

Taylor University

Pillars at Taylor University

Milo Rediger Writings & Addresses

Milo Rediger

2020

Status Quo and Quo Vadis

Milo A. Rediger
Taylor University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pillars.taylor.edu/rediger-writings>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rediger, Milo A., "Status Quo and Quo Vadis" (2020). *Milo Rediger Writings & Addresses*. 60.
<https://pillars.taylor.edu/rediger-writings/60>

This Manuscript (Unpublished) is brought to you for free and open access by the Milo Rediger at Pillars at Taylor University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Milo Rediger Writings & Addresses by an authorized administrator of Pillars at Taylor University. For more information, please contact pillars@taylor.edu.

STATUS QUO AND QUO VADIS

Again, the story of Schultz's two fryers is appropos--can we come up with the quantity and the quality of education necessary in our time? The hallmark of our time is confusion. It is expressed in unreadable art, the unrecognizable drama, the unlistenable music, the unmeaningful activity, the unexplainable behavior of our paintings, our plays, our stereos, our highways and our people.

At the A.C.E. meeting recently, I saw a showing of films prepared especially for this national meeting of college and university representatives by Sol Worth, the director of the University of Pennsylvania's Documentary Film Laboratory, researched from among the films made by students in classes and on their own. I left with feelings of confusion and guilt--not for our student generation but for what we have failed to do in giving our children a clear and reasonable world in which to live and grow up to meaningful maturity. They expressed their fears, their frustrations, their desperate search and their rebellion against a society with values gone wrong. Civil rights, segregation, foreign policy, academic freedom and irreligion provide excellent frames of reference for these expressions.

Recently, while confined to the bathroom by lather, razor and attire inappropriate for exposure to the public, I listened to the entire musical composition (you see, I couldn't get out to turn off the radio) titled "Sloopy, Hang On". I declare I heard almost no lyrics other than Sloopy, Hang On throughout the whole number--except for this very significant variation on the theme from Sloopy, Hang On to Hang On, Sloopy. I could only conclude that this must be a dramatic description of the mad rush to "Where the Action Is", and that some of Sloopy's friends were afraid Sloopy wouldn't make it there and that he would miss out on something exciting. Now, I may be a million miles away from a correct philosophical critique of this popular top-ten school-bus favorite, but I am only reporting my experience and my reaction to the younger generation's attempt to communicate with me. What I am really afraid of is that the converse of this experience is also true, and that the values and the traditions and what we consider to be the axioms and postulates of our Christian heritage and history are not getting through to them with any more meaning or clarity. And we are not teaching if they are not learning!

In order to be filled in more adequately, I recently spent 15 or 20 minutes watching the half-hour TV show called Hollywood a Go-Go. (I couldn't take more than that much of it, I am ashamed to confess.) Here the young set was putting the physical motions to Sloopy, Hang On and another number that goes oo ooo oooo ooooo oooooo with an ascending order of volume and motion until a literal frenzy is achieved. I believe they, both boys and girls, expended an amount of energy in that half hour equal to the physical exercise I got when I was their age by doing farm chores from 5 to 7:30 a.m. and from 4:30 to 7 p.m. every day of the week. In those days, I was so exhausted that I had to have a model-T Ford to drive the ten-mile round trip to my high school classes. (Now our students are so exhausted that they have to drive

the three blocks to football practice.) Watching these absolutely violent bodily gymnastics, you can imagine how chagrined I felt to recall my own childhood experience of putting the motions to the music of "Climb, Climb up Sunshine Mountain".

But now, with this introduction, you may have suspected that I am a cynic about the younger generation, our students. I am not. I think they can be the finest ever. But I am disturbingly concerned about the faculty and the administrators, the teaching and the curriculum, the whole educational thrust and direction as to whether or not these are adequate for the salvation of these students (not used either as salvage or as a theological term) and for the survival of our society.

Now I want to point out several rays of hope and offer some suggestions for change toward improvement. These will become the planks in the platform of my attempt to offer leadership in the presidency of Taylor University. On your acceptance or rejection of this leadership, I will stake the position. I have no sacred right to the office, and I do not look for security to a wrapped-around-the-finger board of trustees (I have too much respect and too high regard for our trustees to assume that they could ever be so wrapped), nor do I assume that official prestige or written contracts (the latter of which I have none) could guarantee continuance or success either to me or to the university. I am putting my professional neck out as far as the limb is long, to mix the figures of speech a bit. What have I to lose, or what to gain by any other course of action? I have more than twenty years of so-called productive period behind me. By some of the educational world's standards, those years have been considered at least averagely respectable. (I do not know if God concurs in this judgment, but I live by faith, in hope, and depending on charity.) With a fair degree of good conscience I could retire early--and then enjoy doing some of the things I have wanted to do all along. I hope I shall not be guilty of what one college president confessed, "I spend so much time justifying what I am doing that I have little time to do what I am justifying."

