

## THE MISSION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by Bill D. Draper

### INTRODUCTION

General Superintendent Coulter, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, administration, staff, alumni, students, and distinguished guests. I approach this moment with mixed feelings of fear and faith--fear in the sense of human inadequacy and faith in the sense of God's presence and strengthening power. I also approach this moment with a deep sense of gratitude to the Board of Trustees of Point Loma College who have conferred this honor upon me--an honor which carries a responsibility far too great to be carried out through human abilities alone. It is a responsibility which can be carried out only through the resourcefulness of God.

I am also deeply grateful to those before me who have served as leaders of this great institution. <sup>Two</sup> ~~Three~~ of them sit today in this audience--Dr. W. T. Purkiser, ~~Dr. R. V. DeLong~~, and Dr. O. J. Finch. Their contribution to our College cannot be fully measured. They served during crucial days and they served well. Each contributed to the great spiritual and academic heritage of our College.

We are all indebted today to the immediate past President of this school, Dr. W. Shelburne Brown. He was a man of vision and courage. He saw opportunities others did not see and possessed the courage to steer the College in a route few others thought either wise or possible. The decision to move to this

present location was a difficult and lonely decision, but one made within a persuasion of divine compulsion. Time continues to vindicate both the wisdom and courage of Dr. Brown's decision. For one thing, his decision gave us an adequate campus of unrivaled beauty and brought us into a supportive community. We are highly favored to be in a city whose people believe in the Christian values and life-style represented by Point Loma College.

Dr. Brown is gone from us in bodily presence only. His dedication will continue to be felt for generations to come. ~~for~~ During his 14 years of service to this College, thousands of young people felt the influence of his dedication, and 3,185 choice youth received their degrees and went out into a world of service.

As I think of Dr. Brown's life I am reminded of what President Benjamin Harrison said at the funeral service for Ulysses S. Grant. He said: "Great lives never go out, they go on."

As I stand here before alumni, faculty, and friends of Point Loma College, I am well aware of the predictions of most educational experts regarding the future of American colleges and universities. The storm clouds have formed and will begin to be felt with full impact in the 1980s as costs continue to soar and the available number of prospective college-age youth declines.

It would be easy for us to adopt a pessimistic attitude toward the future of our education. When Charles William Elliott was President of Harvard University, he was asked how things were going at Harvard. He replied, "Things seem to be going fairly well now that a spirit of pessimism prevails in all departments."

But William James, the eminent psychologist, said that "Pessimism is essentially a religious disease." Therefore, may God deliver us from this malady.

I do not think for one moment the educational situation is as bleak as the experts declare. We do face demanding times regarding the future of higher education which calls for careful administration, quality teaching, and strong financial and prayerful support from constituency. However, I stand here today with the firm persuasion that God's purpose for Christian colleges does not ebb and flow on the predictions of experts.

These times offer us our greatest challenge. The realities we face will sharpen our vision to see more clearly the mission at hand and the best methods which, under God's leadership, will enable us to remain strong.

We must remember that our nation's first colleges were Christian colleges, founded by churches interested in both the academic and spiritual needs of their youth. The point is this--if God needed the Christian college to get our nation going in the right direction, He needs the Christian college to keep it going in the right direction.

I am persuaded that as at no other time the Christian college is desperately needed. I am further persuaded that our place in society will be secure as long as we maintain our mission propagating an education which is distinctively Christian.

The Christian college has always had a distinctive mission. It demands we ask: "What can we as a Christian college do for youth that is not being done elsewhere?" If we forget our mission, we too could easily become one of the

many institutions floundering dangerously near the rocks. To be more direct, if we forget, or even neglect, our distinctive mission, what reason do we have to exist at all?

Regarding our mission, it must first be said:

### WE HAVE A MISSION TO OURSELVES

This mission demands we know "why" we are here. Unless we know "why" we are here, others will not know why we are here and furthermore they will not care.

Because of our times, the word "how" dominates our thinking:

How can we raise sufficient finance?

How can we attract students?

How can we keep our costs low enough to keep students coming  
and yet high enough to keep the college going?

