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Milo Rediger

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1968 Goal Posts (chapel talk)

Milo A. Rediger
Taylor University

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1968 GOAL POSTS

Genesis 1 and 2
I Timothy 4:12

Let me try to relate these scriptures to Taylor students in 1967, and to our Christian college goals for this year. First let me try to share with you what we know about you.

1. You are serious people. You have your own rank and scale of values. You have judged the institutions of our society and have given them priority ratings.
2. You have never known anything but a society of affluence. You have never seen bread lines or lines in front of an employment office. You have never been poor and much less do you know about abject poverty.
3. You have never known a major war. You do not really know the meaning of self-sacrifice for the common good. However, because of our Vietnam-type wars, you know that military service is almost a certainty for you. Therefore, what happens in Vietnam or Burma or in Red China is important because it has very real implications for where you will be next year or the year after that.
4. You have the assumption that science has made everything possible. Included in your philosophy is the idea expressed in "the difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer."

5. We know that you are disposed to question all authority, and that this is the spirit of our time.
6. Many of you are the children of parents who themselves are college graduates. You are, therefore, aware of the fact that college education is not the answer to everything. You know that there are certain social and spiritual shortcomings that your parents did not conquer even with their college education. You are aware that many, many important issues are still left to be resolved, both for the individual and for the world.

So, why are you in college? Hopefully, to prepare for leadership. The Liberal Arts college should be the best school for leadership, and the Christian Liberal Arts college should provide the best climate for the highest type of leadership. How does it prepare for leadership? By doing a few important tasks well. What are those tasks? To see that its students can read, write and speak well. To give them some knowledge of history--especially the history of ideas. To help them understand the methodology of science and the significance of scientific discovery to human welfare. To immerse them in a few of the enduring works of literature. To cultivate in them a layman's appreciation of great art and great music. To instill in them a sense of the appropriate in social and personal relationships--that is to say, an understanding of what is in good taste. To encourage them to grapple with the perennial problems of mankind and to think about these questions with some precision. To help them arrive at a considered

faith--a faith that has something to say about the inescapable realities of life--good and evil, joy and suffering, death, history, God.

This is what we expect of the Christian Liberal Arts college. And, since the human spirit fails except the Holy Spirit fills, the presentation of the gospel is essential to round out the experience.

I know this is an era of dissent and revolt. But so often the revolt of today, though it expresses an honest reaction and concern, does not suggest a responsible and workable solution. e.g. the white bicycles at the University of Wisconsin as a solution to the human problem of transportation. A group of students---. Well, you see what was overlooked is the fact that the bicycles are left wherever the last user stops. How do we know this is where they will be needed next? And the fact that, since nobody owns the bicycles, nobody cares about their condition and their maintenance, how long are they likely to last and who will replace them?

Education for responsible leadership and growth toward mature citizenship imply better judgment than this and more consistent thinking. ^{scientist} A friend of mine wrote: A horse is educated if he has learned to follow the rein; a dog is educated if he comes to heel.

Shall we likewise say that a man is educated if he has learned to weld a seam, or to run a computer, or to read a meter, or to throw a ball or to sell a machine?

What does a farmer want with Shakespeare? Does a housewife need to know the ways of the stars and the planets? Are the thoughts of Aristotle and Kierkegaard important for a salesman?

We may say no: Shakespeare will not plow a straight furrow; the orbits of Mars and Venus will not bake bread; Aristotle closes no sales and writes no invoices.

But to say this is to say that a man's job is all that matters. And then a man is like a horse, or a dog, trained for his job as a horse or a dog is trained.

No. There is more to a man than that.

To be a man means many things. Among them, surely, is to know the force of mind and spirit reaching out to the boundaries of understanding. Who has never felt the unappeasable craving to understand the world in which he has been placed?

If there is such a one, he has in some sense not yet truly attained to the stature of man. And one who once had this feeling, and has lost it, has lost one of the things that made him man.

So education is an awakening--an awakening to all the incredible riches of understanding and enlightenment which the world of learning contains, and to all the riches which lie hidden in art and music and literature. But we are not merely humanists; so we believe that education is also an awakening to one's own nature and ground of being, with all the sobering thoughts which that awareness brings. Education which lacks that dimension is dangerously incomplete, no matter how fine it may otherwise be.

