

In Nomine Jesu

DEDICATORY ADDRESS

CHRIST COLLEGE BUILDING, VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY
Valparaiso, Indiana

Cantate Sunday, April 26, 1970

- Based on Paul's Prayer for the Church, Eph. 3:14-19 -

It is Cantate Sunday, and the Church is asking us to "sing unto the Lord a new song." But there are a lot of people who don't want to "sing along." They are "up-tight" these days about a lot of things. Some are letting their fears loom larger than their problems. But the tensions of our times must be met with temperance. Although surely not relaxed, we ought to be composed. Thank God time, history, and grace are on our side. Time has a way of broadening our vision and sharpening our perspectives. The "Monday-morning quarterback," frustrated by Saturday's defeat, delivers himself of his critique and by Friday, he has forgotten the last defeat and is savoring tomorrow's victory. Time has its mellowing effects, building a maturity of life and reverence for its institutions.

Max Born, the former head of the Institute of Theoretical Physics at the University of Göttingen, genius, and pioneer in quantum mechanics, a colleague of Albert Einstein, with whom he often played violin sonatas, experienced this mellowing process. In the 17 years since his retirement and before his death last January, he felt great anguish of heart. He had had "second thoughts" about the developments within the scientific community. He was particularly distressed with the development of nuclear weaponry, man's preoccupation with the Space and the Arms Race, and the loss of what he called "the old values." "It is satisfying," he said, "to have had such clever pupils, but I wish they had shown less cleverness and more wisdom." In his recent book, My Life and My Views, he pleads for wisdom to redeem the time. "Intellect," he said, "distinguishes between the possible and the impossible. Reason distinguishes between the sensible and the senseless; and even the possible can be senseless."

With this mellowing of perspective, he was reiterating a plea for wisdom written 700 years B.C. by the prophet Isaiah, who quotes the Lord and said in effect: "Things may be bad... but 'Come now, and let us reason together.'" The aged prophet, more concerned with people and survival, than heroics and hardware, had also said, "Let us beat our swords into plowshares." War is the child of folly; Peace is the child of wisdom.

Assembled today in this Chapel so newly dedicated to the epic truth of our Lord's resurrection, and living in the glorious afterglow of Easter, we have come to dedicate the new Christ College Building.

Is this ceremony of dedication just a passing nod, a symbolic gesture to pious tradition and convention? Or would we, in spirit, truly dedicate this building to the Glory of God? Nothing that we can say here can consecrate this building. It is for you, the members of the University Family, to make its use to conform to the many purposes for which this University was founded, and upon which purposes and traditions it has been blessed of God and become a blessing unto many. It is to serve you, the young community of believers whose measured life span is still before you, and who will be guiding the destiny of the Church in the decades before us, and shortly into the mysteries of a new century. As Cardinal Suhard said, "It is for you to assure the Springtime of the Church."

"In Thy Light we see Light" (*In Luce tua, videmus Lucem*) is more than a pious platitude to embellish the emblems of this University. Through the light of God's Word, we are not only made wise unto Salvation, but we are able to discover wisdom that helps us to deal with the problems of our own, and our brother's humanity. To exclude God, or even to feign ignorance of His will, is man's ultimate folly. It is for this reason that the apostle pleads, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." It is for this reason that he offers the prayer of our text, for the Church and for all of us who are, in our own special way, "Penitents and Priests."

The Good Apostle had found Christ. By introspection and faith, he was deeply and personally involved with the meaning of sin and of grace, declaring himself to be the "chief of sinners." Reflecting on heaven's higher love and the redemptive forces of the Gospel, he prays for the Church--for you and for me--that God would grant us "according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Paul would have us possess the Gospel -- not a fragmented gospel, but the Whole Gospel. He would have us to believe in Christ -- not a sometime, somewhat, part-time Christ, robbed of His divinity and Lordship, but the Whole Christ; and find Wholeness in Christ.

Now some may ask, "Among all the sophistries of our time, is the Gospel of Christ a meaningful consideration? Does the University have 'room' for the Church, and a place for Christ College; and does the Church have a claim on the mind and spirit of modern man?" Historically and practically, the answer must be Yes. The Church and the University have common origins; in fact, it is a Parent-Child relationship. Ray Petry, in his History of Christianity, defines the relationship this way:

"The Church arose as a community--a *koinonia* or *communio* of penitents. These penitents freely accepted the divine gift of salvation, which they had in no way earned. The very recognition of unworthiness which all Christ's followers confessed in common conferred upon them a new kind of justness or rightness. Those alone were justified who had a full sense of their own unrighteousness. They therefore stood ready to accept redemption out of God's graciousness. Their distinctive society was not esoteric in the sense of its being a privileged clique. They were simply a grateful people no longer blinded by human striving to the magnanimous operation of this divine action.

