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Marks of a Whole College

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When a change is in process from a junior to a senior college, it is easy to understand why the terminology emphasizes a four-year program as compared with a two-year curriculum. However, since the developments and movements affecting higher education currently include year-round academic work, thus providing a normal undergraduate education in two and two-thirds calendar years, I have chosen to examine the expectations of the senior undergraduate college under the title, "whole college."

I find my thinking completely in harmony with the stated aims of the Spring Arbor concept in its present stage of development. The stimulation and cultivation of intellectual curiosity and creativity, spiritual sensitivity and growth, and social awareness and responsibility come close to the essence of Christian education at the higher level. It is, at least in part, the purpose of this seminar to explore ways and means of achieving these goals and of measuring our actual achievement in our product. It is one thing to talk about philosophy and theory, or even theology, and quite another to examine product and performance.

It probably goes without saying that in order to achieve such significant aims we must have superior personnel, carefully thought-out curricular programs, and adequate facilities and resources. There have always been difficult problems which confront especially the Christian college in its efforts to provide these expensive essentials. I shall note some of them briefly.

Since everybody pays taxes, many people feel that their tax money should provide higher education for their sons and daughters. This is especially true as the cost of education keeps going up with increasing prices on all other commodities. Across the country the tax-supported colleges and universities have enrolled the great numerical majority of our students. This imbalance between the state and private institutions will probably increase disproportionately as enrollments continue to expand. Within this pattern, Christian families should remember that there are significant differences in the nature and quality of the educational programs and experiences provided by

these two kinds of institutions. I would hesitate to expose and limit my children to the classroom educational experience of the day-student who lives at home in the state-college town and just goes to and from the campus by the class bells. Add to this the secular philosophy and commitment of most state universities, and my hesitation is even stronger.

To the credit of my own state, I should refer to what has been called The Indiana Plan. It operates through a state-wide conference of higher education where the presidents and deans of all the thirty-four colleges meet at least once a year to discuss the issues and plan the cooperative programs of higher education. As a result of this cooperation, enrollment of undergraduates in the state universities and in the private colleges has been almost equally divided, varying not more than two per cent from a fifty-fifty distribution until the present tidal wave began to come. Thirty of the thirty-four colleges in Indiana are private or church-related, and these institutions have enjoyed the encouragement and cooperation of the administrators of the four state universities.

Another problem relates to the academic quality of private college offerings, and the tendency of the small liberal arts college to imitate the complex university. I think this calls for courageous action on the part of faculties to plan for depth (I do not mean specialization here) rather than to attempt offering majors in every possible field. I would prefer to provide better education in fewer specialized areas than to offer superficial work in twice as many departments. At Taylor we have pioneered some in this respect. We have dropped some majors and have eliminated all one-man departments. I believe the small liberal arts Christian college can offer the best education for the people it is able to accommodate. It might be necessary occasionally to advise a prospective student to attend some other institution that offers a major in a field which we have either dropped or never added because of excessively high per-unit cost, or because we have decided that it is too loosely related to the liberal arts to be essential.

Finally, the problem of teacher shortages and the competition for the highly qualified faculty members has resulted, in some cases, in a small-college educational

climate that is inferior or, to say the most, mediocre. This is the unpardonable sin of Christian colleges. My best answer to this lies in a multitude of little things which add up to high faculty and student morale (instructional assistance, secretarial help, academic freedom, valid salary and promotion policies, et cetera), coupled with an adequate pattern of major fringe benefits which evidence care for, and secure the prestige of, the members of the teaching and non-instructional staff. Further details probably belong more appropriately to one of the discussion groups or some sub-section of the seminar.

If we can clear these problem hurdles, we are ready to examine the marks of a whole college. I would warn both teachers and students that the level of expectancy is high; there can be no "playing school," and there is likely to be a sharp upgrading from the level of the students' high school experience.

We will look for meaningful personal stimulation through Christian kindness, courtesy and consideration. Almost no one fails to respond to these qualities if their manifestation is sincere and "natural" on the part of the faculty and upper-class students. When this condition obtains, official guests and casual visitors will be impressed, and benefits accrue to the image of the college like compound interest to a savings account. This is not superficial public relations either, because these characteristics are basic to Christian living, and they prepare the way for many significant aspects of educational experience. To cite one example, a type of campus community government which, though it does not destroy the lines of respect and propriety, minimizes the contrasts between faculty and students and becomes a meaningful cooperative exercise for both. Certainly a sub-section of the seminar should explore further the implications and possibilities here.

