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THE FUNCTION OF DIVISION I IN THE LIFE AND PROGRAM
of
TAYLOR UNIVERSITY

by Dr. Milo A. Rediger

In the light of prevailing world conditions, the problems suggested by the topic of the paper are far greater than the writer's capacity to solve them or even to discuss them adequately. Proposals for thought or action presented herein are made for the purpose of stimulating and (hopefully) clarifying our thinking relative to the challenging situation that confronts us now on Taylor's campus. I shall attempt to discuss the topic in terms of the need for a religious emphasis, and then the academic and the extra-curricular aspects of meeting this need.

The Need for a Religious Emphasis

In the March, 1947 Bulletin of the Association of American Colleges there appeared the following statement: "...the colleges must become religious... or the churches must once more become centers of education." The report of the Committee on Religion in Education, which was issued by the American Council on Education, expresses concern "for the corrosive effects of secularism, as mediated through our public schools and colleges upon human character."

In the past three years, college enrollments have increased from fifty to one hundred and fifty percent, and with it has come the most baffled and perplexed generation of young people the colleges have ever entertained. Many youth are feeling that something has gone wrong with our culture and our way of life, and equally many have not decided what, if anything, can be done about it. This at once points up the challenge which confronts those of us who will help to mold their lives and direct their thinking. They are, as one college president said, "the most restless and yet the most promising group to grace the campus in many years."

In our post-war college student body there are extremes of everything -- opinions, theological positions and moral standards. It is customary to say that "times have changed", but in reality, people have changed. The young people we are dealing with today are, in terms of a general cross-section, not to be compared in their reactions, their expectations and their demands with the student body of even ten years ago. As witness, consult the president or any of the three deans or, for that matter, any member of the Administrative Council. But perhaps these changes and differences are not all to be regretted. One thing is certain: we must be vitally alive to the situation. We cannot be mere vendors of subject matter as many college professors once were. We must not only be experts in our respective fields, but we must be conversant with the major issues that constitute the framework of the world in which these young people will have to live and work, and be familiar with the principles that underlie the relation which they will sustain to that world.

Not only are we entertaining a baffled and perplexed generation of youth but, furthermore, one that is characterized by an appalling degree of religious illiteracy. Oh, someone says, that may be true of other colleges, but not here in Taylor University! Let me cite examples on two significant levels. First, the academic. Scores on one hundred seventy Freshman test papers, covering the first three or four weeks of the semester's work in

New Testament Survey, netted fifty-two failures. Before you criticize the teacher too sharply for preparing a poor test, or for preparing a good test after doing a poor job of teaching, permit me to point out the following considerations. Almost without exception, those students who are holders of the Selective Honor Scholarship earned A's on the test. There was the normal run of B's and C's, but the distribution broadened out at the bottom, as though it might indicate a broad foundation of ignorance on which to build a college education. The idea of the incarnation had been discussed in class, not so much from the standpoint of a theological concept, but rather as a very practical approach to the New Testament; and one or two students handed back "carnation" on the test papers. We had also discussed the three pagan religions which were dominant in the world at the time of the advent of Christianity, and on one test paper the following were listed: Protestant, Methodist, and Baptist. One student listed Paul as the author of each of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Allowing for a number of other variables, such as the characteristic freshman inability to take good class notes and the normal "depreciation" consistent with the making of adjustments to a new situation, the data still point to the lack of familiarity with the Bible and basic religious concepts, and the general ineffectiveness of both formal and informal religious education at precollege stages.

I need not prove the point but simply remind you that this same secularism is prevalent in standards for moral conduct, even on Taylor's campus. This is, in part, the result of the veteran's more mature and sometimes cynical point of view about everything from sex to world problems. Another causal factor may be found in the number of our students that come from broken or otherwise sub-standard homes. Any teacher who has taken his counselling work seriously knows that many of our disciplinary problems, as well as the tensions and conflicts that harass and defeat our students, are traceable to these causes. In many cases, these problems have not been solved by the time that has elapsed between the veteran's service experience and the present, or by the distance that lies between the student's home and the campus.

The Academic Aspect of Meeting this Need

The college cannot be expected to perform the miracle of making up for what the home and the church and the lower schools have failed to do, the expectations of parents and pastors notwithstanding; nor can the college make Christians of all its students simply by offering an academic course entitled, "How to Become a Christian."

However, there is something which can and must be done on the formal side of the academic program. The student must be given an opportunity to find a rational basis and to build an intellectual structure for his faith. This can be accomplished through courses in Bible content, systematic and practical theology, evidences and philosophy courses in which the historical, logical and ethical approaches are employed. If such courses are taught by well-trained and vigorous instructors, the students will not only become interested but will gradually come to make these courses centers around which they organize their other academic work as they strive to develop a meaningful philosophy of life and the universe. In fact, "general" educa-

tion cannot rightfully be called so, irrespective of how well the humanities and the sciences are taught, unless it raises and discusses the questions of man's nature, moral responsibility and spiritual destiny, and directs the thinking of the students concerning them.