So much for the past; what of the future? I am still willing to make the stake, because I am confident that the history of the future will confirm my present conviction that the survival of the small Christian liberal arts college is integrally related to our willingness to make and face a cruelly frank and honest diagnosis and to accept and participate in radical changes of and from many of the traditions and habits of college professors. In the past we have rationalized some of our faults with humorous stories and disguised others in pseudo scholarship. (The jokes about forgetfulness, absent-mindedness and ivory-towerishness are no credit or compliment to us! Who, of all people, should be least guilty of absent-mindedness if not college teachers?)

If my premises are right, then my approach is correct for both time and eternity. No, I hold no false conceptions of any sacred right to the office, nor that Taylor University exists to provide me, or you for that matter, with a job and a salary. I started to say that I am staking my work in this position on your acceptance or rejection of leadership. If I fail, (and no one is more cognizant of this possibility than I am), someone else either in or out of the organization will take

his or her turn. One of the hard things I had to come to, after my appointment as dean, was a resignation to a leadership role. I still feel that "he who loves power should not have it, and he who of necessity has it, is not likely to enjoy it". (If you don't like the way I exercise it, as you express your like or dislike by respect and confidence or lack of these, you can un-elect me! This is your right, and I accept it as a legitimate risk of my professional status.) Now, in the next decade the problems of higher education are going to become even greater and more complex. So I will have to make more and more important decisions. All of us will have to do more things better and more better things. Again, as Thomas Jefferson, in his first inaugural address, said, "...I ask so much confidence only as may give firmness and effect to the legal administration of your affairs. I shall often go wrong through defect of judgment. When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground. I ask your indulgence for my own errors, which will never be intentional; and your support against the errors of others who may condemn what they would not, if seen in all its parts."

I have now told you why I never sought, even refused, the position before, and if it is late to be making this declaration, I can only say that the manner in which this has now come about did not provide an earlier opportunity. Perhaps the opening dinner was one such occasion, and I consider the talk I gave then an introduction to this introduction.

Not different generations

The first ray of hope I see is a divinely built-in safeguard. I hope it is our guarantee against inundation by the quantity-fryer in the Schultz incident. It is that we, faculty and students, are not necessarily or really different generations. We have made too much of a communication symbol with all of our talk about generations, just as some theologians have done it with dispensations. What is a generation but a general symbol by which we attempt to communicate? Who can draw the line between two generations? This used to bother me when as a teen-ager I sat on a one-legged milk stool several hours a day and thought about things like time and life and eternity and personal identity and responsibility. (Parenthetically, why should we assume that young people today think of nothing serious or important? I surely did at their age, and you did, too; and I doubt if my parents or my teachers were very much aware of how much. I thought of things like this and how important they seemed to me and how scared I was of their possible meanings which were such uncertainties to me at the time.)

We talk too much about passing something on from one generation to another, as if there were a sharp line over which the passing must take place. God built in a safeguard against the possibility by disposing us to act in such a manner as to guarantee the births of offspring continuously by the calendar and the clock. Now look at the practical effects of this. Some of us are 60ish, some 50ish, some 40ish, some 30ish, some 20ish, --and now we have overlapped the student generation. Who can declare a dateline at which time a separation between generations should be declared? And if it should be done, the least likely time would be that 4-year

period when all of us, from the 60ish on down to and including the students (and I've used the directional reference here only chronologically) have the opportunity to live together, work together, share our knowledge, our hopes, our disappointments, our discoveries, our values--what better time could there be for communication and transmission! I declare it to be the point in experience farthest away from a line between generations.

This is extremely important because of a startling sociological fact--by 1966 more than half of our population will be 25 or under! Combine with this one of the Berkeley slogans of recent vintage, "Don't trust anyone over 25", and you have identified a most significant dilemma of our time. Now, this does suggest not only the necessity for change but the fact that change is happening and is already on us. We are not favored with the option of change or no change; our option is to determine whether we will just undergo the changes or will we put our heads together, our noses to the grindstone and our shoulders to the wheel (and I've run out of figures) to influence and control the direction and flow of them. Our society and our way of life depend on our answer. God placed a tremendous responsibility on us by the way he constituted us individually and structured the race.

Not narrow education

It is insufficient to hold the 19th Century idea of the purpose of education as the preparation of enough learned men to preserve and conduct the republic. Rather, as Frank Koepfel said at the recent White House conference, it is education's purpose and responsibility to keep the nation strong and good, (and he didn't mean strong in the sense of ROTC units and military research grants, either).

