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Milo Rediger Writings & Addresses

Milo Rediger

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The Middle Term

Milo A. Rediger

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Sunday, August 31, 1969
7:00 p.m.

THE MIDDLE TERM

Not the January inter-term, but the middle term in the syllogism of life.

Once a teacher, always a teacher--especially a logic teacher. I insist even teachers must not bore you with unnecessary or hard-to-understand words; let me try not to, and yet use the analogy and terminology of my teaching field.

I want to tell you what I think is the place in our world and in our time for the university to which you have come and to which you have brought your son or daughter. In a confused and turbulent world it is easy to give up anchor points and lose one's way. This has happened to a great extent in our time, and the greatest business of education is to relocate the anchor points.

For fullness of life--which is what we seek in a program of whole-person education--three elements are included, somewhat in the nature of a syllogism. This is the format: given this truth (first term), and granting that idea (middle term), it logically follows that, (third term of the syllogism in the nature of a result or conclusion).

As Christians we believe in the necessity of the inner life of devotion. A commitment to Jesus Christ and daily fellowship with Him is the first term. We base life on this premise. We also do not have to be convinced about the need for the outer life of human service as the third term, the logical outgrowth of our Christian commitment and devotion to Christ.

But between these two lies the reason for it all; the rationale of the Christian life, or for that matter, of life at all. This intelligent approach to truth and meaning, this knowing some things that have the quality of certainty--this is essential to normal growth and productive living. This is the middle term of the syllogism of life, and this is the focal point of the Christian college. We trust our university climate encourages the inner life of devotion, but we are not a church or a Sunday school or an evangelistic campaign--we are a college, but a Christian college. Accordingly, we emphasize knowing truth and people and our responsibilities in light of the Christian revelation.

I have talked up to my text. John 7:17. If any man will do God's will (desires to do God's pleasure) he will know (have the needed illumination) to know) that I am from God. The will and desire come first. This, I hope, has been implanted in your children, our students, by the home and the church. Jesus said, then he will know. Here we undertake our part in the process of growth and development. We covet your prayers and help to succeed. Hopefully, then, fruitful lives of service will follow.

This knowing experience--learning, education, if you will--is central; it is the middle term. Centuries ago Archimedes discovered or invented both the lever and the pulley. The king of Greece considered him a miracle worker because of the things which could be accomplished by using the pulley and the lever. He almost worshipped the inventor. Archimedes responded, "My lever

and pulley can do miracles only on one condition--that the fulcrum is firm."

Think about how true this is. In the triad of life the knowing is like that--it is the fulcrum, and the lever and pulley of life will work only if the fulcrum is firm. Elton Trueblood wrote a book about it and called it A Place To Stand.

This is what our generation has largely lost--this fulcrum, the middle term, the place to stand, this knowing which grows into reasonable but firm conviction.

I believe this is what the younger generation wants to get back into life, superceding our materialism expressed in dollars, replacing our superficiality expressed in entertainment and professionalized sports, and correcting our stupidity expressed in politics and the Vietnam war. (Sample test: when during a three-month period we "withdraw" 25,000 troops and send in 15,000 during the same period, how many have we withdrawn, how smart are we, and how honest?)

Believe me, the fulcrum is going to have to be firm if we are to operate the levers and pulleys that will get us out of our big trouble. A firm belief in God, a sound conviction about Jesus Christ and a generous experience of his mercy and grace and forgiving love will do this for us in ways that affluence and military power and technology cannot produce.

This afternoon you heard Hal Habecker say that
Perhaps the best thing about this talk is that it's over. We know better

the one element about the academic program he wanted
than to keep you late tonight.
to mention is that professors relate their lives and their
teaching to the person of Jesus Christ. You also heard Dale Jackson
say that this is done without superficial or forced piety.
He mentioned the math. prof who felt free to discuss the
triangle without feeling obligated to refer to the trinity,
or a rectangle without having to mention the four

evangelists, or the number seven without having to declare it the perfect number. And yet, Hal said, the students come out with a firm conviction about Christ. This combined expression of student & teacher makes the point of my brief message tonight. This is Christian liberal arts education.

The Middle Term, cont.

As you leave your sons and daughters with us, we do not promise miracles;

we promise to do our best and we hope they will. We have the levers and pulleys--

and as a Christian university, I believe we can provide the fulcrum. We'll begin

with John 7:17 and go on through textbooks and libraries and laboratories, residence

halls and playing fields, to follow the vision that you and your young people have

seen in your decision to come to Taylor today.

May God bless you, parents, as you drive home -- and you, students, as you remain with us to begin your Taylor life.