How can we attract qualified faculty and staff?

We are confronted literally with a thousand "hows"; but we can never answer this important question until we are sure of a more important question-- the question of "why."

The "why" demands we look at our mission. Before we can adequately tell the youth who enroll in our institution "how," we must understand, and be able to clearly articulate the "why" of our existence.

Dr. W. T. Purkiser, former President of Pasadena College, was certainly on target when he said, "The Christian educator must have a definite conviction as to the scope of his task. He must clearly envision its goals lest he too lose



the forest in the abundance of the trees of academic trivia."

Regarding our "why" we have the great example of Jesus to follow. His emphasis was primarily on the "why." He had very little to say about the "how." He was not unconcerned with methodology, but His emphasis clearly reveals the "how" of methodology is of little value without first knowing the "why" of mission.

In answering this all important "why" we must see first of all that our mission is to integrate faith and learning. This is our unique task and primary distinctive. Dr. Phineas F. Bresee, the founder of our College, clearly understood and propagated this concept. He always saw our assignment as divine in origin giving us the responsibility to bring faith and learning together. This was an assignment to be carried out by Godly men and women capable not only in scholarship, but men and women who were also concerned for the spiritual needs of the student. In his emphasis upon the integration of faith and learning, he clearly stated his aim to give a "piety that is intelligent and intelligence that is pious."

Long before it was articulated by Arthur Holmes in his book, The Idea of a Christian College, our founder saw and emphasized that ". . . the integration of faith and learning remains the distinctive task of the Christian liberal arts college.

~~The other~~ <sup>always this</sup> leaders of this great College have given ~~similar~~ emphasis. The late President W. Shelburne Brown summarized the traditional emphasis of our great school when he said, "But what good is another academic institution if we are not adding something to society in terms of spiritual living. We are not here

simply to get another degree. Our institution stands here as a fountain out of which both academic and spiritual values will flow until the two together make their impact upon the world."

*In Light of this responsibility,*

^ We will never compartmentalize our mission. There will never be room at Point Loma College for an "interaction" between faith and learning. There is room for only an "integration" of faith and learning. In the words of a competent educator: "Integration means not a tolerance between religion and the sciences, but rather a fruitful union."

In the second place, in answering this all-important "why" we must see that our mission is to provide education of top quality. To borrow the punch line of a television commercial advertising a very popular commodity: "The quality goes in before the name goes on."...

Our founder's concern for quality education grew out of his persuasion that our distinctive mission of education was given by God himself. He saw it clearly articulated by Christ in His Great Commission. Dr. Bresee referred to this in his last address at Pasadena Nazarene University given on September 2, 1915, when he said: "And when the son of man trod the earth, and opened up with his bleeding heart the Way, he said, 'Go disciple and teach.'"

As Christians teaching and working at Point Loma College, we must remember that when we put the name "Christian" in front of education, creating the banner behind which we march, we impose upon ourselves a solemn and sacred responsibility--a responsibility to provide academic instruction of the finest quality. ~~Unless we do this, we betray the very banner behind which we march.~~

The Christian who works at our College has not less to do--but more, and there can never be a substitute for quality.

But our mission does not stop with just knowing why we are here. Our mission is far broader than this.

### WE HAVE A MISSION TO OUR CHURCH

The name "Point Loma College, An Institution of the Church of the Nazarene," indicates the specific relationship we have to our supporting denomination. The Church of the Nazarene brought its colleges into existence and has nourished us with prayer, students, and finance. From the very beginning, our denomination has placed a high priority on the education of our youth. Our early leaders were persuaded we could never have a strong church without strong educational programs. Our purpose has been to continue an educational program which would return to the Church and to the world young men and women qualified mentally and spiritually to enter every arena of life.

Motivated by this persuasion, our denomination has given us millions of dollars in financial support and thousands of her most precious commodity--her youth!

We have a sacred responsibility to return these young people to our Church and to the world as Christian leaders. *Dr. Bruce, in reference to the Ch. of the Nazarene & its relationship to Point Loma College said:*

[ " . . . there shall be a strong healthy denominationalism.