Education needs to be broad, liberal and free. It must be supported by the people who benefit from it and by all who are committed to its goals. Higher education ought to be our finest example of American free enterprise. I believe nothing is more vulgar in education than the present cut-throat competition for federal grants, and the free flow of federal funds is one of the most stultifying influences on American education today. It is not the issue of federal aid to education, or the separation of church and state that concerns me most. It is this devitalization of the educative enterprise that accompanies the emphasis on grant-receiving and the commensurate de-emphasis on teaching.

As I stated in my talk at the opening dinner, we cannot act as if no relationship existed between higher education and the federal government, and I appreciate what benefits we enjoy from the governmental system we have helped to create. But I re-emphasize that we must keep principle and practice consistent, participate where we should and can, and, above all, continue to preach and practice our belief in individual initiative and an economy based on free enterprise. Programs and controls that disregard or negate the fact of God in human society and the effect of principles such as supply and demand will never enjoy divine favor--and the nation that forgets God will be cast into hell.

Look for a moment at the stultifying effects. Think only of the "publish or perish" policy that controls the recruitment and retention of faculty members in many of our large universities. The grant-receivers are overcoming the teachers in the development of educational policy, and, worse yet, the status and prestige of an institution is greatly affected by the preponderance of grant-receivers over teachers. Since most grant-receivers are selected without reference to teaching ability, would it not be as intelligent to include the maintenance personnel and the secretaries in the deliberations out of which educational policies come? Would it not be more intelligent to incorporate in the deliberations what the students know about their own aspirations, reactions, hopes and needs? Many of them are much closer to the educational process than are the research grant-receivers.

I am speaking here about the practical results of certain aspects of federal aid and participation in the business of higher education. I would keep it largely within the framework of free enterprise, and support it with private resources. I believe that the significance of Mr. A. E. Knowlton's strong personal interest in the Taylor program bears, in part, on this point. Certainly there are the factors of profitable business and personal good will. But I cannot overlook the importance of his willingness to negotiate with us as he is, of the mutual conviction that venture capital may become the life blood of the good, small educational institutions in America. Without it we will be no better in the '70s than was Germany in the '30s and '40s or Russia in the '50s and '60s.

Not little because small

In my opinion, a third ray of hope lies in the greatness of smallness. Even at a time when the fad is for colleges to become universities, we do not have to be little because we are small. I think the greatest tragedy that could befall American education and America itself would be the disappearance of the small liberal arts colleges. Even in them the vocational emphasis and the special fields have become so prevalent as to reduce the pure liberal arts strength to about a statistical third. Nevertheless, we are the garrison of liberal education, and I am deeply grateful for the friendship of people and agencies such as Mr. Knowlton of the Knowlton Construction Company, Dr. R. C. Hutchison of Studies in Higher Education, The Lilly Endowment and Dr. Manning Patillo of the Danforth Foundation, and many others that might be mentioned. These people believe in the survival of the small college, and are willing, in their various ways, to make extensive investments in its survival.

However, we do not qualify just by virtue of size. It is a Biblical principle that the small can be great and this can apply to the Christian college. We can be good without being big.

The significance of many a small college has been vitiated by its attempt to imitate the large multiversity. I believe we can achieve greatness (and produce both of Schultz's fryers) via our considered effort to be a small multipurpose university. To do so we must set some limitation on numbers. Yet we must "roll with the punch" and be realistic about the world in our time. I remember when we built

this library on the assumption that 600 was the maximum enrollment for a good small college. We believed it so sincerely that the construction design does not provide for the possibility of expansion. This is why we must now build a larger facility, and we have tentatively thought of planning for a maximum enrollment of 1800 by 1972. I recognize that this is subject to many considerations. One is our ability to structure this growth financially. Another is your attitude toward these projections. You may feel we should not be that large. To this I would say that we must think of our responsibility in relation to the increasing college-age population. Some may think we should get larger. To this I would pose the question of how large can we be and still be small? Perhaps the next library should be built so that those who follow us would not be in the same difficult situation were they to interpret the needs and responsibilities and figures differently. Your comments on these items are welcome.

My concern is that we preserve the greatness of our smallness. I don't know how many read the Newsweek article on Berkeley and Kerr, but I'm afraid that even in the corrective proposals, too much of their education will still be plagued with largeness and mechanization. We must continue to be personal, individual, and humane in our efforts to guide students into and through the exciting adventure of learning and growing. Why have we assumed that the discoveries we make about the needs and treatment of underprivileged children or slow learners or late bloomers do not apply to the normal majority? If we emphasize TLC in our mental hospitals and find it effective, why should we wait until people are sick to apply it? Remember another Berkeley slogan: "I am a human being; do not fold, bend or mutilate." Granted, I am one of the first to tell parents we do not run a kindergarten or a reformatory or a mental hospital. But I think I hear the students saying, "We are human beings; do not merely numberize us, do not overmechanize us, do not massize education too much." And with this, I believe, the good small college can comply more successfully and meaningfully than can the numerically great university.

