

INSIGHT

by Rev. John P. Bradley, President

Abbey teaching is value-oriented

I have just returned from a workshop at which six presidents of church-related colleges in North Carolina, assisted by a number of experts, attempted to assess the effectiveness of their colleges in confronting their students, as an integral part of the educational process, with right and wrong. Well, actually we don't use these words much anymore ... we talk about values, but we mean, I hope, pretty much the same thing even in these times when it would seem that anything anyone does is just fine, leading the psychologist, Dr. Karl Menninger, to ask, "Whatever happened to sin?"

Helpful experience

The workshop was a good and helpful experience, and the six presidents who participated agreed that Christian colleges such as ours must do a much better job of making their students aware of the utter importance of moral decisions. One would have thought that this is precisely an essential part of the church-related college's reason for existence, but in recent times, even these institutions have backed off from a strong emphasis on this commitment. At the workshop we explored various ways in which a church-related college can, through the curriculum and in extracurricular ways also, restore this emphasis. No one had any illusions about the enormous challenge this poses in our times, in face of the constantly decreasing assistance in sound value formation previously provided in great measure by the student's family, and also in competition with the vast and largely pagan influence of the various media bombarding all of us every day of our lives.

Throughout the workshop, each college president gave his views on what a church-related college ought to pursue in attempting to help students become aware of the crucial importance of moral decisions and form for themselves a sound value system. All six presidents agreed that success in this had to depend on the kind of people on campus to whom the students are regularly exposed. Agreement seemed also to be

reached on the position that any worthwhile undergraduate education must be value-oriented and that in the case of the church-related college, this education should be enhanced by the Christian tradition that nourishes each particular college's identity. All of us felt, too, that faculty members by and large had not in their education been given to understand, so highly specialized has education become, that ultimate human questions are enormously important in any worthwhile education. There is a need, therefore, for college presidents to set up workshops to assist faculty in value-orienting their teaching in a way that is appropriate for college education.

They agreed also that to provide this kind of education, the small size of our colleges should make it possible for the faculty and students to get to know one another well and continue outside the classroom the value-orientation begun within the curriculum. This implies, of course, that faculty at our colleges must be present on the campus well beyond the time spent in the classroom and be the kind of persons who are interested in the student as a human being, not simply as a customer seeking a degree.

Moral, spiritual growth

I personally have felt for a long time that Belmont Abbey College can be one of the private, church-related colleges that can survive the precarious years ahead if we are true to our tradition. In other words, we shall deserve to survive if our faculty, and, indeed, all of us who work here, clearly understand that our goal is to help a student to become a good and enlightened human being, that moral and spiritual growth are just as important as intellectual development. This, of course, demands much dedication, much time beyond preparation for and the teaching of classes, by people relatively ill-paid for this kind of service so important not only to the student but also to our entire society. Yet I believe the need and yearning for this kind of education is great at the present time and will become greater in the years

ahead. And as rising costs and the myriad other problems afflicting private colleges cause more and more of them to close their doors, it is those colleges which effectively meet this need that will survive.

Value-oriented

An article in the current issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by a teacher who knows how to value-orient her teaching of English literature reveals what so many of us involved today in college education have learned from bitter experience: a great many college students today "seem convinced that values per se are irrelevant and that their actions and attitudes make absolutely no difference outside their personal realms." This widespread situation throughout our nation ought to worry anyone who cares about the viability of our kind of society, for, as Daniel Bell, a Harvard sociologist, has frequently pointed out, there must be a certain minimum of shared values for our society to be viable. The article, however, also reveals hope, in that the author has found "that once even the most indifferent of students are exposed to questions of values, they seem to come alive. After a term is over, it is not unusual for such students to ask for outside reading lists and to declare excitement about 'learning to think'."

Our task

Our task here at Belmont Abbey College, and, indeed, at all such colleges, is most difficult, but I do believe that many students today, who are, alas, the victims of a culture that has been called morally and ethically vacuous, will respond to the right kind of teaching and the right kind of teachers. Difficult as this task is nowadays, I believe that Belmont Abbey College, in virtue of its Christian commitment rooted in its history and tradition, can provide this kind of education, but only if we ourselves realize that the dedication and fortitude needed for such a challenging task must be drawn from our own spiritual life, lavishly nourished by the grace of God.

Tyson Is New Placement Director

Brenda B. Tyson has been named director of counseling and placement at Belmont Abbey College.

Mrs. Tyson received both the B.A. and M.Ed. degrees from Winthrop College. She was also employed there from 1969-76, first as an assistant to the director of guidance, testing, and placement and then as the coordinator of student placement and career counseling.

During the 1976-77 school year, she served as counselor at Piedmont High School in Union Co.

Mrs. Tyson is a member of the North Carolina Personnel in Guidance Association, the North Carolina Association of Education, and Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society.



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