We have no sympathy with the twaddle which attempts to express the desire that all people be of one denomination. We believe that such is neither providential nor desirable.

We are lovingly, earnestly, intensely denominational. If anyone wishes to criticize his own denomination, this is a poor place for him to do it.

*How deeply* Dr. Bresee, <sup>*while*</sup> ~~was~~ intensely loyal to the Church of the Nazarene, ~~he~~ <sup>*who came*</sup> deeply loved all the students ~~in the Church~~ <sup>*regardless of denomination*</sup> to Pasadena College, ~~But he also loved~~ <sup>*Church affiliation.*</sup> ~~the various denominations. He expected the same from~~

~~all who served with him.~~ Regarding this position, he spoke decisively:

"These are not the groves of sectarianism. Any student . . . who may be of any church will, we trust, find no effort here to proselyte, but to help each of them to be 'a man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work.'"

*This philosophy of Dr. Bresee has not changed through the years. Therefore, may we understand, and*

may our many friends from beyond our Church understand, that we will never be characterized by a denominational emphasis which is extreme. We are a Christian college endeavoring to give our youth a quality education within a Christian environment and this includes all who desire an education within this philosophy--members of our Church and members of others as well.



## WE HAVE A MISSION TO OUR WORLD

In the booklet, Why the Private College, the Thomas Staley Foundation states: "The qualities of character, integrity, and thoughtful dedication to Christian values are desperately needed in the leadership of our world today." In light of the needs of our world, the Christian college must have the courage to step forth and speak by both program and philosophy to the moral crisis that exists today, ~~in our world~~. To do this will not only ensure the continuance of the college itself, but will also call the nation and world back to those basic principles of righteousness and integrity without which we have no future. Too many institutions of higher learning have failed to carry out this responsibility. As one Christian educator has said: "The landscape of American higher education already contains too many examples of colleges and universities that permitted the values of secular society to absorb Christian distinctives when Christianity met current culture." While in reality, Christian distinctives are to absorb secular values and transform them by the power of God.

There are those who say the Christian college has served its purpose and is no longer even needed or necessary. But those who are so persuaded have a persuasion without either logic or fact--for the very values we represent are those values which, if forsaken, will bring about the demise of our civilization. In his inaugural address as President of Pasadena College, Dr. <sup>W.T.</sup> Purkiser gave a quotation from an article entitled, "College and Church." He said: "Democracy is deeply rooted in Christian faith. The most dangerous blind spot in modern life is the impression we can preserve the fruits of democracy without its roots."

Colleges and universities offering a high standard of education provided by a Christian faculty and staff can look forward to a successful future. For this quality of education, based upon a Christian value system, will be the leaven that changes and saves our society.

#### WE HAVE A MISSION TO OUR YOUTH

Several years ago Methodist Bishop James W. Henley gave an address to a large gathering of his denomination in Memphis, Tennessee. In reference to our nation's youth, he said, "Today's youth are a generation without a cause. Somebody ~~is something~~ is going to get them and whoever gets them has control of the world."

The colleges and universities of America, particularly the Christian colleges, have a greater opportunity than any other institution, other than the home, to give ~~these~~ millions of youth a <sup>righteous</sup> cause for which to live and thus to place the control of the world under the rule of truth and righteousness.

In light of this tremendous potential we must ask, "How can we carry out this mission to our youth?" As I see it, we can do this only by remembering four truths.

First, we carry out our mission to our youth by seeing the sacredness of our assignment.

Tradition tells us that when Trebonius, the teacher who lived and taught in the late 1400s, walked before his class of young boys he always tipped his hat. Someone asked him to give a reason for this strange behavior. He replied, "I never know but what I am tipping my hat to a student who may some day

change the world." Sitting in his class was a young man named Martin--Martin Luther to be exact--and he did indeed change his world.

In reference to the sacred assignment of teaching youth, Philip Melancthon, the German scholar and religious reformer, said, "To train one youth is a greater achievement than the military conquest of Troy."

But how this youth is trained is of utmost importance. This importance was underscored by Plato the philosopher 400 years before Christ when he stated: "The direction in which education starts a person will determine his future life."