In the overall development of our plan, the enrollment figures are tentative and the number of buildings open for consideration. We may even discover that there is a danger of overbuilding. But we are making efforts to discover these things with the very best help and counsel available--and not the least of this will be your corporate judgment. I challenge you to think creatively, seriously, unselfishly about the achievement and preservation of the greatness of our smallness.

Not one group alone

My fourth concern, and I consider it a potential ray of hope, is the reactivation and further development of the community concept. While this ultimately does include the larger community in a geographical sense, I am now speaking of the academic community which is the essential core of the idea of a university. The academic community is composed of both teachers and students. (I include administrators in teachers, because I doubt if anyone who cannot succeed as a teacher should be entrusted with high-level administrative responsibility in an educational

program. And as I think around our administrative circle, I believe I am not treading on anyone's toes.)

Let me remind you that Taylor University has pioneered in the community concept of campus life and government. In 1944 we set the student council in an organizational context which related it meaningfully to the administration and enabled it to do more meaningful things than serving as chore-boys in a faculty-student reception. We gave them a separate faculty adviser and delegated responsibilities and invited dialogue. In 1946 we converted the council's status from just another student organization to that of executive committee of the student body. A constitution was drafted and the election of the president became a student body rather than a senior class function. In 1952 a campus council was organized and a monthly town-meeting type of conference was held, with student, faculty and administrative councils participating. (The faculty council was created at this time also.) Faculty-student committees were made responsible for various areas of campus life and work. In 1955 the student judiciary began to function as an honor board in citizenship affairs. As the division of student affairs grew, these various aspects of community government were related to it in the same manner as faculty participation is related to the academic offices. In fact, the balance was heavily in favor of the student affairs division in that it became responsible for all student organizations, including the work of faculty advisers.

Not always has this pattern worked perfectly. The annual change in student offices presents the great problem of continuity of function or even of information. Occasional changes in administrative offices present similar problems, especially if the philosophies of the incumbents vary greatly. But the growth of the idea has been somewhat consistent on this campus, and the practice of community government has been more or less significant each year. A few years ago we established a student committee on academic affairs, with communication between its chairman and the chairman of the faculty academic affairs committee, the dean. While this plan of parallel committees has been working, with varying degrees of satisfaction, to be sure, on the Taylor campus for a number of years, I heard the idea presented recently at a meeting of the American Council on Education as a new concept, the results of which experiment are now eagerly awaited.

Community government is not the same as student representation in all affairs of the university or on all committees. It is assumed that there are benefits resulting from training and experience on the part of the faculty, which benefits are to be made available to students through sharing experience as a beginning for their own training and further experience. There are some matters with which I am charged and for which our trustees hold me responsible with reference to which the students are not prepared to help me and for which I do not even seek their advice. Nevertheless, students are what the college exists for, and they are vitally concerned with many, if not most, of the affairs of a university. The secret of student involvement

in educational policy lies in a proper distinction between policy and administration, between development of philosophy and theory, and specific cases or immediate issues which need to be resolved. Some things they have tried to do are of very little value, but in this they only match our record. For example, I would not waste the time and the paper consumed in a student evaluation of a faculty, done individually. Value accrues from student evaluation of teachers only when it is invited and initiated by the teachers on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, the students' insistence on doing it occasionally is evidence of the fact that student evaluation of teachers is going on all the time and that, in the final analysis, it prevails. This is true, not because the students know more about teaching than do the professors, but because the educative process is successful only when there is a favorable learning response on the part of the student to the professor's teaching stimulus. Successful learning can no more be demanded than respect for oneself can be demanded--both must be com-manded as responses to respectability and competence.

The ray of hope here lies in a proper rapport between faculty and students, mutual respect, and a fair exchange of common courtesies and consideration. This is facilitated greatly by two factors, one internal and one external. The first is an honest and genuine care for each other within the context of educational aims, goals and proprieties. The other is a planned opportunity for frequent dialogue in larger and smaller groups, via prepared reports, panel discussions and question-answer sessions, and relative to the important business of the educational enterprise. This will include discussions of policy at all levels, even though it may not distribute to students an equal share with faculty in final decision-making. In one of the best and most instructive examples of the helpfulness of students, the students quite coyly, if not subtly, titled their part of the program "The swine return the pearls".

Not man alone

I would be quite unwilling to become involved in so stupendous a task as I have outlined here, were it not for a final ray of hope. I speak of the availability of divine resources. This is not a task for man alone. It is as big and as important as anything God could ever entrust to man. I believe He will not leave us alone. Our physical strength needs to be supplemented by His blessing, our wisdom must come from Him, and our spirits must be one with Him. We have seen many recent evidences of His care and His help. Let us daily seek His guidance for our academic, citizenship, financial and public relations policies, programs and problems.

Milo A. Rediger