research in laboratories. There is the story of the man who came to the psychiatrist with the problem that he believed he was dead. The psychiatrist was glad to have this case because he'd had a hard day and he thought it would be easy to handle this one, easy to prove to this man that he really isn't dead. So he said to the man, "Do dead men bleed?" And the man replied, "Of course not." And the psychiatrist stuck the man with a needle and they both examined the results. After looking at the blood long enough for the results of the examination to be convincing, the psychiatrist said, "So?" and the man's response was, "What do you know; dead men do bleed!" The first business of higher education is to set up a pattern of clear and meaningful communication about matters that are important to both teachers and students in an academic community.
Education in Responsibility, cont.

Education in many colleges and universities is becoming more and more impersonal. It is standardized, mass-produced, efficient and cold. The emphasis is on knowledge itself without reference to values. The student cannot experience the personality of the teacher because they remain strangers to each other. The Dean and the President are symbols; titles with only mythical meanings.

On the Taylor campus, education begins with a deep interest in, and respect for, the individual. Certainly one of our goals is to develop those individual talents which make us unique personal beings. To develop the talents of the students has been the aim of Taylor for more than a century. But talents are wasted if a life is wasted. Taylor stresses the pursuit of sound values as well as the pursuit of knowledge. We hope to engage in the pursuit of truth, but we cannot hope to encompass or comprehend the totality and unity of truth even in any one field that we may choose as a major option. Those who will be graduated at the end of this semester will probably not have integrated all elements and aspects of truth when they leave us. If they have mastered the beginning letters of the alphabet of life and living, perhaps we are fortunate. It may be only the A and the B, but this attaches tremendous importance to our effort to do the A B at a high quality level. If the senior is inclined to take his diploma in hand and say to the world, "Here I come, I have my A B," he probably will hear the world and the rest of life answering, "Come on, child; I'll teach you the rest of the alphabet."

This kind of basic education can take place only in a climate of freedom within a framework of proper authority. The very freedoms of the university, the freeing effect of truth, limit all of us in certain ways. Those who cherish freedom must be strong, strong enough to live and act responsibly. Taylor stands for integrity as well as freedom. It also stands for mutual respect of personality and it upholds sound moral criteria as well as high academic standards within the authority of Christ and the Scriptures. Taylor fosters community government, community effort, and expects responsibility from every member. Everyone of us must stand with the university because everyone of us is an essential part of what the university is and what it will become.

The Taylor faculty will try to make the Liberal Arts and Sciences as understandable as possible, but this can only be an effective counterpart of the student's own effort to investigate, to learn and to understand. The faculty member in a Liberal Arts College is interested in the student as well as in his subject. He will, of course, transmit knowledge, but will also open up for the student the means whereby he may acquire more and relate it meaningfully to all that he already has. (The ferryman.) A great deal of emphasis is placed upon acquiring knowledge, but basically the faculty
wants the students to learn the techniques of knowing. They want him to know the bases upon which knowledge is acquired and what, after all, are the roots of truth and how he may acquire understanding and wisdom. They are interested in the facts, but beyond the facts they are interested in values, meanings, and the capacity of the student to make distinctions and to form discriminating judgments. They wish to develop in their students a respect for authority, respect for what the mind of man with the blessing of God has produced in the past. There is also a sense in which they wish to develop a kind of challenge to authority, the kind of challenge which enables the student to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. They are interested in helping to develop in the students a capacity for self control and for controlled emotion until a reasonable judgment is arrived at in the process of learning and experience.

These new buildings which have appeared in the last two years, and which help to make the campus as fine as it is, reflect the thinking and planning of the university people. The lines and pillars are a visual statement of the importance of balance and order. Each brick is so carefully related to all the others that it is a lesson in what can be achieved through thoughtful planning and orderly procedure within the authority of architectural principles and structural techniques. It speaks quietly in stone and cement of the aims and goals of the university.