To assume that miscellaneous knowledge, gleaned from introductory and somewhat superficial excursions into the various fields of learning represented by our six divisions, will more or less by chance be organized into a sound philosophy of life or a reasonable world outlook is assuming too much. The achievement of perspective will be the result of the careful planning and systematic presentation of the living issues that involve spiritual and ethical values.

This is a task not only for those who work in Division I. The norms of the Christian view of God and the world ought to be traceable in every classroom. Just as we must all work together to help the Department of English achieve its aims for adequate expression of ideas in writing on the part of the students, so we must work together to achieve our aims relative to the student's expression of the best in his living.

On the informal side of the academic program, it may be pointed out that, more than to courses and textbooks, it is to the men and women who compose the college faculty that the students look for confirmation of the truth and the real values of life. Again from the Bulletin of the Association of American Colleges, "There is no substitute for official concern, and no agency will be so effective as a body of men and women on the faculty who care about the ultimate ends of life, and who in class and out are prepared to stand up and be counted." The teacher is by vocation very close to the deepest concerns of the unfolding human spirit. His approach may stress facts and knowledge, but his association and influence have to do with the whole person. It is probably true that every teacher teaches himself as much if not more than he teaches his subject. The overtones of point of view and personal conviction make for a process of life-sharing which goes on whether we would that it should or not.

Then there is the program of personal counselling through which the student's spiritual needs may be met. Since so many of the problems in which the student seeks the aid of a personal counsellor are basically religious in nature, those who work in Division I should be especially interested in and qualified for this program. Not all college professors are equally apt at personal counselling. Officially, we have expected faculty people to share about equally in the counselling program; in actual practice it doesn't work that way. Perhaps we should consider the possibility of discovering those faculty members who are especially gifted in meeting students at the level of their most pressing needs, and relieve them of certain other duties so that their counselling abilities may find the widest possible range. Such a plan might increase efficiency to the extent that no additional cost would be incurred.

The Extra-Curricular Aspect of Meeting the Need

The extra-curricular aspect of meeting this need lies, first, in the out-of-class contacts between faculty and students which were discussed as the informal area of the academic program; second, in the overall campus schedule of religious services and activities that provide opportunity for faculty and students to share worship and other experiences that develop and strengthen the spiritual life.

We provide the opportunity for prayer and devotion in the Tuesday noon prayer and fast service, the Wednesday chapel period prayer meetings and the Thursday evening all-college prayer service. It is my opinion that the Wednesday chapel period devotional program is already paying spiritual dividends. There is a channel for the promotion and expression of missionary interests in the Ambassadors organization with its regular weekly meetings and its annual missionary convention. We attempt to correlate and integrate the devotional and academic areas of our campus life by way of the chapel programs. The emphasis upon the deeper things of the spiritual life is fostered by the weekly meetings of the Holiness League. Through our Gospel teams, we provide opportunities for community service in the religious area. The evangelistic ministry is carried on in the regular Sunday evening services, the fall revival and the annual Youth Conference.

But most of these activities are of such a nature that, in the actual situation, they claim the interest and participation of only relatively small sections of the campus community. I am not advocating any change in relation to most of these activities, for in most cases this is as it should be. For example, I am quite sure that the Holiness League is much more effectively achieving its objectives now than it did when it was conducted as an all-campus religious service of sort of a general nature.

There is, however, one major need that, in my humble opinion, we are not meeting. There is no point in our entire program at which the spiritual life of the total faculty-student community is centralized and focused into an organizing center for the life of our institution in such a way that it commands our loyalty in whole-hearted participation. Even those services which we call all-college do not accomplish this end. Perhaps the Sunday evening service should do it, but there are at least two reasons why it cannot. In the first place, the best medium through which to accomplish this end is not an evangelistic meeting but a service that is primarily worship. It must take the place of that "home church" which teachers and students leave when they come to Taylor University. In the second place, because of our divided Sunday School effort and the absence of the Sunday morning worship service, many are not here for the evening service who would otherwise participate in it.

I have come to at least the tentative conclusion that, as an interdenominational college, we cannot achieve this necessary end by any cooperative effort with the local denominational churches. It seems to me that we must conduct our own college church, of which the faculty will have to be the pillars and to which we will give our loyalty while we live and labor here. True, we would not find all five hundred of our students in the college church on Sunday morning, but if we were to conduct our own services with one hundred fifty, two hundred or two hundred fifty in attendance, we would provide what the average sincere Christian student expects to find when he goes to an interdenominational Christian college. There would certainly be some who would go elsewhere to church, and there should be no law against it. But I believe it to be our obligation to provide for our faculty and students, apart from the local denominational churches, the opportunity for a normal and full-orbed religious life. We provide all of the parts, but, (and this is just my personal opinion) we do not integrate them into a meaningful whole.

I am not unaware of the practical problems involved in the implementation of this proposal, but we have started in this direction, and, I hope, will continue until we have rounded out our program to provide all of the essential elements for the realization of our stated aims.