"The community set up by God and revealed by Christ created from the most ordinary people a society that was an outpost of heaven. It was a *koinonia*, responding to the eternal fellowship.

"Early in the Church's record there emerged a common preoccupation with the "cure of souls" (*cura animarum*) and the "school of souls" (*schola animarum*). Earliest Christian life was a genuine *koinonia* or *communio*. It was a *collegium* in the sense of a close-knit, interpenetrating community. It was a mystical *universitas* of head and members. Before *collegium* and *universitas* meant academic institutions they referred to social vitalities and traditions. These were first pre-Christian, then Christian corporations. At the outset, Christian communities of souls implied associations of teaching and learning, as well as societies of divine worship. Long before Christians were academically self-conscious, they were cast in seminars with the Great Teacher. "Master" and "Disciple" were sacred terms. Theirs was the urgency of breathless expectation, of genuinely Christian hope.

The Christian *collegium* of worship and social response to brothers' needs became also the *koinonia* of instruction, of teaching and learning. This tutelage of Kingdom men on earth, by the Kingdom's servant community in time, registered a desperate need. It was imperative that they know the truth where right doctrine meant eternal beatitude, even as error spelled death to the presence of God and of his people."

Now, obviously the world has changed in twenty centuries. But the role of the Church has not changed. The dynamics of the Gospel still work as a miraculous force on life. The Wholeness of Christ relates to the vitality of the Gospel and to its power among men. The fact of the "Indwelling Christ" relates not only to soteriology and to the fact of salvation, but also to the manner in which men view life. Created of God, we are also the redeemed of God. As the faithful foster this truth in their lives, the Gospel penetrates into all spheres of human judgment and human behavior. The vitality of the Gospel and its interpenetrating forces still have strong and subtle influences on life. Whether apocryphal or not, a story is told of a young Jewish student who was attending Notre Dame. Returning home for vacation, he encountered his local, friendly, neighborhood rabbi. After exchanging pleasantries, the rabbi asked: "Have they tried to make a Christian out of you yet?" "No, Father," was his spontaneous but somewhat conditioned reply.

Luther, too, had to find the difference between empty traditionalism and the vital, penetrating forces of the Gospel. Luther, as a young man, was born to a strong religious tradition of conformism. He was an honorable, decent, brilliant, and socially acceptable young man. He had aspirations and hopes of becoming a lawyer. He was living in the Grace of Baptism, but he had not found Wholeness in Christ. As a relatively mature young man, he had dim views of God. He thought that God was angry, vengeful, a veritable "divine spoil-sport." One day, returning to his home, he encountered a severe thunderstorm. A lightning bolt struck near him; and in fear and panic, he cries out to bow to what he believed to be the vengeance of God, and says: "Help, dear St. Anne; I will become a monk."

Faithful to his promise, he entered the monastery, where he later discovered in the Scriptures the essence and the vitality of the Gospel of Christ. His "Pearl of Great Price" was the truth that we can live at peace with God, that human personality need not be fragmented by fear, intimidated by anxiety, and destroyed by frustration; but that in Christ, the Whole Christ, we can become new creatures -- Renewed, Restored, and Forgiven. This was the thesis of his life, work, and being. He had found Wholeness in Christ; that Grace and Truth do come by Christ Jesus. This power of faith, this discovery of the Wholeness of Christ, led him to make heroic contributions to the life of man and to the Church.

To escape the boredom of our times and deliver the Church from the mediocrity of its witness, the Church would do well to emulate the early Christian community. In our frantic quest for solutions, we might see the Wholeness of Christ and the Gospel providing not only the "cure of souls" (the *cura animarum*) but the "school of souls" (the *schola animarum*), where men might learn to know God and do His will. Maybe, as Max Born suggests, we have been pursuing cleverness instead of wisdom. In our quest for excellence, we might become better students to the matter of Cause and Effect, of Law and Gospel. As we learned from the experiences of the astronauts last week, it is not just a matter of "getting out there," but of "finding our way back." The brute forces of sin have caused us to know separation from God. They have brought greed, fear, and hatred; and have caused us to be "far out." The critical thing now is to find our way back -- back to God, to the shelter of His grace; and renewal and restoration through the Wholeness in Christ. Christ was truly delivered for the world's offenses, but raised again for its justification. And this declaration of justification implies God's willingness to restore man to wholeness.