The sacredness of our assignment demands we start the young person in the right direction and then walk with him along the way.

The sacredness of our assignment places within us a holy restlessness--a restlessness which will not allow us to just sit and wait for youth to come. We are compelled to go out and find them--to share with them our vision--to communicate our distinctives as a Christian college--and to help them find a way to enroll in our school.

We cannot rest easy when thousands of our nation's choicest young people are waiting. If we really believe in what we are doing--if we really believe young people need a Christian education--if we really believe in the resourcefulness of God--if we really believe our own youth need to attend one of our own colleges--then surely we will find the way to make it possible for them to be a part of our community.

I am burdened and perplexed by the fact that <sup>more than 50%</sup> ~~approximately 75%~~ of our own denomination's high school graduates never enroll in one of our colleges. Add

to these the great number of youth from other denominations who would like to attend our college, and you have a vast army of youth, waiting to be reached.

The sacredness of our assignment makes it imperative we be characterized by what Ruskin called "a divine discontent" until every young person at least has the opportunity of a Christian education.

Secondly, we discharge our mission to our youth by seeing the breadth of our responsibility.

Within our responsibility there is the concern for strong academic instruction. The Christian college must always represent quality education. Our banner, "Christian Education," demands this. We are concerned about the mind and within our school there must always be an atmosphere which results in intellectual nourishment. We will not settle for mediocre academic programs and instruction. We will strive for the best and take our place with many colleges and universities who deserve the stamp of quality education.

But we will not forget the breadth of our responsibility. The need of the person goes beyond the need for mental nourishment.

Our responsibility to the student includes the whole person--and this includes the heart as well as the head. To educate the head and forget the heart is to do great disservice to our youth, for in so doing we give them no valid base for their lives. We give them no context from which to implement what they have learned.

Dr. Manning M. Pattillo, Jr., President of Oglethorpe University, lists eight primary responsibilities the liberal arts college has to its student. The



last one mentioned is to guide the student to a "mature encounter with religion." He goes on to say that many students finish their college study with only a child's knowledge of religion. He then concludes: "The God of the Old and New Testaments is at the center of creation, and an education that ignores this fundamental insight has left the student without the key to history and to the meaning of life."

We will not neglect ~~this key to the meaning of life~~ <sup>the heart!</sup>. The spiritual need of the student is primary and scholarship without saintliness finds no place in a Christian college. It shall always be our goal to help young people know what it means to be "born again" and to have their lives filled with the Holy Spirit being brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

To accomplish this, the Word of God will always be primary. It will be honored and studied--it will be our standard for Christian experience and morals--we will not be apologetic, defensive, or hesitant regarding its teachings.

In summary, the breadth of our responsibility is not just to educate the mind, but also to form character in a mold shaped like a cross.

Third, we carry out our responsibility to our youth by seeing the uniqueness of our opportunity.

Our opportunity is unique because of its brevity and its scope. We have only a short period of time to reach them, but reaching them--or not reaching them--will set off a chain reaction lasting throughout their lives and even after their lives are ended.

If we fail to realize the urgency and the uniqueness of our opportunity ,  
7 the world will reap the tragic results . Each one of us should pray daily as our  
school begins , "Help me to be careful and alert today , dear God , as I touch  
these young lives ."

In the year 1835 , a gifted young man was attending a high school in ~~Germany~~ ,  
Germany , called the Frederick William High School . He attended there six years  
and came into contact with Christian emphasis . He was strongly impressed with  
Christianity and for his final assignment wrote a paper entitled "Union With  
Christ" based upon the Gospel of Saint John , chapter 15 . In this paper he ...  
clearly shows not only his interest , but his proximity to Christian faith . He wrote :

" History , the great teacher of mankind , shows from antiquity onward  
human nature has always tried to raise itself to a higher morality . Thus ,  
the history of mankind teaches us the necessity of union with Christ . ...

Also , when we consider the history of individuals , and the nature of man ,  
we immediately see a spark of the divine in his breast , an enthusiasm for  
the good , a striving after knowledge , a desire for truth .