Education is a liberation--a liberation from the blindness of ignorance, from the chains of irrational thought, from the demons of prejudice. But to be complete it must also be a liberation from the notion that man is the measure of all things or

that nothing lies beyond man's capacity for growth and understanding.

So from education we get a kind of glory and a kind of humility. The glory of probing the depth's of God's creation; the humility of knowing our place. This is what makes education exciting.

In the nature of things, our quest can never end. Who knows what lies within the foggy depth of the limitless world? I, for one, can hardly wait to find out; and I must say with the great scientist Isaac Newton, "It seems to me that I have amused myself only with picking a few pebbles on the beach, while the great ocean of truth lies all undiscovered before me."

So, man is this unique being named in the Bible "living soul." He is a problem-type being--an optimistic, hopeful, miserable, striving creature. He is always striving toward freedom. To be free as an individual in a society is a problematical, complex thing. You know, freedom, about which we talk so much, and argue so much, and march so much,--is a funny thing, especially now that there are so very many of us individuals in our ^{great} larger society. Strange, but true, that we cannot all have our individual freedom. In order for drinkers to have their freedom, non-drinkers can't have theirs. If smokers are to have their freedom, we non-smokers can't have ours. When you exercised your freedom in choosing to come to Taylor University, do you know how much of your freedom you left at the gate? It is good to be a college of non-smokers and non-drinkers, unbearded and barbered, clean and combed--and don't think there isn't a good response to this on the part of many, many people. Our best public relations and fund-raising tools are your combs, razors, washcloths, wardrobes, etc. (Dr. Liggett and #3.)

I'm tired of the emphasis, the front page, the attention all going to the 5% hippies and rebels. I'm for the 95% who are sensible and serious, who are sharp and eager, ready and responsible--the ones who make a sane world possible for the dissenters to dissent in! In other words, I'm with you!

Another good friend of mine wrote these sentiments as follows:

I have just about reached the end of my tolerance for the way our society at the present time seems to have sympathetic concern only for the misfit, the pervert, the drug addict, the drifter, the ne'er-do-well, the maladjusted, the chronic criminal, the underachiever, the loser. (In education the term is--the disadvantaged!)

It seems to me we have lost touch with reality and become warped in our attachments, if not in fact psychotic.

In short, I feel it is time for someone like me to stand up and say, "I'm for the upperdog!" I'm also for the achiever--the one who sets out to do something and does it; the one who recognizes the problems and opportunities at hand and endeavors to deal with them; the one who is successful at his immediate task because he is not worrying about someone else's failings; the one who doesn't consider it "square" to be constantly looking for more to do, who isn't always rationalizing why he shouldn't be doing what he is doing; the one, in short, who carries the work of his part of the world squarely on his shoulders.

Not the wealthy, necessarily; not the ones in authority, necessarily; not the gifted, necessarily--just the doer, the achiever--regardless of his status, his opulence, his native endowment.

We are not born equal; we are born unequal. And the talented are no more responsible for their talents than the underprivileged for their plight. The measure of each should be by what he does with his inherited position.

No one should be damned by the environmental condition of his life--whether it be privileged or underprivileged. . . .

It is a dying fashion to pay respect to those who achieve--who really "have it," to use the vernacular. This is the day when the fashion is to be for the underdog. The attitude is being developed that if you really want people to care for you--and who doesn't?--don't be successful; be a misfit, a loser, a victim of one's environment. I take this occasion to urge achievement;--to say it is better to win than to lose, better to receive an A than a C, that class rank is meaningful, that the gentleman's C is not adequate, that those who have developed the pattern of achieving in college will go on achieving out of college, and, because of their achievement, the rest of us will live richer and better lives, and if they are Christians, God will be glorified.

Now, the scriptures place the responsibility directly on us. My Genesis reference indicated that man was so created that this expectation is reasonable, since responsibility is actually the mark that distinguishes him from the other levels of created being. My New Testament reference makes the confrontation direct and personal. "Let no man despise your youth--(Phillips has it--Don't let people look down on you because you are young: see that they look up to you because you are an example to them in your speech and behavior, in your love and faith and sincerity."