To follow Christ can, and should be, life's noblest goal and highest joy. And this journey toward renewal and restoration could be fun. The rule of Christ in our lives demands no pretensions. It rules out all hypocrisy. Our Lord was divine. And yet, He was very human. He was in all things "tempted like as we are, yet without sin." As followers of Christ, we are not to be guilty of "overselling" or "underselling," but men and women of courage, balanced perspective, and sanctified wisdom. We are not to dream impossible dreams, but to act out the Wholeness of Christ in our lives; not with blind, wild, overzealous enthusiasm, but with a ready and steady mind. Dr. Paul Qualben, a clergyman-psychiatrist, warned even the clergy to maintain the wisdom of balance. He said to a conference of clergy, "When you drive into your garage and your wife sees you coming and she says: 'I guess I better put the dinner out; here comes old "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"', you had better watch out!" The Gospel is not to wring us out emotionally, but to bring us to wholeness, evenness, and balance of spirit.

Faith is still "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." The gift of faith is still the work of the Holy Spirit. Ours is but to declare the Wholeness of Christ in thought, word, and deed. Faith is still the realization that Christ's atonement is all-sufficient. Though our bodies and minds can't relax, our souls can. In the Wholeness of Christ, we are complete before God and man. We are not dealing in human absolutes, but in factors of reconciliation and redemption.

But let none of us think we are "off the hook" and "home free" in the fulfillment of our God-given obligation. The holy expectation of the Apostle is that we might comprehend with all saints what is "the length and breadth and depth and height." He commends the Church, and you and me with it, to a life of probing, searching, and of discovering. We are the "saints alive," with the Gospel, Heaven's Leaven, to keep our world from going sour. Our probing is not only to be penetratingly dimensional into all spheres of human existence, but to be ecumenical in its spirit. All areas of life are to be infused with the love of God in Christ.

We all know well the agony that has been visited upon the Body of Christ, the Church, because it has not yet discovered its Wholeness in Christ. It, too, is split, fragmented and hobbled by division. Oddly enough, where old schisms are being healed, new wounds are inflicted upon it. We know well how some have endeavored to patronize and accommodate the spirit of ecumenism, without facing the realities of our Lord's commission, viz: to "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The Church cannot be gathered, nor souls redeemed, by the visions of man, but in the love of Christ, who said: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Here lies a challenge that I would place before you. As the darkness of sin has been dispelled in your lives, so you must bring the candle, the torch, the beacons of God's light into your world. Whether as educators, scientists, doctors, or lawyers -- republicans or democrats -- in public or private life -- you must bring the light of the Gospel into the regimens of your personal life and the disciplines of your vocational or professional training. As the world with you seeks formulas for survival in terms of human ecology, so the world must find wholeness in terms of the human family, its hopes, its aspirations, its well-being. But most important, it ought to find this wholeness in Christ. This campus with its academic prowess, and its Christian tradition, ought to become a veritable "Think Tank" to help the Church to define the Gospel and to propagate "the faith." Wherever we are, and whatever we are doing, the Apostle urges us to reflect the graces and virtues of the "fulness of God," that we might act from impulses not of "emptiness" that reveal vanity and concupiscence, but rather the fulness of the Spirit of God. The Wisdom of God, and fullness of His Spirit, is to guide us in the decision-making processes of life. Even Christians can't get very far on an "empty tank" of faith. Nor can we do much for Christ, unless Christ is central in our life.

Our world, in its pride, vanity, and conceit, has often given itself to ignoble purposes, and been victimized by ignoble forces. Our government is currently spending over twenty-one billion dollars annually in interest payments alone, to support a national debt that is many times that size. The projected costs of reducing crime in our nation are placed at twenty billion dollars annually. Over twenty-five billions of dollars are presently being spent to prosecute an unpopular war in Asia. And the projected costs of saving Earth as a habitable planet of this universe are astronomical. And so the list could go on, pinpointing areas of cumulative national guilt and public and private folly. The forces of our public greed and inflation this year alone will deny some two million American families the chance to live in a modest but a new home, forcing many of them to continue to live in sub-standard or ghetto dwellings.

The Spirit of God would gladly breathe renewal and light into the spiritual smog and darkness of our time. Shall we live half free, and half slave, when in the fulness of God and in the Wholeness of Christ, the human spirit can find new and cheaper solutions for the woeful, human agonies of our tormented times? "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

God give us Grace -- God give us Wisdom -- God give us Time, to know Wholeness in Christ and the Fullness of God; for ourselves, for the Church, and for the World.

It is in this spirit, and with this prayer, that the Trustees of this University would offer this new building to you, and commend it to you for your consecration that it might truly be dedicated to the Glory of God and in the service of the Eternal Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Cantate Sunday, 1970

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