

The True Meaning of Christmas

BY DR. BRUCE E. WHITAKER

The tenets of our great American tradition are incumbent upon us to celebrate and commemorate two significant and meaningful "holiday days"—Thanksgiving and Christmas—within a brief period of only four weeks. Actually, these historic and symbolic celebrations have tended to be marked only by an attitude of benevolence and good cheer.

Take Thanksgiving, for instance. Traditionally it is a time for giving thanks for the things we receive. But it is really a time to be thankful for what we are able to give. Ponder this year, I suggest, the meaning of the GIVING in Thanksgiving, while remembering at the same time that our thanks is for the most beautiful and bountiful harvests any nation has enjoyed in the history of the world.

The true meaning of Christmas, on the other hand, is centered in the Incarnation, which is the union of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ who is both God and man at the same time. God, himself, came in Jesus of Nazareth as the revelation of Himself to man. Unless, therefore, we delve deeply beneath the surface of the cultural-commercial aspects of both the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, we make a mockery of both. To me, Christmas is made more meaningful when homogenized with a true spirit of Thanksgiving.

Veiled in the good obsessive spirit of Thanksgiving and Christmas, many of us are reflecting upon the progress, growth and service of Chowan College as an institution of Christian higher education. It is fitting that students, faculty, alumni, and a host of friends of Chowan College reflect upon the heritage of this 115 year old institution. We are thankful for the College and especially at this time of the year. So many friends have and are expressing concretely their interest and support. Multitudinous blessings have been ours.

Chowan is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, our regional accrediting agency, and by the North Carolina College Conference. It is a member of the American Association of Junior Colleges, the Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities, and the American Council on Education. It is one of seven proud institutions of higher learning which are owned and operated by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Since the fall of 1957, when the college opened with a total of 299 students, Chowan has had



phenomenal percentage growth in student population. In September of this year we opened with 886 regular students. Additional part-time and special students brought the number to a total of 967, by far the largest enrollment in the history of the college. During this same period of time, the plant evaluation has increased from less than \$1,000,000 to well over \$3,000,000. And we are still growing.

I never cease to be grateful for the expressed interest and confidence of the many friends of Chowan College who are giving more money each year to its development program. Though our income from all sources has not kept pace with our needs, remarkable progress has been made. In September we began the use of a new 216-bed dormitory for men, a modern structure which is fully air conditioned. During the summer, through the generosity of Mr. J. Henry Jones of Red Oak, we were able to construct a handsome new driveway with parking facilities located between it and the old drive which now serves as a walkway. At the moment we are involved in the landscaping of the campus which will compliment the new drive. Mr. John O. Askew, III, of Harrellsville, has graciously provided funds for an appropriate new entrance to the campus. The entrance is lighted at night reflecting the name and founding date (1848) of the college. Miss D. Emily Barnes is currently making possible the installation of an electric Carillon bell system, an appropriate and welcome addition to the campus. With the leadership of Coach James Garrison and with the help of many friends of the college, we were able to construct a new athletic field which was used for the first time this fall.

Two significant gifts were received in November. From the estate of the late Charles H. Jenkins

of Ahoskie, Chowan received approximately \$60,000.00 designated for General Endowment. Only the income from these funds will be used for the operating purposes of the college through the years to come. The other, and largest gift in the history of the college, was made by Mrs. Texie Camp Marks of Boykins, Virginia, and by her three children—Mr. Paul Camp Marks, Mrs. Felix Arnold and Mr. Robert F. Marks, Jr. The Board of Trustees has a policy whereby, donors who provide at least 51% of the contract price of a given building may designate the name. The classroom building, which will be named "Robert Marks Hall", is scheduled to be completed in March, and will cost more than \$405,000.00. Many other un-named donors have made and are making un-heralded or un-named gifts which mean as much and are appreciated as much as those to which publicity has been given.

Moreover, a thing of tremendous satisfaction to me, personally, is that we enjoy an enviable spirit and morale within the college family on the part of the faculty, students and staff members. It is obvious, even to an "outsider" that our people enjoy living, working and playing together. This means that the atmosphere on our campus is conducive to learning and growth on all levels.

I am sure that the entire Chowan College family joins me in readily and heartily affirming that Chowan College has reason to rejoice during the approaching Christmas season. My heart is filled with Thanksgiving for the privilege of living and working at this beloved and growing institution and for the revelation of God in Christ who sustains us and provides strength for our daily and even hourly decisions and responsibilities involving the welfare of Chowan College as a vital factor in the Kingdom enterprise.