The atmosphere and the climate of the campus is more intangible and can only be sensed, but it is as real as brick and mortar. We are all influenced by it and, more important, we all help to produce it. We do this within the framework of a reference to authority. A Christian university acknowledges the authority of Christ as He and His ideas are revealed through the Scriptures. There is much misunderstanding of the relationship between freedom and responsibility, and between responsibility and authority. With so much uneasiness and uncertainty in the world, it has become common for the individual to set up his own private authority. He is then not responsible to anyone or anything except himself, and this he interprets as freedom. As I see it, this privatism is a very serious student problem today. This is not simply a reference to relativistic or situational ethics; it refers rather to the student's own kind of authoritarianism which he sets up over against any authority to which an appeal might be made, even if it is the authority of Scripture and of Jesus Christ.

When a student says, "This is how I feel about it and this is what I believe, and if I believe this, then I am not responsible to rules and regulations which are set up by someone else," he is not really talking about freedom at all. He is simply setting himself up as an authority over against all other authorities. Does an individual have the right to feel that way, or the right to believe a certain way if it is in conflict
with Christian authority? If he claims that he does, then I ask, "What are his credentials as compared with Christ's?" Obviously we cannot proceed without some authority, but when the alternatives are the authority of Christ or that of the individual's own private judgment, the choice for us is clear. Acknowledgment of this principle and personal adaptation to it on the part of teachers, administrators, and students are essential to the existence and conduct of a Christian university, and without this there is no such thing as a Christian college.

If I had given a title to this talk, it would have been "Education in Responsibility." When I first started talking to you about responsibility, some of you thought I was going to ask you to remove your feet from the railings up there in the balcony but I haven't talked to you about those things, have I? Rather, I have pointed out some fundamental principles that are characteristic of a Taylor education. It is my personal commitment that these principles should be preserved, and that the implementation of them in the achievement of our educational goals should be done with an awareness of our contemporary world, and appropriate adaptation to the needs of people in our time.

College years go by quickly. You have only a little time and a great deal to do. This is your opportunity to study with a dedicated and a distinguished faculty. This is your opportunity to play on one or some of our many good teams. This is your chance to live on a campus dedicated to Christian values, with many of us willing to help and guide you to the way of wisdom. This is your one chance to help us build this university by giving it the finest traditions and your own best contribution. I want all of you to appreciate what you have here while you have it, and hope you will all be proud of what you will have helped to build when you leave us. That is much better than dropping a sentimental tear when the opportunity is gone.

Taylor is possible because of the freedoms of our land. These same freedoms make many other kinds of colleges possible. There are many colleges with other programs, other points of view, other customs and other traditions. If there are any of you who want neutrality on values and morals in your education, and who want or need a student life in which responsibility is not asked of you, then you should find the kind of college you want. If your college does not offer what you want and need, you will not cherish it. If you do not cherish it, you will not help to build it. If you do not help to build it, your education will be incomplete, and you will not be an educated whole person. The Taylor program has certain definite goals, and the program is not necessarily planned for every kind of student. There are probably some students who should not come to Taylor, and I am confident that our Admissions
Department honestly attempts to make this clear to all inquirers.

As I say this, I am fully aware of the fact that this talk is not phrased in the language customarily used in presidential talks or in State-of-the-University messages, but you must remember that even though I have been charged with the responsibility of the President, I am also a graduate of this university. As a student here I discovered certain things which I want all of you to have the opportunity to discover. I found the meaning of personality. I discovered the meaning of authority. I found true liberation and the meaning of freedom. I found a sense of values. I experienced the impact of a climate generated by a community of good people.

I hope you read me clearly, and that you will be sharper than was the fellow who saw a sign over a lunch counter which read, "All the cold orange juice you can drink for a dime." He ordered, paid the dime and drank the juice. Then he pushed the glass back for a refill. The clerk refilled the glass and said, "This will cost you another dime." The man countered, "But what about the sign?" To which the clerk responded, "You've already had all the cold orange juice you can drink for a dime."

In case you missed it, then, let me say it again. These things I have discussed should be made available to everyone of you, at least the opportunity to discover them, and I want to preserve them also through the years to come for students who wish to seek their education in a Christian university. Please join with us prayerfully in this semester's effort.