We will also look for intellectual achievement expressed in sound scholarship at both levels, teacher and student. I have already said so much about this in relation to philosophy and goals that I shall now only re-emphasize the fact that this comes mainly through faithfulness to the fundamentals and through sheer hard work. "If heads that think must ache, then I, perforce, choose headaches." Edison once said, "Many people do not recognize opportunity because so often it goes around

disguised as hard work." Another commented, "You will either nobly save or meanly lose that which you hold dear." In a recent Association for Higher Education College and University Bulletin, Dr. Marjorie Carpenter wrote, "To acquire a habit of examining any problem until it is understood because it is seen "in the round,' with its essence thoroughly felt -- this is the opposite of thinking superficially." Even in a good college it is always necessary to confront students with the reminder that critical thinking is not easy, and that the purpose of a college education is not to find ways and means of securing a diploma by cultivating a bare minimum of it.

Again, we will look for spiritual development through concern for proper values. It has been said that our generation knows the prices of things but little of their values. We are too willing to let worthless things consume our time and energy and hope that opportunity will come knocking at the door. Spiritual development comes through spiritual nurture and self-cultivation in the light of God and His Word. I think it was Bacon who said, "A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds."

Responsibility for spiritual indifference must be shared by the individual and by the college group. Writing for the Intercollegiate Press Bulletin, Dr. Frederick Binder of Hartwick said recently, "If three days a week the college chapel is practically deserted for the college commons, and the coffee hour has a larger attendance than the communion, is it the fault of heedless, Godless youth, or of complacent Christianity on a carbon-copy campus, duplicated five hundred times in church colleges across America? It would appear that the latter is a surer analysis. The paganism of the campus is but a reflection of the paganism of our entire culture..." I refuse to be one of the five hundred, but I know what Dr. Binder means when we attempt to keep the level of spiritual interest and nurture well above what the students have been accustomed to in their homes and even in their churches. But without the effort, or without a measure of success in it, the college is less than whole.

We will also look for individual integrity, encouraged by emphasis on the honor principle with accent on the practice of dual responsibility. I must satisfy my own conscience, and I must also be my brother's keeper. Responsible participation in

society is preceded by responsible participation in the college community.

In the New Testament, James speaks of the integral balance in true religion. If a man only appears to be religious, he deceives himself and his religion is useless. If a man is truly religious, he puts the law into practice and demonstrates his faith to his fellowmen. The clearest definition of integrity is the proper balance or relation between faith and action. Mere profession will not influence others except negatively; example is the best form of leadership. Jesus is our example in this. He said, "Do you believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? But if you cannot, then believe Me because of what you see Me do." In Him faith and works were so perfectly balanced that He could say this. In us the integration is not so complete, but insofar as we approach being like Him, we come nearer to this perfect balance, this integrity.

Once again, we will look for community involvement, experienced through town-and-gown relationships, resources and reciprocity. In my opinion, we must hitch our religion to the social and political issues of our generation. Now we could talk about the liquor traffic, race relations, organized gambling, tax evasion, corruption in government, prayer in the public schools, et cetera. When I was a boy, my well-meaning Christian parents taught me that, as citizens of another world, we must not become involved in the civics of this one. We must not even go to the election polls. I had to be re-educated to my social responsibilities (and let me say in passing, and to the credit of my parents, that they have also seen better light and have walked in it).

I am using involvement in affairs of government only as an example. We have done two things at Taylor during the past ten years which involve both teachers and students. We send four or five students and a faculty member to participate in the annual Washington seminar on federal service sponsored by the Office of Affairs of the NAE. We have also increased what was a minor in political science to a major area, and at least one course in government is a requirement of all students in most curricular I am reminded of the story about the Indian tribe that sent a representative to Washington to negotiate some business affairs for the reservation. They chose an

elderly, lame and partially blind brave to carry out the mission. He arrived in Washington and had an audience with the president. In the course of the interview, the president of the United States said, "Why did the tribe send you to Washington? Why didn't they send their chief?" "Well," said the old Indian, "It's like this. We Indians are like you palefaces. We never send our best people to Washington."

Finally, we will look for general maturity in the product of the college. Given the appropriate climate and level of expectancy, this will develop through a recognition and acceptance of college years as life and not just as preparation for life. The student must move out of his play world, his dependence on others for decision-making, into the realm of disciplined responsibility. Here is the summation, in essence, of all I have attempted to say. Here the Christian graces, the hard work, the sense of values, the integral balance, the religion in action -- all come together in the growing person who has found his goals, his direction, and his level of achievement. Fortunately, he does not know what lies ahead. But he comes to commencement with a sense of readiness, and, given appropriate continuing self-education and reliance on God, he will realize his potential in service for Christ and his fellowmen.

Christian colleges must provide something which is equal to the best education elsewhere, plus the values of a dedicated Christian community. On this kind of education there is, and should be, a price tag. Let us not undersell our product. It is a fact that those institutions, both private and church-related, which have the highest student costs and the highest proportion of out-of-state students are those which have fluctuated least in their enrollment. This is not to place a premium on high costs, but if we do not properly evaluate the worth of a good Christian education, it is not likely that the public will place any higher value upon it. A premium product with a price tag that relatively represents its value is the least that a Christian college should offer.