Although <sup>man's</sup> ~~these~~ natural instincts are overlaid by sinful desires , the union  
of believers with Christ could overcome these and afford a happiness  
which only one bound unconditionally and childlike to Christ and through  
Him to God can know , and which makes for <sup>a</sup> finer and more elevated life . "

This young man was so close, yet someone overlooked the unique opportunity to reach him for Christ. A few months later this same young man enrolled in the University of Berlin, where as a member of a philosophical organization called "The Doctor's Club" he fell under the influence of Hegelian philosophy. Pushing his Christian interest out of his life, he began to work out his own atheistic philosophy.

A few years later, in 1847 at age 29, this young man published the Communist Manifesto and today over half the world lies under the yoke of communism because someone allowed Karl Marx to slip through <sup>his</sup> ~~their~~ fingers. <sup>He</sup> ~~They~~ missed a very unique opportunity.

Our mission--our commitment--our God-given purpose-is to realize the uniqueness of our opportunity and do everything within God's power to claim our youth for Christ.

Last of all, we carry out our mission to our youth by seeing the distinctiveness of our teaching.

We must understand the distinctive of our teaching is--

not the degrees we have earned.

not the techniques we have developed.

not even the Christian content of our lectures, as important as these are.

The distinctive of our teaching is a Christian life, patterned after Jesus Christ, which backs up all we say. Therefore, we must be extremely careful about the ~~kind of~~ <sup>we set.</sup> examples ~~we set.~~ We must remember the strongest learning

takes place indirectly, on the subliminal level, as the student observes his teacher, both in and out of the classroom. In light of this, we must ~~illustrate~~ illustrate the truth as well as to proclaim it.

The content of a class lecture is important, but the context in which it is given is of infinite importance. Creed without conduct, lecture without life, exhortation without example will turn our youth away. Students are not impressed by mandates. They are impressed by models. It is not difficult to refute a class lecture, but it is extremely difficult to refute a life.

As I think of my college life, I remember two specific times when I tried to drop out of school. Each time I was held steady by the lives of two individuals in particular. One, with his wife, lived in a small two-room dormitory apartment and patiently and gently fashioned my own values by their beautiful Christian living and by their love for me. The other, one of our college's first Ph.D.s, stood in front of his class and taught the difference between "law" and "grace" with tears streaming down his face.

They were both too poor to buy a new suit of clothes <sup>or to</sup> ~~neither~~ owned a car, but they knew God, and furthermore I knew they knew God by the way they lived. It was never difficult for me to accept their scholarly lectures because I believed in their lives. (After 27 years, I still feel the impact of their influence)

Years later when I faced my greatest crisis carrying with it the temptation to get bitter and to quit the ministry, God, with the precision of divine timing, held their lives up before my mind and that made the difference. ←

My gratitude to these two professors, and many others like them, will never end. It only grows with the years.



This will always be the distinctive of our teaching--and through this distinctiveness of a life that reminds people of Christ, we will carry out our mission to our youth.

## CONCLUSION

~~I have endeavored to carefully and comprehensively present the distinctiveness of our mission.~~ We must not neglect our mission. To do so is to court disaster and to betray the purpose of our existence. We lose the reason for our existence when we lose our mission.<sup>1</sup> To lose our distinctive mission will result in tragedy.

After 102 years the Chicago Daily News went out of business. For more than a century, that great daily paper had reported the flow of history. No paper had known a more illustrious career, but in February 1978 this great newspaper gasped and died.

Keyes Beech, a 30-year veteran and Pulitzer prizewinning writer for this great newspaper, was interviewed by David Brinkley on February 21, 1978. He was asked the specific question, "Why did the Chicago Daily News die?" Without hesitancy, the famed reporter replied, "We died because we lost our sense or mission. We were existing, but we did not know where we wanted to go."

As a Christian college, we must not lose our sense of mission. The future of our great nation and of the world is largely dependent upon colleges such as ours standing for educational quality in the midst of spiritual values. We will maintain our sense of mission; we will keep our goals in view motivated by the truth that God has raised us up "for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14)